

# VIETNAMESE CARAMELIZED PORK (THIT KHO TO)

Serves 5

## INGREDIENTS

- Pork Marinade3 lbs pork belly or shoulder cut into bite-size pieces
- 1 teaspoon salt (for cleaning pork)
- 1/4 cup granulated sugar
- 5 tablespoons fish sauce
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 3 garlic cloves (peel and mince)
- 1 shallot (peel and mince)
- Braising Liquid1/4 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup hot water
- 1/2 cup coconut soda

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. For this dish, you have to blanch and wash the meat thoroughly. Skipping this step will result in a thin layer of meat residue/scum that will be difficult to remove later. It also doesn't look very appetizing either. Also, blanching and washing the pork will remove the off-smell of pork. To blanch the meat, bring water to a boil in a large pot. Make sure to use a pot that will fit all the meat when it gets added. Add salt to the pot. Add the pork. You may leave the pork whole or cut into cubes. Once the pot is at a rolling boil, blanch for 3-4 minutes. Carefully drain the content of the pot into a colander in the sink. Wash the pork with cold running water and let dry.
2. Combine the remaining marinade ingredients (sugar, fish sauce, black pepper, garlic and shallot) and marinate for at least 30 minutes.

3. To get that gorgeous brown color on the pork, we caramelize sugar. Use a pot that will use to braise the meat (either a clay pot or regular pot). Add the sugar to the bottom of the pot. No oil is necessary. Continuously stir the sugar with a wooden spoon until it caramelizes. Do not walk away when you are doing this because the sugar will burn quickly. You want the sugar to become a dark amber color. It goes from dark amber to black real quick. Once it's burnt, it's very bitter. You will have to start over. If you have to redo and have burnt sugar, you will find that scrubbing the burnt sugar off the pan is very challenging. Simply soak the burnt pan in water for an hour. The burnt sugar will dissolve on its own.
4. As soon the sugar turns a dark amber, add the pork. Pick up the pot with both hands (use pot holders!) and toss the pork until evenly coated. Avoid using a utensil as the sugar will clump on the utensil. The sugar will harden up but do not worry. Continue to toss with the heat on high until the sugar dissolves again. Add the water and coconut juice.
5. Put a lid on the pot and let it slowly simmer for 20 minutes. Once in a while, remove the lid and toss the pork so that every piece gets coated with the sauce. After 20 minutes, remove the lid. The liquid will reduce and thicken. Braise for another 20 minutes on low. Top it off with either fried shallots, fresh green onions, cilantro or sesame seeds. Serve with steamed white rice.