



Hog Heaven

Russ Kremer's delicious pork starts on the farm, where he's perfected the art of raising pigs sustainably

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It's still the early hours of the morning as Russ Kremer wipes dew off his sleeping bag and switches his headlamp on, but his hogs are audibly awake and grazing. He's nearly through another stint spending 24 hours straight alongside his herd (including sleeping in the woods with them)—a self-assigned research experiment. The goal: to discern exactly what his Tamworth pigs like to do when he's not around. Most important, Kremer watches what they eat.



“

I promised to be an educator, a person to inspire and evangelize a different way of raising livestock. And so I've been doing that ever since.

Russ Kremer

“I want to know what a pig desires and what he don't,” says the fifth-generation hog farmer. Over the last 30 years, Kremer has built his successful pork business on exactly that—his passion for giving pigs a supremely happy, healthy, humane life. By all accounts, his pigs enjoy a veritable playground on Kremer's 146 acres outside of Frankenstein, Missouri. Here, the hogs have a world of options: to root for acorns in woodlands, swim in cool wallows, explore pastures or nap on deep-bedded straw in naturally ventilated buildings. And they can always eat. Kremer provides them a 24/7 buffet of nutritious food choices, from ancient grains to legumes.

“It sounds like paradise, doesn't it?” Kremer reflects. But it wasn't always like this. After graduating from the University of Missouri's ag school, Kremer returned to the family farm convinced large-scale and high-tech agriculture was best. He began farming the industrial way: crowding his pigs into confinement facilities and loading them up with “feed additives,” subtherapeutic antibiotics to promote rapid growth. Within a year, however, Kremer saw the health of his animals drastically decline. He also received a curious diagnosis from the vet: his pigs were coming down with infections that were resistant to most antibiotics.

The spring of 1989 changed everything. Kremer was cut while working with one of his hogs. The injury quickly became infected. Though he was treated with seven different antibiotics, nothing worked. “I was suspicious that maybe I had created some sort of superbug and that this disease was one that I contracted from my pigs,” he recalls. When the infection became septic, Kremer convinced doctors to treat him for the same infection his pigs had at the time. “Within 24 hours, I was cured. But more importantly, I knew I had in part caused the problem

by feeding my pigs antibiotics. And so I charted a new course.”

Kremer started from scratch. He bought new hogs, focusing on heirloom breeds. He built fresh facilities, giving them unlimited outdoor access. He tossed antibiotics. And he began to develop a stock of Tamworth pigs, an athletic, heirloom breed from England with a robust immunity to disease, outdoor hardiness and the ability—when fed acorns—to produce meat resembling the prized Ibérico, the black-foot breed of pigs from Spain that is most famously turned into ham. Eventually, Kremer started a cooperative of farmers raising pigs to high standards of humane treatment, today's Heritage Foods.

The result of all Kremer's tender love and care? An incredibly flavorful product—described as distinctly marbled, juicy and sweet—with die-hard customers. Iowa-based charcuterie company La Quercia is one such client, buying Kremer's Tamworth pork for its prosciutto and smoked pancetta. “Russ' farm is just a really great environment and that improves the quality of the pork,” says Herb Eckhouse, La Quercia's co-founder. “His Tamworth meat is exceptional—there's this caramel sweetness that emerges when it ages.” Meat guru Bruce Aidells agrees. “The colloquialism ‘You are what you eat’ really does apply here. The commodity pork that you can buy are fed a very industrially controlled diet; they're pretty tasteless. They just don't have the depth of flavor—the porkiness—that a beautifully raised pig like Russ Kremer's does. These are happy pigs and that really makes a difference.”

Back to that early-morning wakeup call: As the sun rises over Osage County, Kremer watches his hogs munch on fallen acorns. He leans back in his sleeping bag again and takes it all in. This really is paradise—for these hogs and their farmer.

Roasted Pork Shoulder with Tequila Citrus Sauce

ACTIVE: 45 min **TOTAL:** 4½ hrs (including 1 hr refrigeration time)

TO MAKE AHEAD: Refrigerate pork (Step 1) overnight.

Pork shoulder makes a wonderful roast because it has enough fat to keep it moist and tender during low and slow cooking. The citrus sauce has a smoky, agave sweetness from the tequila and produces a bright counterpoint to the unctuous meat. Serve any extra sauce for dipping.

