

## Milk-Braised Pork Tenderloin with Spinach and Strawberry Salad

ACTIVE: 40 MIN; TOTAL: 1 HR 20 MIN

4 SERVINGS

Braising a seared pork tenderloin in milk gives it a lovely silkiness, and the milk a delicious, savory caramel flavor. The milk will gently curdle as the meat cooks, forming small lumps; pureeing it with an immersion mixer will smooth it out again. The strawberries in the salad can be simply halved, but julienning them whimsically disguises their shape (they begin to resemble sliced red peppers)—making their sweetness a pleasant surprise.

Four 6-ounce pieces of trimmed pork tenderloin

Salt and freshly ground white pepper

1½ tablespoons tarragon mustard or Dijon mustard

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

2 cups whole milk

4 garlic cloves, halved

1 sage sprig

2 large sage leaves, minced, plus 12 small sage leaves, for garnish

1 tablespoon tawny port or oloroso sherry

2 cups baby spinach leaves

4 large strawberries, cut into matchsticks

1. Season the pork with salt and white pepper, then slather it with the mustard. In a medium nonstick skillet, heat 2 tablespoons of the olive oil. Add the pork and cook over moderately high heat, turning twice, until browned, about 9 minutes. Transfer the pork to a plate.

2. Pour off the oil in the skillet. Add the milk, garlic and sage sprig. Simmer over moderately low heat until the garlic is almost tender, about 20 minutes.

3. Add the pork to the skillet along with any accumulated juices and simmer, turning the pieces every 5 minutes, until an instant-read thermometer inserted at the thickest point registers 140°, about 20 minutes. Transfer the pork to a plate. Cover with foil and keep warm. Discard the sage sprig.

4. In a blender, puree the milk with the garlic until smooth. Return the sauce to the skillet, stir in the minced sage and season with salt and white pepper.

5. In a medium bowl, combine the remaining 1 tablespoon of oil with the port and season with salt and white pepper. Slice the pork 1 inch thick and arrange on plates. Spoon the garlic-sage milk sauce on top. Garnish with the small sage leaves. Toss the spinach and strawberries in the dressing and serve the salad alongside the pork.

**WINE** This dish, inspired by the Rioja region (an hour or two's drive south of the Arzaks' restaurant), finds an ideal accompaniment in a medium-bodied Rioja red. The 2005 vintage has been hailed as a great one, and wines from that year are just beginning to arrive in the United States. Look for the curranty 2005 Sierra Cantabria Tinto or the lush 2005 Orobio Tinto. ●