



Spirit House

Restaurant & Cooking School

The Spirit House is named after the elegant shrines or temples which grace most buildings in Thailand.

There, spirit houses, from the simple to the most dazzling and elaborate, are displayed in the homes of the rich, in humble country dwellings, outside ordinary shops, huge business corporations and luxury hotels.

Every morning throughout Thailand, offerings of flowers, fruit and food are placed on the shrines, incense lit, devout prayers quietly chanted, and perhaps, favours asked of the guardian spirits housed within.

By displaying respect and reverence for these household spirits, peace and prosperity will hopefully be granted to the occupants of the building.

20 Ninderry Road,
(P.O. Box 268)
Yandina. 4561
Sunshine Coast, Queensland

phone/fax: 07 5446 8977

website: www.spirithouse.com.au
e mail: admin@spirithouse.com.au



A wok over a flame - the simplest, quickest method of cooking since ancient times! Sizzle, simmer, stir fry, steam or smoke - the wok really is the most versatile, all-in-one, complete cooking utensil.

Wok cooking has been enthusiastically adopted by Australians. Travel to neighbouring countries like Singapore, Hong Kong, Bali, Thailand, and the influence of Asian migrants on our suburban restaurant scene have all impacted on our acceptance of Asian food.

Our daily meals strongly reflect these Asian influences on our kitchens. Cooking utensils like woks and granite mortar and pestle are now commonplace in many kitchens, while designers of kitchen appliances automatically include a wok burner in modern stove tops.

The following recipes are the most popular from hundreds presented at the Spirit House cooking school over the past six years. The constant demand is for dishes which can be prepared and cooked in about twenty minutes.

Hot Wok consists of:

- Stuff** - equipment and ingredients
- Stirfry** - recipes plus chef's hot tips
- Simmer** - exotic curries, cooking techniques
- Sizzle** - fast, fried food
- Steam & Smoke** - alternative methods of wok use
- Sides** - spicy sauces and side dishes.

So fire up your wok and let's get started!

Hot Tips

Hot Wok

This book is the culmination of many years of Thai cooking classes at the Spirit House. The recipes are easily prepared and cooked, using ingredients readily available from good supermarkets or speciality Asian stores.

Do refer to the 'Hot Tips' column on each page as they contain lots of chef's tips and tricks for buying or storing ingredients and for getting the best results from your wok.

Mortar and Pestle

Wok

Wok Shovel

Bamboo Steamer

Chinese Cleaver

Tamarind

Galangal

Fish Sauce

Palm Sugar

Noodles

Spices

Chilli Jam

Stuff



Stuff... to cook with

These few inexpensive kitchen utensils are all you need.

Wok

A cheap steel wok from an Asian supermarket is the best. If cooking over gas, buy a round bottom wok. If using an electric stove, a flat bottomed wok will 'sit' better on the electric element. Choose a wok with a long wooden handle - they are much easier to use. Don't buy a wok that is heavy when empty!

Granite Mortar and Pestle

An 8" mortar is the best size. Because they are so heavy to lift, a handy tip is to put 'felt stickers' underneath so that you can easily slide it around the kitchen bench without leaving scratch marks.

Chinese Cleaver

Most versatile... the blade can be used for fine slicing, the back of the cleaver for heavy chopping or pounding, and if turned on its side, the flat surface will crush ginger or garlic.

Wok Shovel

Toss, turn and lift food out of the wok. These look like flat shovels with a turned up lip on the sides, long wooden or metal handle.

Wok Sieve

For draining and lifting deep fried food out of the wok, comes with a bamboo or timber long handle and wire basket.

Steamer Basket

Made from woven bamboo or metal, buy several tiers that stack on top of one another. The baskets come in different diameters, so make sure they will 'sit' just inside the top lip of your wok.

Hot Tips

Wok Care

To 'season' your new wok, heat it over a high heat with some vegetable oil. Take off the flame, tip out the oil and wipe all the sides thoroughly with paper towel. Repeat the process. Then wash, and after drying, wipe out with oil again.

When cleaning your wok, don't scour it back to metal. Wash it thoroughly, dry it by putting it back on the hot stove top for a few minutes, then wipe it all over with a little vegetable oil on some paper towel. If you do this after each use, your wok won't rust, and with frequent use it will gradually build up a black surface patina.

Knife Care

Maintain the sharp edge by 'steeling' before each use. Do not put your knives in the dish washer - just wipe well then dry thoroughly. Store in a knife block, not in the kitchen drawer!

Stuff... for the pantry

Spices

Don't buy spices in large quantities as they go musty and lose their flavour over time. Always store in air tight containers away from direct light. Buy spice seeds whole and grind them in spice mill or mortar and pestle when ready to use. Many, such as coriander seeds are roasted first in the oven to bring out their flavours.

Noodles

Store in pantry rice noodles for use in stir fry, bean thread (glass) noodles for coconut based soups and salads, and egg noodles to add to soups and stir fry. All these dried noodles keep well, store as you would pasta.

Soya sauces

There are many bean sauces with colours from yellow through to black. All are very thick and must be spooned from the jar. They add depth and flavour to dishes.

Light Soya is saltier than dark soya and is used for marinades.

Dark Soya is thicker and is used for cooking dark meats.

Here's a list of basic pantry items that are frequently used in most Asian recipes and which will keep for months in your pantry or fridge. Buy them all in Asian supermarkets or at the Spirit House Cooking School.

Coconut Milk: for curries/desserts

Coconut Vinegar: delicate smokey coconut flavour

Crispy Shallots: crispy garnish for stir fry/salads

Fish Sauce: adds the 'salt' to all Asian food

Galangal: related to ginger/turmeric

Jasmine Rice: long grained, delicately perfumed rice

Kecap Manis: soya sauce flavoured with palm sugar

Noodles: rice/egg noodles, for stir fry/laksa/soups

Oyster Sauce: salty flavour for stir fry meats, vegetables

Palm Sugar: rich caramel flavour for sauces/dressings

Roasted Rice Powder: used in many Thai recipes

Roasted Chilli Jam: add to stir fry, soups & dressings

Soya Sauce: for marinades and seasonings

Spices: cloves, coriander seed, mace, cinnamon, star anise, szechwan peppercorns, white peppercorns

Sticky Rice: glutinous rice- for savoury/desserts

Tamarind: adds 'tartness' to curries/sauces & dressings

Vegetable Oil: for all Asian cooking



Successful stirfry is all about **speed and heat** for the food to remain crunchy and full of flavour.

Chef's Tips for Successful Stir Fry

Use a good quality vegetable oil, such as peanut or canola oil. Never use cold pressed oils, like olive oil or sesame oil - they are not suitable for heating to high temperatures. Have the oil smoking hot - if the wok is not hot enough, the ingredients will start to 'stew'.

Choose ingredients that require only a limited cooking time. Slice meat into thin, bite size pieces which will cook through quickly.

Most importantly - don't overcrowd the wok! If cooking for more than two, stir fry one batch, put aside in warm place, then quickly do the next serve.

Don't put too many sauces in the dish - usually 2 sauces are enough. All the sauces are then balanced by adding a little shaved palm sugar to taste to the wok.

Try these sauce combinations -

- fish sauce and oyster sauce
- fish sauce and kecap manis
- yellow bean sauce and oyster sauce
- tamarind water and fish sauce

Add fragrant seasonings such as -

- garlic, lemon grass, ginger which have very aromatic flavours.
- shredded leaves of Kaffir lime, Thai/holy/ lemon basil, mint
- crunchy garnishes - crushed peanuts, cashews, crispy shallots will all add textural interest.
- different varieties of chillies give both heat and flavour.

Hot Tips

Stir Fry

Cooking time for stir fry is minimal, there is no time to say "Oh, I've forgotten to chop the garlic!"

So have all ingredients ready next to the stove top before you start to heat the oil - meat and vegetables chopped or sliced, seasonings prepared, bottles of sauces ready opened, shaved palm sugar ready to adjust the flavours at the end of the cooking time.

Prawns in Tamarind Sauce

Satay Beef with Pumpkin and Kaffir Lime Leaf

Vietnamese Lemon Grass Pork

Rice Noodles with Tamarind Prawns

Stir Fry Sugar Snap Peas

Stir Fry Water Spinach

Stir Fry of Pork, Pineapple, Ginger & Yellow Bean Sauce

Stir Fry of Chicken, Thai Basil & Kaffir Lime Leaves

Stir Fry of Pork with Roasted Chilli Jam & Cashews

Prawns & Asian Greens with Roast Pork, Basil & Noodles

Pork & Snake Beans

Phad Thai

Sesame Lemon Chicken

Stir Fry Vegetables and Tofu

Chicken, Ginger, Asparagus & Cashews

Chicken with Green Peppercorns & Curry Paste

Indonesian Sweet Chilli Squid

Stir Fry



Prawns in Tamarind Sauce

[serves 4]

20 green king prawns, peeled and deveined, leave head and tail intact
1 onion, finely sliced
2 tablespoons finely chopped garlic
1-2 red chillies, seeded and sliced
¼ cup tamarind water (see hot tip)
2 tablespoons palm sugar
2 tablespoons fish sauce
2 spring onions, sliced for garnish
fresh coriander leaves for garnish

Heat 2 tablespoons vegetable oil in wok until smoking.

Add onion and chilli, stir fry 30 seconds, add prawns and garlic, stir fry until prawns are just starting to colour.

Add tamarind water, palm sugar and fish sauce, stir fry until prawns are cooked and sauce is thick. Only takes a few minutes.

Transfer to serving plate and garnish with spring onions and coriander leaves.

Hot Tips

Tamarind

Tamarind comes from the bean like pod of the tamarind tree. The sweet-sour flavour is the basis of many sauces and is used to give the sour flavour to Asian dishes.

Buy tamarind pulp in blocks from your local Asian supermarket, wrap in cling wrap and store the block in your fridge - keeps for months.

To make Tamarind Water:

Put 1 tablespoon of tamarind pulp in a bowl, pour in half a cup of boiling water. When cool, mash pulp with a fork and strain the liquid through a sieve. Retain this liquid, discard the tamarind seeds and skins.

Satay Beef with Pumpkin and kaffir lime leaf

[serves 2]

Stir frying Beef

Beef has a tendency to lose a lot of juice during the stir frying process which tends to "stew" the meat and vegetables. To avoid ending up with a stewed mess, stir fry the beef first, set aside and keep warm, then quickly stir fry the Asian greens and suitable vegetables in a tablespoon of vegetable oil and a few drops of sesame oil. Serve beef stir fry and vegetables with steamed jasmine rice.

Peanuts

Really a legume, not a nut, as they grow underground, peanuts are extensively used in Asian cuisines as a source of oil, and to add 'crunch' as a garnish.

Because they do not burn at high temperatures, they are great in stir fries.

Peanuts also form the base of satay sauce and gado-gado.

To cook raw peanuts, deep fry in vegetable oil in a wok on low heat for about 10 minutes. Drain on paper towel.

350 gms eye fillet, sirloin or other tender cut, sliced into stir fry strips
 1 cup of steamed pumpkin, cut into 2.5 cms dice
 100 gms snow peas, sliced
 1 tablespoon red curry paste
 ¼ cup coconut cream
 1 tablespoon fish sauce
 1 tablespoon kecap manis
 2 tablespoons roasted crushed peanuts
 1 tablespoon kaffir lime leaves, shredded finely
 1 tablespoon vegetable oil

Heat oil in wok until smoking, add beef and stir fry until brown. Add curry paste, stir fry for a few minutes until fragrant.

Add coconut cream, fish sauce, kecap manis, pumpkin, snow peas and stir fry until heated through.

Transfer to serving plate, sprinkle with peanuts and kaffir lime leaf.



Vietnamese Lemon Grass Pork

[serves 4]

Marinade:

- 4 cloves of garlic, chopped
- 2 tablespoons fish sauce
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- 1 teaspoon of corn or rice flour
- ½ teaspoon ground white pepper
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 500 gm of boneless pork cut into 2 cm cubes

To make marinade, stir all the marinade ingredients in a large bowl and add pork. Toss to coat evenly and refrigerate for 2 hours.

- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 2 cloves of garlic
- 2 golden shallots, finely sliced
- 4 stalks of lemon grass, finely chopped
- 1 green chilli, chopped
- ½ red capsicum, thinly sliced
- ½ carrot, julienned
- 1 tablespoon fish sauce
- 1 tablespoon palm sugar
- ¼ cup of chicken stock or water
- ¼ cup sliced green shallots

Heat oil in a wok, stir fry the garlic, shallots and lemon grass until golden. Add the pork with its marinade and stir fry for 5 minutes. Add the fish sauce and palm sugar and stir fry until the pork is fully cooked. Add the stock or water if it becomes too sticky.

Add capsicum and carrot and stir fry to heat through. Transfer to serving plates and sprinkle with green shallots.

Hot Tips

Rice Flour

Ground from short grain rice, it has a fine light texture and is used in noodles, pastries.

Red and Golden Shallots

These look like a large clove of garlic but have a red or golden skin. If you can't buy them from your greengrocer, you can substitute with a red onion. Do not use long green shallots - they are really spring onions.

Shallot Curls

Cut the white part off the bottom of the shallot, and using the green part only cut the shallot into long, thin strips. Place in a bowl of iced water, they should curl within about 10 minutes. Drain off iced water, if not using immediately, store in sealed container in fridge. These can be made 24 hours before use.

Rice Noodles with Tamarind Prawns

[serves 4]

Rice Noodles

Made from rice flour, noodles are produced in sheets, then cut at three different widths. 2-3 cms for flat noodles, 5 mms for narrow noodles and 1-2 mms for thin noodles.

Packages of fresh rice noodles are available in Asian supermarkets. They can be cut to any width or filled with meat and vegetables and steamed as rice rolls. Fresh noodles will only keep for a few days refrigerated.

Dried rice noodles should be just rinsed and softened in hot water then added at the last minute to a soup or stir fry.

Spice Paste:

3 dried red chillies, seeded
3 golden shallots, sliced
6 garlic cloves, chopped
¼ teaspoon of white pepper
½ teaspoon of salt

To make spice paste, soak the dried chillies in hot water for ten minutes, then drain and chop finely. Combine in mortar and pestle with the shallots, garlic, pepper and salt. Pound to a paste.

250 gm dried thin rice noodles
2 tablespoons vegetable oil
16 green prawns, peeled and butter flied
¼ cup of palm sugar
¼ cup of tamarind water
¼ cup of fish sauce
1 cup of bean sprouts
¼ cup of garlic chives
½ cup of mint leaves

Soak noodles in hot tap water for 10 minutes until just softened, drain.

Heat the oil and stir fry the prawns until just cooked, remove from wok and set aside. Add the spice paste and stir fry until fragrant. Add the palm sugar, tamarind water and fish sauce. Bring to boil and cook for one minute.

Add noodles and stir fry until noodles have absorbed the sauce, add prawns, bean sprouts and chives, stir to combine.

Transfer to serving bowls and top with the mint leaves. Serve with wedges of lime.



Stir Fry Sugar Snap Peas & Baby Corn

[serves 4]

1 tablespoon vegetable oil
375 gms of sugar snap peas
1 tray of baby corn or 2 cobs of corn, kernels removed
1 tablespoon soya sauce
1 tablespoon shaoxing rice wine
½ teaspoon sesame oil
1 tablespoon toasted sesame seeds
white pepper to season

Heat oil in a wok until just starting to smoke, add the vegetables and stir fry a few minutes.

Add soya sauce, shaoxing wine and sesame oil.

Stir fry to combine.

Transfer to serving plate and sprinkle with sesame seeds and white pepper.

Hot Tips

Shaoxing Rice Wine

Shaoxing or Chinese rice wine is traditionally made in a city of that name south of Shanghai.

It has a lovely amber colour with a rich, slightly sweetish flavour. It is a fermented sherry like wine made from glutinous rice and mineral rich water from Lake Jiang. The wine is allowed to ferment in huge pottery jars which are covered with lotus leaves, sealed with ceramic covers, then covered in mud and allowed to age, sometimes up to ten years.

There are three different grades or qualities. Ask for Shaoxing wine in your Asian super-market, make sure you buy 'drinking' quality.

Substitute with dry sherry if unavailable. Do not confuse with 'Mirin' which is a golden, sweet rice wine from Japan.

Stir Fry Water Spinach

with Yellow Bean Sauce & Golden Garlic

[serves 4]

Water Spinach

Growing prolifically in every swampy area throughout Asia, this leafy, highly nutritious vegetable is cooked like spinach, added to soups and stir fries.

The leaves are long, pointed, dark green, the stems are hollow and pale green. It is related to the 'morning glory vine', not to spinach, and is sometimes called 'swamp cabbage'. In Thailand it is called "Pak Boong" and to watch it cooked is a spectacle in itself.

In a local market, order a dish of "pak boong fai dang" (literally water spinach with red fire). The spinach is cooked very quickly in an extremely hot wok which erupts in flame. The chef plays to the audience and tosses the flaming pak boong across the room or street into another wok or dish - great street theatre!

Buy water spinach in specialised Asian green grocers, if unavailable, substitute with baby spinach leaves.

- 1 bunch of water spinach or similar Asian greens
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 2 tablespoons garlic, roughly chopped
- 2 tablespoons yellow bean sauce
- freshly ground white pepper
- 1 teaspoon white sugar
- 1-2 chopped red chillies to taste

Wash and trim the water spinach into 5 cms pieces.

Heat oil in wok and fry garlic on a gentle heat until starting to colour slightly.

Add water spinach and toss until just starting to wilt.

Add remaining ingredients and toss to combine.



Stir Fry of Pork

with Pineapple, Ginger & Yellow Bean Sauce

[serves 4]

- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh garlic
- 1 tablespoon finely shredded ginger
- 500 gms of pork fillet, chopped into small bite sized pieces
- 2 tablespoons yellow bean sauce
- 2 tablespoons oyster sauce
- 2 tablespoons palm sugar
- 1 red capsicum cut into thin strips
- ½ fresh pineapple, peeled, cored and cut into chunks
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground white peppercorns
- ½ bunch green shallots, cut into slices

Heat oil in wok until smoking. Stir fry garlic briefly until golden.

Add pork and ginger, stir fry until starts to colour.

Add yellow bean sauce, oyster sauce, palm sugar and stir fry until pork is cooked.

Add capsicum and pineapple, stir fry for one minute.

Add white pepper and shallots, toss briefly.

Transfer to serving platter, serve with steamed jasmine rice.

Hot Tips

Yellow Bean Sauce

There are many bean sauces with colours from yellow through to black. They add depth and an earthy flavour to dishes.

The sauce is made by salting and fermenting split and crushed soya beans.

All bean sauces are very thick and must be spooned from the jar.

Oyster Sauce

A rich, salty sauce made from ground oysters that have been boiled, dried, then blended with soya sauce and cooked into a thick sauce.

It is a highly prized seasoning, for its distinctive taste and colour and is well regarded by Buddhists, because the oyster is a permitted food in their vegetarian diet.

Stir Fry of Chicken, Thai Basil & Kaffir Lime Leaves

[serves 4]

Sweet Soya Sauce or Kecap Manis

An Indonesian staple sauce, Kecap Manis is predominately used in dipping sauces and marinades.

This soya sauce is very thick, perfumed with cassia bark and thickened with palm sugar.

Kecap is a Malaysian word from which we have adapted the word "ketchup".

2 tablespoons vegetable oil
 2 tablespoons chopped fresh garlic
 4 golden or red shallots, finely sliced
 500 gms of boneless chicken thigh, chopped into bite sized pieces
 2 red chillies, chopped finely
 2 green chillies, chopped finely
 2 kaffir lime leaves, finely shredded
 2 tablespoons kecap manis
 1 cup Thai basil (if unavailable, substitute with sweet basil)
 2 tablespoons fish sauce
 freshly ground white pepper to season

Heat oil in wok until smoking. Add shallots, stir fry briefly, add garlic, stir fry until golden.

Add chicken, stir fry a minute or two until it is coloured.

Toss in chillies, kaffir lime leaf, kecap manis, fish sauce and stir fry until chicken is cooked.

Add basil and stir fry until wilted. Sprinkle on white pepper and serve immediately.



Stir fry of Pork

with Roasted Chilli Jam & Cashews

[serves 4]

- 1 tablespoon chopped garlic
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 500 gms pork fillet cut into small strips
- 1 tablespoon roasted chilli jam
- 1 tablespoon fish sauce
- 1 tablespoon oyster sauce
- 1 tablespoon palm sugar
- ½ cup roasted cashews
- 2 cups vegetables - eg: snow peas, red capsicum, broccolini

In a wok heat the oil, add garlic and fry until golden.

Add pork and fry until coloured.

Add chilli jam and fry until fragrant. If necessary, add a little water to moisten.

Add the fish and oyster sauces, sugar and cashews, stir fry until meat is cooked.

Mix in the vegetables, stir fry for a further minute.
Serve immediately.

Hot Tips

Roasted Chilli Paste/Jam

Chilli jam is used in Tom Yum soups and many salad dressings.

Don't confuse this product with Sambal Olek or ground chillies.

While you can make chilli jam yourself, the commercial varieties are just as good and will save you a lot of time.

Look for "Chilli Paste with Soya Bean Oil" in your Asian super-market. The imported brand we recommend is 'Pantainorasingh' from Thailand.

Spirit House makes its own roasted chilli jam - available from gourmet stockists - see list on www.spirithouse.com.au

Prawns & Asian Greens

with Roast Pork, Basil & Noodles

[serves 2]

Chinese Roast Pork

- 1 tablespoon whiskey
- 1 tablespoon light soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon crushed garlic
- 1 tablespoon crushed ginger
- 1 tablespoon hoisin sauce
- 1 teaspoon dark soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon oyster sauce

Mix all ingredients together in bowl. Rub all ingredients into a pork neck.

Allow to marinate for 2 hours at room temperature. In 250 degree oven, roast on rack for 40 minutes, turning every 10 minutes and basting continuously with remainder of marinade. Allow to cool before slicing.

Sesame Oil

The seeds are ground into two oils - one light & almost flavourless, good for salads and frying. The other is dark, rich, dense in flavour and made from pressed toasted seeds.

Sesame oil is so concentrated that only a few drops are needed. It is not used as a cooking oil, but a few drops are added at the end of cooking as a flavour highlight.

The cold pressed sesame oil available from health food stores will not produce the authentic flavour needed for Asian dishes - do not use

- 10 green king prawns
- 100 gms Chinese roast pork (recipe in hot tips column)
- 1 teaspoon sesame oil
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 3 red shallots, finely sliced
- 2 tablespoons stir fry paste (or red curry paste)
- ½ packet flat rice noodles, softened in hot water
- 2 red chillies, julienned
- 4 snow peas, halved
- 2 heads bok choy, leaves separated
- ½ cup basil leaves

Dressing:

- 2 tablespoons tamarind water
- 1 tablespoon palm sugar
- 2 tablespoons lime juice
- 1 tablespoon fish sauce
- 1 teaspoon ginger, finely chopped

Whisk all ingredients for dressing together first.

Shell and deveined prawns, then butterfly open.

Cut pork into small, thin slices.

Heat oils in wok, fry the shallots for one minutes, then add stir fry paste and cook until fragrant.

Add all other ingredients except the basil and cook over a high heat for two minutes. Stir in basil and serve immediately.



Pork & Snake Beans

in Stir Fry Paste

[serves 4]

- 500 gms of pork fillet cut into stir fry strips
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 2 cloves crushed garlic
- 3 tablespoons stir fry paste (see recipe in hot tips column)
- 2 tablespoons fish sauce
- 1 tablespoon palm sugar
- 2 tablespoons water or chicken stock
- 200 gms of snake beans cut into 3 cm lengths
- 6 Kaffir lime leaves, finely sliced

In wok, heat oil, add garlic and fry until golden. Add pork and fry until it begins to colour. Add stirfry paste, fry for 5-8 minutes until fragrant. Add fish sauce, sugar, water or stock and beans. Simmer for 5 minutes until beans are tender.

Just before serving mix in kaffir lime leaves, fry for a further 2-3 minutes. The dish will be quite rich and salty. Serve immediately.

Delicious with coconut rice.

