BRAISING: PORK SHOULDER À LA MATIGNON

Chef Thomas Keller / Chapter Twelve

MASTERCLASS

BRAISING: PORK SHOULDER À LA MATIGNON

"Look at this beautiful cocotte. I just love cooking in these. There's something that's really basic and grounded in cooking in something like this. And the transformation of the food as it cooks is just beautiful."

CHAPTER REVIEW

Matignon cooking features vegetables that have been cut to a uniform size for use as a complement in a variety of fried and braised dishes. Many types of root vegetables work wonderfully à la matignon, including carrots, potatoes, leeks, turnips, and rutabaga. Options abound, though Chef Keller does not recommend using delicate vegetables that grow above ground, such as green beans.

Chef Keller braises pork shoulder à la matignon with celery root, apples, and onions, slow-cooking the ingredients in a cocotte, or cast-iron pot. He serves the fork-tender dish with crispy potato rösti.

PREP & COOK TIMELINE

- Bring pork shoulder to temperatrue
  Prep vegetables
- Sauté onions in cocotte
  Add celery root, apples, sachet, cider, honey
- Make sachet
- Return pork to cocotte, transfer to oven
- Truss pork shoulder
- Remove pork and sachet
- Add pork to cocotte and sear on all sides
- Reduce liquid
- Add thickener, acid if needed
- Transfer pork to rack
- Slice shoulder, plate, and serve

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PROTEIN

FOR THE PORK SHOULDER

Mise en place

Ingredients

1 boneless pork shoulder, 3 to 4 pounds
Kosher salt
Canola oil
500 grams (about 2) onions, cut into a ⅜-inch dice
375 grams (about 3) Granny Smith apples, cored and cut to a ⅜-inch dice
250 grams (about 1) celery root, cut to a ⅜-inch dice
500 grams dry hard cider
50 grams honey
10 to 15 grams dry kuzu root*
25 grams Calvados
White wine vinegar, to taste
Watercress, for garnish
French grey sea salt, for finishing

**Ingredient note:* If you cannot find kuzu root, you can substitute it with cornstarch.

Note: If you prefer not to cook with alcohol, replace the dry cider with apple juice but omit the honey so that it does not become overly sweet. You can finish with an aromatic such as a sprig of tarragon or grated citrus zest instead of the Calvados.

FOR THE SACHET

1 bay leaf
1 cinnamon stick
3 star anise pods
3 cloves
Cheesecloth
Kitchen twine

METHOD

MAKE THE SACHET:

Lay the cheesecloth on the cutting board and add bay leaf, cinnamon stick, star anise pods, and cloves on top. Fold the end and roll into a sachet. Tie both ends with kitchen twine. Set aside.

FOR THE PORK SHOULDER:

Remove the pork from the refrigerator at least 1 hour before cooking to allow it to come to room temperature. Use kitchen twine to hold the pork shoulder in its natural, plump shape. Wrap twine down the middle lengthwise and tie, then across the width in the middle and twice more left of the middle and right of the middle. Season all sides of the pork with kosher salt.

Preheat oven to 275°F. Heat a large cocotte over medium-high heat. Pour in about ¼ inch of canola oil. Add the pork and sear, turning as needed, until well-browned on all sides.

Transfer the pork to a rack over a baking sheet, leaving the rendered pork fat in the cocotte to cook and flavor the vegetables. Add the onions and salt them, which will draw out moisture and begin the caramelization process. Once the onions have caramelized, add the apples and celery root. Next, add the sachet and cider, reserving some for the slurry, quickly stepping away to let the steam from the cider safely escape. Finally, stir in the honey and nestle the pork shoulder into the bed of vegetables. Cover and cook for 30 seconds. Transfer the cocotte to the middle rack of the oven to cook for about 4 hours, checking the shoulder after 2½ hours. Use a cake tester to check the resistance. When there's little to no resistance, it's cooked.

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Equipment

Cutting board
Chef's knife
Kitchen twine
7-quart cocotte
Wooden spoon
Cake tester
Mortar & pestle
Small bowl
Whisk
Ladle

While the pork is in the oven, make the rösti (see recipe below).

