

Soy-Braised Pork Leg

Swick

Serves 4 | Active Time: 30 minutes | Total Time: 3 hours 30 minutes

Chef's Notes

Total time excludes soaking of the pork leg in water.

Recipe excludes the hoof of the pork.

Pork legs can be cooked in a large pot and in the oven at 300 F.

Pork belly can be substituted. But after step 3, the pork belly is cut into 1/4" to 1/2" -inch slices and then arrange onto a large bowl followed by the rest of the ingredients (probably with less water). They are placed in a steamer and steamed over medium heat until they're tender. They are served with steamed buns, pickled mustard leaves and cilantro leaves.

This is not an everyday dish for everyone. My late father only makes this every New Year's Eve. This recipe is his signature dish. Relatives would ask for the recipe and the procedure. Unfortunately, nobody has been successful in making this except my brother. He says that soaking the meat in water, which I believe my grandfather told him, is the secret to this recipe. The longer you soak it, the better. The more wrinkled the skin, the better.

My father doesn't have any exact measurement whenever he's making this dish. This is the first time this recipe has ever been written with the help of my brother. So far, we are still trying to perfect it.

Step 1: Simmering the Pork Leg

- 1 leg of pork, cleaned, bone-in (about 2 lb)
 - 1/2 tbsp black peppercorns
 - 1 bay leaf
 - 1 star anise
 - 3 L water (or more)
- To start cooking the pork leg, add water to a large stock pot and bring to a boil.
- Add the pork leg, black peppercorns, bay leaf and star anise.
- Bring back to a boil and lower heat when water is almost boiling.
- Cover and simmer for 30 minutes.
- After 30 minutes, remove the pork and drain well.

Step 2: Frying the Pork Leg

- vegetable oil (for frying)
- 1 to 2 tbsp dark mushroom soy sauce

Pour oil in a wok, halfway. Heat the oil to 375-380 F degrees.

When the pork leg is cool enough to touch and the surface area is dry, apply soy sauce all over the leg. Not too much but just enough to coat it. Marinate until oil is hot enough to fry.

Then, prepare a large bowl of cold water, big enough for the pork leg to fit in. Set aside.

Add the pork leg to the hot oil and fry until they're golden brown on both sides, about 12 to 15 minutes total, turning pork halfway the cooking process.

Step 3: Soaking the Pork Leg

When pork is golden brown, transfer to the prepared bowl with water and let soak for about an hour. Soaking the pork in water after frying changes the texture of the fat and the skin, making it firm and chewy yet tender.

Step 4: Preparing Your Mise en Place

- 4 Chinese dried mushrooms
- 1 cup hot water
- 4 large garlic cloves
- 2 green onions

While the pork leg is soaking in water, prepare the following:

Soak the dried mushrooms in hot water. Then, peel the garlic and cut in half. Remove the ends off the green onion and cut into 1 1/2" -inch pieces.

When the mushrooms have hydrated, remove and squeeze out excess water, then cut into 1/2" -inch strips. Reserve mushroom water.

After an hour, remove the pork legs from the water and drain.

Step 5: Cooking the Pork Leg

- 1 tbsp oil
- 4 tbsp dark mushroom soy sauce
- 1 tbsp Chinese rice wine or Shao Hsing wine
- 3 cups water
- 1 small bay leaf
- 1 small star anise

Heat oil in a wok until hot. Add the garlic and saute until lightly browned, about 1 minute. Then add the green onions and saute for another 30 seconds.

Then add the mushroom soy sauce and the rice wine and mix with the ingredients.

Then add the pork leg, water, bay leaf, star anise and the reserved mushroom water.

Bring to boil and then lower heat. Cover and simmer for 2 to 3 hours, until fork tender, turning meat halfway.

Step 6: Finishing the Dish

- sea salt (to taste)
- 1 tbsp cornstarch
- 2 tbsp water

Remove pork from the wok and transfer to a platter along with the sliced mushrooms. Tent with foil.

Strain the sauce to a saucepan and discard green onions and garlic. No need to degrease as the sauce is not oily.

Check for seasoning. Add salt if needed.

Combine the cornstarch and water. Add to the sauce mixture until slightly thickened. You may not need all of the cornstarch mixture.

Remove foil and pour sauce over. Serve with steamed jasmine rice, sauteed or pickled mustard greens and cilantro leaves.