

Cleo Coyle's *Pernil* Puerto Rican Style Roasted Pork Shoulder

Warm up a chilly fall or winter kitchen with this slow-roasted dinner. It delivers a lot of flavor without a lot of money or work.

During the holiday season, *pernil*, a marinated and roasted pork shoulder, is often made in Latin American homes.

Like my fictional character Matteo Allegro, my husband is a wonderful cook and loves to make this dish throughout the fall and winter because: (a) it's a mouth-watering delight, (b) extremely economical, and (c) pretty easy to make. The aromatics of the rub always make me swoon and the finished product looks and tastes amazing. Like a stunning holiday turkey, a roasted pork shoulder will really wow your dinner guests. (They'll think you worked a lot harder than you did because there's no basting, just pop it in the oven and turn it a few times.)

Pork shoulder roasted this way is tasty sliced right off the bone. Over the years, we've served it with an array of sides: Spanish rice, chili-lime corn, roasted purple Peruvian potatoes, tangy Thai-inspired coleslaw, olive oil-drizzled avocado slices, caramelized organic carrots, and warm, cheesy biscuits. (Watch my Web site for some of these recipes in the near future!) The second day, we like to use our *pernil* leftovers for soft tacos. Place the pork slices in a warmed flour or corn tortilla, add fresh salsa (or crisp shredded lettuce), guacamole, a bit of hot sauce, and top it with a dollop of sour cream. *Pernil* is also used to make Cuban sandwiches—another great serving idea. And now without further ado (or *adobo!*), here's my husband's version of the Puerto Rican classic. *May you eat with joy!*

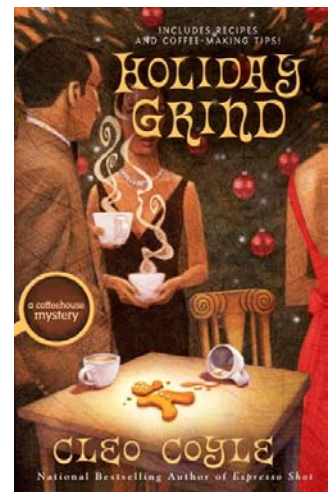


~Cleo Coyle
author of *The Coffeehouse
Mysteries*

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Recipe, text, and photographs (c) 2009 by Alice Alfonsi who writes *The Coffeehouse Mysteries* as Cleo Coyle with her husband, Marc Cerasini

Servings: This recipe is the perfect amount for 2 adult eaters, which (in our house) means second helpings and leftovers. For a family of four to six, use a 6-8 pound pork shoulder and double the ingredients for the rub.



Ingredients:

- 6 garlic cloves, peeled
- 2 tablespoons Kosher salt
- 3 tablespoons oregano
- 1 tablespoon Goya brand Adobo seasoning
- 1 teaspoon coarsely ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- 1 tablespoons red or white wine vinegar
- 1 lime, juiced (about 2 tablespoons)
- 1 bone-in pork shoulder with skin (about four pounds)

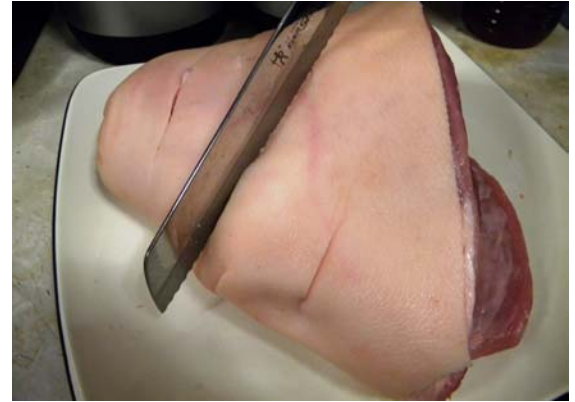


Step 1 – Create the rub: If you have a food processor, then take the first 9 ingredients on a quick spin to make a paste.

No food processor? If (like me) you don't have a food processor, then place the first 6 ingredients on a flat dish. Smash the peeled garlic cloves with the prongs of a fork, crushing the flavor into the dry ingredients. (A mortar and pestle is the traditional method, but I don't have that, either.) When the mix resembles a fine mash, drizzle in your olive oil, vinegar, and lime. Blend the whole thing into a paste.