Coconut Rice: For 4 servings:

Jasmine rice enriched with coconut milk, sugar and salt, resulting in a creamy texture, sweet and fragrant with coconut.

- 1 ½ cups jasmine rice
- 1 can coconut milk
- ¾ cup of water
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- pinch salt

Rinse the rice. Put the coconut milk, water sugar and salt in saucepan, stir until the sugar is dissolved and the liquid is well blended. Add the rice and cook as for jasmine rice recipe (see page 61).

Hot Tips

Thai Stir Fry Paste

With a peppery taste that is especially suited with pork, chicken and fish, this paste makes a great base for stir fries.

- 6 large dried, red, chillies
- 1 teaspoon shrimp paste, roasted
- 1 teaspoon whole white peppercorns
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ tablespoon minced fresh lime peel
- 1 large stalk lemon grass, lower stalk trimmed, finely sliced
- 1 and ½ teaspoons finely chopped, peeled galangal
- ¼ cup chopped garlic
- ½ cup chopped red onion

Soak chillies in warm water. Grind peppercorns in mortar and pestle or spice mill, add salt. Finely chop remaining ingredients and transfer to food processor with the ground spices and shrimp paste. Process to a paste using some of the soaking water from the chillies if necessary.

NB. Spirit House makes this Stir Fry Paste, packed in frozen sachets - available from good gourmet stockists or the Cooking School."

Phad Thai

[serves 4]

Prik Nam Som Sauce

This lovely little condiment keeps, unrefrigerated, for weeks and is a delicious side dish with any stirfry or fried rice.

¼ cup coconut vinegar
1 tablespoon sliced red & green chillies
splash fish sauce
Combine all in bowl.

Pickled Cabbage

Pickling vegetables in vinegar, salt or oil is very common in Asia as it is a way of preserving vegetables after harvest time to be used later in the year when in short supply. Pickled cabbage is used in noodle soups to add flavour. Look for it in Asian supermarkets – it is usually packed in squat, dark brown jars.

Chilli Flakes

These are dried chillies broken into small pieces and provide instant flavour and texture. They are a great standby for busy cooks if fresh chillies are not available. Chilli powder is simply the dried, ground flesh and seeds of red chillies.

350 gms rice noodles
1 tablespoon chopped garlic
250 gms green prawns, or finely chopped chicken/pork
2 eggs, lightly beaten
1 tablespoon dried shrimp, rinsed
1 tablespoon pickled cabbage
75 gms tofu, cut into small dice
½ teaspoon dried chilli flakes
½ cup finely sliced onion
2 tablespoons palm sugar
100 mls tamarind water
2 tablespoons fish sauce
2 cups bean sprouts
½ cup roasted unsalted peanuts, coarsely ground
coriander leaves to garnish
prik nam som sauce (see recipe in hot tips column)

Soak rice noodles in warm water until soft, then drain. Heat one tablespoon oil in wok and cook eggs until scrambled – set aside.

Heat 2 tablespoons oil in wok and fry onion, add prawns and garlic, stir briefly.

Add dried shrimp, pickled cabbage, tofu and dried chilli, stir briefly.

Add palm sugar, soaked noodles, half the bean sprouts, half the peanuts, tamarind water and fish sauce. Toss well until the noodles are heated through. Add egg mixture toss briefly.

Serve garnished with remaining bean sprouts, peanuts and coriander. Serve with Prik Nam Som (see hot tips column).



Sesame Lemon Chicken

with Ginger, Soya and Mirin

[serves 2]

350 gms chicken breast or thigh meat, cut into stir fry strips
1 tablespoon ginger, finely chopped
1 tablespoon vegetable oil
2 cups seasonal vegetables, - e.g. - asparagus, sugar snap peas, baby corn
2 tablespoons soya sauce
1 tablespoon mirin
1 tablespoon oyster sauce
1 teaspoon sesame oil
juice and zest of 1 lemon
1 tablespoon toasted sesame seeds for garnish
2 green shallots, finely sliced for garnish

Toss chicken with ginger and 1 tablespoon of the soya sauce. Set aside.

Heat oil to medium, stir fry chicken until just cooked.
Add vegetables and stir fry a few minutes.

Add soya, mirin, oyster sauce, sesame oil and lemon juice and zest. Stir fry until sauce has reduced.

Transfer to serving plate and garnish with sesame seeds and shallot.

Serve with steamed jasmine rice.

Hot Tips

Mirin

A Japanese sweet rice wine used only for cooking. When mixed with equal quantities of soya sauce it makes teriyaki sauce. When buying, look for naturally brewed Mirin, also called Hon-Mirin. Sweet sherry can be used as a substitute but will not give the same flavour

Chicken

Use chicken thigh meat rather than breast meat in Asian recipes.

Thigh meat has a higher fat content which provides more moisture and flavour. Chicken breast meat is very lean and, if overcooked, dries out quickly losing all flavour.

If you prefer to use breast meat, take extra care not to overcook.

Stir fry Vegetables and Tofu

with Coriander Garlic Paste

[Serves 4]

Bean Curd or Tofu

Fresh bean curd, or tofu, as the Japanese call it, is processed from soya beans. It was first processed in China between 200 - 900 A.D. A high protein food, tofu has a delicate flavour with a texture smooth like baked custard.

Store, covered with water, in the fridge for 2-3 days, changing the water daily.

Dried bean curd is sold in flat sheets and needs no refrigeration. It has to be soaked before using. It can be used in a similar fashion as spring roll wrappers, has a delicate crunchy texture when deep fried.

- 2 tablespoons coriander garlic paste (see below)
- 1 block of firm tofu cut into 2.5 cms cubes
- 1 onion, sliced
- ½ cup of sliced button mushrooms
- 1 red capsicum cut into strips
- 1 bunch pak choy, washed and cleaned
- 100 gms snow peas, topped and tailed
- 2 tablespoons oyster sauce
- 2 tablespoons fish sauce
- 1 teaspoon palm sugar
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- crispy shallots for garnish

Heat oil to medium heat in wok. Add coriander garlic paste and stir fry until fragrant. Add tofu, mushrooms, capsicum and stir fry for about 2 minutes.

Add remaining ingredients, stir fry until pak choy is wilted.

Garnish with crispy shallots, serve with steamed rice or over flat rice noodles.

Coriander Garlic Paste:

This versatile paste will add a lovely 'zing' to any stir fry.

- ½ cup cleaned coriander root and stem
- ¼ cup peeled garlic, roughly chopped
- 1 teaspoon whole white peppercorns

Combine all ingredients in mortar and pestle and pound to a paste. Keeps 3-4 days in refrigerator.



Chicken, Ginger, Asparagus & Cashews

[serves 4]

3 tablespoons of vegetable oil
500 gms of chicken thigh meat, thinly sliced
1 red onion, finely sliced
6 cloves of garlic, finely chopped
½ teaspoon freshly ground white pepper
2 tablespoons finely julienned ginger
2 tablespoons oyster sauce
2 tablespoons fish sauce
1 tablespoon palm sugar
1 bunch asparagus, cut in half
1 red capsicum, cut into strips
spring onion, sliced
½ cup roasted cashews

In wok, heat vegetable oil until hot. Add onion and chicken, stir fry one minute.

Add garlic and ginger, stir fry one minute.

Add oyster sauce, fish sauce, sugar and pepper, stir fry until the chicken is just cooked.

Add asparagus and red capsicum, stir fry one minutes.
Toss through cashews.

Transfer to serving plate, garnish with spring onion slices.

Hot Tips

Cashew Nut

Comes from the Amazon region but was successfully transplanted to India by the Portuguese in the 16th Century. India and East Africa are the world's largest producers and the cashew is second only to the almond in world nut trade. The cashew is related to poison ivy, which is why cashews are never sold in the shell as it contains an irritating oil which must be processed off by heating before the seed can be extracted. The oil is used in paint, varnish and rocket lubricants.

Asparagus

Originating in the eastern Mediterranean, asparagus requires a cold season to grow and is harvested in Spring. It takes 5 years to develop asparagus, and is always cut by hand. White asparagus is harvested while the shoot is still below the ground, green asparagus is cut when the shoots are about 20 cms above ground.

Will not keep, only store in fridge for up to 2 days. Don't buy if stems are dried out or woody, or the tips are slimy or wrinkled.

Chicken with Green Peppercorns & Curry Paste

[serves 4]

Fish Sauce

Fish sauce smells like something you left in the esky from your last fishing trip. Indeed, that's nearly how it's made - by fermenting anchovies packed with salt.

Fish sauce provides the "salty" taste in Thai food and helps to balance the other main flavours.

Fortunately, fish sauce's smell is much worse than its taste. It is used in nearly every Thai dish, much like salt is used in western cooking - in fact, even the ancient Romans made a similar sauce.

Buy it in a bottle from your supermarket, it keeps for months. There are various grades of fish sauce, choose a top 'table' variety.

The best brand is covered in large Thai writing but on the side of the green and white label is written "Squid Brand" - get it in Asian supermarkets.

500 gms chicken thigh meat, cut into thin strips
 2 tablespoons green peppercorns in brine
 1 tablespoon red curry paste
 ½ cup of coconut cream
 1 tablespoon palm sugar
 1 tablespoon fish sauce
 ½ cup Thai or sweet basil leaves
 2 tablespoons vegetable oil

Crush green peppercorns in mortar, toss through chicken pieces to coat thoroughly.

Heat oil in wok, stir fry until chicken until begins to colour. Add curry paste and stir fry until fragrant, about 4-5 minutes.

Add coconut cream, fish sauce and palm sugar, continue to stir fry until chicken is cooked.

Tear in basil leaves, stir fry until wilted - about 30 seconds. Serve with steamed jasmine rice.



Indonesian Sweet Chilli Squid

[Serves 4]

- 1 red onion, diced
- 6 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1 stalk lemon grass, finely chopped
- 6 red chillies, deseeded and chopped
- 500 gms squid, cut Chinese style (see hot tips column)
- 2 tablespoons kecap manis
- 1 tablespoon tamarind water
- 1 tablespoon fish sauce
- 1 red capsicum, cut into thin strips
- 200 gms snow peas, topped and tailed
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil

To Prepare Squid:

Defrost frozen squid tubes, open the tubes and lay flat on cutting board with inside surface facing you. There is a very thin membrane on the surface which is hard to see - scrape the surface with a knife which will break up this membrane. Using fingers, pull off as much of the membrane as possible.

Cut the squid Chinese style. (see hot tips column)

Put onion, garlic, lemon grass and chillies in mortar and pestle, pound to paste. Heat vegetable oil in wok to medium heat, add paste and stir fry for about 2 minutes. Add squid, turn up the heat to high, stir fry until squid curls, about 3-5 minutes. Add capsicum, snow peas, tamarind water, fish sauce and kecap manis. Stir fry all briefly until coated with sauce.

Serve over bed of rice and garnish with slices of cucumber, tomato, green shallot curls and Indonesian prawn crackers (krupuks).

Hot Tips

To Cut Squid Chinese Style:

Using a flexible knife held on a slight angle, score the surface in a criss cross fashion. Cut the squid tubes into triangles - about 4-6 triangles from each squid tube.

By removing the membrane, scoring the skin, then cooking very fast in your wok, the squid will be very tender.

Krupuks

An Indonesian cracker made from corn flour pounded with fish, vegetables or prawns then dried in the sun.

When deep fried in hot oil, they puff up.

Available in packets from Asian super-markets, they keep indefinitely in airtight containers

Green Curry of Ocean Trout
Jungle Curry of Duck
Penang style Chicken Curry
Chu Chee Curry of Prawns
Yellow Curry Chicken with Cucumber Relish
Seafood Laksa
Massaman Lamb Curry
Coconut Salad of Prawns
Red Curry of Pineapple & Mussels
Green Seafood Curry
Red Curry of Pork, Pineapple & Ginger

Simmer



Green Curry of Ocean Trout

with Krachai & Basil [serves 4]

- 500 gms of ocean trout, skinned, cut into serving portions
- 1 cup coconut milk
- 2 tablespoons green curry paste
- 1 tablespoon palm sugar
- 3 kaffir lime leaves, finely shredded
- 1 tablespoon shredded krachai
- 1 tablespoon fish sauce
- ½ cup sweet basil leaves

Do not shake the tin of coconut cream. Skim the thick cream from the top, there should be about half a cup, add to the wok and heat until sizzling.

