Main dishes / Vietnam

Thit Kho To (Vietnamese Caramel Pork)

Pork belly braised in a dark amber caramel, fish sauce, and fresh coconut water until the fat is translucent-soft and the meat drinks in the salty-sweet glaze — the quintessential dish of Southern Vietnamese home cooking.

Time 90 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 800 g Pork belly, skin-on, cut into 4 cm pieces
- ☐ 60 g Fish sauce (nuoc mam)
- ☐ 20 g Palm sugar or brown sugar
- ☐ 20 g Garlic cloves, sliced
- ☐ 4 g Black pepper, ground
- ☐ 5 g Thai bird's eye chili, sliced (optional)
- ☐ 400 g Fresh coconut water
- ☐ 80 g Granulated white sugar (for caramel)
- ☐ 60 g Shallots, sliced
- ☐ 4 whole Eggs, hard-boiled and peeled
- ☐ 20 g Green onions, sliced

Let's make it.

01 Place a clay pot or heavy-bottomed pot over medium heat. Add the white sugar in a thin, even layer. Watch carefully without stirring — as the edges begin to melt and turn amber (about 4–5 minutes), tilt the pan to distribute. When the sugar is fully liquid and the color of dark mahogany, with thin wisps of smoke just beginning, remove from heat immediately.

02 Add the pork belly pieces to the hot caramel and stir quickly to coat. Stand back — the fat will cause violent sputtering. Sear the pork in the caramel for 3–4 minutes, turning with tongs, until each piece is coated in the dark caramel and beginning to brown.

03 Add shallots and garlic to the pot and stir for 1 minute. Pour in coconut water and fish sauce — the liquid will seize and splatter as it hits the caramel, then rapidly dissolve it. Add palm sugar and black pepper. Bring to a boil, skim any foam, then reduce to the lowest possible simmer. Cover and cook for 45 minutes.

04 After 45 minutes, add the peeled hard-boiled eggs. Gently turn them to coat in the broth. Cook uncovered for another 20–25 minutes, occasionally spooning broth over the pork, until the broth has reduced to a glossy, syrupy sauce and the fat on the pork is completely tender and translucent.

05 Ladle pork, eggs, and sauce into bowls or onto a platter. Scatter green onions and optional chili over the top. Serve immediately with steamed jasmine rice and pickled daikon.

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