

Fresh Ham Italian Style

By Mario Batali



Serves 6-10

Time 2+ hrs

INGREDIENTS

1 cup kosher salt
6 cup packed light brown sugar
1/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons fennel seeds
3/4 cup crushed black peppercorns
1 6- to-8 pound bone-in leg of pork (shank end) often called a "fresh ham"
1 cup fresh sage leaves (from about 2 large bunches)
12 garlic cloves
1/4 cup fennel pollen or ground toasted fennel seeds
3 tablespoon kosher salt
1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
1/2 cup packed light brown sugar
1 cup apple-cider vinegar
1/2 cup apricot jam
2 tablespoon Colman's dry mustard
2 tablespoon fennel seeds

PREPARATION

Step 1 Make the brine: Combine 6 cups water, the kosher salt, and the brown sugar in a large saucepan and heat over high heat, stirring, until the salt and sugar dissolve. Remove from the heat and pour into a pot or other container that is large enough to hold the pork and the brine. Add the fennel seeds and peppercorns, and set aside to cool while you prepare the roast.

Step 2 Make the ham: Using a very sharp serrated knife, score a series of parallel lines 1 inch apart in the skin of the ham, making them about 1/2 inch deep. Then score another series of parallel lines diagonally across the first cuts to make a diamond pattern. (Scoring the skin will make it crispy and delicious on the surface and succulent within.)

Step 3 Add 10 cups water to the brine mixture. Make sure the brine is completely cold before you add the ham. Submerge the ham in the brine, cover the container, and refrigerate for 24 hours.

Step 4 Preheat oven to 325F.

Step 5 Combine the sage, garlic, fennel pollen, kosher salt, pepper, and olive oil in a food processor and process until smooth, about 1 minute. Rub this mixture into the nooks and crannies in the surface of the ham.

Step 6 Place the ham on a rack in a roasting pan, and bake in the oven for 3 hours, or until the internal temperature reaches 150 Deg. F. (If it is not at 150 deg. F, continue cooking until it gets there.)

Step 7 Meanwhile, make the glaze: Combine the cider vinegar, apricot jam, dry mustard, and anise seeds in a medium saucepan and bring to a boil, stirring to dissolve the sugar. Reduce the heat and simmer until reduced to 1 1/2 cups and syrupy. Pour into a bowl and set aside.

Step 8 When the pork has reached 150 deg. F. brush on a thin layer of the glaze. Continue cooking, brushing with the glaze. Continue cooking, brushing with the glaze two more times, until the internal temperature reaches 165 deg. F. Transfer the pork to a carving board and allow it to rest.