



## The Whole Pig ...And Nothing But the Pig

By Michael Persson / Photography by Dave Hansen

**S**UMMER GET-TOGETHERS WERE MADE FOR THIS. A few friends, drinks and the easy chat that the warm season inspires. Similarly breezy should be the summer kitchen. After all, 'tis not the season of braising, sautéing, boiling and mashing. Instead, summer fêtes are the sensual combination of lemony marinade, the taste of sweet berries and mint, and that smokiness emanating from the barbecue. And to this end, the art of grilling, or smoking, or roasting are the essential skills required in the summer kitchen with the rule being, the bigger the piece of meat the bigger the gathering.

This summer, Max's Market on Thames Street has taken this charbroiled credo and served it up in the most dramatic way. Emily Wigutow, Max's owner and culinary creative, has introduced to her seasonal repertoire the classic pig roast. That's right, one whole pig in one SUV-sized cooker – simple.

The pig roast is essentially a New World phenomenon. In Cuba, it goes by the name *lechón asado*, in Hawaii the Kalua pig is cooked in an *umu* (a pit dug in the ground) and in the Deep South, this porcine party production is just plain old pig pickin'.

Wigutow calls hers "a pig in a blanket," because it's wrapped in foil throughout its eight-hour cooking. The aluminum blanket has the added bonus of catching the roast's cascading liquids, acting as a natural baster, preventing the meat from drying out. The pig is skewered onto a spit and its bed filled with charcoal (using fruit wood adds a sweetness and using mesquite is altogether southwestern). Once it heats up, the cooker should put out a cozy 200 to 250 degrees Fahrenheit. Essentially, the method is rotisserie, but in other parts, the pig is wrapped in banana leaves, butterflied and cooked between two steel wire racks. The New World pig roast is as individual as its peoples.

Then there's the pig, a 75-pound animal Wigutow buys from a farm in Scituate, Massachusetts. At that weight it's no suckling pig, but neither is it fully grown. At this size, the pig should yield about 1 1/2 to 2 pounds of meat per person, which means your guest list can easily reach 35. And depending on how you like your pig (sweet, hot, sour or garlicky) will determine how much work you'll want to put in – remember, it's summer, so there's chilled





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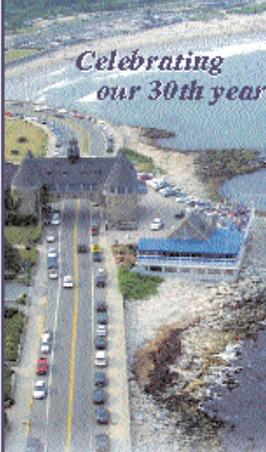
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rosé or perhaps a mojito to sip. One way Wigutow enjoys is to fill the pig with whole oranges. Other than that, she rubs salt all over the flesh the night before and that's it. "To me that's enough flavor. I don't go in for the basting injections or any of that kind of thing," she says. Let's just say the Newport style is *au naturel*.

While the barbeque in a box is cooking low and slow, preparing the all-important side dishes can commence. During a Max's pig roast, Wigutow prepares a colorful array putting out that tri-color standard of tomato, mozzarella and basil with a vinaigrette, roasted corn and tomato salad and a roasted two-potato salad of sweet potatoes and red bliss tossed in a spicy creamy dressing with toasted shallots. There are other sides. Take for example grilled

spring onions, whole grilled ears of corn with grated parmesan cheese, lime juice and chili powder and the slew of slaws such as Asian cabbage slaw (a spicy alternative to the traditional coleslaw). There is, of course, the perfect summer accompaniment to melt-in-the-mouth pork: nothing at all. "A piece of pork, a piece of skin stuck in a roll," says Wigutow.

And on these summer days, having spent time in the garden socializing, playing with the kids or mixing another pitcher of sangria, the unveiling of the porky prize makes for quite the spectacle as the crispy pig emerges and the odd arm reaches in to sample a succulent piece of heaven. At many pig roasts, the fellows who started cooking the pig, sometime in the early morning, are usually sound asleep at eating

time – a definite case of too much marinade. Though, not to worry. Roll them into the undergrowth. There will be plenty left, once they come to.

One final temperature check. It's time to chow down.

Carving up the roast might be best done away from the crowd depending on how squeamish they are. Or, if the mob is baying for flesh, then get to it with cleavers a-flying. "You can't be girly about this," notes Wigutow, wielding her kitchen blades like a Shaolin monk. Having had the aroma of pig suffusing the air all day, people can be excused to show their carnivorous selves, crowding the juicy meat like jacksals, snatching the odd stray morsel as it comes their way. The hunks of meat are heaped

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**Sambar.** A hip corner bistro inspired by the flavors of Brazil. Sample traditional seafood, steak and vegetarian plates, or experiment with the gorgonzola ravioli and lobster mashed potatoes, with homemade sangria. 515 Thames St., Newport, 619-2505, thesambar.com

**Stone House,** Chef Paul Jonathon Wade creates a true farm to table offering featuring local farmers, foragers and fishermen. Enjoy Pietro, Little Compton and Tuscan inspired, and 1854, the Prohibition era speakeasy tavern. 122 Sakonnet Point Rd., Little Compton, 635-2222, stonehouse1854.com

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## The Whole Pig

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ready to be sandwiched. And the ribs are chopped into handy finger food. Yes, you can have a dipping bowl of barbecue sauce to go with the ribs, but true to Wigutow's declaration, plain pig is perfect on its own.

So this summer, you can attend a Max's Market pig roast, or gather with friends for your very own. Enjoy. Woo-pig, soooooee!

Max's Market, 469 Thames Street, Newport  
849-8088, maxsmarket.com



RECIPÉ

### ELOTE SALAD

#### INGREDIENTS

- 4 ears of corn or 1 bag of frozen corn kernels
- 1 spanish onion (brown onion)
- 1 pt grape tomatoes, halved
- 1 each green and red pepper, diced
- 1 cup cilantro, chopped
- ¼ cup + 2 tbsp. queso fresco or queso anejo + feta cheese, crumbled
- ½ cup sour cream
- 1 chipotle in adobo, minced
- ½ tsp cumin
- 1 lime, zest and juice
- Salt and pepper

#### PREPARATION

If using fresh corn, peel and place on preheated grill or grill pan, cook until grill marks are visible. If using frozen corn, empty bag of corn onto a preheated grill pan (stovetop) or bake in a 350 degree oven for approximately 20 minutes. Slice the onion into thick rounds and grill, or roast with frozen corn kernels.

Allow the corn and onion to cool to room temperature (this can be done ahead of time).

Chop the onion slices into a large dice. Combine corn, onions, peppers, tomatoes, cilantro and ½ cup cheese.

In separate bowl, combine sour cream, chipotle, cumin, lime and salt and pepper to taste; if needed, thin with a little water. Toss dressing with corn mixture and sprinkle with remaining cheese.

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