Add green curry paste and cook over gently heat until fragrant - about 5 minutes. Add palm sugar, fish sauce, stir until sugar is dissolved.

Add remaining coconut milk, bring to boil, reduce to low heat, add ocean trout, krachai, kaffir lime leaves and simmer gently until fish is cooked.

Stir in basil leaves and serve with steamed jasmine rice.

Hot Tips

Thai Curries

The classic method for cooking Asian style curries is to first 'crack' the coconut cream. This entails simmering the thick cream from the top of the can until all the water is evaporated, leaving just the coconut oil in the wok. To this oil, add the curry paste, fry for about five minutes until fragrant, then add the meat, vegetables and more coconut cream, simmering until all is cooked.

Krachai

Also called lesser galangal, a member of the ginger family, gives a subtle spicy flavour especially to seafood. It is quite aromatic with light brown skin and yellow interior.

Difficult to buy fresh in Australia, so buy pickled in brine - the brand we recommend is "Cock" brand, imported from Thailand. Also spelt "Kachai".

Jungle Curry of Duck

[serves 4]

Shrimp Paste

When the aeroplane door opens at Bangkok airport your first whiff is of rotting tropical vegetation, sewerage and shrimp paste! This vile smelling paste is a staple ingredient in most curry pastes.

Fermented from tiny, salted shrimp, store it in an air tight container or visitors will think something has crawled into your refrigerator and died. How long does it keep? Months probably, but who would know if it's off!

When making curry pastes, shrimp paste is invariably roasted with the other spices. Wrap in foil and place in 180° oven for 5-10 minutes. You will know it's ready when you smell it and it goes crumbly.

Galangal

Related to ginger and turmeric, galangal doesn't taste anything like ginger, having its own unique flavour which can be quite hot. Don't substitute ginger for galangal as this will dramatically alter the final flavours in the dish. Use fresh galangal - peel, slice and store in your freezer. Or buy pickled galangal in jars from your local Asian supermarket. In its powdered form, galangal is often called "laos powder"

1 duck, boned, meat finely sliced
750 mls chicken stock
2 tablespoons fish sauce
2 tablespoons green peppercorns
6 kaffir lime leaves, finely sliced
½ bunch Thai basil leaves
½ bunch snake beans cut into 2.5 cm lengths
2 tablespoons whisky

Jungle Curry Paste:

4 tablespoons fresh green chillies, chopped finely
4 tablespoons golden shallots, chopped finely
4 tablespoons chopped garlic
4 tablespoons galangal, chopped finely
2 tablespoons lemon grass, finely sliced
pinch of sea salt
1 tablespoon shrimp paste roasted

Pound all paste ingredients in mortar to a fine paste.

In wok, heat 2 tablespoons vegetable oil, add the curry paste and fry until fragrant.

Add the fish sauce and continue to fry for another minute.

Add the meat and cook until sealed. Cover with the stock and add the whisky. Simmer for 1 to 2 minutes, or until meat is cooked.

Just before serving add the remaining ingredients and allow to simmer for a few minutes to allow distribution of flavours.



Penang style Chicken Curry

with Green Peppercorns & Pumpkin

[serves 4]

- 1 kg chicken thigh meat, cut into bite size pieces
- 2 teaspoons fresh or tinned, crushed green peppercorns
- 2 cups steamed pumpkin pieces
- ¼ cup of vegetable oil
- ½ cup red curry paste
- 1 ½ cups of coconut cream
- 2 tablespoons palm sugar
- 3 tablespoons fish sauce
- ¾ cup roasted, crushed peanuts
- 1 cup of loosely packed Thai Basil leaves

Rub chicken pieces with crushed peppercorns.

Heat oil in wok, stir fry chicken until well coloured and nearly cooked. Remove from wok, set aside. Drain oil from wok.

Add quarter cup of coconut cream and heat until sizzling. Add curry paste and simmer until fragrant.

Add remaining coconut cream, sugar, fish sauce, peanuts and bring to the boil, stirring well.

Add chicken pieces and pumpkin pieces, simmer until well coated with the sauce and cooked through.

Add basil leaves, stir until wilted. Transfer to serving plate.

Hot Tips

Peppercorns

Before chillies were introduced to Asia, the most important hot spice in Thai cooking was pepper.

It was the first spice to reach the West, references to it have been found in Greek and Roman writings from before the 5th Century.

Peppercorns are the berries of a climbing vine which grows wild in the rain forests of Asia.

Fresh peppercorns are green, black peppercorns are the unripened berries that have been picked and left to dry in the sun. Removing the black outer skin gives you the white peppercorns which are most often used in curry pastes.

Pink peppercorns are the berries of an unrelated South American plant and are milder and sweeter than Asian peppercorns. Buy them all in your local delicatessen.

Chu Chee Curry with Prawns

[serves 4]

Palm Sugar

Palm sugar is widely used in Asian cooking and is processed from palm tree sap. The sap flows from the tapped palm for 4-6 months, then is boiled down in large vats until thick.

It is packed into bamboo tubes or halved coconut shells - so when you buy it in these shapes you know it has been traditionally made. Add it to dressings and sauces to bring out the flavours. It has a fudge like consistency and tastes like caramel or fudge.

You can buy it in jars or packets - the packets are easier to use, as palm sugar is a solid lump. With your knife, shave the sides of the sugar block, then chop the shavings. Like sugar, palm sugar keeps for ages and is best stored in the fridge.

Chu Chee Curry Paste

This curry paste, infused with Kaffir Lime, lemon grass and the exotic Asian ginger, krachai, is used only in fish and seafood dishes.

- 1 can coconut milk
- ¼ cup of Chu Chee curry paste (recipe below)
- 500 gms prawns, shelled and deveined
- 4 tablespoons of fish sauce
- 4 tablespoons of palm sugar
- 6 Kaffir lime leaves, finely sliced
- 4 chillies, stemmed and cut length wise into slithers
- 1 cup Thai basil

Spoon the thick cream from the top of the can of coconut milk into wok on medium heat. Stir in curry paste and bring milk and paste to a low boil. Simmer, stirring constantly, for two minutes.

Stir in rest of the coconut milk, add prawns. Simmer for 2 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add fish sauce, sugar and stir until dissolved. Add lime leaves and chillies, simmer for 1 minute, stirring often. Transfer to serving bowl, garnish with Thai basil.

Chu Chee Curry Paste:

- 10 large dried red chillies
- ½ teaspoon coriander seed, roasted
- ½ teaspoon shrimp paste, roasted
- 16 whole white peppercorns
- 10 fresh Kaffir lime leaves
- ¼ cup of chopped garlic
- 1 tablespoon chopped coriander stems
- ½ tablespoon minced lime zest
- ½ cup chopped red onion
- 1 stalk lemon grass, finely chopped
- 3 tablespoons finely chopped, peeled galangal
- 1 ½ tablespoons finely chopped, peeled krachai

Soak chillies in warm water. Grind coriander seed and peppercorns in mortar and pestle or spice mill. Finely chop remaining ingredients and transfer to food processor with the ground spices and shrimp paste. Process to a paste using some of the soaking water if necessary.



Chicken with Yellow Curry Sauce & Cucumber Relish

[serves 4]

500 gms of chicken thigh meat sliced
250 gms diced potato, parboiled
200 gms green beans, topped and tailed
4 tablespoons of yellow curry paste
500 mls of coconut cream
1 tablespoon of palm sugar
fish sauce to taste
1 tablespoon vegetable oil
coriander to garnish

Heat oil in wok, add 2 tablespoons of the thick cream off the top of the can of the coconut cream. Add curry paste and simmer gently for 5 minutes until fragrant. Season to taste with fish sauce, adjusting the flavours to taste.

Add chicken, potato and beans simmer gently until just cooked, about 5 minutes.

Serve with steamed jasmine rice and a side dish of Cucumber Relish (see page 68)

Hot Tips

Potatoes

A potato low in moisture and sugar is termed "floury". These potatoes are best for baking, mashing and frying. The washed potato available in most supermarkets is called "Coliban" and is a floury variety.

A waxy potato is high in moisture, low in starch and remains firm when boiled. These varieties are best for salads or eating whole. The most commonly available waxy potato is "Desiree", with long, oval shape, pink skin with creamy yellow flesh. The "Kipler" is also a waxy variety, popular with chefs. A "Chat" potato is simply a new, small potato.

Seafood Laksa

[serves 2]

Vietnamese Mint

The most important of Vietnamese herbs, it is served with almost every meal, eaten as a fresh herb or in salads. Highly aromatic, it is extremely easy to grow - just put some stems in a glass of water and it will sprout roots. It makes a great pot specimen, loves the sun and being well watered - it spreads rapidly if unchecked in the garden.

If unavailable, substitute with a combination of coriander and ordinary mint - not quite the same however, as the original! Because it is used always in Laksa it is also called 'laksa leaf'.

375 gms prawns, scallops or squid
 fresh Chinese egg noodles or rice noodles if preferred
 500 mls of coconut milk
 500 mls of chicken or fish stock
 2-3 tablespoons of laksa paste
 1 tablespoon fish sauce to season
 1 teaspoon of palm sugar
 ½ cup Vietnamese mint, finely chopped
 100 gms of bean sprouts
 2 tablespoons of crispy shallots
 2 spring onions, finely diced
 wedges of lime

Skim the thick cream off the top of the coconut milk. Heat the cream in wok, add laksa paste, allowing one tablespoon per person, simmer until fragrant, about 5 minutes.

Add remaining coconut milk and chicken stock. Bring to the boil. Add palm sugar and fish sauce.

Add seafood, reduce heat and simmer gently until cooked.

Blanch noodles in boiling water and divide between the serving bowls.

Pour on laksa sauce and garnish with bean sprouts, crispy shallots, spring onions and lime wedges.



Massaman Lamb Curry

with Sweet Potato

[serves 4]

2 tablespoons vegetable oil
500 gms lamb leg, diced
1 large onion, chopped
1 large sweet potato, cut into bite size dice
500 mls coconut milk
2 tablespoons massaman curry paste
½ cup roasted, unsalted peanuts
2 tablespoons palm sugar
2 tablespoons fish sauce
¼ cup tamarind water

Heat oil in wok and sear meat.

Add onion, cook about ½ minute.

Add enough water to cover, bring to boil and simmer for 15 minutes. Add the potatoes, cover wok with lid or foil and simmer until potatoes are partially cooked. Strain out meat and vegetables, reserve broth.

Place thick cream from the coconut milk in wok, stir in curry paste, cook for 2 minutes. Mix in potatoes, meat and peanuts. Stir in reserved coconut milk, add sugar, fish sauce and tamarind. Stir until sugar is dissolved.

If necessary, stir in as much of the reserved broth to thin the sauce to your taste. Simmer until the potatoes are cooked through.

Serve with steamed jasmine rice.

Hot Tips

Sweet Potato

This tuber is a native of Central America and was introduced to Europe by Christopher Columbus. A staple food in Jamaica and West Indies, also of the Polynesians.

There are 3 varieties of sweet potato commonly used in Australia -

1. The brown skinned sweet potato which is ideal for baking and is soft and moist.
2. The orange skinned or 'kumara' variety which is drier and often used for puddings or candying.
3. The purple skinned one is all purpose and is medium dry.

The brown and purple varieties discolour quickly after being peeled, so drop the peeled pieces into cold water until ready to use.

Store as with potatoes in a cool, dark airy place. Do not buy them if sprouting. Sweet potatoes can be boiled, baked, mashed, fried, candied or made into breads and puddings

Coconut Salad of Prawns

with Lemon Grass & Kaffir Lime

[serves 4]

Kaffir Lime Leaves

Kaffir Lime leaves are readily available either fresh or frozen. Or, buy a kaffir lime tree from any good nursery and have your own fresh supply.

The fruit has little juice, its skin is used for zest in curry pastes and the leaves are used extensively, either whole or shredded, to impart an incomparable flavour.

Unless you are using the kaffir leaf whole in a soup, be sure to remove the stem and spine of the leaf. Doing this will give you two half leaves - slice or chop them finely before blending, as they are tough to process.

