

Hong Shao Rou •

Ingredients

Skin-on pork belly	2 lbs.	Bay leaves	1
Rock or granulated sugar	5 Tbsp.	Dried red chilis	3
Shaoxing wine	3 Tbsp.	Tangerine	1
Light soy sauce	2 Tbsp.	Garlic cloves	4
Dark soy sauce	1 Tbsp.	Daikon radish	1 lb.
Ginger, fresh	1 inch piece	Water or stock	1-2 cups
Green onions	6	Jasmine rice	3 cups
Star anise	2	Baby bok choy	2 lbs.
Cinnamon stick	1	Sesame seeds, toasted	2 Tbsp.

Directions

Cook rice — Cut **pork belly** into 1½–2 inch cubes — Measure 5 Tbsp. **granulated sugar** and set aside — Measure 3 Tbsp. **Shaoxing wine** and set aside — Peel and slice **ginger** (1 inch piece) into ½ inch thick slices and smash — Cut **green onions** into 2–inch pieces (white parts) for braising; thinly slice green parts for garnish and set aside in *Small Bowl #2* — Smash **garlic** cloves lightly — Peel and slice **daikon radish** into ½ inch thick rounds; set aside in *Medium Bowl #1* — Trim **baby bok choy**: remove any damaged outer leaves, trim the base, and quarter lengthwise through the core; set aside in *Medium Bowl #2* — Toast **sesame seeds** in a dry pan over medium heat until golden and fragrant, approximately 2–3 minutes; set aside in *Small Bowl #2* with sliced green onion tops — Peel **tangerine** and cut the peel into ½ inch wide strips, avoiding the white pith as much as possible — Combine **ginger**, **green onion whites**, **garlic**, 2 Tbsp. **light soy sauce**, 1 Tbsp. **dark soy sauce**, 2 **star anise**, 1 **cinnamon stick**, 1 **bay leaf**, 3 **dried red chilis**, and **tangerine peel** strips in *Small Bowl #1*

1. Heat a heavy pot or Dutch oven over medium heat. Add **pork belly** cubes (no oil needed; fat will render). Sear until golden on all sides, approximately 5–7 minutes, turning pieces as needed. The fat should render and pool in the pot, and the meat should appear golden brown, not deeply browned. Remove **pork belly** and transfer to *Large Bowl #1*; set aside. Reserve 2 Tbsp. rendered fat in the pot.
2. Reduce heat to low. Add measured **granulated sugar** to the rendered fat in the pot. Stir constantly as the sugar melts and caramelizes. The sugar will transition from clear liquid to golden, then to amber, and finally to deep red-brown, approximately 3–5 minutes. Stop immediately when the caramel reaches deep amber/red-brown

color; do not allow it to turn black or smoke. If the caramel darkens too quickly, remove the pot from heat briefly—residual heat will continue cooking. The caramel should appear glossy and deep red-brown, not blackened.

3. Return **pork belly** (*Large Bowl #1*) to the pot with the caramel. Toss to coat each piece evenly with the caramelized sugar. The pork should appear uniformly coated with the glossy caramel.
4. Add measured **Shaoxing wine** and allow it to bubble for *30 seconds*, scraping up any caramelized bits from the bottom of the pot. This deglazes the pot and adds depth of flavor.
5. Add all contents from *Small Bowl #1* (**ginger, green onions, garlic, light soy sauce, dark soy sauce, star anise, cinnamon stick, bay leaf, dried red chilis, tangerine peel**).
6. Add **daikon radish** (*Medium Bowl #1*) to the pot, then add hot **water or stock** to just cover the **pork belly** and **daikon**. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to a low simmer. Cover and braise for *1½–2 hours* until the pork is very tender and the **daikon** is tender and translucent. Check at *1 hour*: the pork should be yielding but not falling apart, and the **daikon** should be beginning to soften. The fat should appear gelatinous and translucent, not chewy. Check occasionally and add hot water if needed to maintain coverage of the meat and vegetables.
7. Remove and discard the aromatics: **ginger, green onions, star anise, cinnamon stick, bay leaf, dried red chilis, tangerine peel**, and **garlic** cloves.
8. Uncover the pot and increase heat to medium-high. Reduce the braising liquid until the sauce thickens and becomes glossy, approximately *10–15 minutes*. The sauce is ready when it coats the back of a spoon thickly and the pork has a deep red-brown sheen. The sauce should cling to the meat, not pool or appear runny. Bubbles will become larger and slower as the sauce thickens.
9. While the sauce thickens, bring a large pot of well-salted water to a rolling boil. Add the quartered **baby bok choy** (*Medium Bowl #2*) and blanch until bright green and tender-crisp, approximately *1½–2 minutes*. The stems should be tender but still have a slight crunch, and the leaves should be wilted but not mushy. Drain immediately and keep warm.
10. To serve, assemble in individual bowls: place a layer of blanched **baby bok choy** on the bottom, add a generous portion of steamed rice on top, then arrange the **pork belly** pieces and **daikon** on top of the rice. Spoon the reduced braising sauce over the pork. Garnish with sliced **green onion** tops and toasted **sesame seeds** from *Small Bowl #2*. Serve immediately. The pork should be fork-tender with gelatinous, melt-in-your-mouth fat and a glossy, deep red-brown exterior. The **daikon** should be tender and translucent, having absorbed the rich braising liquid.

