



Roast Pork with Pumpkin and Figs in Port Wine

By Chris Duke

Anna's Gourmet Goodies



A few years ago when Chef Sarig Agasi was running Butterflies Restaurant in North Raleigh, we sampled one of his pork dishes with pumpkin and it was fabulous. *(If you happen to live around Raleigh, you can now sample Chef Sarig's fantastic fare at Zely and Ritz on Glenwood Avenue)* That was the basis for my inspiration, along with the fact that I also enjoy port wine and figs.

Pork cooked in port wine is an excellent combination, giving the meat a slightly sweet taste. The pumpkin and the fresh figs further compliment the pork and make for a dish that is tasty, hearty and easy to prepare. The hardest part is peeling and chopping the pumpkin, but the taste is worth the effort.

Roast Pork with Pumpkin and Figs in Port Wine

- 2 lbs. whole pork loin
- 8 cups chopped pumpkin (about 2 lbs.)
- 1 lb. fresh figs
- 4 cloves garlic
- 1 cup tawny port wine
- 1 tbsp fresh thyme
- 1 tbsp fresh sage
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Extra virgin olive oil

Pre-heat the oven to 375 degrees. If you don't have a pork loin, a boneless Boston butt roast would also work fine. Wash the pork thoroughly and pat dry. When cooking a pork loin or roast, I like to wrap it with cooking twine. This holds the meat together and makes it easier to carve. You can have your butcher tie up the meat, or do it yourself. Make sure you use cooking twine that is all cotton. You can get a length from your butcher or find it in most kitchen stores. Tie the meat in sections with lengths of twine that are about 1" apart.

When cleaning your pumpkin, start by cutting it in half. A heavy ice cream scooper makes it easy to remove the seeds and the soft inner pulp. Cut the halves into smaller

pieces that you can easily handle and remove the outer peel. Cut into strips about ½” wide, and then into ½” chunks.

Wash the figs, remove the top stem, and cut the figs in half lengthwise.

Chop the thyme and sage. If you don’t have access to fresh herbs, you can substitute 1 tsp. each of dried thyme and sage.

Season the outside of the meat with salt and pepper. Heat a Dutch oven or large ovenable pan with a lid over medium to high heat. Coat the bottom with extra virgin olive oil, and place the meat in the pan. Sear for about 1-2 minutes on each side, rotating the meat until it is slightly browned on all sides. Remove the pan from the heat.

Add the pumpkin around the meat, then the figs, garlic, and port wine. Sprinkle the herbs on top, season with salt and pepper, cover with the lid and place in the oven.

Check the roast every 20 minutes and baste with the juices. Pork should be cooked to an internal temperature of around 170 degrees. Depending on your oven, plan on about 1 hour and 15 minutes. Check the meat with a thermometer and remove from the oven when it reaches around 160 degrees. Let rest covered for ten minutes – it should continue to cook and rise up to the proper temperature.

Remove the pork from the pan and place on a cutting board. Drain most of the juices into a saucepan, heat to a boil and reduce by 50%. Check the pumpkin and figs and adjust the salt and pepper seasoning to taste if necessary.

Use kitchen scissors or a sharp knife to remove the string. Slice the pork and surround with the pumpkin and figs. Pour the reduced juices over the slices and serve. We enjoyed this dish with a fresh loaf of sourdough bread just to soak up every last drop – yum!

Bon Appetit!