



A couple of years ago I had the opportunity to be a butchers hand . That's the chap in the back who does all the stuff you, the customer, probably doesn't want to see. There's nothing sinister going on behind the chains, often just a lot of sausage making and a few bawdy jokes.... Anyway, it occurred to me that although we got through a vast amount of pork shoulder for sausages, we never put it out on the counter. I asked why and Geoff the head man at the time simply said ?Who'd want to cook it for hours?? Which seemed a little odd to me as a rescued Edwardian recipe we'd modified for slow roast pork shoulder with quince jelly was flying out of the door at a restaurant I assisted at, just round the corner.

The truth is, although it's far from a popular cut these days shoulder if cooked right is probably the most tasty and rewarding cut of pork ? oh and it's as cheap as chips! Your butcher might think you're a bit odd asking for it, but they'll certainly have plenty in if they make their own sausages.

So here's a slightly edited Jamie Oliver recipe for you:-

This is a proper old-school Sunday roast with crackling. Leaving the bone in adds a bit of extra flavour and having a layer of fat helps to keep the meat nice and moist as it roasts. This isn't the kind of joint you carve into neat slices. If you've cooked it right, it should pull apart into shreds with a couple of forks. If you're worried about scoring the crackling yourself, ask your butcher to do it for you, that's what he's there for.

Preheat your oven to 220°C/425°F/gas 7.

Place your pork on a clean work surface, skin-side up. Get yourself a small sharp knife and make scores about a centimetre apart through the skin into the fat, but not so deep that you cut into the meat. If the joint is tied, try not to cut through the string. Rub salt right into all the scores you've just made, pulling the skin apart a little if you need to. Brush any excess salt off the surface then turn it over. Season the underside of the meat with a few pinches of salt and pepper. Place your pork, skin-side up, in a roasting tray and pop in the preheated oven. Roast for 30 minutes, until the skin of the pork has started to puff up and you can see it turning into crackling. At this point, turn the heat down to 170°C/325°F/gas 3, cover the pork snugly with a double layer of tinfoil, pop back in the oven and roast for a further 4 and a half hours. Take out of the oven, take the foil off, and baste the meat with the fat in the bottom of the tray. Carefully lift the pork up and transfer to a chopping board. Spoon all but a couple of tablespoons of fat out (save it for roast potatoes!).

Add all the veg, garlic and bay leaves to the tray and stir them into the fat. Place the pork back on top of everything and return to the stove without the foil to roast for another hour. By this time the meat should be meltingly soft and tender. Carefully move the meat to a serving dish, cover again with tinfoil and leave to rest while you make your gravy. Spoon away any fat in the tray, then add the water or stock and place the tray on the hob. Bring to the boil and simmer for a few minutes, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon to scrape up all those lovely sticky tasty bits on the bottom of the tray. When you've got a nice, dark gravy, pour it through a sieve into a bowl or gravy boat, using your spoon to really push all the goodness of the veg through the sieve. Add a little more salt and pepper if it needs it. Serve the pork and crackling with your jug of gravy and some lovely roast potatoes (As a treat, you can try roasting them in the fat you spooned out of your roasting tray. Some stewed red cabbage and a dollop of apple sauce will finish this off perfectly.)

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