

by Ron James

THE CHEF

After a long bus ride in April 1988, Houston native Kris Rudolph arrived for a getaway and to study Spanish in the dusty crowded streets of San Miguel de Allende, Mexico.

A knee injury had ended her short-lived professional dance career, and she wondered if this historic colonial village was the right place to nurse her wound. The answer wasn't long in coming.

As she recalls in the forward to her first cookbook, "Recipes and Secrets from El Buen Cafe" (available at her Web site, www.mexicocooks.com, \$20), "By the end of the week, I had a family, friends and a Mexican boyfriend, who taught me more Spanish than I ever learned in school."

Soon, Rudolph was teaching English in a small language school. On her teacher's salary, she rarely could afford to eat at restaurants.

KRIS RUDOLPH - Kris Rudolph is a successful restaurateur, teacher and author of three cookbooks. Her latest book is 'Mexican Light: Health Cuisine for Today's Cook.' CNS Photo courtesy of Culinary Adventures of Mexico.

PORK LOIN - Pork Loin With Mango-Chipotle Salsa is one of the featured dishes in Kris Rudolph's latest

cookbook, 'Mexican Light: Health Cuisine for Today's Cook.' CNS Photo courtesy of Culinary Adventures of Mexico.

"I did, however, treat myself to coffee and cake some afternoons, a luxurious habit I picked up as an exchange student in Germany," she said. "Back then, good coffee and cake were hard to come by in San Miguel. ... I thought, 'What this town needs is a cafe with good desserts and real coffee.'"

After a year, Rudolph left to study hotel, restaurant and travel administration in the United States. Upon returning to San Miguel, she opened the four-table El Buen Cafe bakery and coffeehouse. It was a challenge for a single, 25-year-old woman to run a business in Mexico.

"The guy who sold coffee to restaurants wouldn't sell to me because I was a woman," she laughed. "I had to drive over an hour to get coffee for the restaurant."

Today, the restaurant has grown and is an institution in San Miguel. Rudolph has not only become a successful and respected restaurateur, but a teacher and culinary tour organizer as well. She has written three cookbooks; the latest is "Mexican Light: Health Cuisine for Today's Cook," (University of North Texas Press, \$17.95).

THE DISH

Pork is an important part of the Mexican diet. Pork Loin With Mango-Chipotle Salsa is not only delicious, but healthy to boot. The loin is the most tender and lean cut of pork. Because there is so little fat, it is easily overcooked. Insert a meat thermometer into the center of the loin. When it reaches 140 F, remove the loin

from the oven and allow it to sit at least 10 minutes to allow the juices to return to the center.

"Fresh fruit salsas are a great way to dress up any meal. They have it all: flavor, texture, aroma and most importantly, minimal calories and fat. Mangos are at their best in summer, juicy and full of sweetness. If you're making this recipe and the mangos are a little tart, try adding a tablespoon of brown sugar. Unfortunately this will change the nutritional information below ... maybe tart isn't so bad after all?"

THE WINE

Pork tenderloin is indeed the other white meat, so its delicate flavors work better with most white wines or lighter style reds like merlot and pinot noir. The mango-chipotle salsa adds an interesting tropical flavor and heat wrinkle which leads us to a 2004 Marques de Caceres Rose (\$8), a wine that matches nicely with both the pork and the salsa.

This Spanish wine is a great value and a wonderful spring and summer quaffing wine. It has crisp acidity with rich flavors of strawberries and cherries. Don't let the low price fool you, this rose consistently scores in the high 80s from the wine media critics. Serve it very cold.

PORK LOIN WITH MANGO-CHIPOTLE SALSA

1 (2-pound) pork tenderloin

1 tablespoon olive oil

Salt, to taste

Black pepper, to taste

Mango-Chipotle Salsa:

2 cups mango, chopped (about 2 to 3 mangoes)

1 chipotle chile, seeded and minced

1/4 cup chopped green onions

2 teaspoons fresh lime juice

1/8 cup chopped cilantro

Yields 6 servings.

Preheat oven to 350 F.

Heat olive oil in frying pan over medium-high heat. Season tenderloin to taste with salt and pepper, and sear until browned on all sides. Transfer to baking sheet.

Place tenderloin in oven for 10 to 15 minutes or until done. (An instant-read thermometer inserted in center of tenderloin should read 140 F.)

While tenderloin is in oven, place salsa ingredients in large bowl and mix well.

Slice tenderloin and top with salsa.

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Ron James welcomes comments and suggestions. E-mail him at ronjames@perfectpairings.us. Listen to his "Gourmet Club" radio show and see archives of previous columns at www.perfectpairings.us.

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Food and Wine: Colonia repast - Mexican pork loin and Spanish rose by Ron James