

Roasted Pork Loin with Gingered Rhubarb Chutney – Comfort du Jour

Rhubarb is not a common ingredient in the South, but I searched the city and found just enough to make this sweet-meets-savory chutney to accompany a gorgeous pork loin we snagged at the local farmer's market. Other ingredients came from nearby on the "flavor wheel," including cardamom, star anise and pink peppercorns.

This recipe requires some prep-ahead time, so plan accordingly. The chutney can be made while the roast is in the oven. If you prefer, make the chutney ahead of time and refrigerate. The chutney was delicious served warm with the pork roast, but room temperature or chilled would be good, too.

BRINE FOR PORK LOIN

2 1/4 lb. pasture-raised pork loin
4 cups cold water
1/4 cup canning and pickling salt (or kosher salt)
1/4 cup packed brown sugar
1 Tbsp. crushed pink peppercorns
2 cardamom pods, crushed
1 star anise piece

Be sure that your brine container is non-reactive; a large, deep glass bowl works great. It is not necessary to heat the water, as picking and kosher salt both dissolve easily. If you do heat the water, be sure the brine mixture is completely cool before adding it to the pork.

Stir together brine ingredients until sugar and salt are dissolved; submerge pork loin, cover and refrigerate 4 to 5 hours; remove from brine, pat dry all over with paper towels. Rest a few minutes, pat dry again, then follow rub instructions.

RUB FOR PORK LOIN

1/2 tsp. garlic powder
1/2 tsp. onion powder
1/4 tsp. ground cardamom
1/4 tsp. ground ginger
1/2 tsp. five spice powder
1/2 tsp. ground black pepper

Spray olive oil onto brined pork loin, and sprinkle rub all over, especially the lean surfaces. Let roast remain uncovered at room temperature for about an hour before roasting.

Preheat oven to 450° F. Place loin roast (fat side up) on rack above parchment-lined baking sheet, or inside a shallow glass baking dish. Roast at 450° for 15 minutes, then reduce heat to 400° and roast (on convection setting, if your oven has one) 30-45 additional minutes, or more as needed to reach 145° F internal temp. Rest 10 minutes, then slice thinly. Dip slices into any clean pan drippings for extra flavor at serving.

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RHUBARB APPLE CHUTNEY

1 Tbsp. extra virgin olive oil
1/2 cup diced sweet onion
1 tsp. pink peppercorn, crushed
1 cardamom pod, crushed
a pinch or two of kosher salt
1 heaping cup rhubarb
1/2 cup chopped apple, any firm variety
1/4 cup packed brown sugar
1 or 2 Tbsp. minced crystallized ginger (the flavor is prominent; adjust to taste)
2 Tbsp. apple cider vinegar
Leaves from about two sprigs of fresh thyme

Heat olive oil in a small saucepan and sauté onions until softened. Add salt, cardamom and pink peppercorns. Add rhubarb and apple and toss to combine. Add brown sugar and crystallized ginger. Cook over medium-low heat until sugar is dissolved and fruit begins to break down. Add vinegar and continue to cook over low heat until fruit is completely softened and mixture is thickened. Stir in thyme leaves. If not using immediately, chill then reheat.