



This month we highlight succulent pork, along with vegetables that have stored well all winter, frozen or cellared. Marketed as “the other white meat” by the National Pork Board, commodity pork has become so lean that it’s a challenge to cook it without reducing it to shoe leather. Happily, Mississippi Market’s Pastures a’ Plenty pork comes from old-fashioned Berkshire and Duroc hogs, whose meat is juicy and fat enough to cook up moist and tender.

Day 1: Roast Pork

Ingredients: 4-5 lb. bone-in pork shoulder roast (Pastures a’ Plenty is nice)
Salt
Freshly ground black pepper

- At least 3 hours before roasting the pork shoulder, and preferably the day before, salt and pepper the meat on all sides. Cover closely with plastic or glass and refrigerate.
- One hour before roasting the meat, take the roast out of the fridge and let it warm to room temperature. This creates more even cooking because the center of the meat is not markedly colder than the exterior.
- Heat oven to 400°. Have one oven rack in middle and one below it; the lower rack will be used for baking the corn custard.
- Put room-temperature pork shoulder in earthenware or glass pan and place on middle rack in oven. The roast does not need to be on a rack.
- After 1 hour, turn the pan so that the meat cooks evenly (the side facing the back of the oven will always cook faster).
- If you’re using a tempered glass or metal pan, check temperature with thermometer after 1 ½ hours to avoid overcooking.
- After 2 hours, baste the meat with the juices in the bottom of the pan.
- Take the roast out after 2 hours and 20 minutes. Let rest for 20 minutes before carving so the juices don’t spurt out as soon as you cut the meat.

Save the bone for soup making and the leftover meat and drippings from the bottom of the roasting pan—they will be used in Meals 2 and 3.

Cooking Tip: For long, even roasting like this, you’ll find that earthenware is vastly better than metal or glass pans, which tend to build up too much heat. As a result, the juices you’ll be saving for use in the Shepherd’s Pie may become too concentrated and salty in glass and metal. You can buy a 10-inch Spanish *cazuela*—a round, earthenware pan with a glazed interior—at Kitchen Window in Minneapolis for \$13. It is a treasure for long oven roasting. If you must use tempered glass or metal, use less salt and reduce the temperature of the oven to 375° and roast your pork longer, until the interior reaches 160° (USDA).

Smoky Corn Custard

*While the pork is roasting, prepare this cozy corn custard. A dried jalapeño (chipotle) in the custard provides a bit of smoky flavor without heat. **This side dish takes about 40 minutes to cook, so start preparing it about 45 minutes before the pork comes out of the oven.***

Ingredients: 2 Tbs. butter
1 clove of garlic, skinned and slightly smashed
1/3 c. chopped scallion (green and white)
2 c. frozen corn (SnoPac is local and very good)
2 c. whole milk, or 1 ¼ c. whole milk and ¾ c. heavy cream
3 eggs, well beaten
1 tsp. sea salt or 1.5 tsp kosher salt

1 chipotle, whole (optional)
Little bits of butter for topping and greasing pan

- Butter a baking dish, sides and bottom, and then rub with smashed clove of garlic. Set dish aside.
- Heat a skillet on medium, then add 2 Tbs. of butter, and when that has melted, add 1/3 c. of scallions to it. Cook until the scallions start to smell good. Add the corn, and cook until it no longer looks frozen.
- Pour the skillet's contents into the baking dish.
- Combine milk, cream, and eggs; pour these into the baking dish. Add salt and whole chipotle. Dot the top with tiny bits of butter.
- Put baking dish in a larger pan and pour hot water halfway up the sides of the baking dish. Bake on lower rack while the pork finishes roasting. The custard will puff up and brown beautifully.

Serve slices of roasted pork with corn custard and a green salad.

Cooking Tip: To maximize your drippings, add boiling water, bit by bit, to the fluid and crusty bits in bottom of roasting pan. Use a silicon spatula to loosen bits from pan. Pour drippings into a glass jar and refrigerate, covered, for use in Meal 3.

Day 2: Pork Tacos with Springtime Green Salsa

Tacos can be as simple or complex as you want them to be—and they're always quick to prepare. They're at their best hot out of the skillet or off the griddle, when their combination of soft centers and crispy edges are most succulent. Homemade salsas, which take almost no time to prepare, raise the humble taco to culinary nobility. It's already summer harvest season in Mexico, so use fresh tomatillos for your salsa verde.

