

## Skillet-Roasted Sausages with Muscadines & Shallots

I learned this delicious recipe while studying countryside recipes in the Umbria region of Italy, a place that reminds me of the foothills of North Carolina and other parts of the South in both landscape and food traditions. In Italy they use a local black grape, so in keeping with the spirit of using local fruit, I use our native grapes when I make this at home. Most Italians don't remove the seeds from the grapes, assuming that eaters will know they are there, just like seeds inside a whole apple or pit inside a fresh peach. I generally seed the grapes for the convenience of the eaters who might not have thought about that.

The grapes soften and their skins wrinkle a bit as they roast, and when seasoned with fragrant rosemary and a drizzle of condiment-grade aged balsamic, remind me of warm, chunky chutney. You can roast the grapes solo to create a wonderful garnish for a cheese plate or salad.

If you happen to have the grill fired up and ready, let it do the roasting. Place the skillet on the grate and close the lid, which will add smoky flavor to this dish. In Italy, the cook giving me lessons nestled his cast-iron skillet full of grapes in the glowing embers of a campfire.

I like to turn this into a meal by accompanying the sizzling sausage and jammy grapes with mustard, cheese, and good bread. However, they are also delicious served atop polenta or creamy grits, or for that matter, good mashed potatoes or sweet potatoes.

Makes 4 servings

1 pound fresh sausage links, such as sweet or hot Italian sausages made from pork or poultry  
1 to 1 1/2 cups muscadine or scuppernong grapes, halved and seeded  
2 large or 4 small shallots, peeled and halved lengthwise  
1 tablespoon olive oil  
Kosher salt and ground black pepper  
2 to 3 small rosemary sprig, plus a few leaves for garnish  
1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar, to taste (preferably aged, condiment-grade)

Suggested accompaniments: Grainy mustard, good bread, and a wedge of ripe cheese

1. Preheat the oven to 400 °F. Heat a large, oven-proof skillet (preferably cast-iron) over medium-high heat.
2. Add the sausage and cook until nicely browned on both sides, turning with tongs, 2 to 3 minutes per side.
3. Toss the grapes and shallots with the oil and big pinches of salt and pepper. Push the sausage to the edges of the pan and add the grape mixture. Turn the shallots cut-side down so that they can brown. Tuck the rosemary into the grapes. Place in the oven to roast until the sausages are cooked through, about 20 minutes. (An instant-read thermometer inserted

into the center of a sausage should register 160°F and the juices should show no traces of pink. Don't overcook the sausages so that they won't dry out.)

4. Drizzle with the vinegar and sprinkle with chopped rosemary. Serve warm or at room temperature alongside the accompaniments.

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