

Adobo Pork Belly

3 1/2 pounds pork belly (skinless)
1 cup rice wine vinegar
1 cup water
2/3 cup low sodium soy sauce
1/4 cup light brown sugar, packed
12 cloves garlic, peeled & lightly smashed
3 bay leaves
1 chili de arbol
2 tsp fresh-ground black pepper
1/2 tsp msg (opt)
2 tsp flour (for cooking bag)
fried bean thread noodles
thinly sliced chives

Slice belly lengthwise into 1 1/2 - 2 inch slices. Trim fat on top of slices to about 1/3 inch. Diagonally score top layer of fat both ways, try to avoid cutting into meat.

Oven to 250. Dump flour into an oven bag. Set in a large baking pan. Place pork in a single layer. Set aside.

In a small saucepan, over medium heat, bring vinegar to a boil. Reduce heat to a brisk simmer and cook for 5 minutes, will reduce by about 25 %. Add water, soy, brown sugar, garlic, bay leaves, chili pepper, black pepper and msg. Continue to simmer another minute to dissolve brown sugar. Carefully pour over pork. Seal up bag. Carefully snip 5-6 1/2 slits in top of bag to release steam.

Braise for 3 hours, Check for doneness, should be tender but not falling apart. Will feel jelly like when poked, 196 to 210 degrees on a thermometer. May need another 30 minutes.

When done, remove from oven and cool in bag for 1 hour. Transfer pork to another dish, big enough to hold pork in a single layer. Carefully pour juices over meat. Cover with a piece of plastic wrap then another pan. Top this evenly with several large cans. Chill over night. This step compresses meat to facilitate cutting into chunks that stay together. Okay to skip if not looking for small perfect pieces.

Remove congealed fat and discard. Lift meat out of pan, scrape excess juices back into dish, then transfer strips to a cutting board. Scrape all of juices into a medium sauce pan. Bring to a boil then reduce heat to a brisk simmer and reduce by almost half, 30-45 minutes. Watch carefully toward end of time. Taste and season well. To balance the rich concentrated sauce, add a dash or three of rice wine vinegar. Sometimes a pinch of sugar is required. Strain into another container and allow to cool to room temperature.

Cut meat into chunks, as small as 3/4 inch (appetizer) to 2 inches (entree). Return to dish. Pour over broth. Gently stir to ensure meat is coated. Cover and chill till needed.

Oven to 450. Move oven rack to top third. Line a shallow rimmed dish with foil and parchment. Lift chunks out of pan (juices will cling and that is okay) and arrange on prepared sheet with a good inch and a half between pieces. Transfer all bits of congealed stock to a small bowl and microwave about 15 seconds, just till melted. Set aside.

Roast 5 minutes, flip over, baste with reserved juices, cook another 5, flip and baste again, roast another 3-5 minutes till sizzling

Insert a toothpick/skewer for appetizers. Serve on a bed of fried bean thread, garnished with chives.

8 servings or 60 appetizre pieces

Lailas Notes

Adapted from several online recipes and multiple trials. Pork belly is exceedingly rich, small portions are advised. Works better with well marbled meat.

Braised and pressed pork can be held for up to 5 days. Remove weights after a day.

Leftovers are fabulous served in ramen or Hawaiian Rolls.