SPICE RUB & PORK

- 2½ tablespoons chopped fresh sage
- 2 tablespoons minced garlic
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh thyme
- 1 tablespoon lemon zest
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt
- 2 teaspoons ground pepper
- 1 teaspoon cumin seeds
- 1 4-pound boneless pork shoulder roast

SAUCE

- 2 cups orange juice
- ½ cup lemon juice
- ½ cup lime juice
- ½ cup agave syrup or corn syrup
- ¼ cup tequila
- 1 tablespoon fish sauce
- 2 teaspoons minced garlic
- ½ teaspoon hot sauce
- ¼ cup fresh cilantro for garnish

1. **To prepare spice rub & pork:** Combine sage, 2 tablespoons garlic, oil, thyme, lemon zest, salt, pepper and cumin in a small bowl. Place pork, fat-side up, in a baking pan and rub the spice mixture all over the top and sides. Cover and refrigerate for at least 1 hour or overnight.
2. When ready to roast the pork, position a rack in bottom third of oven; preheat to 450°F.
3. Transfer the pork to a rack set in a roasting pan. Roast for 20 minutes.
4. Reduce oven temperature to 325°F. Continue roasting until an instant-read thermometer inserted in the thickest part registers 170°F for a

tender but sliceable texture or 180°F for a pull-apart texture, 2½ to 3½ hours.

5. Transfer the pork to a cutting board; loosely cover with foil. Let rest for at least 15 minutes.

6. **Meanwhile, to prepare sauce:** Pour orange, lemon and lime juices into the roasting pan. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat and cook until reduced to 2 cups, about 5 minutes. Stir in agave (or corn) syrup, tequila, fish sauce, garlic and hot sauce. Cook, stirring occasionally and scraping up any browned bits, until the sauce is the consistency of a light syrup but not thick enough to coat a spoon, 6 to 8 minutes. Strain the sauce through a fine-mesh sieve (discard the solids).

7. Thinly slice or shred the pork and drizzle the sauce over it. Garnish with cilantro.

SERVES 8-10 (with leftovers): 3 oz. pork & generous 1 Tbsp. sauce each
CAL 254 / FAT 15G (SAT 5G) / CHOL 69MG / CARBS 8G
TOTAL SUGARS 6G (ADDED 4G) / PROTEIN 18G
FIBER 0G / SODIUM 374MG / POTASSIUM 302MG.





Roasted Fennel & Italian Sausage Stuffing

ACTIVE: 45 min **TOTAL:** 1 hr 35 min
TO MAKE AHEAD: Refrigerate sausage (Step 4) for up to 2 days or freeze for up to 3 months. *This stuffing recipe is special because it comes complete with a sausage-making lesson from the Sausage King himself, Bruce Aidells.*

- 6 cups cubed crustless whole-wheat sourdough bread**
- 2 medium fennel bulbs, cored and sliced**
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided**
- 1½ teaspoons ground pepper, divided**
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt, divided**
- 1 pound pork shoulder butt, trimmed and cut into 1-inch cubes**
- 3 ounces sliced bacon or pancetta, cut into 1-inch squares**
- 2 teaspoons minced fresh sage, divided**
- 2 teaspoons minced fresh thyme, divided**
- 1½ teaspoons minced garlic**
- 1½ teaspoons whole fennel seed**
- ½ teaspoon ground fennel seed**
- 1 cup chopped onion**
- ½ cup chopped celery**
- 1½ cups low-sodium chicken broth**
- ½ cup chopped fresh parsley**

- 1.** Preheat oven to 350°F. Coat a 9-by-13-inch baking dish with cooking spray.
- 2.** Spread bread on a large rimmed baking sheet. Bake, stirring occasionally, until dry but not hard, about 15 minutes. Transfer to a large bowl.
- 3.** Increase oven temperature to 450°F. Toss fennel in a large bowl with 1 tablespoon oil, ¼ teaspoon pepper and ½ teaspoon salt. Spread on the baking sheet. Roast, stirring occasionally, until tender and golden, about 25 minutes. Transfer to a cutting board; let cool for 5 minutes. Coarsely chop and add to the bowl.
- 4.** Meanwhile, pulse pork and bacon (or pancetta) in a food processor until coarsely chopped. Transfer to a medium bowl and add 1 teaspoon each sage and thyme, garlic, fennel seed, ground fennel, 1 teaspoon pepper and ¼ teaspoon salt. Knead and squeeze the meat until well blended.
- 5.** Heat the remaining 1 tablespoon oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the sausage and cook, crumbling with a wooden spoon, until no longer pink, about 5 minutes. Add onion, celery and the remaining 1 teaspoon each sage and thyme. Reduce heat to medium, cover and cook, stirring frequently, until the vegetables are soft, about 10 minutes. Transfer the mixture to the bowl with the bread. Add broth to the pan and bring to a simmer, scraping up any browned bits, then add to the sausage mixture. Stir in parsley and the remaining ½ teaspoon pepper and ¼ teaspoon salt. Transfer the stuffing to the prepared baking dish. Cover with foil.
- 6.** Bake for 20 minutes. Uncover; bake until slightly crisp on top, 15 to 20 minutes more.

