Main dishes / Vietnam

Bánh Mì Caramelized Pork

Thin-sliced pork belly lacquered in fish-sauce caramel until the edges blacken and crisp, perfuming the kitchen with burnt sugar and soy — the kind of filling that makes a humble baguette taste like a destination.

Time 60 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 100 parts Pork belly or pork shoulder, thinly sliced (5mm)
- ☐ 8 parts Granulated sugar (for caramel)
- ☐ 10 parts Fish sauce (Phu Quoc or Tiparos)
- ☐ 15 parts Shallots, thinly sliced
- ☐ 6 parts Lemongrass, bruised and minced (inner stalk only)
- ☐ 1 parts Black pepper, coarsely cracked
- ☐ 5 parts Neutral oil (vegetable or sunflower)

Let's make it.

01 Combine sliced pork with fish sauce, shallots, lemongrass, and black pepper. Toss to coat every surface thoroughly. Marinate at room temperature for 30 minutes, or refrigerate up to 4 hours. The fish sauce begins drawing moisture out of the meat, concentrating the brine.

02 In a wide heavy skillet or wok over medium heat, add oil then sugar in an even layer. Do not stir — let it melt and color. When the edges turn amber, gently swirl the pan. Pull from heat at a deep amber that smells like butterscotch, not burnt coffee. Work fast; caramel moves through its stages in seconds.

03 Add marinated pork to the caramel in a single layer, working quickly. The mixture will spit and bubble violently — step back. Do not stir for the first 90 seconds so a crust can form. Then toss and cook over medium-high for 4-5 minutes total, until edges char and sauce clings like lacquer.

04 Remove from heat. Add 2 tablespoons of water to deglaze any stuck caramel from the pan and toss the pork to coat in the loose sauce. Let rest in the pan for 2 minutes — the residual heat melds the glaze and the resting reduces the risk of burning your mouth on the caramelized edges.

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Servings are an estimate; check quantities in the source recipe.
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