

## **Braised Pork Braciolo**

*You've Got Time:* In Southern Italy, cheap cuts of meat are transformed by a long, slow braise, getting an infusion of flavor and softened to tender in the process. Braciolo are part of "Sunday sauce" or "ragu" in some regions, and in others the stuffed meat rolls stand alone. You can ask your butcher to pound the meat for you, but then you'll miss the cathartic benefits of this dish. After the initial work of pounding, stuffing, rolling and browning, the rolls are happy to be left alone in a wonderful bath of wine, tomatoes and aromatics til they're good and tender.

### **Ingredients**

#### **the meat rolls**

1/2 cup fresh breadcrumbs (with crusts)  
1/3 cup finely grated pecorino romano (about 1½ ounces)  
1/3 cup finely chopped walnuts  
1/4 cup chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley  
Zest of one lemon  
1 clove garlic, grated on a fine microplane  
1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes  
1/2 teaspoon kosher salt and 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper  
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil  
1½ pounds boneless pork shoulder (butt) roast, trimmed and cut into 8 slices, about 3 ounces each  
8 thin slices pancetta, cut in half (about 2½ ounces total)

#### **the braise**

3 tablespoons olive oil  
All-purpose flour, for dredging (about 1/2 cup)  
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper  
1 small onion, finely chopped (about 1 cup)  
2 cloves garlic, thinly sliced  
1/4 cup white wine  
1 (28-ounce) can San Marzano whole, peeled plum tomatoes in puree, crushed by hand  
5 sprigs fresh thyme

**for serving, optional**

chopped parsley  
grated pecorino romano

**special equipment**

meat pounder  
kitchen twine or toothpicks  
a large, deep heavy-bottomed saute pan or skillet (large enough to hold the rolls in a single layer)  
kitchen scale to weigh the meat

**Directions*****for the meat rolls***

Mix the breadcrumbs, cheese, walnuts, parsley, zest, garlic, red pepper flakes, salt and pepper in a small bowl. Drizzle the oil over and mix together. Set aside.

Put a slice of pork between two pieces of plastic wrap. Pound the pork to an even 1/4-inch thickness between plastic wrap. Repeat with the rest of the pork, then cut each piece in half to yield 16 pieces.

Working on a flat surface, line each piece of pork with a slice of pancetta, then top with a heaping tablespoon filling. Tightly roll up meat, enclosing the filling, and tie with kitchen twine (or secure with toothpicks). Don't worry if some filling falls out.

***for the braise***

Heat 2 tablespoons of oil in a large deep skillet over medium-high heat until simmering. Spread the flour on a plate. Generously season meat rolls with salt and pepper, then lightly dredge in flour, shaking off excess. Sear the meat rolls in the oil, turning with tongs and adjusting heat if necessary to prevent burning, 8 to 10 minutes total. Remove to a plate as browned.

Lower the heat to medium and add the remaining tablespoon of oil, onion, garlic and a sprinkle of salt. Stir until onions have softened slightly, about 2 minutes. Pour in the wine and scrape up those browned bits. When the wine has nearly evaporated, add the tomatoes, thyme sprigs and a little more salt and pepper.

Raise the heat to bring to a simmer, and then snuggle the rolls into the sauce, pouring any juices from the plate into the sauce. Adjust the heat to maintain a gentle simmer. Cook uncovered, turning the meat in the sauce occasionally, 40 to 50 minutes, or until meat is tender and sauce is thick. Remove and discard thyme sprigs.

Transfer the rolls to a serving plate, remove the strings or toothpicks, and spoon sauce over. Sprinkle with chopped parsley or grated pecorino romano, if desired. They are wonderful over pasta or polenta.

### **Cook's Note**

Rolls can be made using veal or beef, adjusting cooking time as necessary.

To prepare the roast for bracirole, trim away any excess fat or connective tissue from the pork. Place the roast on a cutting board so that the grain of the meat runs from your left to right. Cut slices across the grain. If you cut at a slight angle, it will make your slices a little bit bigger. Then pound the slices as described above.

**total time:** 1 hour 40 minutes

**active prep:** 1 hour

**serves:** 6 to 8

**difficulty:** moderate