Main dishes / China

Crispy Pork Belly

Cantonese siu yuk at its finest — the skin shatters into a thousand lacquered shards, the fat beneath has rendered to a translucent, yielding layer, and the meat below is seasoned deep into the grain.

Time 480 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 100 parts Pork belly (skin-on, bone-out)
- ☐ 1 parts Five-spice powder
- ☐ 2 parts Rice vinegar
- ☐ 0.5 parts Baking soda (for skin pricking)
- ☐ 3 parts Fine sea salt
- ☐ 0.5 parts White pepper (ground)
- ☐ 2 parts Garlic (minced)

Let's make it.

01 Using a metal skewer or a fork, prick the skin of the pork belly hundreds of times over its entire surface, going about 5mm deep but not piercing through to the fat layer. Flip the belly and score the meat side in a crosshatch pattern, 2cm deep. This mechanical disruption of the skin creates channels for rendered fat to escape during roasting, which is what causes the skin to blister and shatter.

02 Flip the belly meat-side up. Rub the five-spice powder, minced garlic, white pepper, and half the salt thoroughly into the meat and into all the score cuts — get the seasoning as deep into the cuts as possible. Flip skin-side up and rub the remaining salt onto the skin evenly. Place skin-side up, uncovered, in the refrigerator for a minimum of 6 hours or overnight. The desiccating air of the refrigerator is what drives the final moisture out of the skin.

03 Dissolve the baking soda in rice vinegar and brush onto the skin generously; the alkalinity raises the pH of the skin, accelerating the Maillard reaction and driving crisping. Place skin-side up on a wire rack over a foil-lined tray. Roast at 180°C (360°F) for 50 minutes to render the fat, then blast at 230°C (450°F) for 20–25 minutes for the crackling. Watch closely in the final stage — the transformation from rendered to blistered is fast.

04 Remove from the oven and rest on the wire rack — never on a flat surface which would trap steam and soften the crackling. Rest for 10 minutes before slicing. Slice using a sharp cleaver or heavy chef's knife with downward pressure rather than sawing; sawing shatters the crackling unevenly.

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