

ITALY BY INGREDIENT

ARTISANAL FOODS / MODERN RECIPES



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PHOTOGRAPHS BY MOLLY DECOUDREAUX

RIZZOLI
NEW YORK

There is an inverse proportion between how easy this unusual roast is for the cook and how much it impresses the eater. It came to life as an improvisation to make some unexpected guests feel welcome. It was such a hit that within two weeks it made it into the regular class rotation and became one of the dishes my students treasure and even pass on to their college-bound kids.

Fennel is the defining flavor of porchetta and is a very good fit for all things pork. But feel free to use different herbs. Rosemary, sage, thyme, savory, or bay would all work. You can up the garlic or eliminate it altogether. Want a kick? Add some red chili flakes. I have used duck fat when I was out of lard and have substituted pancetta for the prosciutto. In this case, reduce the amount of lard by half as pancetta is fattier than prosciutto. One last suggestion, assemble two of these, wrap the extra one tightly in plastic wrap and aluminum foil, and hold in the freezer for up to 3 months. Once thawed and roasted, it'll be as good as just made.

Filetto di maiale in crosta di pane condita

Pork tenderloin in seasoned bread crust

FOR 6 PEOPLE

- 1 pork tenderloin,
about 1½ pounds / 680 g
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 baguette
- 1 tablespoon fennel seeds
- 1 teaspoon black
peppercorns
- 1 handful wild fennel
fronds (or substitute dill or
farmed fennel fronds)
- 1 to 2 garlic cloves
- ¼ cup / 60 g lard
- 3 to 4 prosciutto slices

Heat the oven to 425° / 220°C / gas mark 7.

Sprinkle the tenderloin all over with 1 teaspoon of the salt and leave it on the counter to come to room temperature. Slit the baguette down one of the long sides, leaving the opposite side attached, and open it as if it were a book.

Heat a small frying pan over medium heat until hovering your hand over it feels uncomfortable. Toss in the fennel seeds and swirl the pan until you smell the seeds' fragrance. Pulverize the fennel seeds with the peppercorns in a spice grinder or with a mortar and pestle and pour the powder into a small bowl. Mince together the wild fennel and garlic and add to the bowl. Then add the remaining 1 teaspoon salt and stir to mix well.

Work three-fourths of the seasoning into the lard. Smear the inside of the baguette with the seasoned lard, then upholster it with the prosciutto slices.

Roll the tenderloin in the leftover seasoning and lay it in the slit bread over the prosciutto. Tighten the baguette around the meat and secure everything with butcher's twine as if tying a roast. If the baguette overshoots either tip of the meat by more than 2 inches / 5 cm, trim its ends to come closer to the tenderloin. Place the bread-covered tenderloin on a sheet pan.



Slide the pan into the oven and roast for 30 to 35 minutes, until a thermometer inserted halfway into the tenderloin registers 130°F / 55°C.

Let rest for 5 to 10 minutes, then remove the twine, cut it into slices 1½ inches / 4 cm thick, and serve.