Equipment Required

- 5–6 quart heavy-bottomed pot or Dutch oven with lid
- Wooden spoon or silicone spatula for stirring
- Tongs or slotted spoon for handling pork
- Sharp knife and cutting board
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Large mixing bowls (2–3)

Mise en Place

- Cut **pork belly** into uniform 1½–2 inch cubes before beginning
- Measure and set aside: **granulated sugar** (5 Tbsp.) and **Shaoxing wine** (3 Tbsp.) — these are needed during time-sensitive steps
- *Small Bowl #1* — all ingredients added together in step 5: **ginger** (1 inch piece, sliced and smashed), **green onions** (2-inch pieces), smashed **garlic** cloves, **light soy sauce** (2 Tbsp.), **dark soy sauce** (1 Tbsp.), **star anise** (2), **cinnamon stick** (1), **bay leaf** (1), **dried red chilis** (3), and **tangerine peel** (strips from 1 tangerine)
- *Medium Bowl #1* — **daikon radish** sliced into ½ inch rounds
- *Medium Bowl #2* — **baby bok choy** trimmed and quartered lengthwise
- *Small Bowl #2* — garnish: thinly sliced **green onion** tops and toasted **sesame seeds**
- Have hot **water or stock** ready for braising liquid

Ingredient Tips

- **Skin-on pork belly** is essential for authentic texture—the skin becomes gelatinous during braising
- **Rock sugar (bing tang)** can be substituted for granulated sugar for a glossier finish; crush if using large pieces

- **Shaoxing wine** adds depth and neutralizes gamey flavors; dry sherry can substitute if unavailable
- **Dark soy sauce** provides the characteristic deep color; do not omit
- Fresh aromatics are preferred; dried star anise and bay leaves work but fresh ginger and green onions are essential
- **Dried red chilis** add a subtle heat and depth; adjust quantity to taste preference, or remove seeds for milder heat
- **Fresh tangerine peel** adds a bright, citrusy aroma; use only the colored outer peel, avoiding the bitter white pith
- **Daikon radish** adds a mild, slightly sweet flavor and absorbs the rich braising liquid beautifully
- **Baby bok choy** provides a fresh, crisp contrast to the rich pork; look for firm, bright green heads with no yellowing
- **Sesame seeds** should be toasted until golden and fragrant for best flavor; store-bought toasted sesame seeds can be used for convenience
- Use homemade or high-quality stock if available; water works but stock adds depth

Preparation Tips

- Pat **pork belly** thoroughly dry before searing; moisture prevents proper browning
- Render fat slowly during searing—the goal is golden color, not deep browning
- The sugar caramelization step (*chao tang se*) is critical—this creates the signature glossy, deep red-brown color and complex flavor
- Watch the caramel carefully; it can burn quickly. Remove from heat if it darkens too fast
- The caramel should be deep amber/red-brown, not black. Black caramel will taste bitter
- Coat each piece of pork evenly with caramel before adding liquid

- Braise low and slow—the fat should become gelatinous and translucent, not chewy
- Check liquid level periodically; add hot water if needed to maintain coverage
- Remove aromatics before reducing sauce for cleaner presentation
- Reduce sauce until it coats the meat thickly; it should not be runny
- Blanch **baby bok choy** while the sauce reduces to save time; do not overcook—it should be tender-crisp, not mushy
- The finished dish should have a glossy sheen and deep red-brown color
- If caramel darkens too quickly: remove from heat immediately and stir; residual heat will continue cooking
- If pork is tough: continue braising, checking every *15 minutes* until fork-tender
- If sauce is too thin: continue reducing over medium-high heat until it coats the back of a spoon
- If sauce is too thick: add a splash of hot water and stir to combine
- If color is too light: the caramelization step may have been insufficient; ensure sugar reaches deep amber/red-brown
- If fat is chewy: continue braising until it becomes gelatinous and translucent

Make Ahead & Storage

- The braise can be prepared up to *2 days* ahead; flavors deepen overnight
- Cool completely before refrigerating
- Reheat gently in a covered pot over low heat, adding a splash of water if sauce has reduced too much
- The dish does not freeze well due to the delicate texture of the gelatinous fat
- Leftovers keep refrigerated for up to *4 days*

Troubleshooting

- If caramel burns: start over with fresh sugar; burned caramel cannot be salvaged

Serving Suggestions

- Assemble in individual bowls: **baby bok choy** on the bottom, steamed rice in the middle, and the braised **pork belly** and **daikon** on top
- The layered presentation allows the rice to absorb the rich braising sauce while the bok choy provides a fresh, crisp base
- Garnish with sliced **green onion** tops and toasted **sesame seeds** for color, texture, and flavor
- The dish is rich; moderate portions are recommended
- Serve hot; the gelatinous fat should be warm and yielding, and the bok choy should be bright green and tender-crisp