

Braised Pork with Plums

Serves 8

Time: 2hrs.

Ingredients:

about 1.6kg/3lb 8oz pork shoulder

5 tbsp rice wine

5 tbsp light soy sauce for flavour, 1 tbsp dark for colour

generous thumb-size piece fresh root ginger

5 garlic cloves

1 red chilli, deseeded and finely chopped

2 tbsp vegetable oil

bunch spring onions, finely sliced

2 star anise

1 ½ tsp five-spice powder

1 cinnamon stick

2 tbsp sugar, any type

1 tbsp tomato purée

500ml chicken stock

6 ripe plums, halved and stoned

Method:

Cut the pork into big pieces about the length of your thumb and twice as wide. Put into a bowl or food bag, and add the wine, soy sauces, half the ginger, half the garlic and half the chilli. Marinate for at least 1 hr or up to 24 hrs.

Heat oven to 160C/140C fan/gas 3, then heat the oil in a large casserole.

Tip in half the spring onions, remaining ginger and garlic, the star anise, five-spice powder and cinnamon. Fry gently until fragrant and soft. Stir in the sugar, turn up the heat, then lift the pork from the marinade and turn in the oniony mix for about 3 mins until the meat is just sealed but not browned. Tip in the marinade, tomato purée and stock, give it a stir, cover, then braise in the oven for 2 hrs.

After the first hr is up, add the plums to the pan. Take the lid off and carry on the cooking, uncovered. The meat should be completely tender, turning golden brown where it breaks the surface of the sauce.

Spoon off any excess fat from the surface, then scoop the meat and plums carefully from the pan with a slotted spoon. Turn up the heat and boil the sauce for 5-10 mins until reduced and slightly syrupy.

Return everything to the pan, gently warm through, then scatter the rest of the spring onions over the top to serve.