

PORK ROAST (TUSCAN STYLE) WITH GARLIC AND ROSEMARY

As a kid, I have some wonderful memories of roasted pork dinner. The smells were awesome and the taste proved that the smell wasn't lying! For several years I looked for recipes that would match my memories but had poor luck. It turns out there were 2 reasons: My tastes had become a bit more sophisticated, and more importantly, the nature of pork has changed significantly! In a quest to be healthier (which is good to a point) a lot of the fat has been bred out of today's pigs. Unfortunately, it's the fat that holds so much of the richness and flavor of pork! This recipe uses pancetta, which is a cured pork product from Italy that has a lot of flavor and a fair amount of fat. This meat is processed into a paste, combined with spices, and spread over "double butterflied" pork loin, rolled up, and cooked to perfection. It sounds daunting, but it's easier than you think. You won't be disappointed!

INGREDIENTS:

2-2 ½ Pounds Boneless Center-cut Pork Loin Roast
1 Lemon
1/3 Cup Olive Oil
8 Garlic Cloves, minced (about 1 Tablespoon)
1 Tablespoon Fresh Rosemary, chopped
2 Ounces Pancetta, cut into ½ inch pieces
¼ teaspoon Red Pepper Flakes
1 Tablespoon Kosher Salt

Kitchen Twine

DIRECTIONS:

The hardest part of this recipe is trying to explain what "double butterfly" means. A butterflyed shrimp is a shrimp that is nearly cut in half lengthwise to increase the surface area for quicker cooking and/or to increase the surface area of any seasonings desired. We are going to do something similar with our pork loin, but we will make 2 evenly spaced slices being very careful not to slice through, effectively cutting our roast into thirds, and when opened up we will have a rectangular piece of meat about 1 inch thick or so.

Start by placing your pork loin on the counter with the fat side up and the small side facing you. Position your knife about 1 inch above the bottom and slice horizontally until you are between ½ and 1 inch from the other side. Open up the flap and make another horizontal cut through the thicker portion of the roast, stopping ½ - 1 inch from the edge again. Open this flap and you should have a rectangle of meat that you could fold up like a business letter. If the meat is uneven, cover with plastic wrap and use a meat pounder (or rubber mallet) to even it out. It does not need to look beautiful.

Spread Kosher salt evenly over both sides (½ Tablespoon on each side) and rub into meat to help it adhere. Cover with plastic wrap and set aside.

Finely grate 1 teaspoon of zest from the lemon. Combine the lemon zest, oil, garlic, and pepper flakes in a 10 inch nonstick skillet. Cook over medium low heat, stirring often until the

garlic begins to sizzle, about 3 minutes. Add the rosemary and continue to cook, stirring often, about 1 minute longer. Strain the mixture through a mesh strainer set over a bowl and allow the oil to drain. We will use this infused oil later!

To process the pancetta, place it into a small food processor and mix it into a smooth paste. If you don't have a food processor or yours is too big, use a blender. Scrape the sides as necessary. Add the garlic-rosemary mixture and continue to process until the mixture is homogenous, again scraping down the sides as necessary.

Remove the plastic wrap from your roast and spread the inside of the roast with the pancetta garlic paste as evenly as possible. Do the best you can because it doesn't spread too well. You may find it easiest to use a rubber spatula or even your fingers...whatever works.

Roll up the roast keeping the fat on the outside, and tie with twine at about 1 ½ inch intervals.

Line a cookie sheet with foil, place a wire rack in it, and spray with oil. Place your masterpiece on the wire rack, fat side up, and refrigerate for 1 hour.

Adjust your oven rack to the middle position and preheat to 275 degrees. Put the roast in the oven and cook until a meat thermometer registers 135 degrees in the center, about 1 ½ - 2 hours. Remove the roast from the oven, tent with aluminum foil, and allow to rest for 20 minutes.

Turn on your kitchen vent fan or turn off your smoke detector.

When 20 minutes (or so) is up, heat 2 Tablespoons of your reserved oil in the same 10 inch skillet over high heat (I use 8 ½ to 9 on my stove) until just smoking. As the oil is heating up, pat the roast dry with paper towels. If it is damp it will not brown. When oil is ready, brown the roast on the fat side first, then the sides, but not the bottom, about 4 to 6 minutes.

Transfer the roast to a cutting board and allow the roast to rest for 5 minutes, then remove the twine. Slice into ¼ to ½ inch slices and prepare to be impressed with yourself!

2 other things:

- Turn your smoke detector back on.
- Leftovers can easily be reheated, but they also make a great sandwich in a hamburger bun!