

Vietnamese Caramelized Pork Belly with Fermented Shrimp Paste (Thịt Xào Mắm Ruốc)

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INGREDIENTS

- 1-½ lbs pork belly
- 1 tablespoon sea salt (for cleaning)
- ¼ teaspoon thick soy sauce for color (optional)
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 3 tablespoons minced lemongrass
- 2 tablespoons minced shallots
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic
- 3 tablespoons granulated sugar
- 2 tablespoons fermented shrimp paste
- ½ cup water
- 1 teaspoon minced Thai chili pepper (optional)
- ⅛ teaspoon (dash) ground black pepper

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Clean the pork belly by vigorously rubbing it down with salt then rinse. Cut the pork belly into pinky size strips, making sure every slice has a bit of skin, fat, and meat.
2. In a skillet with a lid, heat vegetable oil on medium-high. Add lemongrass, shallots, and garlic. Stir together and pan fry until fragrant (about 30 seconds).
3. Stir pork belly into the aromatics and cook for about 2-3 minutes.
4. Add sugar, shrimp paste, and water. Reduce heat to low. Cover skillet with a lid and continue to cook for 15 minutes or until pork is tender.
5. Remove lid and let the pork slowly simmer until the sauce thickens. Mix in the chili pepper (optional), then top with ground black pepper. Serve with steamed white rice and a plentiful platter of boiled or fresh vegetables for a complete meal.