

Lomo de Cerdo con Higos

pork with figs

The Moors loved to combine fruit and meat, and Catalan cooks readily embraced the idea. Pork and figs—dried or fresh—make a particularly delicious pairing. If you like, the figs can be cooked the day before, and the sauce can be made several hours ahead of serving and reheated.

FIGS

- 1 lb (500 g) dried black figs or 12–16 fresh figs
- 1 cup (8 fl oz/250 ml) oloroso or amontillado sherry
- 2 lemon slices
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 2 whole cloves

PORK AND BASTING MIXTURE

- 1 boneless pork loin, about 3 lb (1.5 kg), tied
- tiny garlic slivers (optional)
- salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
- pinch of ground cinnamon
- ½ cup (4 fl oz/125 ml) oloroso or amontillado sherry
- ½ cup (4 fl oz/125 ml) fresh orange juice
- ¼ cup (3 oz/90 g) honey

SAUCE

- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 large yellow onion, chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 cup (8 fl oz/250 ml) oloroso or amontillado sherry
- 1 cup (6 oz/185 g) peeled, seeded, and diced tomato (optional)
- 1 cup (8 fl oz/250 ml) chicken stock
- ¼ cup (1 oz/30 g) ground toasted almonds
- 1 tablespoon grated orange zest
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

☞ If using dried figs, place them in a saucepan with the sherry, lemon slices, cinnamon stick, and cloves. Add water as needed to cover and place over medium heat. Bring to a simmer and cook until tender, 10–15 minutes. Remove from the heat and set aside

to steep for an hour or two. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the figs to a cutting board. Remove and discard the lemon slices, cinnamon stick, and cloves from the cooking liquid and reserve the liquid. Cut the figs in half and set aside. If using fresh figs, proceed as directed but poach them in the sherry mixture for only 3–5 minutes.

☞ Preheat an oven to 400°F (200°C).

☞ To prepare the pork, trim away any excess fat. If desired, cut a series of evenly spaced slits into the surface of the loin with the tip of a sharp knife and slip a garlic sliver into each slit. Then rub the roast all over with salt, pepper, and cinnamon. Place the pork on a rack in a roasting pan. In a small bowl, stir together the sherry, orange juice, and honey.

☞ Roast the pork, basting every 15 minutes with the sherry mixture, until an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part registers 147°F (64°C), 40–45 minutes. Let rest for 10 minutes. Alternatively, test the roast by cutting into it with a sharp knife; the meat should be lightly pink at the center.

☞ About 30 minutes before the roast is ready, begin making the sauce: In a frying pan over medium heat, melt the butter. Add the onion and sauté until tender, about 8 minutes. Add the garlic and cook until tender, about 3 minutes longer. Add the sherry, tomato (if using), stock, almonds, orange zest, cinnamon, and reserved fig liquid, raise the heat to high, and cook until thickened, 8–10 minutes. Spoon half of the sauce into a blender and purée, then return to the saucepan. Add the figs and heat through. Season with salt and pepper.

☞ Snip the strings on the roast and slice the pork. Arrange the pork slices on a warmed platter and spoon the sauce over them. Surround the slices with the figs. Serve at once.

serves 4