

# Pork Roast with Mangoes and Lychees

Makes 4 to 6 servings

My friend Alec Lobrano is the man thousands turn to when they want advice on where to eat in Paris. The author of *Hungry for Paris* and a longtime contributor to *Gourmet* magazine, he's been the go-to guy on the Paris scene for more than twenty-five years. Yet while Alec can detect and describe the nuances of French cuisine from classic to nouvelle, when he's cooking at home, he's apt to serve his French friends something from his earlier life in America, often this sweet-and-sharp pork loin, a dish with roots in the Dominican Republic.

Alec tells a wonderful story of moving to New York's Upper West Side in 1977, where he shared an apartment with a friend who was as broke as he was, and discovering a neighborhood Dominican bar where the air-conditioning was reliable, the beer cheap, and the welcome *ô* once the crowd got used to the gringos *ô* warm, so warm that when Dominican Independence Day rolled around, Alec found himself invited to celebrate with the bar's owner. It was there that he had a version of this dish: pork and mangoes in a wine and vinegar sauce with soy and honey. It must have been love at first taste, because he has carried the memory and the recipe with him ever since, first to London and then to Paris, where it seems perfectly at home.

Alec told me that when he re-created this roast, he added the lychees, which, as he says, *ô*have the oddball fun of standing in for the fat that's missing from a pork loin. People always think that the lychees are fat and push them to one side, so I love revealing the *trompe l'œil* and insisting they try at least one.ö

1 2- to 2½-pound pork loin roast, at room temperature  
2 tablespoons olive oil  
Salt and freshly ground pepper  
1 large onion, finely chopped  
5 garlic cloves, split, germ removed, and thinly sliced  
3 tablespoons red wine vinegar  
½ cup dry white wine  
3 tablespoons soy sauce  
Juice of 1 lime  
3 tablespoons honey  
½ 1 teaspoon piment d'Espelette (see Sources) or chili powder  
1 bay leaf  
2 thyme sprigs  
1 ripe mango, peeled, pitted, and cut into thin strips  
10 lychees, peeled and pitted if fresh, drained if canned

Center a rack in the oven and preheat the oven to 300 degrees F.

Pat the roast dry with paper towels. Place a Dutch oven or other heavy oven-going casserole over medium-high heat and pour in 1 tablespoon of the oil. When it's hot, put

the pork fat side down in the pot and cook for a couple of minutes, until the fat is browned, then turn it over and brown the other side. Transfer the roast to a plate, season with salt and pepper, and discard the oil.

Return the pot to the stove, this time over low heat, and add the remaining tablespoon of oil. When it's warm, toss in the onion and garlic, season with salt and pepper, and cook, stirring, for about 3 minutes, or until the onion is translucent. Turn up the heat and pour in the vinegar — stand back, the scent of hot vinegar is very strong. When the vinegar has almost evaporated, a matter of a minute or two, pour in the wine. Let the wine bubble for 30 seconds or so, then add the soy, lime juice, and honey. Bring to a boil, stir in the piment d'Espelette or chili powder, add the bay leaf, thyme, mango, and lychees, and give the pot another minute at the boil. Add the roast fat side up, baste with the sauce, cover the casserole, and slide it into the oven.

Allow the roast to braise gently for 30 minutes, then check its temperature: you're looking for it to measure 140 degrees F at its center on an instant-read thermometer. The roast is likely to need a total of 40 to 50 minutes in the oven, but it's important to check early, since pork varies. Pull the pot from the oven, transfer the roast to a cutting board, cover it lightly with a foil tent, and let it rest for 5 to 10 minutes, during which time it will continue to cook (its temperature will probably rise another 5 degrees or so).

While the roast is resting, taste the sauce. If you'd like to concentrate the flavors even more, boil it for a couple of minutes. Don't forget to check for salt and pepper.

Slice the roast and serve with the sauce.

### *Serving*

Alec serves his pork with sticky rice, but I like it as much with Cardamom Rice Pilaf — the citrusy flavor of the cardamom is really nice with the fruit in the sauce — or Orange Rice Pilaf.

### *Storing*

Leftovers can be covered and refrigerated overnight, then reheated very gently the following day, but it's likely that the pork will be a tad overcooked. You can use the pork chilled in salads or let it come to room temperature and make open-faced sandwiches. Do that, and you should reheat the sauce and spoon it over the sandwiches. Speaking of the sauce, it's great over pasta.

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