

PORK BUNS

Prepared by: Matthew Nelson

Source: Momofuku

1 Steamed Bun (recipe follows)
About 1 tablespoon hoisin sauce
3 or 4 slices Quick-Pickled Cucumbers (recipe follows)
3 thick slices pork belly (recipe follows)
1 scant tablespoon thinly sliced scallion (green and white)
Sriracha, for serving

Heat the bun in a steamer on the stovetop. It should be hot to the touch, which will take almost 0 time with just-made buns and 2 to 3 minutes with frozen buns.

Grab the bun from the steamer and flop it open on a plate. Slather the inside with the hoisin sauce, using a pastry brush or the back of a spoon. Arrange the pickles on one side of the fold in the bun and the slices of pork belly on the other. Scatter the belly and pickles with sliced scallion, fold closed, and voila: pork bun. Serve with sriracha.

Steamed Buns

1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon active dry yeast
1 ½ cups waater, at room temperature
4 ¼ cups bread flour
6 tablespoons sugar
3 tablespoons nonfat dry milk powder
1 tablespoon kosher salt
Rounded ½ teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon baking soda
1/3 cup rendered pork fat or vegetable shortening, at room temperature, plus more for shaping the buns, as needed

Stir together the yeast and 1 1/2 cups room temperature water in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with a dough hook. Add the flour, sugar, milk powder, salt, baking powder, baking soda and fat and mix on the lowest speed setting for 8 to 10 minutes. The dough should gather together into a ball on the hook. Lightly oil a large bowl and put the dough in it, turning it over to coat it with the oil. Cover the bowl with a dry kitchen towel and put it in a warm place and let the dough rise until it doubles in size, about 1 hour 15 minutes.

Punch the dough down and turn it out onto a clean work surface. Using a sharp knife, divide the dough in half, then divide each half into 5 equal pieces. Gently roll the pieces into logs, then cut each log into 5 pieces, making 50 pieces total. They should be about the size of a Ping-Pong ball and weigh about 25 grams each. Roll each piece into a ball and set them on baking sheets. Cover them loosely with plastic wrap and let them rise for 30 minutes. While they're rising, cut out fifty 4-inch squares of parchment paper.

After 30 minutes, use a rolling pin to roll each ball into a 4-inch-long oval. Brush lightly with vegetable oil, lay a chopstick horizontally across the center of the oval and fold the oval over onto itself to form a bun.

Gently pull out the chopstick, leaving the bun folded, and transfer it to a square of parchment paper. Put it back under the plastic wrap and form the rest of the buns. Let the buns rest for 30 to 45 minutes: they will rise a little.

Set up a steamer on top of the stove. Working in batches so you don't crowd the steamer, steam the buns on the parchment squares for 10 minutes. Remove the parchment. You can use the buns immediately or allow them to cool completely, then put them in plastic freezer bags and freeze for up to 2 months. Reheat frozen buns in a stove top steamer for 2 to 3 minutes, until puffy, soft, and warmed all the way through. Freeze half the buns in airtight bags for another time.

Quick-Pickled Cucumbers

2 meaty Kirby cucumbers, cut into 1/8-inch-thick disks
1 tablespoon sugar, or more to taste
1 teaspoon kosher salt, or more to taste

Combine the cucumbers with the sugar and salt. Let sit for 5 to 10 minutes.

Tate: if the pickles are too sweet or too salty, put them into a colander, rinse off the seasoning, and dry in a kitchen towel. Taste again and add more sugar or salt as needed. Serve after 5 to 10 minutes, or refrigerate for up to 4 hours.

Pork Belly

One 3-pound slab skinless pork belly
¼ cup kosher salt
¼ cup sugar

Put the pork belly in a roasting pan that holds it snugly, fat side up. Combine 1/2 cup salt and 1/2 cup sugar in a small bowl and rub all over the pork. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 6 hours, and no longer than 24.

Heat the oven to 450°F. Discard any liquid that has accumulated in the roasting pan and put the pork belly in the oven. Cook for 1 hour, basting it with the rendered fat halfway through, until it's golden brown.

Turn the oven temperature down to 250°F and cook until the pork is tender, another 1 hour and 15 minutes or so. Transfer the pork to a plate, decant the fat and the meat juices from the pan and reserve it for the buns. Allow the pork to cool slightly.

When it's cool enough to handle, wrap the pork in plastic wrap or aluminum foil and put it in the fridge until it's thoroughly chilled and firm. (You can skip this step if you're pressed for time, but the only way to get neat, nice-looking slices is to chill the belly thoroughly before slicing it.)

Matthew's Notes: You can substitute butter for the shortening/fat in the buns. You can buy the hoisin sauce. I cooked the pork at 250 for an hour and half instead of an hour. I would make these again.

