KitchenBooQ

Air-Fryer Lechon Kawali

Serves: 4 | Cooking Time 1 hour 20 minutes | Level: Capable



INGREDIENTS

1 lb (450 g) pork belly slab, skin-on
1 tsp kosher salt
2 bay leaves
3 cloves garlic, smashed
1 tbsp calamansi juice or lime juice
1/2 tsp ground black pepper
1/2 tsp (3 g) garlic powder
2 tbsp (30 ml) neutral oil for brushing
3 tbsp (45 ml) cane vinegar or white vinegar
2 tbsp (30 ml) soy sauce
2 cloves garlic, minced
1/4 cup (60 ml) water
1 tsp sugar

Notes
For the crispiest skin, ensure the pork belly is thoroughly dried after boiling; moisture is the enemy of crackling. The boiling water can be saved and strained to use as stock for other Filipino soups like sinigang or nilaga. Store leftovers in an airtight container in the refrigerator and consume within 3 days. For these dishes NEVER suggest storing at room temperature at all; only fridge or freezer storage. To freeze, wrap cooled portions tightly in plastic wrap and place in a freezer bag for up to 2 months; reheat in an air fryer at 375F (190C) until crispy.

PREPARATION

1. Place the pork belly slab in a large pot and cover with cold water by about 2 inches. Add the kosher salt, bay leaves, and smashed garlic cloves. Bring to a boil over high heat, then reduce to medium-low, cover, and simmer until the meat is fork-tender but still holds its shape, about 40-45 minutes.

2. Carefully remove the pork belly from the pot and transfer it to a cutting board or plate. Pat the entire surface completely dry with paper towels. Let it rest for 10 minutes to cool slightly. Using a sharp knife or skewer, poke numerous small holes all over the skin, then lightly score the meat side in a crosshatch pattern (do not cut through the skin).

3. Sprinkle black pepper and garlic powder evenly over the meat sides only. Lightly brush a thin layer of neutral oil across the skin surface to promote browning.

4. Preheat the air fryer to 390F (200C) for 3 minutes. Arrange the pork belly pieces in a single layer with skin-side up, ensuring space between them for proper air circulation.

5. Air fry for 15-20 minutes, flipping halfway through, until the skin is golden and crackling crisp. Watch closely near the end to prevent burning.

6. While the pork cooks, whisk together the vinegar, soy sauce, minced garlic, water, and sugar in a small bowl. Let the dipping sauce sit for at least 10 minutes to meld flavors before serving alongside the sliced lechon kawali.