Remove the cocotte from the oven and bring back to the stovetop over low heat. Remove the pork and sachet and let rest on a rack over a sheet pan. Bring the liquid remaining in the cocotte to a simmer. While it simmers, grind kuzu in a mortar and pestle. Combine kuzu and cider in a small bowl and whisk into a slurry, using enough cider that it's runny and pourable. Stir in about a third of the slurry and add more as you continue cooking to reach your desired thickness. Taste the matignon and adjust salt and acid as needed. Add the Calvados and do a final taste for seasoning. Adjust for acidity with vinegar if needed. Simmer until the flavor is pleasantly concentrated.

TO COMPLETE

Transfer the pork shoulder to a cutting board and remove the twine to slice. Ladle some of the matignon into your serving dish and top with sliced pork shoulder. To plate and serve as Chef Keller does, garnish with watercress and serve with a potato rösti. You'll find the recipe for the rösti on the following page.

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ACCOMPANIMENTS

POTATO RÖSTI:

**Note: You can embellish the rösti recipe to suit your tastes by adding cooked bacon, leeks, garlic, or minced onions to the grated potatoes before they are placed in the pan.*

Mise en place

Ingredients

800 grams (about 1¾ pounds, or 3 large) Yukon Gold potatoes
10 grams kosher salt
100 grams clarified butter (or more, as needed)

Equipment

8-inch sauté pan
Peeler
Mandolin
Measuring spoons
Flat spatula or cake spatula
Turner
Serrated knife

METHOD

Peel the potatoes, then slice them lengthwise on a mandolin. Julienne them lengthwise into to keep the julienne strips as long as possible. Toss the potatoes with the salt and allow them to wilt down and release their liquid for about 5 minutes. Squeeze the potatoes in a lint-free towel to help release any remaining moisture. You may wish to repeat the squeezing and salting a couple of times to get the potatoes pretty dry.

Toss the grated potatoes with 2 tablespoons of clarified butter to evenly coat them. Heat the 8-inch sauté pan over medium-high heat. Add 3 tablespoons of clarified butter to the pan. When the butter just begins to smoke, start placing the grated potatoes in the pan. Use a cake spatula to compact the potatoes tightly into the pan, and flatten them into an even layer that is about an inch thick.

When the rösti begins to brown around the edges, use a cake spatula to gently separate the edge of the potatoes from the pan and take a peek at the bottom of the rösti. Adjust the heat up or down to prevent scorching or sticking to the pan. When the bottom layer is a rich, golden brown color, use a wide spatula to carefully and quickly turn the rösti over.

Pour the remaining butter around the perimeter of the rösti and continue to cook until the other side begins to brown. Reduce the heat to medium-low and cook slowly for about 10 to 15 minutes, until the bottom is well-browned and crisp.

Remove the pan from the oven or stovetop and loosen the edges of the rösti from the pan with a cake spatula. Tilt the pan and coax the rösti out of the pan and onto a serving dish or cutting board. As soon as the rösti is cool enough to handle, sprinkle with chives and cut into wedges, using a serrated knife.

You can make the rösti up to a day ahead. If you do, re-crisp it by putting in a pan with clarified butter and warming it in the oven with the pork.

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LEARN MORE

- You can cook any number of different protein and vegetable combinations à la matignon. The technique works with any large joint of meat that has a lot of connective tissue—lamb shanks, osso buco, oxtail, or even a pot roast. Consider flavor profiles that appeal to you, and focus on ingredients that are in season. For Mediterranean flavors, you could use a vegetable combination of peppers, cauliflower, onions, and tomatoes. Bear in mind that you want to use vegetables that exude liquid, not ones that absorb liquid (such as eggplant). Spices like curry can transform the flavor profile of the dish. Just make sure to preserve the ratio of liquid and vegetables.
- Chef Keller draws an important distinction between a bouquet garni and a sachet. A bouquet garni is always comprised of parsley, thyme, and bay leaf. When making a bouquet garni, you might use the exterior leaves of a leek to wrap the components together. A sachet can contain any herbs you like. Chef Keller wraps his up with cheesecloth. It's easy to remove from the food when you're done cooking with it.