REVERSE-SEAR · MEDIUM

Kamado buzhenina: garlic-studded pork neck, reverse-seared and served in cold slices

Buzhenina (Russian cold pork roast, made on my Big Green Egg Large: garlic-studded pork neck, indirect at 120 °C to 65 °C, a direct sear to 71-75 °C and a night in the fridge before slicing thin.



PREP	COOK	SERVINGS	TEMPERATURE
30 min	180 min	8	120 °C

Ingredients

- **1.8 kg** whole pork neck (collar, sold in Spain as cuello or aguja), fat left on
- **14 ud** garlic cloves, peeled and whole
- **4 ud** bay leaves, cut into strips
- **27 g** coarse salt (1.5 % of the meat's weight)
- **2 cda** Dijon or Russian mustard
- **1 cda** sweet smoked paprika from La Vera (pimentón dulce de la Vera)
- **1 cdta** black peppercorns, coarsely crushed
- **1 cdta** ground coriander seed
- **1 cda** extra virgin olive oil
- **1 ud** loaf of black rye bread, Borodinsky style, to serve
- **4 cda** hot Russian mustard or grated horseradish (khren, Ø 5 cm), to serve
- **6 ud** pickled gherkins, to serve

Method

1 STUD THE NECK

Ask for a whole pork neck of 1.5 to 2 kg, fat on and untied. Pat the joint dry with kitchen paper and make 14 deep incisions with the tip of a knife, spread over both faces, and push a whole garlic clove and a strip of bay into each one. Press them in until they disappear inside the meat: on the surface the garlic burns; inside, it confits.

2 RUB AND REST IN THE FRIDGE

Mix the mustard, paprika, crushed pepper, ground coriander, salt and oil into a thick paste and rub it over the whole joint. Wrap it in cling film or put it in a sealed bag and leave it in the fridge for 12 to 24 hours. The salt, at 1.5 % of the weight, works as a dry brine: in a day it travels only a few millimetres, seasons the outside and dries the surface for the crust; the inside is perfumed by the garlic. Take it out an hour before you light the kamado.

3 LIGHT THE KAMADO TO 120 °C

I fill the firebox of my Big Green Egg Large to the rim with lump charcoal; a dense quebracho such as Jealous Devil's lasts the two and a half hours without topping up. Light a single spot in the centre, leave the dome open for ten minutes and set the ConvEGGtor legs up with the grate on top. Close, and adjust both vents until the dome settles at 120 °C with the smoke almost invisible.

4 INDIRECT COOK TO 65 °C

Push the probe into the centre of the thickest part, avoiding the garlic and the seams of fat, and set the joint on the grate fat side up. Dome closed at 120 °C, and keep it closed. A 1.8 kg neck takes about two and a half hours to reach 65 °C inside; the number rules, not the clock. A wireless probe such as the MEATER+ lets you follow it from indoors.

5 REMOVE THE DEFLECTOR AND BUILD THE FIRE

At 65 °C, move the meat to a board and take out the probe. Put on barbecue gloves, lift out the grate and then the ConvEGGtor, which is at dome temperature, and set it down on a heatproof surface. Put the grate back on its own straight onto the fire ring, close the dome and open both vents fully: the coals recover to 250-280 °C in five to ten minutes and the grate heats with them, so you open only once, to put the meat on.

6 SEAR DIRECT ON EVERY FACE

The dome is at 250-280 °C and with the vents open it can pass 300, so always burp it before opening: five centimetres, about five seconds, open. Lay the neck straight on the grate and sear each face for 90 seconds to 2 minutes, turning it with tongs, until the mustard-and-paprika crust is dark and crisp on all six sides. If the fat flares, close the dome fully for a few seconds and burp it again before opening; never leave it ajar. After the last face, move the joint to the board and probe it: at 71 °C in the centre it does not go back on; if it is short, give it another turn.

7 REST AND CHILL

Leave the joint on a board for twenty minutes, uncovered; the temperature keeps climbing and settles between 71 and 75 °C. If you want to eat it hot, slice it now, a centimetre thick. For true buzhenina, wait until it is lukewarm, wrap it well in foil or cling film and put it in the fridge for at least eight hours, ideally overnight.

