

Remove the skillet from the heat, discard the herbs, and slowly whisk in the remaining 2 tablespoons butter. Adjust the seasonings with salt and pepper to taste (and additional sugar, if necessary).

3. Cut the tenderloins crosswise into thin slices. Serve slices of pork accompanied by figs, lightly drizzled with the balsamic sauce, and garnished with the minced thyme leaves. Pass additional sauce at the table, if desired.

PORK TINGA

WHILE THE NAME SOUNDS LIKE A Tuesday-night special at Trader Vic's, pork tinga is actually a stewlike pork dish from Mexico. Fiercely spiced with chorizo sausage, chipotle chiles, and garlic, it is heady stuff.

Authentic pork tinga comprises shredded stewed or braised pork shoulder simmered with chorizo in a tomato-based sauce. The texture is fairly dry, more like a saucy stir-fry than a stew. The braised pork, of course, would not be possible with our time constraints, but thinly sliced and sautéed pork could fill its role—not quite authentic but, by our reckoning, the sauce was the star of the show anyhow.

We experimented with several cuts of pork, and tenderloin proved the easiest to prepare as well as the most flavorful. To cook the meat as quickly as possible, we prepared the meat as we would for a stir-fry, thinly slicing it from the whole tenderloin into cutlets and then shredding it into thin strips. A brief spell in the freezer firmed the pork, making it easier to cut. The meat browned within a couple of minutes in a large smoking-hot skillet, which improved its overall flavor and deepened the final dish.

While the pork was easy to figure out, the sauce took some effort. The best versions of pork tinga we tasted were finely

balanced between hot and sweet, suffused with smoky heat from chorizo and chiles, and lightened with fresh oregano. Onions, tomatoes, and garlic rounded out the flavors and provided depth.

The first step, then, was to sauté the chorizo, which would provide the fat necessary to soften the onions and garlic. Chorizo is integral to both Mexican and Spanish cooking and is available in most markets. We found it sold in medium-size links as well as thicker links. We cut the skinnier links into small wedges; thicker sausages must have their casings removed and the meat diced. The sausage browned quickly and rendered plenty of fat in which to cook the onions and garlic. We sautéed the onions until soft and then added a large amount of garlic at the last minute so it retained its sharp bite. Canned diced tomatoes were agreeable, especially as they needed no prep work outside of a quick drain.

Chipotle chiles, the last addition to the sauce, were the star of the show—searingly hot and smoky-tasting. Chipotle chiles, also known as *smoked jalapeños*, are available dried as well as rehydrated and packed in an adobo sauce, which contains tomato, onion, oil, and herbs. Whereas dried chiles must be toasted and rehydrated, the canned chilies were ready to go, saving valuable preparation time. Chipotle chiles are hot; discretion is important. After trying multiple batches, tasters favored 1½ chiles—any more and it was hard to taste anything beneath the spiciness.

For the most balanced flavor, we simmered the sauce for about 10 minutes, just long enough to blend the flavors, break down the tomatoes, and reduce the liquid. We found it necessary to add more liquid for a smoother flavor and texture; canned chicken broth filled the bill. We reserved the pork until the final moments to prevent it from overcooking—always a risk when simmering thin pieces of meat.



Pork Tinga

SERVES 4 TO 6

TIME: 45 MINUTES

This recipe is best made with thin chorizo, about an inch thick. If you can find plump links only, remove the casings and crumble the meat before cooking the chorizo. If you can't find chorizo sausage, substitute kielbasa, though the flavor won't be quite as intense. Pork tinga can be served over rice, with tortillas, or even tucked into French bread or a roll as a sandwich. If you choose a sandwich, melt a soft cheese, like Monterey Jack or colby, over the meat. The meat (strained of excess sauce) may replace the bean mixture (or be included with it) in the tostada recipe on page 112.

- 1 pork tenderloin (1 to 1 1/4 pounds), cut into thin strips (see the illustrations on page 328)
- Salt and ground black pepper
- 4 teaspoons vegetable oil
- 8 ounces chorizo, quartered lengthwise and then cut crosswise into 1/4-inch-thick pieces
- 1 medium onion, chopped fine
- 4 medium cloves garlic, minced or pressed through a garlic press (about 4 teaspoons)
- 1 1/2 chipotle chiles in adobo sauce, minced
- 1 (14 1/2-ounce) can diced tomatoes, drained
- 1 3/4 cups canned low-sodium chicken broth
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar
- 1 1/2 teaspoons coarsely chopped fresh oregano leaves

1. Toss the pork with salt and pepper to taste in a medium bowl. Heat 2 teaspoons oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat until smoking. Add the pork in a single layer and cook without stirring until browned, 1 1/2 to 2 minutes. Using tongs, flip the pork strips; brown the second side, another 1 1/2 to 2 minutes. Transfer the pork to a clean bowl and

cover with aluminum foil to keep warm.

2. Add the remaining 2 teaspoons oil and the chorizo to the empty skillet. Cook, stirring infrequently, until lightly browned, about 2 minutes. Add the onion, 1/4 teaspoon salt, and 2 tablespoons water to loosen the browned bits. Cook, stirring often, until the onion softens, 2 to 3 minutes. Stir in the garlic and chipotles and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add the tomatoes, broth, and brown sugar and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to medium-low and simmer until the liquid is reduced by half, about 10 minutes. Stir in the pork and oregano and cook until heated through, 2 to 3 minutes. Serve immediately.

HONEY-GLAZED PORK LOIN WITH VEGETABLES

CRISP AND GLISTENING WITH RENDERED fat, it's hard to beat the visual appeal and flavor of a well-browned pork roast. It's the center of any festive spread, though preparation time is well beyond the limit of weeknight dinners. We wondered, however, if it were possible to cook a small roast—enough for four—at high heat so it would be ready in under an hour. After a long game of trial and error, we found that yes, it is possible—and, as a bonus, we roasted vegetables alongside the meat for a complete meal made in one pan.

Blade-end pork loin is among the most flavorful and tender cuts of pork, and it has the added benefit of a blanket of fat that helps protect the meat from drying out—something we found especially important with high-heat roasting. Blade-end roasts are available in a variety of sizes, but we chose to use the smallest we could find, which meant 1 1/2 pounds to just over 2 pounds.