INDIRECT · ADVANCED

Suckling pig (cochinillo) roasted in a kamado, by the quarter, with crackling skin

This is the Christmas roast done in a kamado, with the truth up front: a whole one will not fit. Two quarters, indirect at 150 °C with water under the meat, then a 250 °C finish so the skin blisters and crackles.



PREP	COOK	SERVINGS	TEMPERATURE
30 min	210 min	4	150 °C

Ingredients

- **2 ud** suckling pig quarters (cochinillo), one front and one rear (half an animal, about 2.4 kg in total)
- **40 g** lard (manteca de cerdo), at room temperature
- **3 ud** bay leaves
- **1 ud** spring onion (cebolleta), in thin rings
- **1 cda** white wine vinegar
- **25 g** coarse salt
- **600 ml** water for the pans (and a little more for topping up)
- **1 ud** cos lettuce (lechuga romana), for the salad
- **3 cda** extra virgin olive oil

Method

1 DRY THE SKIN THE DAY BEFORE

Pat both quarters dry with kitchen paper, the skin above all. Spread the coarse salt over the inner side and rub a thin layer onto the skin. Place them skin up on a rack set over a dish and leave them uncovered on the bottom shelf of the fridge, away from anything that will be eaten uncooked, for 12 to 24 hours: the cold air dries the skin, and dry skin is what blisters later instead of turning leathery. Take them out 45 minutes before roasting.

2 LIGHT THE CHARCOAL AND SET UP INDIRECT

Empty the ash and fill the firebox to the brim with the NaturBraza marabú charcoal: reloading with the meat inside means lifting out grate, quarters and deflector. Light in one or two spots and leave the lid open for 10 minutes. Fit the Bono's ceramic deflector and, on top, two or three Weber pans, as many as fit without overhanging the deflector, with a centimetre of water and the bay leaves. Set the grate, close up and stabilise at 150 °C at grate height: allow 30-40 minutes.

3 PRICK AND RUB

With the tip of the Victorinox carving fork, prick the skin about a dozen times per quarter, at an angle and without reaching the meat: you want an exit for the fat underneath, not for the juices. Blot away any moisture that has appeared. Rub the whole skin with the lard in a thin layer, without forgetting the edges and the trotters, which are the first parts to brown.

4 ROAST AT 150 °C

Set the quarters skin up, head to tail: the leg of one next to the shoulder of the other, clear of the ceramic. Push the probe into the thickest part of the leg, away from the bone, and hold 150 °C for 2 to 2.5 hours. After 45 minutes, burp the lid and top up the pans that still hold water with hot water, slowly and at the edge, from a spouted jug through a gap in the grate. If one is dry and holds fat, add no water: it spits.

5 CHECK DONENESS

The leg decides. The slow phase ends when it reads 85-88 °C in its thick part and the shoulder does not drop below 75 °C at any point: check by inserting the probe in two or three places, always away from the bone. The physical sign agrees: the leg bone turns with a tug and the meat gives way between the ribs. If the leg stalls at 80 °C, give it another 15-20 minutes; this roast forgives extra time better than haste.

6 FINISH THE SKIN AT 250 °C

Before raising the heat, top up to a centimetre, slowly and at the edge, the pans that still hold water. Open both vents fully and, past 235 °C, close the bottom vent halfway: the ceramic keeps climbing by inertia and settles at 250 °C. Count 20-30 minutes from 250 °C. After 15, burp the lid, with gloves on and your face turned away; check the skin and close again. If an edge darkens, cover it with foil.

7 REST AND CARVE

Close both vents, burp the lid and take the quarters out with gloves. Rest them for 10 minutes on a board, skin up and uncovered: foil traps steam and softens the skin. Hold each quarter with the fork and cut it into portions with the Fiskars poultry shears, skin side up: they go through the skin and the soft ribs of a milk-fed animal without crushing the crust. Serve with the lettuce and spring onion salad dressed at the last moment.

Editor's tips

- Ask the butcher for the half piglet already split into front quarter and rear quarter: the butcher's saw cuts the backbone cleanly, and the poultry shears are kept for the portions, which is where they earn their place.
- In a 46 cm kamado, make a single quarter. The time barely changes, because what sets the roast is the thickness of the leg and not the kilos on the grate.

