BACON CURING THE ETHICAL BUTCHER WAY

The Ethical Butcher is a nonsmoker! I make my bacon by roasting a seasoned, cured pork belly. Here are 3 flavors from my catalog of nearly 60 flavors of local, heritage-breed bacon goodness.

2½ pounds heritage-breed pork belly, skinless and boneless, edges trimmed until uniform
Kosher salt
2 tablespoons ground cornmeal, for Jalisco version only

Backyard Memories Rub
1½ tablespoons kosher salt
½ cup crushed fresh raspberries or 2 tablespoons preserves
1 teaspoon french lavender
4 or 5 fresh sage leaves, chopped
¼ cup gin

Jalisco Rub
1½ tablespoons kosher salt
3 serrano chiles, sliced
1 jalepeño, sliced
1 dried guajillo, sliced
zest of 1 lime
1 teaspoon cumin
1 tablespoon chopped fresh cilantro
1 clove garlic, minced
¼ cup tequila

Python Rub
1½ tablespoons kosher salt
2 teaspoons crystallized ginger, sliced
½ teaspoon freshly grated ginger root
½ teaspoon ground ginger
2 tablespoons ground cacao
6 to 10 scotch bonnet peppers, stemmed and finely chopped (substitute habeñeros)
1 teaspoon shredded coconut

Rub entire pork belly with salt. In a bowl, mix rub ingredients of choice, except alcohol (for Backyard Memories and Jalisco). Rub belly with mixture until saturated. Place belly in a gallon-size sealable bag and add alcohol. Seal bag, squeezing out as much air as possible. Place on bottom shelf of fridge for 7 days. Turn slab over on day 3 or 4.

After one week, remove slab from bag. Preheat oven to 225°F. Place slab skin side up on baking sheet. For the Jalisco version, coat fat side of pork with 2 tablespoons ground cornmeal before roasting. Roast until internal temperature reaches 145°F. Remove from oven. Cool and drain slab on wire rack for 15 minutes. Place slab on plate and cover lightly with plastic wrap and place in fridge until completely cool; overnight is best. Bacon will keep for up to about 1 week.

Slice and cook bacon as desired. Can be used to make lardoons, strips, bacon bits, etc.

Serves 6 to 8