Add one kaffir leaf when steaming rice to impart a subtle yet delicious lime flavour to the rice.

To poach the prawns

1 kg green prawns, peel & devein, remove heads but leave tails intact

½ large green chilli, chopped, remove seeds if desired

2 cloves of garlic

2 tablespoons of finely chopped lemon grass

1 tablespoon of palm sugar

1 tablespoon of fish sauce

250 mls of coconut cream

½ tablespoon of lime juice

Pound the green chilli and garlic in a mortar and pestle with a pinch of salt to a paste. Combine in wok the paste, lemon grass, palm sugar, fish sauce and coconut cream. Bring to the boil, stirring until the sugar is dissolved.

Reduce to a simmer and add the prawns. Poach gently until the prawns are just cooked. Remove prawns with a slotted spoon to a large bowl.

Reserve the poaching liquid.

Salad:

½ cup of Thai or sweet basil leaves

4 kaffir lime leaves, finely shredded

2 large red chillis, seeds removed and cut into thin strips

½ cup of coriander leaves

2 golden shallots, finely sliced

Add all the salad ingredients to the bowl of prawns. Add lime juice to the reserved poaching coconut cream. Add enough of this lime coconut cream to the prawn mixture to dress generously. Toss well and transfer to serving plate.



Red Curry of Pineapple & Mussels

[serves 4]

24 mussels, or use prawns if preferred
1 can of coconut milk
½ cup of red curry paste
1 cup fresh pineapple chunks
2 tablespoons palm sugar
3 tablespoons fish sauce
2 cups Thai or lemon basil

Spoon the thick cream from the top of the can of coconut milk into wok on medium heat. Stir in curry paste until blended and bring to a low boil. Cook, stirring constantly, for 2 minutes.

Add the mussels and cook for 30 seconds. Stir in the pineapple. Add the palm sugar, stir until dissolved.

Stir in the reserved coconut milk and fish sauce, bring to boil.

Turn off heat, stir in basil until wilted.

Hot Tips

Mussels

Two major varieties available most of the year now that mussels are 'farmed' - Australian blue and New Zealand green lipped mussel.

Don't eat mussels gathered from piers or jetties as they, like oysters, can absorb any pollutants or toxins in the water. Mussels must be alive when purchased and cooked.

Store in fridge covered with damp cloth for no more than 2 days. To use, first rinse in cold water, remove the hairs or 'beard'.

Mussels can be eaten raw, steamed in white wine, or barbecued when they absorb the smokey flavours. Discard any mussels that do not open after cooking.

Green Seafood Curry

with Lemon Grass & Tamarind [serves 4-6]

Lemon Grass

An important flavouring in Asia where the lemon tree will not grow. A thin reedy plant of which only the bottom inner core is used. Peel off the tough outer leaves and finely slice the bottom 15 cms of the stem.

As the knife gets harder to use, you will know that you have chopped too far up the stem.

Use the outer leaves for making lemon grass tea. This is a most refreshing iced drink on a hot day. Pour some of the cold lemon grass tea into ice cube trays and add the ice to the chilled lemon grass drink.

- 200 gms green prawn meat
- 200 gms swordfish or other meaty fish, cut into 2.5 cm dice
- 2 dozen black mussels, cleaned
- 2 squid tubes, prepared Chinese style - see page 24
- 2 tablespoons of vegetable oil
- 2 tablespoons of green curry paste
- 400 ml of coconut cream
- ½ tablespoon of palm sugar
- 2 tablespoons of fish sauce
- ½ cup of tamarind water (see hot tips, page 8)
- ½ cup of chicken stock or water
- 2 stalks of lemon grass, lightly bruised, cut into 10 cm lengths
- 6 kaffir lime leaves, roughly torn.
- 6 medium green chillies, left whole
- ½ cup of Thai or sweet basil leaves

Open the tin of coconut cream without shaking and then remove three tablespoons of the thick cream from the top of the tin. Combine this in a wok and cook over a medium heat, stirring constantly until the oil has split from the coconut cream and the mix looks foamy and smells like toasted coconut.

Now add the curry paste and fry gently over a low heat for about five minutes. Add the remaining coconut cream, palm sugar, fish sauce, tamarind water, stock, lemon grass, kaffir lime leaves and chillies.

Bring to the boil and then reduce to a simmer, add the fish pieces first, cook for 2 minutes, add the prawns and mussels, cook a further few minutes, add the squid and then the basil. After another minute or so, the basil will have wilted and the seafood should be ready.

Transfer to a large serving bowl or individual bowls if preferred.



Red Curry of Pork, Pineapple & Ginger

[serves 6]

750 gms pork loin cut into strips
3 cups coconut milk
3 tablespoons red curry paste
¼ cup julienned ginger
2 tablespoons fish sauce
1 tablespoon palm sugar
2 cups of pineapple chunks
½ cup Thai basil or sweet basil leaves
3 kaffir lime leaves, finely shredded
coriander leaves for garnish

Heat half cup coconut milk in wok and add curry paste and ginger, cook until fragrant and the oil is starting to separate from the coconut milk, about 5-10 minutes.

Add pork, palm sugar and fish sauce and stir fry until pork is sealed, then add remaining coconut milk. Simmer until pork is tender.

Add pineapple and simmer for one minute.

Stir in basil leaves and transfer to serving bowl, garnish with shredded lime leaves and coriander leaves.

NB. For a delicious vegetarian variation on this curry, substitute tofu for the pork.

Hot Tips

Pineapples

From Central America, the pineapple is actually a 'false' fruit. It consists of hundreds of true fruits which are indicated by the 'eyes' revealed when you cut away the skin. The short brown hairs in the centre of each eye are the remnants of the flowers which once grew along the woody centre stem.

Pineapples contain an enzyme which digests protein so you can tenderise tough meat by rubbing it with pineapple before cooking. In Asia, the pineapple is eaten ripe and also used while still green in sour soups and curries. Buy pineapples on basis of the sweet smell, not the colour, as even a dark green pineapple may be quite ripe.

To hasten ripening, place the pineapple in a plastic bag with a ripe banana, leave closed at room temperature.

To grow your own pineapples, cut off the leafy crown attached to a thick slice of the fruit, plant in a warm sunny spot, wait patiently for a couple of years, then pick your own fruit!

Thai Fish Cakes

Crispy Fried Whole Fish

Stuffed Prawns in Spiced, Crispy Coconut Batter

Seafood Noodle Balls

Prawn & Sweet Potato Fritters

Garlic Coriander Fish Fillets

Chinese Style Omelette

Pork & Glass Noodle Spring Rolls

Thai Fried Rice with Prawns

Sizzle



Thai Fish Cakes

[serves 4-6]

500 grams white fish fillets
2 tablespoons red curry paste
2 tablespoons fish sauce
3 tablespoons corn flour
1 egg beaten
¼ cup finely sliced spring onion
½ cup finely sliced green beans

In a food processor, mince fish to a paste, add red curry paste, fish sauce, corn flour and egg. Combine well.

Put into a bowl and mix in beans, onions. Wet hands and shape into flat round cakes.

Deep fry in vegetable oil until golden brown. Drain on kitchen paper.

Traditionally served with Cucumber Relish and Sweet Chilli Dipping Sauce.

Hot Tips

Vegetable Oils

Always use a good quality vegetable oil in all your Asian cooking - never use olive oil.

After use, strain and keep in a screw top jar in the refrigerator.

If you don't like to use much oil, a handy hint is to keep your oil in a spray bottle and just give your hot wok a few squirts before starting to cook.

Varieties of Vegetable Oils:

Canola Oil: low in saturated fats & containing Omega 3 fatty acids, canola is made from rapeseeds.

Coconut Oil: pressed from copra (dried coconut meat), coconut oil is used for frying and for the manufacture of processed products such as candies, margarines, soaps and cosmetics.

Corn Oil: odourless and almost tasteless, corn oil has a high smoke point, making it suitable for frying. Also used in baking and salad dressings.

Crispy Fried Whole Fish

with Tamarind Chilli Sauce

[serves 2]

Grapeseed Oil: with its pale yellow colour and delicate neutral flavour, grapeseed oil can be used as a substitute for olive oil

Peanut Oil: because of its high smoke point, peanut oil is especially prized for frying. Most American peanut oils are mild flavoured, whereas Chinese peanut oils have a distinctive peanut flavour.

Sesame Seed Oil: a common ingredient in oriental recipes, the rich nutty flavour is suitable or use in salad dressings, meat and vegetable dishes. Use sparingly.

Soybean Oil: extracted from soy beans, this light yellowish oil has always been popular as a cooking oil in Chinese cuisine as it is inexpensive, healthy and has a high smoke point.

Sunflower Oil: this pale yellow, delicately flavoured oil is very high in polyunsaturated fats and low in saturated fats. Though it has a relatively low smoke point, sunflower oil is used in cooking as well as for salad dressings.

1 whole fish, weighing about 500 gms -cleaned, scaled, gutted & gilled
plain flour to coat fish
4 cups vegetable oil for deep frying

Tamarind Chilli Sauce:

4 tablespoons chopped garlic
4 red chillies, finely chopped, deseeded & julienned
2 golden or red shallots, sliced
1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh or pickled galangal
1 tablespoon finely chopped coriander root or stem
10 white peppercorns
2 tablespoons fish sauce
2 tablespoons palm sugar
½ cup tamarind water
coriander or Thai sweet basil to garnish

To make sauce: in mortar, pound white peppercorns, add garlic, shallots, galangal, coriander root - pound to coarse paste.

Heat 2 tablespoons oil in wok and fry the paste and chillies until fragrant - about 2 minutes. Add fish sauce, palm sugar, tamarind water.

The sauce should be sweet, tangy and salty and should be quite thick. If too dry, moisten with a few tablespoons water. Simmer this sauce for a few minutes for the flavours to come together. Remove sauce from wok, keep warm.

To cook fish:

Heat remaining oil in wok. Make sure oil is sizzling hot by testing with a piece of garlic. Slide fish gently into oil, head first. Using wok flipper, spoon oil over the top of the fish while cooking. This will take about 10 minutes. Carefully turn the fish over, fry on the second side for about 5 minutes. Carefully lift out, drain on paper towel.



Stuffed Prawns in Spiced, Crispy Coconut Batter

[serves 4-6]

20 large green king prawns, peeled, deveined & butterflied
125 gms chicken breast, finely chopped
1 clove garlic
1 coriander root
½ teaspoon white pepper
2 slices chopped ginger
1 teaspoon fish sauce
2 tablespoons coconut cream

In mortar, pound garlic, peppercorns, coriander root and ginger to paste. Place finely chopped chicken into food processor with coconut cream and process to paste. Add garlic, coriander paste and fish sauce. Place in fridge to chill for 2 hours. Fill butterfly prawns with about one teaspoon of the chilled mix.

Batter:

2 teaspoons sambal olek
1 tablespoon very finely chopped lemon grass
1 cup plain flour
1 cup corn flour
enough soda water to make a batter consistency of pouring cream.

Mix all batter ingredients together in bowl to form a smooth cream consistency.

1 ½ cups shredded coconut
extra plain flour

Method:

Dip prawns in the extra flour, then coat in batter. Roll prawns in shredded coconut. Fry gently in hot oil in wok until cooked.

Serve with Sweet Chilli Dipping Sauce (page 67)

Hot Tips

Deep Fry

Deep fried food is a favourite cooking method across Asia. Most of the snacks offered at road side stalls are deep fried – cheap and quick, they are the 'fast food' of the workers.

Because the food is cooked at such high temperatures, deep frying has the added benefit of killing any bacteria.

Woks make an ideal cooking vessel for deep frying as the sloping sides allow you to deep fry with the minimum of oil. Spring rolls, fish cakes, fritters, wontons – the list is endless and all of them delicious.

Serve most deep fried food with the classic Thai sweet chilli dipping sauce.

Sambal Olek

This is simply ground chilli processed in vinegar or citric acid. It is convenient to use and saves you chopping chillies. Buy it in jars in the supermarket.

