

# Slow cooked pork belly with garlic, lemon & chilli on soft polenta

Thomas Allen Wines  
MEMBERS' TABLE RECIPE

## Ingredients

1200g pork belly, preferably female\*  
and Berkshire\*\*  
Zest from a large lemon  
1½ tsp chilli flakes

2 cloves garlic, crushed  
1½ tsp fennel seeds, dry roasted  
Salt  
Extra virgin olive oil



## Method

Place belly onto a large chopping board and using a very sharp large knife, score the skin diagonally at 1cm intervals to make small diamonds. Take care not to cut into the meat.

Place fennel seeds and chilli flakes in a mortar and grind to a fine powder. Mix fennel and chilli with lemon zest and crushed garlic and a little oil to form a thick paste. Smear a little less than half of this onto the meat side of the belly and place this side down on a rack in a deep baking dish (just larger than the belly piece). Add 1½ tsp of salt to the fennel mix and smear over the skin side, rubbing well into the incisions. Set pork aside in the refrigerator overnight, uncovered.

The next day preheat the oven to 200°C. Gently dab away any moisture on the pork skin with some paper towel, then lift the rack and belly out of the dish and remove any moisture in the baking dish. Place the belly into the dish, minus the rack and roast for approximately 30 mins (skin should start to blister).

Reduce the oven temp to 140°C and carefully pour in enough water to come up to a level just below the skin. It's important not to get any moisture on the skin at this time. Continue to cook at this temperature for at least 1–1½ hours until the meat is very tender when tested with the tip of a small knife. Remove the belly from the oven, use 2 egg lifts to gently lift the belly from the liquid to a clean tray.

Place another clean tray on top of the belly and place on the lowest (and coolest) shelf in the refrigerator. Ensure there is some room above the top tray and place as much weight as possible on top of this second tray, then leave the belly overnight and undisturbed. This will press your belly into a uniform thickness and make portioning easy later.

The next day, place the belly skin side down on a large chopping board and trim the untidy edges with a large, heavy and very sharp knife. Then place the belly piece on scales and work out your portion size and cut accordingly. The scraps can be used for stir fries, or similar, or even frozen for later use.

To serve these portions, preheat the oven to 180°C and prepare a lightly greased oven tray. Warm a BBQ plate to medium hot, lightly salt the skin of the belly portion and add a drop or so of oil to the plate and place the belly portion skin side down onto the plate until the skin blisters again. Move these portions to your prepared tray (skin side down) and cook in the preheated oven for approx. 15 mins. The skin should be crunchy and the meat tender.

*Serve immediately on soft polenta, drizzle gently with a little red wine vinegar syrup and accompany with a crisp green salad.*

*This recipe will serve 6 generously for a main meal, or more as an entrée.*

*\* Female pigs taste better and are much more tender, largely due to the absence of testosterone.*

*\*\* Black Berkshire pork is a slow growing breed, giving a better flavoured and textured meat.*

*The meat is usually more expensive but definitely worth the expense.*