



Virginia Ham with Pickled Peaches

Serves: ham size dependent

Prep time: about 3 days

Cook time: 2-4 hours

FOR THE HAM

One uncured ham, the best quality you can afford and any size.

A pot large enough to hold it (make sure in advance)

Cloves

Brown muscovado sugar

PICKLED PEACHES

Also delicious with roast pork or duck. You will need a 1 litre sterilising jar, washed and dried out in the oven to sterilise it.

8 large ripe but firm peaches

350 g granulated sugar

1 pint (570 ml) white wine vinegar

2 tablespoons fresh lime juice

1 level dessertspoon coriander seeds

1 level dessertspoon mixed peppercorns

3 shallots, peeled and finely sliced

'Nanaire was famous for her home-cured Virginia hams ... and generations on, family Christmas is not complete without Virginia ham 'sliced thin as smoked salmon' and Nancy Lancaster's pickled peaches'. Isabella Tree

HAM

Soak the ham in cold water for 24 hours. Then scrub it, and put in a fresh pot of cold water to boil. Once it has reached a boil reduce to a very slow simmer, so that you can hardly see the bubbles. Cover and cook for 25 mins to the lb or kg, but not less than 2 hours. When tender, take off the stove and leave it to cool in the liquid overnight. Skin the ham, leaving the underlayer of pale fat. Score this crosshatch with a sharp knife and press in whole cloves at the crossing of each hatch. Sprinkle thickly with muscovado sugar (some mix with molasses or black treacle but just the sugar is also fine).

Bake in oven at high heat until brown and bubbling (about 20 minutes).

Remove from oven, and allow to cool. Serve with the peaches, and maybe some celeriac remoulade.

PEACHES

Begin by measuring the sugar, wine vinegar, lime juice, coriander seeds, peppercorns and shallots into a large saucepan or preserving pan.

Give everything a good stir, then place the pan on a low heat and allow to heat through, stirring from time to time until all the sugar has dissolved – don't let it come up to simmering point until all the granules of sugar have completely dissolved.

Put another saucepan of water on to boil. Halve the peaches and remove the stones, then drop them into the boiling water for a few seconds.

Remove them with a draining spoon and you should find that the skins slip off easily. Now place the skinned peach halves in the vinegar and sugar mixture, bring it up to simmering point and gently poach the fruit for 15 minutes or until tender when tested with a skewer. Use a draining spoon to remove the peaches and transfer them to the warmed preserving jar. Boil the syrup rapidly to reduce it to approximately half its volume, then pour through a strainer over the peaches.

Seal the jar and keep for 6 weeks before using.

Entertaining in Style

NANCY ASTOR and NANCY LANCASTER

Table Settings, Recipes, Flower Arrangements, and Decorating



JANE CHURCHILL and EMILY ASTOR

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