

Luau Pork Shoulders in La Caja China

Perry P. Perkins

A luau is a Hawaiian feast that often features food such as poi, kalua pig, poke, and lomi salmon; as well as entertainment, such as Hawaiian music and hula.

Among people from Hawaii, the concepts of "luau" and "party" are often blended, resulting in graduation luaus, wedding luaus, and birthday luaus. It's customary for Hawai'i families, regardless of ethnicity, to hold a lū'au to celebrate a child's first birthday.



In Polynesian cultures (*and also in Korean culture*), the first birthday is considered a major milestone.

When I learned this on my first trip to the Islands, shortly before my daughter was born, I fell in love with the idea, and decided that Gracie's first birthday (and as many as possible, following) would be a traditional luau.

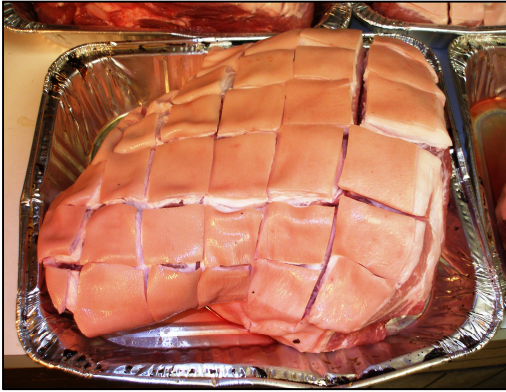
Of course, owning La Caja China Model #2 made this a pretty easy decision!

So, for my little girl's first birthday Luau, I roasted four pork shoulders (around six pounds each) in La Caja China, and the results were amazing!

The party menu was luau pork, sticky rice, fresh baked Hawaiian rolls, and fruit salad. We even had an auntie provide a delicious tropical punch to wash it all down! All of these recipes can be found easily (*except the punch, but you can shoot me an email for that*), with a Google search, so I'm just going to focus on the meat...



I'm sure you're okay with that.



After bringing the pork shoulders to room temperature, I used a sharp knife to score the fat cap, rubbed them with coarse sea salt, and then brushed each with liquid smoke.

If you're a "smoke purist" don't freak out (I'm one too,) but liquid smoke is how they do it in Hawaii. With La Caja China's electric smoker attachment (which I now have) I'm looking forward to taking a more "bbq approved" approach to this recipe, this summer!

Next, I wrapped each shoulder loosely in banana leaves* (I couldn't find Ti leaves,) tied them up with kitchen string, and then wrapped them in foil.



I placed each of the shoulders in a disposable pan, and roasted them in La Caja China for about six hours. Looking back, I think the pans were a waste of time, and I will stick to using just the racks next time.



We started the box with 16lbs of coals and basically just followed the [Pork Shoulder Roast Work Sheet](#), from La Caja China's website, word for word.

After about five hours, when I couldn't withstand the mouth-watering aroma wafting from my Cuban box any longer, I lifted the lid, unwrapped the shoulders, and peeled back the banana leaves to let the fat get crispy for the last half-hour.

After letting the pork rest for about a half and hour (despite the grumblings of my guests,) I chopped up the shoulders and then mixed the meat with a wash of $\frac{1}{4}$ cup liquid smoke, 4 cups hot water, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup Adobo Criollo spices, and 2 Tbs seasoned salt. (*Btw, I really think that the "spice & smoke" wash made the pork much more flavorful. I've tried it both ways, and this was the big winner!*) After letting the meat rest another 15 minutes, the remaining liquid had been soaked up, and the luau pork was ready to be served.



This was a darned good thing, as I was already fighting off an “appreciative” crowd with my spatula and tongs!



The “oohs and ahhs” quickly gave way to a famished silence, punctuated only by lip-smacking, and the occasional groan and exclamation of joy. *Note to self: Next time set some of that crispy skin aside, or sell it off at a premium!*

I have cooked many a pork shoulder in my oven, more in my smoker and, while all were appreciated, not garnered the acclaim that these did.

Seriously, La Caja China is THE way to do luau pork.

