

CRISPY PORK WITH MANGO SALSA

SERVES 6 TO 8 AS A SNACK OR APPETIZER

“The government exports so many of the ingredients that matter to Cubans, leaving very little in the hands of the people here in this country,” said an elderly gentleman who ran an antique shop in Havana, as his albino Tibetan terrier ran in circles around his legs. He didn’t want us to use his name, but he told us that as long as we kept it confidential, he wasn’t afraid to tell us that he thinks “the government is worthless.” The antiques in his shop—relics of the past, everything from tattered Cuban flags to antique watches and weathered baseball gloves—were piled to the ceiling in topsy-turvy towers. He ran his fingers through the black ringlets of his granddaughter, Rosario. She was sitting on a rocking chair in front of the establishment’s only fan, the fairy princess of vintage-ville. “One of the only things they let us keep is pork, and what a relief that is. I can’t imagine where we would be without pork.”

We think many Cubans would agree. Pork is a celebrated ingredient in the Cuban kitchen, and this recipe glorifies and intensifies pork’s flavor. These crispy, lusty porcine hunks are made all the more addictive when dipped into Mango Salsa enlivened with a hearty squeeze of lime. Keep in mind that this recipe calls for 2 pounds of trimmed pork shoulder, which means that, depending on the amount of fat and gristly bits on the shoulder, there could be a significant loss of volume once trimmed.

6 cloves garlic, smashed
1 teaspoon dried oregano
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1½ teaspoons salt
⅓ cup freshly squeezed lime juice
2 pounds pork shoulder, trimmed and cut into 1½-inch chunks
Vegetable oil for deep-frying
Mango Salsa

Stir together the garlic, oregano, cumin, salt, and lime juice in a large mixing bowl. Add the pork and mix with your hands, making sure all the meat is coated in the marinade. Cover the pork and allow to marinate in the refrigerator for at least 2 hours.

Heat at least 4 inches of oil in a large, heavy pot over medium- high heat until it reaches 375°F. Remove the pork from the marinade and pat it dry using paper towels. Working in small batches, fry the pork until deep brown, crispy, and cooked through, 4 to 5 minutes. Be sure to allow the oil to come back up to temperature between batches. Transfer the fried pork to paper towels to drain. Sprinkle with a little salt while hot. Serve with Mango Salsa.

MANGO SALSA

2 cups diced fresh mango
¼ cup diced red onion
½ cup diced cucumber

½ cup diced green bell pepper
½ habanero, stemmed,
seeded, and minced
1 tablespoon honey
2 tablespoons freshly
squeezed lime juice
½ cup chopped fresh cilantro
½ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon freshly ground pepper

Mix all ingredients and let rest at room temperature for at least 30 minutes to let the flavors combine.