SERVES 12: ⅔ cup each
CAL 174 / FAT 7G (SAT 2G) / CHOL 24MG / CARBS 16G
TOTAL SUGARS 4G (ADDED 0G) / PROTEIN 10G
FIBER 3G / SODIUM 273MG / POTASSIUM 325MG.



Sources of well-raised pork: Buy Kremer's at select Whole Foods in the Midwest or online at whiteoakpastures.com and heritagefoods.com (coincidentally not the Heritage Foods he started). Niman Ranch, at supermarkets nationally, is another great option. Ever wonder what all those labels on pork really mean? See our guide by hovering your phone's camera over this smart code.

STYLING: CHELSEA ZIMMER (FOOD), CLAIRE SPOLAN (PROP)

Pork Tenderloin "Rosa di Parma"

ACTIVE: 25 min **TOTAL:** 55 min

EQUIPMENT: Kitchen string
It's not unusual to find a Parmigiano-Reggiano-stuffed roast like this served at special family celebrations in the Italian province of Parma, but it's often made with beef. This version doubles down on the pork by stuffing it with prosciutto along with the cheese. You can certainly use Italian prosciutto, but consider cured American hams like La Quercia's Tamworth Prosciutto made from Russ Kremer's pork.

- 2 teaspoons finely chopped fresh sage**
- 1½ teaspoons minced garlic**
- 1 teaspoon finely chopped rosemary**
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt**
- 1 teaspoon ground pepper**
- 2 pork tenderloins (1-1½ pounds each), trimmed**
- 4 thin slices prosciutto**
- 1 cup freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese**
- 3 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided**

- 1.** Combine sage, garlic, rosemary, salt and pepper in a small bowl. Set aside.
- 2.** Preheat oven to 450°F.
- 3.** Double butterfly the tenderloins, so they can be flattened, stuffed and rolled. To do that, you'll make two long horizontal cuts, one on each side, dividing the tenderloin in thirds without cutting all the way through. (See photos, page 105.) Lay one tenderloin on a cutting board. Holding the knife blade flat, so it's parallel to the board, make a lengthwise cut into the side of the tenderloin one-third of the way down from the top, stopping short of the opposite edge so that the flaps remain attached. Rotate the tenderloin 180 degrees. Still holding the knife parallel to the cutting board, make a lengthwise cut into the side opposite the original cut, starting two-thirds of the way down from the top of the tenderloin and taking care not to cut all the way through. Open up the two cuts so you have a large rectangle of meat. Use the heel of your hand to gently flatten the meat to about ½ inch thick. Repeat with the second tenderloin.
- 4.** Cover each butterflied tenderloin with

- 2** prosciutto slices, then spread ½ cup Parmigiano-Reggiano over the prosciutto, leaving a 1-inch border. Starting with a long side, roll up each tenderloin so the stuffing is in a spiral pattern, then tie the roasts at 2-inch intervals with kitchen string.
- 5.** Lightly brush the roasts all over with 1½ teaspoons oil, then rub with the reserved herb mixture. Heat the remaining 1½ teaspoons oil in a large, heavy, ovenproof skillet over medium-high heat. Add the roasts, bending to fit if necessary, and cook, turning often, until browned on all sides, 3 to 5 minutes total.
- 6.** Transfer the pan to the oven. Roast, checking often, until an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part registers 145°F, 15 to 20 minutes. Transfer the roasts to a cutting board, tent with foil and let rest for 5 minutes. To serve, remove the string and cut the pork into 1-inch-thick slices.

SERVES 10: about 3 oz. each
CAL 175 / FAT 7G (SAT 3G) / CHOL 72MG / CARBS 16G
TOTAL SUGARS 0G (ADDED 0G) / PROTEIN 26G
FIBER 0G / SODIUM 619MG / POTASSIUM 368MG.