Ingredients: 2 c. shredded or cubed leftover pork
2 Tbs. peanut oil (Spectrum unrefined is particularly tasty) or rendered pork fat
1 clove of garlic, skinned and slightly smashed
1 pkg. of La Perla fresh corn tortillas
Romaine lettuce leaves, thinly sliced
Springtime Salsa Verde (recipe below)
Hass avocados, sliced and salted
1–2 limes

- Heat a heavy skillet over medium-high; add 1 Tbs. of peanut oil or pork fat, and when it is very hot, add meat and clove of garlic. Move meat around; the object is to reheat it, not to recook it. When it is hot, remove meat from pan to a side dish and cover lightly with aluminum foil. Discard garlic.
- Reheat pan with another 1 Tbs. of oil or fat on medium heat. When the oil is hot, put a *pair* of tortillas in the skillet, one on top of each other. Turn over as soon as you can see the tortillas start to lift a bit—you are aiming at reheating them, adding a bit of oil to them, but not *frying* them. Stack heated tortillas on a plate and cover with aluminum foil to keep them warm.
- Assemble the tacos: first put in the meat, then slices of Romaine lettuce, then the salsa.
- Squeeze some fresh lime juice over the contents of tacos.
- Serve with red pepper strips dressed with vinaigrette.

Cooking Tip: When making tacos, use a pair of tortillas—they do a better job of holding in juicy fillings. Aim at adding just a bit of heat and fat to the tortillas—you aren't trying to *fry* them.

Springtime Salsa Verde

Ingredients: 2 c. tomatillos (6–8 fresh)
2 serrano chiles, seeded and deveined
Clove of garlic, skinned
¼ onion, red or yellow
½ c. fresh cilantro
¼– ½ tsp. sea salt
¼– ½ c. water
pinch of sugar
1 tsp. finely chopped cilantro

- Peel papery husks off tomatillos and place them in a saucepan; add enough water just to cover. Bring to a boil; lower heat, and simmer for 10 minutes.
- Grind together chiles, garlic, onion, cilantro, and salt in a mortar or pulse in a food processor—you want this salsa to be only semi-smooth.
- Grind tomatillos and add to other ingredients; mix together.
- Dribble water, bit by bit, into sauce. You want sauce to have a fairly fluid consistency. Taste, and add a pinch of sugar if needed.
- Add 1 tsp. of finely chopped cilantro to finish the sauce.

Day 3: Pork Shepherd's Pie

Does food get any more comforting than shepherd's pie? Not in my book! This is the perfect dish to come home to and reheat. Having a glass casserole of it tucked in your freezer is insurance that you'll always have a fine meal at the ready. You can add fresh spring greens to your pie if you wish: fresh or frozen peas, or tiny cubes of carrot.

Ingredients: 1 ½ c. celery, chopped
½ c. onion, chopped
½ c. water
3-4 c. shredded or cubed pork
Leftover drippings from roasting (add hot water to make 2 c.)*
1 tsp. sea salt
2 Tbs. minced parsley
2 large baking potatoes (russets)
2 eggs, well beaten
¼ tsp. sea salt
Tiny slivers of butter
2 Tbs. freshly grated Parmesan

** If you roasted the pork in metal or tempered glass, you may not have enough drippings. Add organic chicken broth instead.*

- Preheat oven to 400°.
- Add celery, onion and water to saucepan; simmer until celery is almost tender. Add meat, 2 c. of drippings, salt and parsley.
- Pour contents into buttered 2.5-qt. casserole. Put casserole in oven, covered, while you prepare potatoes.
- Halve the potatoes; leave skins on. Put in sauce pan, cover with cold water, bring to boil, then simmer until potatoes are cooked through.
- Remove potatoes from pot; save potato water for soup making.
- Skin and mash potatoes; add beaten eggs and salt.
- Take casserole out of oven; top with the mashed potatoes. Dot with tiny slivers of butter to promote browning. Grate Parmesan over top.
- Bake until potatoes are lightly browned (25–30 minutes).