

Maiale al Latte

There are several things to say about this dish. Firstly, this recipe is essentially the *Pork in Milk* from Rick Stein's *Venice to Istanbul*. Secondly, neither the English title of *Pork in Milk* nor its description, which would be something like "pork served with curdled milk", sounds particularly appealing, especially to traditionally squeamish Brits. *Maiale al Latte* sounds so much better, IMHO, hence my reverting to the Italian. (Pig in Milk, which is pretty much how that translates, may sound even worse.) Thirdly, it is not the most elegant of dishes to serve due to said curdled milk [see above]. Fourthly, the lactic acid in the milk tenderizes the pork. Lastly, it is a very comforting, absolutely delicious dish that everyone should try.

Rick Stein does this with loin of pork but I've read that, loin being a very lean cut, pork shoulder gives a softer end result.

Planning

| | |
|---------------|---------|
| serves: | 4 |
| prep time: | 15 mins |
| cooking time: | 2½ hrs |

Ingredients

1.5kg pork joint (loin or shoulder), skin removed and fat trimmed
30g butter
olive oil
6 cloves garlic, crushed
8 sage leaves
1 tbs fennel seeds
zest of 1 lemon
1 ltr full fat milk
juice ½ lemon
Salt & pepper

Method

Season the pork well all over with salt and pepper. Melt the butter together with a few glugs of olive oil in a large, heavy-bottomed casserole. Brown the pork all over in the oil and butter mixture.

Remove the pork. Throw in the garlic and stir briefly - say, a minute so it doesn't burn - then add the sage leaves, fennel seeds and lemon zest. Moving the flavourings to the side of the pan to clear a patch for the pork and return the pork to the pan. Turn off the heat while you deal with the milk.

In another saucepan, scald the milk: bring it to simmering point then turn off the heat. Pour the scalded milk and lemon juice over the pork. Bring it back to the boil then reduce the heat and simmer very gently with the lid on but slightly ajar. Cook for about 2 hours, turning the meat halfway through cooking. Keep checking every 15 minutes or so to ensure the milk is not burning on the bottom of the pan (hence the need for a heavy bottomed pan)

During cooking, the milk will curdle, separating into the whey and something resembling discoloured ricotta cheese - yummy! After about 2 hours simmering the whey should have more or less all evaporated. If not, remove the pork and reduce the residual *sauce* separately. Taste and adjust the seasoning.

Serve the pork sliced thickly with dollops of curdled milk sauce.

(Yes, I know, but trust me on this.)