

Warm Salad of Pork, Figs & Blue Cheese



There are many marriages in the food world that border on perfection and this marriage of Figs & Blue Cheese is absolutely no exception. I had a bunch of figs in the fridge and it took me days to decide what I wanted to do with them until friends arrived with a truckload of cheeses and we didn't quite get to the second blue. Lightbulb moment! Figs & blue cheese, pork & figs, blue cheese & cauliflower, sage & pork, this could actually work. So, with those ingredients at hand, plus a few others that were already lurking in the

fridge, garden & pantry I set about making a meal that I had no idea what the end result would be. It was a total gamble but with ingredients such as these the odds were pretty good. It was.....pretty darn good.

There are a few elements to this dish and because I was in total creative mode, I didn't really time the prep etc. I have a fairly good idea of how long it took and certain elements can be done ahead so maybe don't try and pump this one out on a busy weeknight. Plan ahead, pop the tunes on, grab a glass of wine and enjoy the process. It is definitely a process that needs to be enjoyed. In saying that, nothing about the dish is technical or difficult.

Prep time: Approx 30-40 Minutes + at least 30 mins marinating time

Cooking time: 20 Minutes

\$\$ Medium Budget

Serves 4

800gm of pork fillet

1/2 a cup of red wine

2 tbs of Fig Chutney (I used Beerenberg Fig & Caramelised Onion Chutney that was available at the supermarket)

1 tbs of seeded mustard

8 ripe figs, halved

100gm of good blue vein cheese

1 red onion, peeled with roots left intact, halved and sliced into wedges

A few handfuls of baby rocket

6 radicchio leaves, roughly torn

500gm of cauliflower, cut into small chunks

1/2 cup of chicken stock

A pinch of nutmeg

A dozen sage leaves

1/3 cup of hazelnuts, toasted and roughly chopped

Extra virgin olive oil for frying & drizzling

Sea salt and pepper

To prepare the pork, place the red wine, chutney and mustard in a small bowl and whisk to combine. Place the pork in a shallow dish (if the fillets are really long, cut them in half) and pour over the marinade. Set aside for at least 30 minutes but longer if suitable.

Place the cauliflower in a saucepan with the chicken stock, season with salt, pepper and nutmeg and bring to the boil with the lid on. Reduce the heat and allow to steam until the cauliflower is super soft. Remove the lid and reduce the liquid by about half. Before serving, puree with a stick blender until nice and smooth. I made this ahead and just reheated before serving. This is also a light version so add a knob of butter and a dash of cream if you like it richer.

Preheat the oven to 180°C. Line a baking tray with baking paper and spread the onion wedges around. Dot the halved figs, flesh side up around the tray and break up the blue cheese, filling the figs with as much as you can. Drizzle over a little olive oil and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Bake in the oven for about 20 minutes or until the cheese is melted and golden. Maybe leave this step until 20 minutes before serving so that it is still melted and oozy.

Heat a small frypan and add enough oil to cover the base of the pan. Fry the sage leaves for a minute or so until nice and crispy. Remove from the oil and drain on paper towel. Don't throw the oil out as you will use it to dress the salad leaves.

Combine the rocket & radicchio leaves in a bowl and just before serving use the sage oil to dress the salad with a sprinkle of salt & pepper.

Heat a griddle pan or fry pan to a nice high heat and add a little oil. Drain the marinade from the pork into a small saucepan. Bring the saucepan to a simmer and allow the marinade to cook for about 5-7 minutes until reduced and a little sticky. Cook the pork in the pan on all sides until lovely and brown for about 10 minutes, then transfer the pan to the oven for a further 5-10 depending on how thick the fillets are and how well done you like your pork. I like mine on the pinkish side, more medium well as it maintains its moisture and is nice and juicy. Allow to rest for 5 minutes before slicing into 2cm slices, on the diagonal for aesthetics.

To plate the dish, divide the cauliflower between four plates and use the back of the spoon to swirl it around. Place a pile of salad leaves to the side of the cauliflower and then place the pork slices on top of the cauliflower. Scatter the red onion & figs & blue cheese around the dish. Sprinkle over the toasted hazelnuts and sage leaves and drizzle the reduced marinade over the salad and pork. For plating inspiration, refer to the photo above.

Crack open a bottle of light red , some romantic tunes, light the candles and you have yourself the perfect Valentines Day meal right there!

Leftover Sage? You might like to cook this.....

[Pulled Pork, Pancetta & Sage Lasagne](#)

