

FENNEL + CORIANDER FALL-APART PORK SHOULDER WITH MEYER LEMONS, CREAM, AND A VERY IMPORTANT GARNISH

Fresh rosemary... it's the new parsley

Serves 6-8

REMEMBER, BEST PRACTICES: READ THE RECIPE ALL THE WAY THROUGH BEFORE YOU START COOKING!

Do you know of the concept of a bookend? This repeat-worthy braise is an example of how it can play out in culinary terms: the initial spice rub sends this dish outta the gates with a promising start, and the finish... oh, the finish: I'm so excited to have you experience a change of heart about fresh rosemary. When super finely chopped, rosemary is actually enjoyable when fresh (controversial, I know) and heightens flavors and depth like only salt and pepper can. Add to that the addition of fresh Meyer lemon juice, lots of zest, and heavy cream, and... well, consider the book closed.

2 tablespoons fennel seeds

1 tablespoon coriander seeds

$\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon red pepper flakes

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

5 pounds boneless pork shoulder roast, cut crosswise into 2-inch slabs

1 large or 2 small-medium fennel, preferably with long stalks

4-5 Meyer lemons

1 large yellow onion, peeled and cut into 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch wedges

1 head garlic, cut crosswise in half (skins left on)

1 (6-inch) sprig rosemary, or comparable, plus additional needles, very finely chopped, for serving

8 sprigs thyme, plus additional leaves for serving

3 cups low-sodium chicken broth

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup heavy cream

Polenta, rice, greens, grains, or toasty bread, for serving

1. Combine fennel seeds and coriander seeds in a spice mill, mortar and pestle, or (clean) coffee grinder. Grind until fine. Transfer to a bowl and add the red pepper flakes, 1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon salt, and 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons black pepper. (That's more than just a couple of grindings on your peppermill... be generous here!) Mix to combine. The hardest part of this recipe is over.

2. Place pork pieces on a work surface (or simply on the paper in which they were wrapped) and sprinkle with the spice mixture, pressing the spices into the meat and rolling the pieces around in any excess that falls off to coat all sides and edges thoroughly. If you can, do this an hour or up to two days in advance to let the seasonings really infiltrate the meat.

3. When ready to cook, preheat the oven to 350 degrees with a rack in the lower third.

4. Prep the fennel: cut the stalks off of the bulb and reserve. Halve the bulb (or bulbs) and cut lengthwise into 1 ½-inch wedges. Reserve some fronds for garnish. Any fronds that remain on the stalks can be used in the braise.

5. Transfer the pork to a large Dutch oven with a tight-fitting lid. Peel 2 Meyer lemons with a vegetable peeler. Add the peels to the pot, along with the fennel wedges and a big handful of the stalks. Add the onions, garlic, rosemary, and thyme. Nestle everything into the pot so that the meat is somewhat shingled and the aromatics are evenly scattered on top, between, and beneath. Add the chicken stock and the juice of two Meyer lemons (about ⅓ cup).

*NOTE: If the pot feels cramped, don't worry! As cooking progresses, the meat and vegetables will shrink, and you'll be able to maneuver the contents of the pot more easily into an even layer.

6. Cover the pot and transfer to the oven. Let roast, basting every 45 minutes and shifting the meat and vegetables as they cook into as even a layer as possible. After 3 to 3 ½ hours, the meat will be pull-apart tender and the aromatics will be meltingly tender and nearly integrated into the cooking liquid.

7. Increase oven temperature to 425 degrees. Remove the pot from the oven and pull out any unruly herb sprigs, fennel stalks, or garlic skins. Don't discard the lemon peels— they are delightfully edible. In fact, keep them all to yourself!

Tip the pot to one side and, using a big spoon, skim as much fat off of the top of the cooking liquid as possible. Alternatively, if making this in advance, don't skim any fat at this point. Transfer the pot to the refrigerator with the lid somewhat ajar, and let chill until ready to serve. Skim any solidified fat and rewarm on the stovetop until the liquid is bubbling before proceeding.

8. Return the pot to the oven and continue to cook, uncovered, basting halfway through and turning pieces over to expose more areas to crisp, until liquid has reduced a bit and the top of the meat has slightly browned, about 20 minutes.

9. Remove from the oven, add the juice of 1 Meyer lemon to the pot and gently shake to distribute, using a spoon as necessary to mix. Add the heavy cream and shake and stir until incorporated. At this point, I like to start pulling the meat into large pieces, nestling them into the braising liquid and dousing them in the sauce. Now taste a bit of the meat and a bit of the sauce. Add more salt and additional lemon juice to reach desired depth of flavor and brightness.

10. Serve, over polenta, rice, greens, grains, or toasty bread, garnished with a generous smattering of finely grated Meyer lemon rind and additional (yes— additional!) fresh Meyer lemon juice atop each portion. The pork really soaks in the liquid so that final squeeze of lemon is EVERYTHING. Plan on using up to 2 more Meyers for serving, presenting lemon halves at the table to encourage even more DIY garnishing. Top with fennel fronds and fresh thyme, if desired.

Finally, sprinkle with the finely chopped rosemary— about a pinch or two per plate. A little goes a long way, but don't leave this out!

NOODLE