

ROAST PORK LOIN (CORMARYE)

Hailing from 14th-century England, this simple recipe is the once-and-future champ of pork roasts in my book. The pork may be seasoned anywhere from two hours to two days ahead. Let the roast come to room temperature before spitting it and laying it down to the fire.



- 1 tablespoon coriander seeds
- 1 tablespoon caraway seeds
- 1 teaspoon black peppercorns
- 2-4 cloves garlic
- 1 teaspoon kosher or coarse sea salt
- 2 tablespoons red wine
- 1 bone-in pork roast, 3 to 4 pounds
- ½ cup stock or water

6 to 8 servings

1. Grind the coriander and caraway seeds and the peppercorns with a mortar and pestle. When they are mostly pulverized, toss in the garlic and salt. Crush to a paste, and then work in the wine. Slather the mixture all over the pork roast. Let stand, sealed in a nonreactive container, for two hours at a cool room temperature, or up to two days, in the fridge.

2. Set up your hardwood fire and roasting apparatus much as for the roast rabbit, except that the pork loin will want to be 7 to 9 inches from the coals. (See page 45.) Plan to use either a flat-bladed spit, a spit with a slot that a skewer can pass through, or a spit with adjustable meat forks to secure the roast.

3. There's a bit of a dilemma in spitting a roast like this. You want to avoid impaling the best part of the meat, the center, but at the same time you want the roast to be perfectly balanced on the spit, which is achieved by centering it in the meat. An inevitable contradiction. But when I have a bone-in roast, I find that my mind is made up by the prospect of running the spit flat against the ribs to help secure the rotation. If the lopsided spitting results in one section of the roast being

less done because of greater distance from the heat, I can always pay special attention to that area later and compensate by moving coals toward it. If you can only get a boneless roast, then you may as well spit it dead center. Clamp-on meat forks are handy here, especially if you have a thin metal spit.

4. When your fire has produced plenty of coals, use a fire shovel to create a lovely coal bed beneath where the roast will be suspended. Feed the main fire with new hardwood from the back. Lay the roast down over the coals on the spit supports.

5. Turn frequently over the hot coals until it begins to sizzle and make some drippings. Then deploy a dripping pan directly under the roast, and refresh the coal supply between it and the main fire. Don't forget to feed the fire from the back again.

6. If the drippings begin to scorch at all, add a little hot water to the dripping pan. Baste the roast from time to time with the drippings, if you like.

7. Observe the meat as it goes from pinkish-red to creamy to golden brown; and as it shrinks and tightens. These are all signs of cooking. In the best hearth conditions, it may not take too much more than an hour to cook a roast like this. Looking carefully at the roast, turning it to advantage, and taking steps to advance cooking in any places which have fallen behind — these are really all you have to do to roast this loin perfectly. When it looks all crispy and sizzling like a pork roast you'd like to eat, take its internal temperature. At 145°F, you may remove it to a heated platter, and keep warm for a 10 to 15 minute rest. If you find that the center is still too cool, just pull the coals further away to slacken the heat and allow it to continue to roast without much more browning.

8. When the roast is resting, have a look at the drippings. Spoon excess fat from the top of them, and then put the pan back on a little coal bed. Add the stock (and another splash of red wine if you like) and bring to a simmer scraping up the bottom of the pan and stirring. Simmer a few minutes, correct the seasoning, and then just keep warm while you carve the roast in thin slices.

9. Not very period-appropriate, but this pork loin is great with polenta and flavorful garlicky braised greens. It's also tremendous in sandwiches with almost any accompaniments you can think of.

TROUBLESHOOTING: ROASTING

What happens if the meat looks all brown on the outside, yet the thermometer reads 115°F, not 150°F? This situation indicates that your roast has been too close to the coals or to the blaze of the fire. Make a note of that for next time, and then take remedial action right away. Push the fire further away, and just keep roasting over a diminished pile of coals. All is not lost. Just do all you can to sloooow things down until the internal temperature rises.



Recipe excerpted from
Cooking with Fire
by © Paula Marcoux.
Photograph by ©
Keller & Keller Photography, Inc.
All rights reserved.