

Brick Oven Roast Chicken

Ingredients

4 lb chicken
1 onion, quartered
2 stalks celery
2 garlic cloves, peeled and sliced
1/2 cup water
4 TBS cooking olive oil
Herbs
Salt and Pepper

1. Place the onion, celery and garlic in the bottom of a steel, iron, aluminum or terra cotta pan. Cover with water (this will keep the vegetables from burning and give you chicken great flavors from the steam).
2. Rinse the chicken, pat dry, and sprinkle the cavity with salt and pepper. Place the herbs inside the cavity, and set the chicken on the bed of vegetables. Rub the chicken with the olive oil, and season with salt and pepper.
3. Bake for 1 hour (depending on your oven heat), with a small fire on the side (if your oven needs the heat). The moisture in the oven means that you not need to baste. If your oven is too hot, cover the chicken with foil (or just the tips) to keep the skin from burning. Remove the foil for the last 10-15 minutes.
4. Prick the thigh with a fork -- if the juices run clear, the chicken is cooked. Transfer to a serving platter.
5. If you would like, use the pan drippings to make gravy. Remove the fat, then add 3 TBS flour and cook for 3 minutes. Add 1 cup of chicken stock and cook for 5 minutes. Strain out the vegetables and serve.

Brick Oven Mushroom Stuffed Pork Chops with Pears

With thanks from Robert in Sacramento, CA

The chops must have been two and a half inches thick and marbled with just the right amount of fat (it's sad that it's so difficult to get pork with fat in it these days). The chops had some sort of special name which escapes me right now. (You might have to reduce the cooking time of this recipe if your chops are not as thick as the ones I found. If so, I think I would reduce the time the dish is covered because you still want to leave enough time uncovered to get a nice brown crust on the chops.)

I threw this together and it turned out surprisingly well for such an easy meal. Probably the best pork based meal we've had out of the oven so far. When chopping the mushrooms keep in mind that they will reduce in size by half. You want to err on the side of chopping them too large otherwise they will be too small to have any texture by the time they are finished cooking. Basically chop them as large as you can, (mine were larger than the size of dice) as long as you can still stuff them into the 'pork chop pocket' after they

reduce. Remember, if later on you find that they are too large, it will be easier to chop them smaller (on the other hand, if they are too small, then you're going to have one hell of a time trying to chop them larger.)

It is not necessary to use the jam and relish which I used. You can experiment with any sweet fruit or tomato based jam and relish but I found the ones described below to be exceptionally good. They are also available at Taylor's or on line from Earth and Vine.

Ingredients

3 of the thickest pork chops you can find
3 green onions chopped (just the white portion)
2 pears peeled and quartered (I used red Anjou but they say that Bosc is best for cooking)
6 medium size (about half the size of a dollar bill) roughly chopped Portobello mushrooms
Olive oil
Red Wine
1 jar of Earth and Vine Roma Tomato and Chili Mélange jam
1 jar of Earth and Vine Cranberry Shallot Relish

Preparation

Put a couple tablespoons of the oil in a sauté pan and sweat the onions over high heat for about three minutes.

Add more oil to the pan if needed and add the chopped mushrooms and continue cooking until the mushrooms begin to reduce.

Add about half the jar of the Roma Tomato and Chili Melange Jam and continue cooking until mushrooms reduce in size by one half. You want to end up with a nice thick glazed mushroom mixture but don't overcook the mushrooms; they'll cook some more while in the chop. Salt and pepper to taste.

Cut a pocket into each of the pork chops. Try to keep the entry hole no larger than two inches and swivel the knife about to make the interior hole larger than the entry hole. Stuff the chops with the mushroom mixture. Just pack it in there as best you can.

Place the chops in a earthenware dish coated with olive oil and add enough red wine to cover the bottom of the dish with about one eighth of an inch of wine. Salt and pepper the chops. (I went pretty heavy on the salt and pepper but that's just my preference with pork.)

Cover tightly with foil and place in a hot (walls 625 to 725 F) wood burning oven.

While the chops are cooking, place the pear quarters in a pan and coat with about one third of the jar of Cranberry Shallot Relish.

After the chops have been in the oven for 1 hour, remove the foil and add the

pear / relish mixture. Place the chops back in the oven, this time without the foil. After about one half hour they should look like the picture at the top of the recipe. Serve with the pears and the liquid from the dish poured over the chops.