



Sous vide char siu is a contemporary approach to the classic Chinese BBQ pork dish known for its sweet and savory glaze and red-tinted finish. Unlike traditional methods that involve grilling or roasting, sous vide cooking allows for precise temperature control, ensuring the meat is cooked evenly throughout. This technique locks in the juices, making the pork incredibly tender and flavorful.

Char siu has been a staple in [Chinese cuisine](#) for centuries, often enjoyed in various dishes like bao buns, fried rice, or noodles. By incorporating sous vide into this beloved recipe, home cooks can achieve restaurant-quality results with minimal effort. The combination of sous vide and char siu creates a delicious fusion that's hard to resist.

The use of sous vide does not diminish the flavors of char siu. Instead, it enhances them by allowing the marinade to penetrate deeper into the meat, resulting in a more intense taste. This method also provides the flexibility to experiment with different cuts of pork and marinade variations.

Why Choose Sous Vide for Cooking Char Siu? Benefits Explained

Consistent Results

- **Precision Cooking:** Sous vide allows you to cook the meat to an exact temperature, ensuring even cooking without the risk of overcooking or drying out.
- **Reliable Texture:** Achieve the same tender, juicy texture every time, making your char siu consistently delicious.

Enhanced Flavor

- **Deeper Flavor Penetration:** The vacuum-sealed bag lets the marinade deeply infuse the pork, enhancing its sweet and savory notes.
- **Concentrated Taste:** Cooking in its own juices helps preserve and intensify the natural flavors of the meat.

Time Efficiency and Flexibility

- **Hands-off Cooking:** Sous vide requires minimal monitoring, allowing you to focus on preparing other dishes or simply relax.



- **Flexible Timing:** The wide window for cooking times allows you to leave the meat in the water bath without worrying about it becoming overcooked.

Perfect Glaze Finish

- **Easy Searing:** After sous vide, a quick sear on a hot grill or broiler provides the perfect caramelized finish for the char siu.
- **Glossy Appearance:** Achieve the iconic red-tinted glaze with ease, ensuring an appetizing presentation.

Versatility

- **Cut Options:** Experiment with different cuts, like pork belly or shoulder, to suit your taste preferences while maintaining the integrity of the dish.
- **Marinade Variety:** Easily try new marinades or ingredient combinations to put your own twist on the traditional char siu.

Sous Vide Char Siu Ramen: A Perfect Fusion of Flavors

Imagine combining the savory richness of char siu with the comforting warmth of a bowl of ramen. Sous vide char siu ramen is a delightful fusion that brings together two beloved dishes in perfect harmony. The tender slices of sous vide-cooked pork add depth and flavor to the broth, making each spoonful a savory delight.

To create this dish, start by preparing your favorite ramen broth. You can opt for a classic pork bone broth or try something lighter like miso or soy-based broth. While the broth simmers, prepare the sous vide char siu using your preferred method and marinade. Once the pork is cooked, slice it thinly and add it to the steaming bowls of noodles.

Top your ramen with traditional garnishes like soft-boiled eggs, scallions, and pickled ginger to enhance the flavors. The combination of the flavorful broth, tender pork, and fresh toppings creates a satisfying meal that will impress any ramen lover.

The Best Time and Temperature for Sous Vide Char Siu

Achieving the perfect sous vide char siu involves selecting the right time and temperature to ensure the meat reaches optimal tenderness and flavor. Here's a simple guide to help you get started:



1. Prepare the Pork:

Begin by selecting a quality cut of pork, such as pork shoulder or pork belly, which are ideal for char siu. Trim any excess fat and slice the meat into manageable portions to ensure even cooking.

2. Marinate the Meat:

Create a flavorful marinade using traditional char siu ingredients like hoisin sauce, soy sauce, honey, five-spice powder, and a touch of red food coloring for that classic look. Coat the pork thoroughly and let it marinate in the refrigerator for at least 4 hours, or overnight for more intense flavors.

3. Set the Sous Vide:

Preheat your sous vide machine to 145°F (63°C). This temperature is optimal for achieving tender and juicy char siu without losing its structure.

4. Vacuum Seal:

Place the marinated pork in a vacuum-seal bag, making sure to remove as much air as possible before sealing. This step is crucial for even cooking and to retain the marinade flavors.