Seafood Noodle Balls

[serves 4]

Egg Noodles

Made from a flour and egg dough, these thin, round strands are sold in packets of tight bundles, looking like skeins of yellow wool. When fresh, they are sold by weight. Used in soups and stir fry, they also crisp up when deep fried. Before cooking, rinse in cold water to remove excess starch, then boil for 4 minutes or until tender.

200 gms prawn meat, roughly chopped
 200 gms squid, roughly chopped
 1 red onion, sliced Chinese style
 ½ cup chopped coriander stems
 1 tablespoon garlic, finely chopped
 1 tablespoon ginger, finely chopped
 2 eggs - beaten
 ½ cup plain flour
 fish sauce to season
 fresh ground white pepper
 1 teaspoon sambal olek
 2 bundles dried egg noodles, soaked in warm water until soft, then drained and cut into 5 cms pieces

Place all of the above ingredients in large bowl.
 Mix thoroughly until well combined.

Heat 2 cups vegetable oil in wok. Drop teaspoons of mixture into hot oil and cook until golden brown, about 5 minutes.

Don't make the balls too large or they will be doughy in the middle.

Serve with Cucumber Relish and Sweet Chilli Dipping Sauce. (page 67-68)



Prawn & Sweet Potato Fritters

[serves 4]

250 gms sweet potato, grated and excess moisture squeezed out
250 gms green prawns, peeled and chopped roughly
½ cup self raising flour
½ cup rice flour
pinch turmeric
1 teaspoon sugar
pinch of salt
1 cup of coconut milk
oil for deep frying

To serve:

soft lettuce and mint leaves
sweet chilli sauce (page 67)

Combine in a large bowl the potato, prawns, flours, turmeric, salt, sugar and coconut milk. Heat oil in wok, fry teaspoons of mix, a few at a time. They should be golden brown on outside and soft on inside.

Drain on paper towel and serve on lettuce with mint leaves and sweet chilli sauce for dipping.

Hot Tips

Ginger

Choose firm skinned pieces and peel them thinly, as the flesh nearest the skin has the most flavour.

The easiest way to peel ginger is to scrape the skin off with the edge of a soup spoon.

Don't buy ginger if the skin is dark and withered as it will be long past its use-by date. Store in plastic bag in refrigerator.

Do not substitute with ground ginger.

Turmeric

Found in curry powders and mustards because of its yellow colouring, it is a cheap substitute for saffron. Related to the ginger family, its rhizomes are bright orange and very tough. Buy it ground and in small quantities as it turns musty very quickly.

Garlic Coriander Fish Fillets

with Lime Chilli Dipping Sauce

[serves 4]

Mint

Originated in ancient Greece. The flowering tops of mint contains camphor which is added to toothpastes, deodorants.

There are over 30 varieties of mint. Do not keep mint in water, it will blacken. Do not wash before storing, store in plastic bag in fridge. Wash and dry mint just before using.

Coriander

Coriander is related to the carrot and so the root and stem is the part to use, the leaves are mostly used as a garnish. With your knife, scrape off the outer skin of the root before chopping it.

Don't cook the leaves, they will go black and add bitterness to the dish.

Coriander seed is widely used also because it keeps well, while retaining the coriander flavour.

Coriander must be sown where it is to grow as the seedlings will not transplant - sunny, well drained position. It will not grow well in extreme heat, as it 'bolts' or goes to seed very rapidly.

500 gms reef fillets, cut into approx. 50 gms strips
 1 tablespoon soya sauce
 1 tablespoon fish sauce
 1 teaspoon palm sugar
 ¼ cup coriander root and stem
 ½ teaspoon white peppercorns
 ½ cup peeled garlic, roughly chopped
 1 teaspoon ginger, roughly chopped
 2 tablespoons rice flour
 ½ cup coriander leaves to garnish
 2 tablespoons lime juice
 1 tablespoon fish sauce
 1 tablespoon sliced birdseye chillis
 4 cups vegetable oil

Combine soy, fish sauce and palm sugar. Marinate the fish pieces in this mixture for about 30 minutes. Remove fish from marinade, toss pieces in rice flour.

Make a paste in mortar and pestle from the coriander roots, peppercorns, garlic and ginger.

Heat 4 cups vegetable oil in wok until hot, add the fish pieces and paste, deep fry until golden brown and crisp. Remove from wok with skimmer, drain on paper towel.

Transfer to serving plate, garnish with coriander leaves. Serve with steamed jasmine rice



Chinese Style Omelette

with Oyster Sauce

[Serves 2]

4 eggs, beaten
½ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon sugar
1 cup cooked seafood - e.g. - fresh crab, prawns or mussels
½ cup bean sprouts
2 shallots finely sliced on the diagonal
freshly ground pepper
1/3 cup peanut oil for frying

For the broth:

¾ cup chicken stock
1 teaspoon fish sauce
1 teaspoon palm sugar
1 teaspoon sesame oil
2 tablespoons oyster sauce for serving

Whisk together the eggs, fish sauce and palm sugar.

To make the broth, heat the chicken stock in a small pot with the fish sauce, palm sugar and sesame oil. Bring to the boil then keep warm.

Heat the peanut oil in a wok until smoking. Pour in the egg mixture and let it bubble and puff up. Tip the wok to allow the runny parts of the egg to run to the edges.

When the omelette is almost cooked, add the seafood, shallots, bean sprouts and pepper to one half of the omelette. Flip the other side over and drain off all the oil into a bowl.

Tip the omelette into a serving bowl and pour around a little of the broth. Drizzle the oyster sauce on top and serve immediately.

Hot Tips

Chicken Stock

If you have the time, make your own stock - it is far superior to stock cubes and can be stored in your freezer.

1 Kg. of chicken bones
1 onion, roughly chopped
1 carrot, roughly chopped
4 cloves of garlic
1 teaspoon white peppercorns

Put all ingredients in large pot, cover with 4 litres of cold water, bring to boil, reduce heat to simmer. Skimming often, cook for 2 hours.

Bean Sprouts

Both mung and soy beans are used for bean sprouts, with the mung bean sprouts best for using raw. The long straight sprouts are the ones traditionally used in Asian dishes - pick off the long straggly brown tails before using. Tinned bean sprouts do not have the flavour or crunchiness.

Pork & Glass Noodle Spring Rolls

[Serves 4]

Bean Thread Vermicelli or Glass Noodles

Made from mung beans, extensively used in vegetarian cooking, these noodles are also known as glass noodles because when cooked, they are nearly transparent.

Used in salads, stir fries and soups, these noodles are sold dried in tight bundles tied with white cotton - when dry, they are extremely tough and difficult to break.

To use, just place them in a bowl, pour on hot water, and soak for about 8 minutes or until soft. If using boiling water, soak for about 1 minute.

Spring Roll Wrappers

Packets of wrappers are available frozen in supermarkets. These light pastry sheets are always square but can be packaged in different sizes - 250, 215 and 125 mm square.

Thaw until you can peel off as many sheets as required, then wrap and refreeze the unused sheets.

Spring roll wrappers are perfect for any deep fried food.

50 gms glass noodles, soaked and cut into 5 cms pieces
 1 tablespoon chopped coriander root and stem
 2 cloves garlic
 1 teaspoon ground white peppercorns
 120 gms minced pork
 1 tablespoon palm sugar
 2 tablespoons fish sauce
 ½ red onion, finely diced
 100 gms bean sprouts
 2 tablespoons fresh coriander leaves, roughly chopped
 packet of spring roll wrappers
 vegetable oil for frying

In food processor, combine garlic, coriander root and stems to paste. Heat 1 tablespoon of oil in wok, add onion, stir fry until softened. Add garlic coriander paste and stir fry briefly.

Add pork, stir fry until cooked. Add palm sugar, fish sauce and glass noodles, remove from heat. Cool. Stir in bean sprouts and coriander leaves.

Lay the spring roll wrapper on board, place 1 tablespoon of mixture in centre and roll as tightly as possible. Seal the ends with a paste made from a two tablespoons of corn flour and water.

Heat oil in wok until medium heat and fry spring rolls until golden, about 5 minutes. Drain on paper towel.

Serve with Sweet Chilli Sauce (page 67).



Thai Fried Rice with Prawns

[serves 4]

- 4 cups of cold, cooked jasmine rice
- 6 cloves garlic
- ½ cup coriander root and stem
- 4 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 red onion diced
- 500 gms green king prawns, peeled and deveined
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 2 tablespoons of palm sugar
- 2 tablespoons fish sauce
- 2 teaspoons white pepper, ground
- 1 tomato, cut into thin wedges
- 3 spring onions, sliced
- 2 cups of bean sprouts
- coriander leaves
- 2 tablespoons crushed, roasted, unsalted peanuts

In mortar, pound garlic, coriander stems to a paste.
Set aside.

Place one tablespoon of oil in wok over medium heat, add the egg and scramble. Set aside.

Add remaining oil to wok. When hot, add the onion, prawns and garlic coriander mix. Stir fry until prawns turn pink, about 30 seconds.

Add rice, fish sauce, sugar, pepper, and stir fry for one minute.

Add tomato, egg mix, stir fry for one minute.

Transfer to serving platter, garnish with spring onions, bean sprouts and peanuts. Serve with Hot and Sour Sauce (page 66)

Hot Tips

Fried Rice

Fried rice is found in one form or another in every Asian country. It's always prepared from cold, cooked rice because fried rice is just one way of using up leftover rice from dinner the night before.

In Indonesia, it's called nasi goreng, in Thailand, kao pad. Fried rice is eaten usually for breakfast – the corn flakes of Asia as it were.

Steamed Eggplant with Hot and Sour Sauce
Steamed Red Curry of Reef Fish in Banana Leaf
Steamed Seafood with Garlic & Basil
Pork & Water Chestnut Dumplings
Steamed Seafood Pudding
Steamed Ginger Buns
Steamed Coconut Pancake with Prawns and Scallops
Steamed Atlantic Salmon with Chilli and Lime Sauce
Steamed Scallop Wontons
Steamed Ocean Trout with Ginger and Shallots
Mangoes with Sticky Rice
Steamed Coconut Custard
Steamed Jasmine Rice
Salad of Pomelo & Tea Smoked Salmon
Smoked Trout with Wasabi Cream & Pickled Ginger Relish
Smoked Trout with Green Mango Salad

Steam & Smoke



Steamed Eggplant

with Hot & Sour Sauce

[serves 2]

1 large eggplant cut into 2 cm slices and lightly salted for 20 minutes
peanut oil for frying
1 tablespoon fresh ginger finely julienned
2 shallots finely sliced

For the sauce:

1 ½ tablespoons kecap manis
1 ½ tablespoons Chinese black vinegar
1 tablespoon Japanese soy sauce
½ tablespoon chilli sauce (not sweet)
½ teaspoon szechuan peppercorns, roasted and finely ground
½ cup water or chicken stock
2 tomatoes, peeled, seeded and diced
1 tablespoon chopped coriander

Pat the eggplant dry. Heat the peanut oil till smoking then fry the eggplant until well browned on both sides. Cut each slice into quarters. Place the eggplant into a bowl and then into a steamer. Sprinkle with the ginger and shallots and steam for 5 minutes in wok. Gently stir the eggplant and steam for a further 5 minutes.

Put all the sauce ingredients except the coriander in a small pot and bring to the boil. Simmer for 3 minutes then pour over the cooked eggplant and sprinkle with the coriander.

Hot Tips

Chinese Black Vinegar

Brewed from malt and glutinous rice, used to enrich stews and sauces.

Like Balsamic Vinegar, older black vinegars are highly prized.

In a special Chinese recipe for women following childbirth, black vinegar is brewed with pork and ginger to strengthen the womb!

Szechwan Pepper

One of the ingredients of Chinese Five Spice Powder, it is not really a true pepper it is made from the seed casings of the berries of the prickly Ash which grows wild in China.

They have a peculiar numbing effect on the tongue and are indispensable in Chinese cooking.

Buy them whole and store in airtight containers.

Steamed Red Curry of Reef Fish in Banana Leaf

[serves 2]

Banana Leaves

Used through out Asia to wrap food for baking or steaming and so retain its moisture. Foil can be used to the same effect.

Use this leaf on a white plate to make a great presentation impact with your Asian dishes.

Immerse them in hot water to soften, then cut into circles to fit inside the rim of your plates, or cut into squares or rectangles.

