

Braised Pork Belly & Udon Noodle Broth

Braised Pork Belly would have to be my new favourite thing. It is literally so tender it melts in your mouth and nestled in a fragrant broth, with slippery udon noodles, earthy mushrooms, crunchy broccolini and a soft boiled egg it was deliciously light yet ultimately satisfying. I love me a good Japanese soup and this one was a real box ticker!

This recipe can be done in the pressure cooker, slow cooker or stove top. Just be sure to brown your pork strips first for maximum flavour.

Prep time: 20 Minutes

Cooking time: 50 Minutes (pressure cooker) 5 Hours on Low (slow cooker) 2.5 Hours (stove top)

\$\$ Medium Budget

Serves 4

Peanut oil for frying

800gm of Pork Belly Strips, cut in half (these may not always be available so you can ask your butcher to slice a pork belly for you)

2 garlic cloves, peeled

5cm piece of ginger, sliced

2 spring onions, halved

1/2 a cup of Soy Sauce (I like to use Tamari in Japanese cooking but not essential)

1/2 a cup of Mirin

1/2 a cup of cooking sake

1 tbs of rice wine vinegar

1 tbs of sugar

1 litre of chicken stock

1 punnet of fresh shiitake mushrooms, sliced

1 punnet of enoki mushrooms, dirty ends cut off and roughly pulled apart

1 bunch of Broccolini, ends removed and sliced diagonally in half

1 packet of dried Udon Noodles

2 soft boiled eggs, peeled and halved

4 radishes, thinly sliced

2 spring onions, thinly sliced into long strips diagonally

White or black sesame seeds for sprinkling

Sesame oil for drizzling

To prepare the Braised Pork Belly, heat a deep pan or saucepan (or pressure cooker or slow cooker) and add a little oil. Fry the pork belly strips on both sides until golden, remove and set aside on a plate. In the same pan, lightly fry the spring onions, garlic and ginger for a minute or so until aromatic. Pour the soy, mirin, cooking sake & vinegar into a jug and pour into the hot pan along with the chicken stock, stir in the sugar until dissolved and bring the broth up to a simmer. Pop the pork belly strips back in the pot (or pressure cooker/slow cooker) and cover with a tight fitting lid. Allow to simmer gently for 2.5 hours (or follow the timing guide above) until tender. Use a slotted spoon or strainer to remove the pork belly and aromatics from the broth before serving and bring the stock up to a rapid boil so it is piping hot when you ladle it over the ingredients.

While the pork belly is cooking, place the sliced radishes and spring onions into a small bowl and cover with iced water. Drain before serving and set aside for garnish.

When the Braised Pork Belly is done, cook the noodles according to packet instructions. Blanch the broccolini in boiling water for a minute or two, being careful not to overcook as it will cook further in the soup broth.

To serve the soup, place the cooked and drained noodles (refresh under hot running water if they have cooled) in the bottom of four large bowls. Arrange the broccolini, Braised Pork Belly strips and raw mushrooms (delicate Asian mushrooms will cook perfectly in the broth) in groups around the bowl. Ladle over the boiling hot broth and garnish with the radish & spring onion, half a soft boiled egg and sesame seeds. For a lovely flavour burst, drizzle over a little sesame oil and serve immediately.