5. Cook the Pork:

Submerge the vacuum-sealed bag in the water bath. Cook the pork for 6 to 8 hours. The longer cooking time allows for all the connective tissue to break down, resulting in exceptionally tender meat.

6. Finish with a Sear:

After sous vide cooking, remove the pork from the bag and pat it dry with paper towels. Sear the meat in a hot pan or under a broiler for a few minutes on each side to caramelize the exterior and develop the signature char siu crust.

7. Slice and Serve:



Once seared, let the pork rest for a few minutes before slicing thinly. Serve with your choice of side dishes or incorporate it into recipes like classic char siu bao or the aforementioned ramen.

By following these steps, you'll create irresistibly tender and aromatic sous vide char siu that highlights the harmony between precise cooking techniques and traditional Chinese flavors.

Sous Vide Char Siu Recipe: A Step-by-Step Guide

Creating sous vide char siu is a straightforward process that yields impressive results. Here's a step-by-step guide to help you master this delicious dish:

1. **Prepare the marinade:** Combine ingredients like soy sauce, hoisin sauce, honey, five-spice powder, garlic, and ginger in a bowl. Adjust the seasonings to your liking for a custom flavor profile.
2. **Marinate the pork:** Place your chosen cut of pork, such as pork shoulder or tenderloin, in a resealable bag with the marinade. Ensure the meat is fully coated and refrigerate for at least 4 hours or overnight for maximum flavor infusion.
3. **Seal and sous vide:** Remove the marinated pork from the refrigerator and place it in a vacuum-sealed bag. Submerge the bag in the preheated sous vide water bath and cook for the recommended time and temperature.
4. **Finish with a glaze:** Once the sous vide process is complete, remove the pork from the bag and pat it dry with paper towels. Brush with a glaze made from the reserved marinade and broil or grill until caramelized and slightly charred.
5. **Serve and enjoy:** Slice the char siu thinly and serve with your preferred sides or incorporate it into dishes like ramen or bao buns.

How Long Should You Sous Vide Char Siu for the Perfect Texture?

Achieving the perfect texture for sous vide char siu depends on the cooking time and the cut of pork used. For tender cuts like pork tenderloin, a shorter cooking time of 6 to 8 hours at 140°F (60°C) is usually sufficient to achieve a juicy and soft texture.

For larger, tougher cuts like pork shoulder, consider extending the cooking time to 10 to 12 hours at 150°F (65°C) to allow the collagen to break down and tenderize the meat. This longer cooking process ensures that the pork becomes incredibly tender and easy to slice.



Keep in mind that personal preferences play a role in determining the optimal texture. Some may prefer a firmer bite, while others seek a melt-in-your-mouth experience. Experimenting with different cooking times and temperatures allows you to customize the texture to your liking.

Sous Vide Char Siu vs. Traditional Char Siu: What’s the Difference?

Feature/Aspect	Sous Vide Char Siu	Traditional Char Siu
Cooking Method	Slow cooking in a water bath	Roasting or grilling
Temperature Control	Precise, constant	Variable, manual
Moisture Retention	High, due to vacuum sealing	Moderate, can dry out if overcooked
Texture	Evenly tender and juicy	Can vary, sometimes drier or firmer
Flavor Infusion	Deep, as marination occurs while cooking	Strong, but can be uneven
Hands-on Time	Minimal, mostly setup and finish	More, requires watching and basting
Cooking Time	Several hours	1-2 hours, generally faster
Ease of Use	Beginner-friendly, requires precision setup	Requires skill in roasting/grilling
Equipment Needed	Sous vide machine, vacuum sealer	Oven or grill, roasting pan
Result Consistency	Very consistent across cooks	Can vary with heat and skill levels

Sous vide char siu offers unparalleled consistency and moisture retention, making it ideal for those who prioritize ease and precision. In contrast, traditional char siu provides the rich, caramelized flavors developed through direct exposure to heat, appealing to those who enjoy a more hands-on cooking experience. Both methods have their unique advantages, yielding delicious results with their own distinct characteristics.

Sous Vide Char Siu Temperature Guide: Finding the



Ideal Heat

Finding the ideal temperature for sous vide char siu involves balancing tenderness and safety. For a juicy and slightly pink center, aim for a temperature of around 140°F (60°C). This temperature is safe for consumption and ensures the meat retains its natural moisture.