Bamboo Steamer

Use your bamboo steamer for steaming Chinese buns - the woven lids are particularly good because they do not allow any condensation to drop on the buns.

500 gms firm fleshed white fish - thinly sliced
 2 tablespoons red curry paste
 500 mls coconut cream
 30 mls fish sauce
 1 teaspoon palm sugar, shaved
 1 egg
 6 kaffir lime leaves, shredded finely
 12 Thai basil leaves
 1 banana leaf cut into circle to fit steamer basket and secured with bamboo skewer

Place fish in bowl and mix with coconut cream, reserving 2 tablespoons for garnish. Mix in remaining ingredients except for basil leaves.

Line steamer basket with banana leaf and layer with basil leaves. Fill banana leaf with fish mixture. Cover. Steam in wok over gently simmering water for about 15-20 minutes.

Test with wooden skewer - if it comes out clean, it's cooked.

Serve in steamer basket, drizzle remaining coconut cream over top. Garnish with julienned red chilli and kaffir lime leaves.

Serve with steamed jasmine rice.



Steamed Seafood

with Garlic & Basil

[serves 4]

½ teaspoon of white pepper
2 red chillies, chopped
4 cloves of garlic, chopped
1 tablespoon coriander root, chopped
3 tablespoons vegetable oil
1 ½ tablespoons oyster sauce
1 tablespoon fish sauce
500 gms black mussels, cleaned
250 gms peeled green prawns
250 scallops or fish
¼ cup of chicken stock
½ teaspoon sugar
½ cup of Thai basil leaves
coriander leaves to garnish

In a mortar, pound the peppercorns until crushed, then add the chillies, garlic, and coriander roots, pound to a rough paste.

Heat oil in wok over medium heat, add the paste and fry until fragrant. Stir in oyster sauce, fish sauce and sugar.

Add the mussels, prawns, scallops and toss with the sauce to mix. Add the stock, then cover wok and steam until the mussels have opened.

Taste and adjust the seasoning with fish sauce. Toss through the basil and cook until it wilts.

Transfer to serving plate and discard any mussels that haven't opened, garnish with the coriander.

Hot Tips

Garlic

To Crush Garlic:

Break up the bulb into cloves.

Place the flat side of your knife on the clove of garlic, bang down with the palm of your hand, and the skin should just slip off. Once the skin is removed, bang down again with the knife to crush the clove. Then chop finely.

When deep frying, slice the garlic cloves lengthways and cook until a nutty, light brown colour.

Do not overcook as it will taste very acrid.

Deep fried garlic (and shallots) can be sprinkled on top of salads, giving a lovely crunchy texture to the garnish.

Pork & Water Chestnut Dumplings

with Peanut & Lime Sauce

Water Chestnuts

With their crispy white flesh under a thin brown skin, they are used to give a crunchy texture contrast.

Peel before use, add to pork dishes with bamboo shoots and black mushrooms.

Wontons

These very thin sheets of noodle dough are usually cut into 3 and half inch squares.

Find them in the frozen food section of your supermarket, use them for dumplings as well as wrappers.

100 gms water chestnuts, finely chopped
 4 green shallots, sliced
 2 cloves garlic, roughly chopped
 2 cleaned coriander roots
 ½ cup coriander leaves
 500 gms lean minced pork (or chicken if preferred)
 2 tablespoons fish sauce or to taste
 freshly ground white peppercorns, to taste
 2 teaspoons sugar
 1 packet of wontons or gow gee wrappers
 extra coriander leaves for garnish
 strips of red chilli for garnish

Process shallots, garlic, coriander roots and leaves in a food processor until finely chopped. Add pork, fish sauce, pepper and sugar, process until combined. Transfer to bowl and mix in the water chestnuts.

Place a walnut size round of this mixture in the centre of each wonton wrapper, bring the pastry together but don't fully enclose dumpling mixture. Place dumplings in large steamer basket in wok and steam covered, over high heat for 8-10 minutes.

To serve:

Divide wontons between serving plates, drizzle with peanut lime sauce (page 66) and garnish each wonton with coriander leaves and chilli strips.

[Makes about 24 dumplings]



Steamed Seafood Pudding

with Kaffir Lime & Coconut Cream

[serves 2]

400 gms chopped fresh fish, such as snapper or any delicate white fish
400 gms chopped green prawn meat
600 mls coconut cream
2 tablespoons of red curry paste
3 eggs, lightly beaten
1 teaspoon of palm sugar
2 tablespoons of fish sauce
½ cup of Thai or sweet basil
4 kaffir lime leaves, finely shredded
1 red chilli, seeds removed and cut into thin strips for garnish
handful of coriander leaves for garnish
banana leaves for steaming

Transfer fish and prawn meat to the bowl of a food processor and process to a rough paste. In a mixing bowl dissolve the palm sugar in the fish sauce and then add the seafood, curry paste, beaten eggs and 500 mls of the coconut cream. Stir to combine.

Line a bamboo steamer basket with the banana leaves. Scatter the basil leaves over the banana leaves and then transfer the seafood mixture to the steamer basket.

Fill a wok with enough water to come just below the steamer basket. Bring the water to the boil and then sit the basket over the water. Cover and reduce heat to a simmer. Cook gently for about 30-40 minutes.

To serve, spoon over the reserved coconut cream and garnish with the kaffir lime leaves, chilli strips and coriander leaves.

Hot Tips

Basil

Thai basil is similar to our ordinary sweet basil, it has pointy leaves and purple stems with a strong anise flavour and is really pretty with its pink flowers.

Holy basil has a quite intense clove fragrance, and is so named because Hindus believe it is a sacred plant - commonly found around temples in Asia. Very mint like, with small rough textured leaves which have an intense flavour when cooked.

Lemon basil has a fragrant lemon scent, and is delightful used with any Thai seafood recipe.

All basil varieties are easy to grow in a sheltered but sunny position with good drainage.

Plant seeds in intended growing area in early Spring. Pinch out basil flowers to encourage bushiness.

Steamed Ginger Buns

The dish makes a wonderful entrée and can be steamed in individual bowls if preferred. These are tasty little appetisers or finger food for functions. Makes about 20 buns.

Steamed Buns

Steamed buns, both stuffed and plain, are a classic part of Chinese cuisine and accompany both savoury and sweet dishes.

Ginger buns are especially good with Thai red curries - just add peeled and finely chopped ginger and shallots to the basic bun recipe.

Garam Masala

Garam Masala is a condiment added to a dish at a late stage in the cooking.

Sometimes it is used as a flavouring agent in cold dishes such as raitas.

To Make Garam Masala:

Grind together the following and store in air tight jar in cool dark area, keeps for about 2 months.

- 4 teaspoons black peppercorns,
- 4 teaspoons coriander seed,
- 3 teaspoons cumin seed or fennel seed,
- 1 teaspoon cloves
- 1 teaspoon cardamom seed
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon

Filling:

- 6 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 4 red onions chopped
- 2 cloves garlic
- 1 teaspoon garam masala
- ½ teaspoon turmeric
- ½ teaspoon chilli powder
- ½ teaspoon fennel seeds
- 350 gms eggplant
- 6 teaspoons brown sugar
- ½ lemon, juiced
- 50 gms fresh ginger, finely chopped
- salt/pepper

Fry onion and garlic in oil until golden brown. Fry spices until brown. Add other ingredients, cover and cook for 20 minutes, season, stir in ginger.

To make buns:

- ½ cup plain flour
- ¼ cup self raising flour
- ½ cup warm water (blood temperature)
- 1 ½ teaspoons dried yeast
- ¼ cup sugar
- 3 teaspoons ghee
- sesame seeds

Mix water and sugar together in saucepan, heat to tepid temperature. Add yeast. Mix into flours and ghee, prove for 45 minutes.

Roll the dough into a rectangle about ½ cm thick. Spread the filling all over the rolled dough, leaving 5cms clear along the long edge. Brush this edge with egg wash. Roll up from the opposite long edge as tightly as possible. Cut roll into ½cm wide rounds. Lay each round flat and brush the surface with egg wash and sprinkle with sesame seeds. Let the rounds prove for another 30 minutes. Place rounds on grease-proof paper. Steam for 20-25 minutes. Remove steamer from heat, allow to cool in steamer with lid on.



Steamed Coconut Pancake

with Prawns and Scallops

[serves 4 - makes 8 pancakes]

Pancakes:

3 eggs
1 tablespoon of rice flour
150 ml coconut milk
dash of fish sauce
dash of sesame oil
vegetable oil

To make the pancakes, whisk the eggs, rice flour, coconut milk, fish sauce and sesame oil together. Heat a Teflon crepe pan or skillet over medium heat. Drizzle a small amount of vegetable oil into the pan, then ladle enough pancake batter in to cover the surface thinly. Cook until the mixture is set and then turn out onto a plate.

Continue until all the batter is used. You should have 8 pancakes. Set aside.

Green Curry Sauce:

1 tablespoon green curry paste
1 cup of coconut milk
½ tablespoon of fish sauce, or to taste
½ tablespoon of palm sugar, or to taste
1 tablespoon of vegetable oil

To make the curry sauce, heat vegetable oil in wok over moderate heat, add paste, cook, stirring for about 5 minutes. Add coconut milk, fish sauce and palm sauce. Bring to the boil and then reduce heat and simmer for 5 minutes. Taste and adjust seasoning with fish sauce and palm sugar if necessary.

Recipe continued next page...

Hot Tips

Coconut Milk

Coconut milk is made from the flesh of the coconut, not the liquid in the shell. This gives the milk the oil needed to cook with.

When cooking curries using coconut milk, don't shake the can. Use the solidified cream on the top to fry out the curry paste and intensify the flavours.

To achieve the right consistency of sauce in the curry, add some of the remaining liquid in the can when the curry is nearly cooked.

Steamed Coconut Pancake

Continued...

Curry Pastes

Most curry pastes all have similar ingredients but, by varying the quantities, the end result can be completely different.

Red curry paste is the most versatile as it is used in fish cakes, satay sauce etc. as well as for making curries. Mace is used in red curry pastes, but not in green.

If making your own pastes, make triple the quantity and store in freezer in ice block trays for about 3 months. One cup is enough for a curry for about 6-8 people.

Curry pastes keep for about 3-4 weeks in refrigerator. Once you have a ready made store of curry paste, you can whip up a delicious curry in just a few minutes.

Fresh curry paste is far superior to most supermarket pastes - open these jars and all you can smell is the processed, preservative smell.

If you have to use commercial pastes, add some chopped lemon grass and kaffir lime leaves to give some fragrance to the paste.

Spirit House makes a range of preservative free curry pastes in easy-to-use frozen sachets. See www.spirithouse.com.au for stockists.

Prawns & Scallops Filling:

16 medium green king prawns, peeled and deveined
 16 medium scallops
 4 kaffir lime leaves, finely shredded
 2 green shallots, finely chopped
 ½ cup of lemon basil, if unavailable use Thai or sweet basil
 coriander sprigs to garnish
 red chilli strips to garnish

To make the filling, cut the prawns and scallops into half and mix with the kaffir lime leaves, green shallots and lemon basil. Divide the mixture into 8 portions.

Place one pancake onto a board and put one portion of the filling onto the pancake and roll into a neat package. Repeat with the remaining pancakes and filling.

Place pancakes in steamer basket lined with greaseproof paper over wok of simmering water and steam for about 8 minutes.

Place cooked pancake into shallow serving bowl and serve with the warm green curry sauce and garnish with coriander and chilli strips.



Steamed Atlantic Salmon

with Chilli & Lime Sauce

[serves 4]

4 pieces of atlantic salmon

Paste:

- 2 coriander roots
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon oyster sauce
- 2 cloves garlic, blanched in boiling water

Puree all paste ingredients in food processor or mortar.

Chilli Lime Sauce:

- 2 green chillies, sliced
- 3 tablespoons lime juice
- 1 tablespoon castor sugar
- 2 tablespoons fish sauce

Combine all sauce ingredients in bowl.

Divide paste mixture between each piece of salmon, spread evenly on surface.

Line bamboo steamer with banana leaf or foil, place fish pieces in steamer, presentation side facing up.

