

LE CREUSET SIGNATURE CAST IRON 29CM OVAL CASSEROLE

Pork Shoulder with Leeks, Chestnut Mushrooms and Cream Serves 4

I like to look for the 'spare rib' joint for this wonderfully rich and comforting braise. It comes from the top of the shoulder and is beautifully marbled, which means it's ideal for cooking slowly at a low heat. I like to get this dish cooking then head out into the garden or go for a blustery autumn walk before gathering round the table to eat.

Preparation time: 10 minutes

Cooking time: 2 hours 30 minutes

INGREDIENTS

A dash of oil

1 x approximate 350g piece of cured pork belly (streaky bacon or pancetta), cut into 2-3cm cubes

1.2-1.5kg fresh pork shoulder (spare rib joint), skinned, boned and rolled

2 leeks, halved and sliced

2 garlic cloves, peeled and thinly sliced

2 bay leaves

2-3 rosemary sprigs

2-3 thyme sprigs

2 tablespoons plain flour

450ml cider

450ml pork, chicken, or vegetable stock

A knob of butter

250g chestnut mushrooms, cut into thick slices

200ml double cream

A small bunch of parsley

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

METHOD

Preheat the oven to 150°C/ 130°C Fan/ Gas Mark 2

1. Start by heating the oil in the oval casserole over a medium heat. Add the cubes of cured pork belly pieces and cook the meat for 6-8 minutes, or until well-browned and golden on all sides. Cooking the meat gently allows all that lovely well-flavoured fat to render out of the meat without anything becoming too dark. Le Creuset Cast Iron Casseroles are perfect in this instance, because they transfer such a glorious even heat.
2. Lift the pieces of browned pork belly out of the casserole using a spatula or slotted spoon and set aside. Add the pork shoulder joint to the casserole.
3. Season the meat all over with salt and pepper then fry gently on all sides until the pork has taken on a deep golden colour and smells irresistible. Set the browned pork shoulder aside with the pork belly.

4. Now add the leeks to the same casserole, along with the sliced garlic, all the fresh herbs and a little seasoning. Sweat the leeks for about 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Then sprinkle in the flour and cook for a further 3–4 minutes, before pouring in the cider and stock and bringing to a simmer.
5. Return the browned pork and pork belly to the casserole and give everything a gentle stir to mix the ingredients together. Then place the tight-fitting lid on and place into the oven for 2 hours.
6. Meanwhile, set a large frying pan over a medium heat and add the butter. When it is bubbling, add the mushrooms and season them lightly. Sauté the mushrooms, turning them regularly for 6–8 minutes until cooked through. Set aside.
7. When the pork shoulder is ready add the fried mushrooms and double cream to the casserole and stir well. Return the casserole to the oven for 15 minutes without its lid.
8. Stir in the chopped parsley and check the seasoning before bringing to the table with a dressed green salad and some good bread.

Cook's Notes

- This lovely slow cooked dish is perfect for a weekend supper when you have a moment to slow down a little and spend some time in the kitchen pottering around with good ingredients.
- I like to serve this pork dish with mashed potatoes, but it would work equally well with rice, polenta, or a simple pasta.
- If you can't find a spare rib joint, try this same recipe with a rolled pork belly instead. It'll be even richer.