

Ham'n it Up for Easter

If you have any doubt about the popularity of a baked ham at Easter time just swing by any of the spiral-cut ham outlets peppering the suburbs the ten days before Easter and see what's happening. Some of them offer nicely prepared hams but they will cost you, most run between \$8.50 and \$11 per pound. I think part of the fun is in taking the time to bake your own. We've got some suggestions that might help you get great results!

When selecting the ham you will prepare remember that your choices begin with how your ham has been prepared. You'll note that when buying a ham it will come partially cooked or fully cooked. Prebaked weight should equal out to about 12 ounces per person on a partially cooked ham and about 9 ounces per person on a precooked one. A precooked ham may also be labeled "ready to eat" but you'll want to reheat the ham to an internal temperature of 140°F and consider glazing it if you want to make the meal "all that it can be."

Before preheating your oven to 325°F lower your oven rack to its lowest position and prepare a roasting pan by tightly rolling aluminum foil into a pencil thin snake and placing it in a zig zag pattern on the bottom of the roaster. This should elevate the ham just barely above the roaster and allow air circulation during roasting. Insert your temperature probe into the thickest part of the ham and place ham on the roaster.

Place ham in roaster onto the oven rack and slowly pour 3 cups of apple cider over the ham before closing the oven door. The cider will help your ham form a crust, sealing in moisture during roasting and slowly cook away under the ham infusing it with a hint of the apple flavor. A fully cooked ham will require about 10 to 12 minutes per pound to reach an internal temperature of 140°F and remember that it will continue to increase in temperature by 5°F when out of the oven.

If you are preparing a partially baked ham stay with the same plan but you'll need to figure roasting time of about 15 to 20 minutes per pound and a final internal temperature of 160°F.

Should you wish to glaze your ham it should be removed from the oven about 45 minutes before it is done and scored with the tip of a knife in a criss-crossed diamond pattern. If you wish you can press whole cloves into the middle of each scored "x" and brush on your favorite glaze. We mix together:

½ cup brown sugar
¼ cup honey
¼ cup orange juice
1 ½ teaspoon dried Coleman's mustard

Return your ham to the oven and finish roasting. Remember, when your ham is done you should remove it to a platter, cover it loosely with foil and allow it to rest for 10 to 15 minutes before carving.

One of the neatest potato side dishes I've ever had was in Germany and if you feel just a bit adventurous this Easter, your family and guests will surely love these traditional potato dumplings called:

Kartoffelklöse (Much easier to make than to pronounce!)
(enough for 6 to 8 servings)

Boil in a large heavy bottom pot until tender:

6 medium baking potatoes, unpeeled

Allow potatoes to cool, peel them and put them through your ricer. Combine them with:

2 large eggs

½ cup all purpose flour

1 ½ teaspoons salt

Beat all of your ingredients by hand with a fork or whip until fluffy. Shape the batter into 1 inch patties ¼ inch thick being sure not to over handle. Place the dumplings into 6 quarts of gently boiling water, which has had 2 tablespoons of salt added. They should be ready to be removed after 10 minutes with a slotted spoon. Drain them.

In a skillet melt 8 tablespoons of butter or bacon drippings according to your taste. Place the dumplings into the skillet in batches and lightly sauté them until just browned. Remove them to a casserole as they are done. Top them with 1 cup of shredded cheddar cheese and place under broiler just long enough to melt the cheese. Serve immediately.

There are a host of wonderful side dishes to choose from for Easter to complete your menu. This is a great time of year for asparagus and “children of all ages” love baby carrots sautéed in brown sugar and butter. Don't forget good bread or yeast rolls to round out your main course presentation.

As you know, we never consider a menu complete without some great wines hand-selected to compliment the foods and Easter ham presents a terrific opportunity to enjoy crisp, refreshing Rieslings from Germany. I've tried many wines next to baked ham and these beautifully made white wines are tough to beat in such a paring.

One of the finest Riesling Spaetlese I've ever had the opportunity to taste is the 2000 Van Volxem Riesling Scharzhofberger. This remarkable wine is part of the stable of superb German wines brought into this country by Terry Theise. His stamp of approval has tremendous impact on even the most discriminating German wine drinkers.

This luscious late harvest wine was crafted by one of the hottest winemakers in the Saar region of Germany, Roman Niewodniczanski. His results in this wine offer powerful green apple character entwined in clean, crisp fruit acidity just at the “steely” level. One

glass is just a tease! Easter deserves a special wine experience and this one is easily up to the task.

If your tastes are running to great red wines for the holiday go no further than the extraordinary experience of opening the 2000 Tassajara Rousse Rouge Syrah from the California appellation of Paso Robles. The Syrah grape has been the heart of the remarkable red wines from the Rhone region in France and all indications are that this hilly area east of Cambria and south of San Francisco is perfect for Syrah cultivation.

Winemaker, Craig Reed, has blended 82% Syrah, 8% Cabernet Sauvignon, 8% Zinfandel and 2 % Viognier into this blockbuster red wine. The structure is big and bold with taste notes of over-ripe black currants, cassis, wild strawberries and hints of French Oak. Only 220 cases were made of this delightful red. We can only hope that his next vintage will compare to this wonderful wine!

If you need assistance finding these delicious selections or have questions please call us at (888) 288-0668. Cheers!