If you prefer a more well-done texture, consider raising the temperature to 150°F (65°C) or even 160°F (71°C). The higher temperature results in firmer meat with a slightly different flavor profile. Remember that the sous vide method allows you to experiment with different temperatures until you find the perfect match for your taste.

Maintaining a consistent temperature throughout the cooking process is crucial for achieving uniform results. Invest in a reliable sous vide machine with precise temperature control to ensure your char siu turns out flawlessly every time.

Exploring Sous Vide Char Siu Pork Tenderloin: A Tender Cut Option

Pork tenderloin is an excellent choice for sous vide char siu due to its naturally tender nature and ability to absorb flavors effectively. The following steps outline how to make the most out of this tender cut using the sous vide method:

1. **Choose the Right Cut:** Select a high-quality pork tenderloin, ensuring it's fresh and of uniform size to promote even cooking.
2. **Prepare the Marinade:** Blend soy sauce, hoisin sauce, honey, five-spice powder, garlic, and ginger in a mixing bowl. Adjust the quantities to suit your flavor preferences for a personalized taste experience.
3. **Marinate with Care:** Place the pork tenderloin in a resealable bag, making sure it is completely coated with the marinade. Allow the meat to marinate in the refrigerator for at least 4 hours, or overnight for an intensified flavor infusion.
4. **Vacuum Seal:** Remove the marinated tenderloin from the refrigerator and seal it in a vacuum-sealed bag, ensuring no air pockets remain for optimal sous vide cooking.
5. **Sous Vide to Perfection:** Submerge the vacuum-sealed tenderloin in a preheated sous vide water bath, setting the temperature to 140°F (60°C) for a succulent, juicy texture. Cook for approximately 6 to 8 hours.
6. **Finish and Serve:** After sous vide cooking, remove the tenderloin from the bag, pat it dry with paper towels, and brush it with a reserved marinade glaze. Broil or sear the



tenderloin until the surface is nicely caramelized.

7. **Enjoy the Tender Delight:** Once finished, slice the char siu pork tenderloin thinly and serve with your choice of sides, or incorporate it into various dishes to showcase its rich, flavorful taste.

Sous Vide Char Siu Pork Belly: A Rich and Flavorful Alternative

Pork belly offers a rich and succulent alternative for preparing sous vide char siu, with its high fat content ensuring a melt-in-your-mouth texture. To achieve the best results, follow these steps:

1. **Prepare the marinade:** Mix ingredients such as soy sauce, honey, hoisin sauce, five-spice powder, ginger, and garlic in a bowl. Adjust the balance of sweet and savory as per your taste preferences.
2. **Marinate the pork belly:** Place the pork belly in a resealable bag and cover it thoroughly with the marinade. Refrigerate the bag for at least 4 hours or overnight, allowing the flavors to penetrate the layers of fat and meat.
3. **Seal and sous vide:** Remove the pork belly from the refrigerator and seal it in a vacuum bag, ensuring all air is removed. Cook the pork belly in a sous vide water bath set at 160°F (71°C) for 16 to 24 hours, which allows the fat to render and the meat to become exceptionally tender.
4. **Finish with a glaze:** Once cooked, take the pork belly out of the bag and pat it dry with paper towels. Apply a layer of fresh glaze made from the reserved marinade, then broil or grill it on high heat until the exterior is caramelized and slightly crisp.
5. **Slice and serve:** Let the pork belly rest for a few minutes before slicing it into thick pieces. Serve with steamed buns, rice, or noodles to complement its rich flavors and create a satisfying meal.

Sous Vide Char Siu Serious Eats: Expert Tips and Insights

Embarking on the journey of making sous vide char siu can transform your cooking skills, as the meticulous process brings out the best flavors and textures in pork. Here are some expert tips and insights to elevate your sous vide char siu to a professional standard:

1. **Select Quality Pork:** Choosing the right cut is essential. Pork shoulder, tenderloin, or



belly are recommended for their ability to hold flavors and moisture. Fresh, high-quality pork ensures the best results in both taste and texture.

