

Char siu pork

This is a popular Chinese barbecue dish, also common in Vietnam, where it's called thịt xá xíu. It is absolutely delicious with rice and salad, in bánh mì (Vietnamese baguette sandwiches), in steamed buns or just on its own as soon as you've sliced it. This recipe is thanks to Andrea Nguyen, author of 'Into the Vietnamese Kitchen: Treasured Foodways, Modern Flavors'.



Serves: 4-6

1kg pork shoulder, in one piece

2 cloves garlic, minced

2 tbsps sugar

½ tsp Chinese five-spice powder

3 tbsps hoisin sauce

2 tbsps Shaoxing rice wine or dry sherry

2 tbsps light soy sauce

1 tbsp dark soy sauce

2 tsps sesame oil

1. Trim any large swathes of fat off the pork. Cut it into several fat strips – each approx 6-8" x 1½" x 1½".
2. Whisk remaining ingredients together to make marinade. Add meat, turn to coat, cover and leave in fridge overnight or for at least 6 hours. Turn occasionally.
3. Remove meat from fridge one hour before cooking. Heat oven to 250C, with a rack positioned in the upper third. Line a roasting tin with foil and position a roasting rack on top. Place meat on rack, spaced well apart. Reserve marinade.
4. Place tin in oven and roast for 35 mins. Every 10 mins remove roasting tin from oven and, using tongs, dredge each piece of meat in the reserved marinade and return to the rack, turned over. After 35 mins the meat should be beginning to char in places and should read 60-63C on a meat thermometer inserted into the thickest part.
5. Let meat rest for 10 mins. Cut into slices on a slight angle and against the grain of the meat. (If any of the meat is any pinker than a slight rosé in the centre, return it to the oven for a few minutes.) Serve warm with jasmine rice, a zingy carrot and daikon salad and fresh coriander for garnish.



Pork facts:

Why has pork been the most commonly eaten meat in the world for 1000s of years?

- It's the most prolific animal after the rabbit; one sow is said to bear 6.5 million descendants in just 12 years.
- They are the most efficient converters of carbohydrates into protein and fat; 100lb of feed increases a pig's weight by 20lbs of flesh. (Cows convert the same amount into just 7lbs.)
- And they'll eat anything. Not as long ago as you might imagine pigs were allowed to roam wild in cities such as New York and Naples – free street cleaning labour and free feed for pigs.
- You can (if you're so inclined) eat almost every part of a pig, and many parts are easy to preserve: salt pork, prosciutto, sausages, bacon, pancetta, pâté, salami, chaps, head cheese, black pudding, jellied trotters...

Sources:

Real Flavours, Glynn Christian, 2005