(2) Score the pork shoulder: After rinsing and drying off the pork shoulder, make six to eight 2-inch long slices around the white skin with a sharp knife. You should slice far enough to penetrate the skin and fat and allow the knife to cut shallowly into the meat under the skin. (See my photo.)



(3) Apply the rub: Make life easy and before you begin applying the rub, place a long sheet of plastic wrap on a cutting board, serving dish, or cookie sheet. Place the pork shoulder in the center of the plastic wrap and then begin to massage the swoon-worthy fragrant rub (“adobo” in Spanish) all over the surface of the pork, making sure to work the paste into the cuts you made in the skin. Massage the meat well, really rubbing the spices into the flesh.



(4) Wrap and chill: Now draw up the sides of that plastic wrap, on which you set the pork in the previous step, and wrap the meat tightly. Place it in the refrigerator and allow it to marinate for at least 3 hours—overnight is better. (Pork shoulder is a dense meat, so the longer you marinate it, the better the flavors will penetrate.) If you’ve doubled the ingredients for a 6-8 pound pork shoulder, you must marinate at least 6 hours. Again, overnight is not necessary but it really does give you the best result.



(5) Prepare for cooking: The shoulder needs to come to room temperature, so allow the wrapped meat to sit outside the fridge for 30 minutes. Preheat your oven to 325 degrees F. Unwrap the meat and discard the plastic wrap. **DO NOT RINSE.** Place the shoulder on a rack over a shallow pan, skin side up. Roast uncovered for 3 to 3-1/2 hours in center of the oven. (This is about 45 to 50 minutes a pound, depending on your oven, so a 6 pound shoulder would need to slow roast for 4-1/2 to 5 hours, an 8 pounder 6 to 7 hours, and so on.)



(6) Turn the Meat: Every hour during the cooking, flip the meat over. In other words, you’ll start roasting the pork shoulder with the skin side up. After an hour, flip the shoulder so the skin side is down for the second hour. Then flip it a final time so the *pernil* finishes the last hour the way you had it originally, with the skin side on top again. You’re turning it this way so the skin will cook evenly on all sides and the juices will be distributed properly. At the end of the cooking time, the meat should be at an internal temperature of 165 degrees. If the thermometer is under that temperature, then place the meat back in the oven for another 20 to 30 minutes and check again. By the end of the roasting process, the skin will be beautifully browned & delicious. (Yes, we eat the skin!)

(7) Rest and slice: Very important! After you remove the *pernil* from the oven, do not slice the meat right away. Allow it to rest for at least 20 minutes. If you slice it right away, juices will run out and the meat will not be as moist.

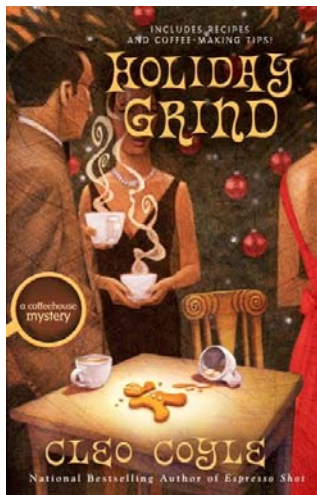
SERVING IDEAS: This pork shoulder has a lot of flavor so it's tasty sliced right off the bone. You can serve it, like any roasted meat, with an array of side dishes.

Over the years, we've enjoyed it with Spanish rice, chili-lime corn, roasted purple Peruvian potatoes, tangy Thai-inspired coleslaw, olive oil-drizzled avocado slices, caramelized organic carrots, and warm, cheesy biscuits. (Watch my Web site for some of these recipes in the near future!) The second day, we like to use our *pernil* leftovers for soft tacos. Place the pork slices in a warmed flour or corn tortilla, add fresh salsa (or crisp shredded lettuce), guacamole, a bit of hot sauce, and top it with a dollop of sour cream. *Pernil* is also used to make Cuban sandwiches—another great idea for this recipe.

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