2. **Marinate Thoroughly:** Allow the pork to marinate for at least 12 hours. This extended marinating time ensures that every piece becomes infused with the delicious, complex flavors characteristic of traditional char siu.
3. **Seal Properly:** Ensure that the pork is vacuum-sealed properly to prevent any air from entering the bag. This prevents uneven cooking and contamination, allowing for even heat distribution throughout the meat.
4. **Monitor Temperature Accurately:** Utilize a reliable sous vide device that maintains a consistent temperature throughout the cooking period. Precision is key, as fluctuations can affect meat texture and safety.
5. **Finish with High Heat:** After cooking sous vide, quickly sear the meat on high heat, either using a broiler or grill. This not only ensures the development of a flavorful crust but also enhances the visual appeal of the dish.
6. **Rest Before Serving:** Allow the pork to rest for a few minutes after the high-heat sear. This process helps in the redistribution of juices, ensuring maximum flavor in every bite.

By incorporating these expert recommendations, you can refine your approach and consistently create sous vide char siu that is both authentic and tantalizingly delicious.

Sous Vide Char Siu: The Best Marinades for Authentic Flavor

A delicious marinade is the key to achieving authentic char siu flavor in your sous vide creation. Traditional marinade ingredients include soy sauce, hoisin sauce, honey, five-spice powder, garlic, and ginger. These components work together to create a harmonious balance of sweet, savory, and aromatic flavors.

To customize your marinade, consider adding additional elements like rice wine, oyster sauce, or red food coloring for a vibrant finish. The key is to adjust the proportions to suit your taste preferences, creating a marinade that enhances the natural flavors of the pork.

Allow the pork to marinate for at least four hours or overnight to ensure the flavors penetrate deeply. The extended marinating time contributes to a more intense and satisfying final dish.



Sous Vide Char Siu on Reddit: Top Tips from the Cooking Community

The Reddit cooking community is a treasure trove of advice and firsthand experiences that can enhance your sous vide char siu endeavors. Here are some top tips shared by fellow cooking enthusiasts:

1. **Choose the Right Cut:** Many Redditors suggest experimenting with different cuts of pork to find the best balance of flavor and tenderness. While pork belly is a favorite for its richness, pork shoulder is another popular option due to its marbling and flavor.
2. **Seal the Flavors:** Properly sealing the pork with the marinade is crucial. Ensure that you vacuum-seal the bag tightly to prevent leakage and allow the flavors to fully infuse. Some Reddit users recommend double-bagging as an extra precaution.
3. **Mind the Timing:** While sous vide offers flexibility, timing can still impact texture. Users recommend using a longer cook time for tougher cuts to break down connective tissues and achieve a tender result. Adjust the cooking time based on the thickness and type of pork.
4. **Finish with Flair:** Achieving a perfect char on your char siu is essential for flavor and presentation. Redditors advise patting the pork dry post sous vide before applying a glaze, then using a blowtorch or broiler for that desired caramelized finish.
5. **Flavor Variations:** Don't be afraid to tweak the traditional marinade. Community members suggest experimenting with different spices and sauces, such as adding miso paste or using maple syrup instead of honey, to discover new flavor profiles that suit your palate.
6. **Document Your Process:** Many users track their sous vide experiments by documenting temperature, time, and marinade adjustments. This practice helps refine your technique and remember which combinations yield the best results.

By incorporating these community-driven insights, you can enhance your sous vide char siu preparation, ensuring each batch is better than the last. Join the conversation on Reddit to exchange tips and share your own sous vide triumphs.

How to Finish Your Sous Vide Char Siu with a Perfect Glaze

The final step in creating sous vide char siu is achieving that irresistible glaze that characterizes this dish. After removing the pork from the sous vide bath, brush it generously



with a glaze made from the reserved marinade.

To achieve a beautifully caramelized exterior, broil the glazed pork for a few minutes or use a grill to create those signature char marks. This final step enhances the visual appeal of the dish while adding depth to the flavors.

For an extra layer of flavor, consider finishing the glazed char siu with a sprinkle of sesame seeds or a drizzle of sesame oil. These finishing touches add a delightful contrast to the sweet and savory notes of the glaze.

