

Holiday Ham with Many Mustards

Serves 15-20 with leftovers, 30-40 as a snack ham

The difference between having a ham for dinner and a ham party is in the number of condiments and amount of fun you could possibly have. Promise everyone heavy snacks and they'll come appropriately hungry and pleasantly surprised when they see a giant ham and fourteen types of pickles. As a reminder, hams are sold already cured, smoked and cooked through- the ham could be slipped out of its plastic jacket, sliced and served, if you wanted. That said, to score a ham, season it to your liking (fennel seed and chili flake for me, thank you), roast it until the outside is crisp, fat rendered and juices running, is a transcendent experience.

For the Ham

1 13–16 pound un-spiraled bone-in ham (half or whole) Snake River Farm, Heritage Foods and Porter Road are great resources

¼ cup whole fennel seeds

2 tablespoons black peppercorns

2 tablespoons crushed red pepper flakes

2 tablespoons kosher salt

2 tablespoons light brown sugar

2 cups cilantro or parsley, tender leaves and stems, finely chopped (optional)

For the serving

Rolls: Soft, tiny ones, already split

Mustards: Yellow, whole grain, dijon, spicy, brown, in a jar, in a tube, etc.

Pickles: Kosher dill spears, whole kosher dill thinly sliced, cornichons

Other pickled things: Pickled jalapeño, sauerkraut, kimchi, pickled onions

Thinly sliced yellow onion

Softened butter (salted or unsalted)

Several bags of salted potato chips (no flavors)

A creamy dip. Lipton's French Onion is tough to improve upon, but The Dip (Labne Dip with Sizzled Scallion and Chili from Nothing Fancy) is also a top choice.

Crunchy vegetables for the dip and snacking (radish, fennel, turnip, cucumber)

Instructions

- 1 Preheat the oven to 325°. Remove your ham from any plastic or netting and place in a large baking dish (if 9x13 is the largest you have, that's fine...if the ham is too large for that, use a rimmed baking sheet).
- 2 Using a small, sharp knife, make tiny (about ½" deep) incisions across the surface of the ham, about ½" apart. You can stop here, or go back and make a crosshatch pattern with more incisions. No wrong choices here, but I do advise some scoring to allow the bits to crisp up and the spices to get into the nooks and crannies.
- 3 Combine fennel seed, peppercorns and chili flake in a blender, spice grinder or mortar and pestle and blend, pulse or pound the spices until they're coarsely ground. Transfer to a small bowl and add kosher salt and brown sugar, mixing to blend*.
- 4 Rub the spice mixture all over the ham, getting into the incisions the best you can (they will still be pretty tight before the ham goes into the oven, but do your best). Depending on size of your baking dish and size of your ham, pour ½ cup to 1 cup water in the bottom of your baking dish (this is to create a sauce at the end and prevent any sugar or spices from burning).
- 5 Place in the oven uncovered and bake, basting three or four times with a baster or a spoon, until the outside of the ham is caramelized, deeply (deeply) browned (if it's not that brown, please keep it in the oven till it is!) and there's a delicious looking sauce on the bottom, 3–4 hours.
- 6 Remove ham from the oven and let it cool slightly before transferring it to a cutting board to slice.
- 7 For the sauce, pour the liquid from the baking dish into a medium bowl and add cilantro, stirring to combine. You can season this with a spoonful of mustard or splash of apple cider vinegar, but I think it's perfect as-is (especially with all that mustard on the side).
- 8 Serve your ham with all of the accouterments to all of your friends.

*This particular blend of salt, sugar, fennel and chili is also excellent for a rub on roast chicken, pork chops or pork shoulder, so if you're going to plug something in to make this, consider making a larger batch and saving for something down the road.