8 SLICE THIN AND SERVE

Cold, the fat is firm and the meat holds the cut. With a long, narrow knife, a 24 cm sujihiki such as the Miyabi 5000FCD, take slices two to three millimetres thick in a single stroke from heel to tip, without sawing. Serve at room temperature on black bread with hot Russian mustard or horseradish, and the gherkins alongside.

Editor's tips

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Salt at 1.5 % of the weight is the ceiling: buzhenina is eaten cold and cold sharpens salt, so what tastes about right hot will be plenty in the next day's slice.

- If your neck is nearer 2 kg, allow three hours indirect instead of two and a half; measure in the centre and do not go by the clock, because thickness matters more than weight.
- Leave the mustard crust alone during the indirect stage: it dries and forms the base the sear browns on. If it looks dark too early, the dome is above 120 °C and it is time to close the top vent a little.
- Keep it whole and wrapped in the fridge for up to four days, and slice only what you are going to eat: a loose slice dries out far sooner than the joint.

Gear for this recipe

Big Green Egg Large

This is the kamado I cook this buzhenina in. The thick ceramic of the Big Green Egg Large holds 120 °C for two and a half hours with the vents nearly shut, and that steady heat is what lets the centre of the neck climb slowly and evenly to 65 °C. The 46 cm grate leaves room for a 2 kg joint with air around it, and the same cooker does the second job: with the deflector out and the vents open, the coals move to 250-280 °C in minutes for the sear. The full Big Green Egg guide is at /guias/big-green-egg-guia-completa.

mikamado.es/en/kamados/big-green-egg-large

Big Green Egg ConvEGGtor plate setter (Large)

The ConvEGGtor is Big Green Egg's deflector for the Large, and it is the part that turns the kamado into a convection oven: it sits legs up between the coals and the grate, cuts the direct radiation from the charcoal and spreads the heat around the dome. In this recipe it makes the first stage of the reverse sear possible, two and a half hours at 120 °C without the underside of the neck scorching. Its ceramic mass also smooths out temperature swings when you adjust the vents. It comes out hot for the sear, with gloves, because it is at dome temperature. It fits the Large only; each size of Egg has its own.

mikamado.es/en/accesorios/bge-conveggtor-large

Jealous Devil 100% White Quebracho lump charcoal 15.8 kg

A reverse sear asks two contradictory things of the charcoal: hold 120 °C for two and a half hours on very little air and then, straight after, climb to 250-280 °C for the sear without topping up. A dense hardwood lump such as Jealous Devil's Quebracho Blanco does both. Its density means a full firebox sees out the long indirect stage with margin to spare, and because it has not burned down, there is plenty of fire left for the direct stage once the vents open. It produces little ash, which matters in a long cook with the bottom vent nearly closed: built-up ash chokes the airflow and drops the temperature without warning.

mikamado.es/en/accesorios/jealous-devil-quebracho-lump-charcoal

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MEATER+ wireless WiFi thermometer

In a two-and-a-half-hour indirect cook, every opening of the dome costs heat and recovery time. The MEATER+ is a single wireless probe that goes into the centre of the neck and sends the internal temperature to your phone, so you follow the climb to 65 °C from indoors without lifting the lid. The manufacturer sets the probe's ambient limit at 275 °C, so it has to come out before the 250-280 °C searing stage and go back in, with the joint already on the board, only to check the final 71 °C. In this recipe, where doneness is decided by the probe and not the clock, that continuous reading is the number that counts.

mikamado.es/en/accesorios/meater-plus-wifi

Miyabi 5000FCD – 24 cm Japanese Sujihiki (Slicing Knife)

Buzhenina is served in slices two or three millimetres thick, and that is where a short kitchen knife fails: you end up sawing, the slice breaks along the garlic incisions and the fat crumbles. A sujihiki is a long, narrow Japanese blade designed to carve in a single stroke. The 24 cm of the Miyabi 5000FCD span the width of a whole neck from tip to heel, and the fine edge of its layered steel goes into cold meat without dragging. Slice the joint well chilled, with the fat firm, resting the blade on the board and drawing it towards you, without pressing down.

mikamado.es/en/accesorios/miyabi-5000fcd-sujihiki-24

Full recipe at: mikamado.es/en/recetas/buzhenina-cuello-cerdo-reverse-sear-kamado

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