



Port Wine-Cherry Sauce

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS:

We cure our pork rib roast overnight with a salt and sugar rub, which seasons it well and gives it a mahogany appearance. We then cook it slowly, to help keep it as moist and juicy as possible. To dress it up for a holiday feast, we pair it with an elegant and concentrated port wine and dried cherry beurre rouge sauce.

Makes about 1 3/4 cups

INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups tawny port
- 1 cup dried cherries
- 1/2 cup balsamic vinegar
- 4 sprigs fresh thyme, plus 2 teaspoons minced
- 2 shallots, minced
- 1/4 cup heavy cream
- 16 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into 1/2-inch pieces and chilled
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Combine port and cherries in bowl and microwave until steaming, 1 to 2 minutes. Cover and let stand until plump, about 10 minutes. Strain port through fine-mesh strainer into medium saucepan, reserving cherries.
2. Add vinegar, thyme sprigs, and shallots to port and bring to boil over high heat. Reduce heat to medium-high and reduce mixture until it measures 3/4 cup, 14 to 16 minutes. Add cream and reduce again to 3/4 cup, about 5 minutes. Discard thyme sprigs. Off heat, whisk in butter, few pieces at a time, until fully incorporated. Stir in cherries, minced thyme, salt, and pepper. Cover pan and hold, off heat, until serving. Alternatively, let sauce cool completely and refrigerate for up to 2 days. Reheat in small saucepan over medium-low heat, stirring frequently, until warm.

TECHNIQUE

WHY ADD CREAM TO A BUTTER SAUCE?

To dress up our pork, we turned to a classic French preparation: beurre rouge. The beauty of this sauce, which translates as "red butter," is that at its most basic it requires just two components: butter and an acidic liquid. (Red wine and red vinegar for beurre rouge and white for beurre blanc are traditional.) The preparation is equally simple: Just whisk cold butter into the reduced acidic liquid.

The problem is that butter sauces, like any mixture of fat and water, don't always stay emulsified. That's because the

butter is highly temperature sensitive: If the sauce gets too hot (above 135 degrees), the butter—itsself an emulsion of fat and water—will “break” and the butterfat will leak out. If it gets too cold (below 85 degrees), the butterfat solidifies and forms crystals that clump together and separate when the sauce is reheated.

The key to foolproofing a butter sauce is thus stabilizing the butterfat so that it doesn’t separate. We do this by whisking in the butter a little bit at a time, which keeps the temperature of the sauce relatively stable. Even more important, we also add cream. Cream contains a relatively high proportion of casein proteins that surround and stabilize the butterfat droplets so that they don’t separate from the emulsion. Cream is such an effective stabilizer that our sauce can be made ahead, chilled, and gently reheated before serving.