Main dishes / Japan

Chashu Pork Belly

A rolled pork belly tied tight, seared golden, and braised in soy, mirin, sake, and sugar until the fat is trembling and translucent — the canonical ramen topping.

Time 180 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 100 parts Pork belly, skin-on (whole slab)
- ☐ 15 parts Mirin (hon-mirin)
- ☐ 5 parts White sugar (or light brown sugar)
- ☐ 2 parts Fresh ginger (thick slices, unpeeled)
- ☐ 10 parts Water
- ☐ 15 parts Soy sauce (regular / shoyu)
- ☐ 15 parts Sake (cooking or drinking grade)
- ☐ 3 parts Green onion / scallion (whole stalks)
- ☐ 2 parts Neutral oil (for searing)

Let's make it.

01 Lay the pork belly skin-side down on a clean board. Roll it tightly from one short end into a compact cylinder, keeping the roll as even in diameter as possible. Tie at 2 cm intervals with butcher's twine — snug but not so tight that it cuts into the fat. The tight roll ensures even slices for ramen, and the twine holds the shape through the braise. If the belly is very thick or the skin tough, score the skin lightly at 1 cm intervals before rolling to help it render and soften evenly.

02 Heat the oil in a heavy pan or Dutch oven over high heat until shimmering. Place the rolled belly in the pan and sear, turning every 2 to 3 minutes with tongs, until every surface including the two flat ends is golden-brown. This takes about 10 to 12 minutes total. The skin side will sputter and contract energetically — use a splatter screen if needed. The Maillard crust built here contributes the roasted, caramelized notes that distinguish chashu from a simple braised pork roll.

03 Remove the seared roll to a plate. Deglaze the hot pan with the sake, scraping all the fond from the bottom. Add the soy sauce, mirin, sugar, water, scallion stalks, and ginger slices. Stir to dissolve the sugar. Return the roll to the pan — the braising liquid should come about halfway up the roll. Bring to a bare simmer, then cover with a tight-fitting lid or a cartouche of parchment paper. Cook over the lowest heat that maintains a gentle simmer, turning the roll every 30 minutes so all sides have equal time submerged, for 2 to 2.5 hours total.

04 Allow the chashu to cool in the braising liquid to room temperature, then transfer the roll (still in its braising liquid) to the refrigerator and chill overnight, or at minimum 4 hours. Chilling accomplishes two things: the fat solidifies, making clean slicing possible (warm chashu is too soft to slice neatly), and the roll continues to absorb the braising liquid as it cools, deepening the flavor penetration. The chilled braising liquid will set to a dark, jiggly gel — reserve it as a tare or glaze for other applications.

05 To serve, cut the twine with scissors and slice the chilled roll into rounds of 8 to 12 mm thickness. For ramen service, heat a small non-stick or cast-iron pan over medium-high heat until it just begins to smoke. Lay the chashu slices in without oil — they carry enough rendered fat from the braise. Sear for 45 to 60 seconds per side until the edges caramelize and char at the points and the surface takes on a glorious, lacquered char. Alternatively, brush the slices with a little of the gelled braising liquid and briefly torch them or place under a very hot broiler for 60 seconds to lacquer and caramelize the surface.

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