Sous Vide Char Siu Recipes: Variations for Every Taste

Experimenting with sous vide char siu recipes allows for creativity in the kitchen, catering to diverse palates. Here are a few variations to inspire your next culinary adventure:

1. Sweet and Spicy Char Siu

Ingredients:

- 2 lbs pork shoulder or belly
- 1/2 cup hoisin sauce
- 1/4 cup honey
- 2 tbsp soy sauce
- 1 tbsp sriracha
- 1 tsp five-spice powder
- 3 cloves garlic, minced

Steps:

1. **Marinate:** Combine hoisin sauce, honey, soy sauce, sriracha, five-spice powder, and garlic in a bowl. Coat the pork thoroughly and marinate for at least 4 hours, or overnight.
2. **Sous Vide:** Preheat the sous vide machine to 145°F (63°C). Place the marinated pork in a vacuum-sealed bag and cook for 8 hours.
3. **Finish:** Remove the pork from the bag, pat dry, and brush with reserved marinade. Broil or grill to add a nice caramelized layer.



2. Citrus Char Siu

Ingredients:

- 2 lbs pork belly
- 1/2 cup soy sauce
- 1/4 cup orange juice
- 2 tbsp brown sugar
- 1 tbsp rice wine
- Zest of 1 lime
- 2 cloves garlic, minced

Steps:

1. **Marinate:** In a bowl, mix soy sauce, orange juice, brown sugar, rice wine, lime zest, and garlic. Coat the pork belly evenly and refrigerate for several hours.
2. **Sous Vide:** Set the sous vide to 150°F (65°C). Seal the pork belly in a vacuum-sealed bag and cook for 10 hours.
3. **Finish:** Once cooked, dry the pork, brush with additional marinade, and grill until lightly charred; the citrus notes should shine through.

3. Ginger and Scallion Char Siu

Ingredients:

- 2 lbs pork shoulder
- 1/4 cup soy sauce
- 1/4 cup brown sugar
- 2 tbsp sesame oil
- 2 tbsp grated ginger
- 4 scallions, chopped

Steps:

1. **Marinate:** Combine soy sauce, brown sugar, sesame oil, ginger, and scallions. Marinate the pork shoulder in the mixture for at least 4 hours.
2. **Sous Vide:** Heat the water bath to 140°F (60°C). Place the pork in a sealed bag and immerse it in the sous vide for 8 hours.
3. **Finish:** Remove the pork from the bath, pat dry, and glaze with the remaining



marinade before broiling, achieving a flavorful, fragrant char.

These variations provide a range of flavors and textures, demonstrating the versatile delight of sous vide char siu. Adjust the ingredients and cooking times to align with personal preferences, and enjoy recreating these delicious dishes in your kitchen.

Conclusion

Sous vide char siu offers a delightful fusion of tradition and innovation, allowing you to enjoy the rich flavors of Chinese BBQ with the precision of modern cooking techniques. Whether you're a seasoned chef or a curious home cook, the versatility and convenience of sous vide make it an excellent choice for creating restaurant-quality char siu at home.

By following the step-by-step guide and exploring variations, you'll discover a culinary adventure that delights the senses and impresses your guests. With sous vide char siu in your repertoire, you're well-equipped to elevate your cooking game and savor the delicious results.

To deepen your understanding and skills in sous vide cooking, consider exploring additional resources and engaging with the vibrant cooking community. The world of sous vide offers endless possibilities for culinary exploration and enjoyment.

FAQs

What equipment do I need for sous vide cooking?

To start cooking sous vide, you'll need an immersion circulator, a water bath or large pot, vacuum seal bags or zip-top bags, and a tool to vacuum seal or remove air from the bags. A broiler, grill, or blowtorch is also useful for finishing dishes.

Can I use any cut of pork for sous vide char siu?

Yes, while traditional cuts like pork shoulder and belly are popular for char siu, you can experiment with other cuts, such as pork ribs or loin, to achieve different textures and flavors. Adjust cooking times accordingly to ensure tenderness.



How long should I cook sous vide char siu?

For pork shoulder or belly, cooking sous vide at 165°F (74°C) for 12-24 hours is recommended. The extended time allows collagen to break down, resulting in tender meat. Different cuts may require different times based on their thickness and desired texture.

Is it necessary to marinate the pork before sous vide?

Marinating is highly recommended as it infuses the meat with flavor, making for a more authentic and delicious char siu. A minimum of four hours of marinating time is suggested, but overnight is optimal to let the flavors fully penetrate the meat.

Can I prepare sous vide char siu in advance?

Absolutely! Sous vide char siu can be cooked and then chilled in the refrigerator for up to a week. When you're ready to serve, simply reheat it to serving temperature and apply the final glaze and finish through broiling or grilling.