

Christmas alternative: Rolled pork belly with herby apricot & honey stuffing



If you're looking for an alternative to Turkey this Christmas and you're a huge crackling fan you'll love this idea for roast dinner - drying out the skin gives great results.

Ingredients

- 4 tbsp olive oil
- 1 onion chopped
- 2.5kg piece pork belly, boned, skin on (from Waterall obvs)
- small bunch parsley chopped
- small handful thyme leaves picked
- 10 sage leaves, chopped
- 50g fresh breadcrumb
- 140g dried apricot, chopped
- 1 tbsp flaky sea salt

- 2 tbsp clear honey

Method

1. Heat 1 tbsp of the oil in a small frying pan. Add the onion and cook for 10 mins until golden. Trim off about 100g of the pork, from the meaty side – but if the butcher has left a chunk of meat on one side where the ribs have been removed, leave this on as it will help you roll it. Whizz the pork trimmings in a food processor, then tip into a bowl with the herbs, breadcrumbs, apricots, onion and 2 tbsp oil, season and mix well.
2. Turn the pork belly skin-side up. Using a sharp knife or Stanley knife, score the skin at 1cm intervals and rub the sea salt all over. Turn the pork belly over and season a little more, then brush the honey over the flesh. Lay the stuffing down the centre, then bring the 2 ends together and roll tightly. Flip the pork over so the ends meet underneath. Tie the rolled pork with kitchen string to secure. Put the meat on a wire rack in a roasting tin and transfer to the fridge, uncovered for a few hrs or up to 24 hrs, so the skin has time to dry out and the meat takes on the flavours from the stuffing.
3. Heat oven to 220C/180C fan/gas 6. Rub the pork with the remaining oil and a little more sea salt. Roast in the centre of the oven for 30 mins. Turn the oven down to 180C/160C fan/gas 4 and continue cooking for 2 hrs. Finally, turn the oven back up to 220C/200C fan/gas 7 to crisp up the skin for another 30 mins – don't worry if your pork looks dark on the outside, it will still be juicy and delicious in the middle. Remove from the oven, cover with foil and leave to rest for 45 mins before carving. If your skin does not turn crispy, pop the joint under a hot grill for a few mins, rolling it onto its side to get the sides nice and crispy too – just keep an eye on it as it will burn easily.