I’ve never had my guests be all that interested in my kettle bbq, or my smoker, but every person wandered over to ask about my “Caja.”

It was a great “conversation starter,” especially after folks got a taste of what it could do, and I never could have cooked for this big of a crowd without it.

Just a slight second to my beautiful little girl, La Caja China was the toast of the luau!

Aloha!

-Perry

**In retrospect, I would leave out the disposable pans, as I mentioned, and just wrap a single banana leaf around each shoulder for flavor, leaving the ends open. The pork took a little longer to cook than the instructions called for, and I think the combination of these two things make it harder for the “heat to get to the meat.”*



Perry P. Perkins comes from a long line of professional chefs. As a third generation gourmand, he focuses his love of cooking on bar-b-que, traditional southern fare, and fresh Northwest cuisine.

His books include the novels *Just Past Oysterville*, and *Shoalwater Voices*, and his new humor collection, *Elk Hunters Don't Cry*. Perry is the Portland Writing Examiner, and you can read more of his work at www.perryperkinsbooks.com

Perry's books are available at Amazon.com

Gracie's Luau Pork

Recipe by Perry P. Perkins

4 - boneless pork shoulders (6lb ea)
1 ½ gal Hawaiian Mojo
½ cup Stubbs liquid smoke
1/4 cup Adobo Criollo spices*

4 cups hot water
2 Tbs seasoned salt
4 Tbs garlic powder
6 Ti or banana leaves

1. Marinate the shoulders with Hawaiian Mojo (see recipe) overnight.
2. Remove from marinade, pat dry, and inject each shoulder with 6-8 ozs of remaining marinade. Score pork on all sides, rub with salt, then brush with liquid smoke, and sprinkle with garlic.
3. Wrap loosely in Ti/Banana leaves, leaving the ends open, tie with string.
4. Secure shoulders in rack, tent each with foil, and fire up La Caja China. Cook according to Pork Shoulder Roast Work Sheet
5. Flip the shoulders after about 4 hours. Peel back the banana leaves, and brush with mojo. Return coal pan to let the fat get crispy for the last half-hour.
6. Remove shoulders from Caja and allow to rest 30 minutes.
7. Chop the meat and then mix with a wash of 1/2 cup liquid smoke, 4 cups hot water, 1/4 cup Adobo Criollo spices, and 2 Tbs seasoned salt.
8. Let that sit about 15 minutes, drained remaining liquid (most had been soaked up) and served.
9. Shred pork, sprinkle with smoke water, rest 10 minutes, serve with Sweet Hawaiian Pork Sauce (see recipe.)

Notes: Traditionally this would be served with white or Hawaiian rice (see recipes.) A nice fruit salad in very complimentary as well. If you really want to go "Big Island" serve this up with some Lomi-Lomi Salmon, Chicken Long Rice, and Pineapple Haupia. There are many wonderful Hawaiian cookbooks available, my favorite is "Sam Choy's Sampler."

Adobo Criollo spice blend can be purchased from La Caja China at :

http://www.lacajachina.com/category_s/35.htm

Sweet Hawaiian Pork Sauce

Recipe by Perry P. Perkins

For 1 pig or 4 shoulders:

1 - 15oz can sliced peaches in heavy syrup
16 oz peach preserves
2 Tbs liquid smoke
1 Tbs red pepper flakes

1 -15oz can crushed pineapple
1 cup brown sugar
2 Tbs minced garlic

Combine all and bring to boil. Lower heat and simmer on low until sauce has begun to thicken. Keep warm until serving

Hawaiian Mojo

Recipe by Perry P. Perkins

For 1 pig or 4 shoulders:

6 cup orange juice
1 ½ cup Stubb's mesquite liquid smoke
6 Tbs minced garlic
1/8 cup table salt

6 cup pineapple juice
6 tablespoon oregano
6 teaspoon cumin
24 oz. of water

Mix all the ingredients and let it sit for a minimum of one hour.

Blend all ingredients and let it sit for a minimum of one hour, strain and inject, or place meat in a cooler and pour marinade to cover overnight.