- For Christmas Eve, count back about four and a half hours from when you sit down: 40 minutes of lighting, 2-2.5 hours of roasting, the climb to 250 °C, 20-30 minutes of finishing and 10 of resting. If you are ahead of schedule, the 150 °C phase tolerates a little longer.
- Never wet the skin during the roast or pour water over it, as is done with other roasts. The water goes only in the pans; the skin stays dry and rubbed with lard.

Gear for this recipe

Kamado Bono Grande XXL 59 cm

This recipe depends on space on the grate, which is why it asks for a large kamado. The Kamado Bono Grande XXL measures 59 cm across the body and, according to retailer listings, around 49-50 cm of usable grate: just enough for two suckling pig quarters laid head to tail, with no skin touching the ceramic at the edge. It comes with a ceramic deflector as standard, which is the basis of the indirect roast at 150 °C and the support for the water pans, so nothing else needs buying to set it up. Its ceramic mass takes longer to heat, 30-40 minutes to stabilise, but it then holds the temperature through the two and a half hours of roasting with very little adjustment of the vents.

mikamado.es/en/kamados/kamado-bono-grande-xxl-59

NaturBraza marabu charcoal, pack of two 5 kg bags (10 kg)

Between the slow roast and the finish, this suckling pig asks for more than three hours of burn and a final rise to 250 °C without reloading halfway. NaturBraza marabú charcoal is very dense wood: it burns slowly, with a short flame and little ash, the profile that sustains a long cook with the vents almost closed and still has reserve when you open them to go up to 250 °C without reloading. That is why the firebox is loaded to the brim from the start: reloading mid-roast would mean lifting out the grate with the quarters on it.

mikamado.es/en/accesorios/naturbraza-carbon-marabu-2x5kg

Weber 6415 — small aluminium drip pans, 22 × 15 cm, pack of 10

They are the Segovian oven moved into the kamado. The Weber drip pans measure 22 × 15 cm, so two or three fit on the Bono's deflector under the two quarters. With a centimetre of water they do two jobs: they keep the chamber moist during the roast at 150 °C, like the shallow water in the earthenware dish, and they catch the fat the skin releases. While they still hold water, the base stays at around 100 °C and that fat does not scorch or send acrid smoke to the meat, even in the 250 °C finish. As disposable aluminium, they are thrown away at the end and the deflector stays free of carbonised fat. They do not lift them: cold and full, they are something rigid.

mikamado.es/en/accesorios/weber-bandejas-grandes-aluminio-pequenas-10

Victorinox Swiss Classic 5.2103.15B: carving fork, 15 cm blade

It works twice in this recipe, always outside the kamado. Before roasting, the tip of the Victorinox Swiss Classic carving fork pricks the skin on the surface, which is the gesture of the Segovian recipe: about a dozen angled pricks per quarter, without reaching the meat, so the fat underneath has an exit and the skin blisters instead of puffing into pockets. At the end, with the roast rested on the board, it holds each quarter while the shears cut the portions, so the hand does not press the crisp skin. It has a 15 cm forged blade and a plastic handle, so it stays away from the embers: its place is the board.

mikamado.es/en/accesorios/victorinox-swiss-classic-tenedor-trinchar

Fiskars Functional Form 1003033: 25 cm poultry shears

The Fiskars poultry shears are designed for chicken and turkey, and here they work for the same reason: the bones of a milk-fed animal are thin and soft, about the calibre of a large bird's. Their 9.5 cm serrated blade goes through the toasted skin and the ribs of the suckling pig in one clean cut, with the piece skin up, without the downward pressure of a knife that crushes the crust that took so much effort to achieve. With two quarters, regular portions come out without changing tools. To split the backbone of half an animal raw, though, the butcher's saw is the better tool, and these short blades would need several passes.

mikamado.es/en/accesorios/fiskars-tijeras-aves-25cm

Full recipe at: mikamado.es/en/recetas/cochinillo-asado-piel-crujiente-kamado

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