Place steamer over wok full of boiling water, steam for 5-7 minutes until fish is cooked medium rare.

Serve with chilli lime sauce.

Hot Tips

Chillies

Chillies were introduced into Asia by the Portuguese in the 1600's. The heat from chillies varies depending on the variety and other factors such as the growing environment - chillies on the sunniest side of the bush are always hotter than those on the shaded side. Any climatic condition that causes stress in the plant will increase the level of heat in the pods.

To test the level of heat of your chillies, cut off the top, run your finger across the top cut edge, then rub your finger on your tongue - wait for the result! The hottest part of the chilli is the seeds and the membrane. If you want only a mild dish, leave out the seeds and the membrane, using only the outer coloured part.

Chillies serve two purposes - they provide both heat and flavour.

Steamed Scallop Wontons

with Ginger Dipping Sauce

[makes about 30 wontons]

Wontons

These very thin sheets of noodle dough are usually cut into 3 and half inch squares. Find them in the frozen food section of your supermarket, use them for dumplings as well as wrappers.

- 250g fresh fish, cut into small pieces
- 250 scallop meat
- 2 cloves of garlic, roughly chopped
- 2 coriander roots, cleaned and scraped
- freshly ground white pepper, to taste
- 2 tablespoons of fish sauce
- 1 teaspoon of sugar
- 3 green shallots, finely sliced.
- 1 packet of wonton wrappers
- 1 egg lightly beaten

Process fish, scallop meat, garlic and coriander root in food processor until finely chopped. Transfer to a mixing bowl and stir in the fish sauce, sugar, pepper and green shallots.

Place a teaspoon full of mixture on the centre of each wonton wrapper, brush edges lightly with egg and bring the pastry together to form a dumpling.

Transfer wontons to a large steamer basket lined with banana leaf or oiled greaseproof paper. Steam, covered, over moderate heat for about 5-7 minutes. Serve with ginger dipping sauce.

Ginger Dipping Sauce:

- ½ cup of light soya sauce
- 1 tablespoon of Shaoxing wine
- 1 tablespoon of sugar
- 1 tablespoon of finely chopped ginger
- ½ teaspoon of sesame oil

Combine all ingredients in a small saucepan and cook, stirring until the sugar is dissolved.



Steamed Ocean Trout

with Ginger & Shallots

[serves 4]

4 x 180g pieces of Ocean Trout, skin and pin bones removed. (Use Atlantic salmon if trout unavailable.)

2 tablespoons of oyster sauce

freshly ground white pepper

½ cup of ginger, finely julienned

4 green shallots, finely sliced

2 tablespoons of shaoxing rice wine

2 tablespoons of soy sauce

2 large green chillis, seeds removed and finely sliced

handful of coriander sprigs for garnish

½ cup of safflower oil

1 teaspoon of sesame oil

Rub fish with the oyster sauce and season with the white pepper.

Steam over simmering water in wok in either a metal or bamboo steamer basket, lined with banana leaf or oiled greaseproof paper, for about 5 minutes for medium rare. Transfer to serving plates.

Cover the fish with the ginger, shallots, green chilli, soy sauce, coriander and shaoxing wine.

Heat the oils together until almost smoking and pour them over the fish.

Hot Tips

Shaoxing Rice Wine

Chinese rice wine is also called "Shaoxing" as it is traditionally made in a city of that name south of Shanghai.

It is a fermented sherry like wine made from glutinous rice and mineral rich water from Lake Jiang. The wine is allowed to ferment in huge pottery jars which are covered with lotus leaves, sealed with ceramic covers, then covered in mud and allowed to age, sometimes up to ten years. There are 3 different qualities. It has a lovely amber colour with a rich, slightly sweetish flavour.

Ask for Shaoxing wine in your Asian supermarket and make sure you buy 'drinking' quality. Substitute with dry sherry if unavailable.

Do not confuse with 'Mirin' which is a golden, sweet rice wine from Japan.

Mangoes with Sticky Rice

[serves 6]

Vanilla Beans

The vanilla pod is the fruit of a climbing orchid that grows wild in Central America and was used by the Aztecs to flavour chocolate. It was taken to Europe by the Spaniards.

Each pod contains a number of tiny black seeds which contain the flavour. The pods are picked unripened, then cured over a long process which, as a result of enzyme activity, develops their unique flavour. The flavour is developed by sweating the pods in the sun for 10-20 days, then drying them slowly for several months.

Pollinated by only one species of bee and one species of hummingbird, commercial crops are usually hand pollinated which is one of the reasons for vanilla's high price.

Store a vanilla bean in a canister of caster sugar for a constant supply of vanilla sugar. Add a whole bean to fruits when poaching in wine.

2 cups of sticky (glutinous) rice
 3 cups coconut cream
 few drops vanilla essence or a vanilla bean
 1 and ¼ cups of castor sugar
 ½ teaspoon salt
 3 mangoes to serve 6 people
 1 tablespoon sesame seeds for garnish

Cover sticky rice with cold water and soak overnight.

Drain and steam for approximately 30-40 minutes in steamer basket lined with clean cloth over boiling water in wok.

Set aside half cup coconut cream.

Combine remaining coconut cream with sugar, salt and vanilla, stir over gently heat in a saucepan (not aluminium) until sugar is dissolved.

Transfer cooked rice to large bowl. Pour over coconut cream mixture. Set aside until rice has absorbed all the coconut cream.

Divide rice and mangoes between serving plates. Spoon remaining coconut cream over rice and garnish with sesame seeds.



Steamed Coconut Custard

1 ½ cups coconut cream
1 cup palm sugar
5 eggs
½ teaspoon vanilla or pandanus essence

Heat coconut cream on very low heat with palm sugar, just enough to dissolve the sugar. Cool to room temperature.

Beat eggs well together, stir in the coconut cream and the flavouring essence. Strain through wire sieve.

Pour mixture into either individual ramekins or large heatproof bowl. Place ramekins in steamer basket. Steam over medium heat until custard is set - about 15 minutes for ramekins, about 40 minutes for large bowl.

Traditionally steamed and served in a hollowed out small pumpkin.

Serve also a topping for coconut flavoured white sticky rice.

Hot Tips

Pandanus

The pandanus plant is grown in every Thai kitchen garden as the leaves are used both in cooking and woven into containers for Thai sweets.

Strips of leaves are dropped into the rice pot or wrapped around chicken to impart a subtle perfume.

The leaves are also pounded to an essence, bright green in colour and used to flavour Asian cakes and sweets.

Steamed Jasmine Rice

[serves 4]

Rice

Short grain rice is polished rice which has a high starch content. When cooked it is soft, moist and sticky, ideal for puddings or sushi.

Long grain rice on the other hand has a lower starch content, the grains are polished and hulled and when cooked remain firm, fluffy and separate. It reheats well.

Brown rice is the whole natural grain of rice before it has been processed. It has a delicious nutty flavour with a firm, chewy texture. It needs more water and takes longer to cook than white rice.

The most commonly asked question in our cooking classes is how to steam rice so that it's light and fluffy. So, even though it's steamed in a saucepan, not a wok, we have included the recipe here.

Jasmine rice is long grained with a delightfully delicate scent.

Always wash rice several times before cooking to remove excess starch and achieve a pure white colour. Do NOT add salt to the water.

2½ cups of jasmine rice
3½ cups of water

Put the washed rice and water into a heavy bottomed saucepan and bring to boil. Cover tightly and reduce the heat to its lowest setting.

Simmer for 18 minutes. Lift the lid to check that it is cooked, cook for 1-2 minutes longer if necessary.

The rice is done when the grains are soft enough to crush between your thumb and forefinger.

Turn off the heat and let stand covered for 8-10 minutes before serving.



Salad of Pomelo & Tea Smoked Salmon

[serves 2]

Smoking Mixture:

200 gms jasmine rice
200 gms brown sugar
200 gms black tea
200 gms Atlantic salmon fillet

Salad:

1 pomelo, segmented and seeded (if unavailable, use grapefruit)
3 tablespoons of shredded coconut, roasted
3 cloves garlic, sliced and deep fried
4 golden shallots, sliced and deep fried
1 tablespoon roasted peanuts, crushed
5 green birdseye chillies, sliced
6 mint leaves, torn
2 tablespoons fresh coriander leaves
3 long red chillies, seeded and julienned

Dressing:

30 mls fish sauce
4 teaspoons palm sugar, crushed
2 teaspoons lime juice
1 tablespoon chilli jam
60 mls coconut cream

Place the smoking mixture in aluminium foil, then place in the bottom of a wok. Place a small rack (available from Asian supermarkets) over the foil, and place wok over a high heat. When mixture starts to smoke, place salmon fillet on rack and cover wok with a lid or foil. Allow to smoke for 10 minutes, then remove fish from wok, and refrigerate.

When cooled, flake salmon into a medium sized bowl, add all salad ingredients. Mix all dressing ingredients together in a small bowl. Toss salad gently with dressing, then serve on a large platter.

Hot Tips

Pomelo

The largest of all citrus fruits and native to S.E. Asia, the flesh is drier but sweeter than grapefruit.

The flesh can be quite tart when first picked, but the longer the time since picking, the sweeter it becomes.

The segments are used in salads or savoury dishes, tossed with salt, lime juice and chilli.

Remove all of the thick white membrane before using.

Limes

There are 2 varieties of limes - Tahitian, used for its juicy fruit, and Kaffir limes which are used for the leaves, their fruit having little juice.

Limes are ripe when green skinned. As limes age, the skin turns yellow but the juice content increases. Store limes in fridge for up to 3 weeks.

Always use limes, not lemons, in Asian recipes, as they have a distinctive flavour all of their own. Only use lemons if limes unavailable - the taste of the final dish will not be the same however!

Smoked Ocean Trout

with Wasabi Cream & Pickled Ginger Relish

[serves 4]

Wasabi

Tasting like a cross between horseradish and mustard, wasabi grows like watercress, on the marshy edges of Japanese rivers and streams. The rhizomes are finely grated on special copper coated graters which reduce the root to a fine juicy pulp.

Wasabi is always served with sushi, sashimi and any raw fish dishes, complimenting the bland flavour of the fish.

Wasabi is sold in powdered form or as a paste in tubes. The powdered wasabi must be mixed with a little warm water.

Pickled Ginger

A tangy addition to salads, the flavour teams especially well with avocado or any of the melon family.

The Yandina Ginger Factory produces an excellent pickled ginger, plus a shredded ginger garnish.

Smoking Mixture:

200 gms brown sugar
200 gms black tea
6 cinnamon sticks, broken up
1 side Southern Ocean trout, boneless & skinless

Line a wok, large enough to hold the fish, with foil. Sprinkle smoking ingredients over base of foil. Place wok over low heat until mixture starts to smoke. Place wire rack in wok, put fish on rack, cover wok with foil. Smoke over gentle heat until fish is cooked - takes about 15-20 minutes.

Wasabi Cream:

Mix together all three ingredients in small bowl.
2 tablespoons wasabi
250 mls sour cream
salt and pepper to taste

Pickled Ginger Relish :

Combine all these ingredients in bowl -
2 tomatoes, filleted and cut into fine dice
½ cucumber, peeled, seeded and cut into dice
1 red onion, finely diced
2 tablespoons chopped pickled ginger
2 tablespoons wine vinegar
2 tablespoons olive oil
2 tablespoons coriander leaves, chopped
salt and pepper to season

To serve: place side of smoked trout on serving platter, drizzle with wasabi cream, serve with side dish of Pickled Ginger Relish.



Smoked Ocean Trout

with Green Mango Salad

[serves 4]

Smoking Mixture:

- 200 gms brown sugar
- 200 gms black tea
- 6 cinnamon sticks, broken up
- 1 side southern ocean trout, boneless & skinless

Line a wok, large enough to hold the fish, with foil. Sprinkle smoking ingredients over base of foil. Place wok over low heat until mixture starts to smoke. Place wire rack in wok, put fish on rack, cover wok with foil. Smoke over gentle heat until fish is cooked - takes about 15-20 minutes.

Green Chilli & Lime Dressing:

- 5 cloves garlic
 - 2 tablespoons coriander root and stem
 - 1 teaspoon sea salt
 - 6-8 green chillis
 - 1 tablespoon palm sugar
 - 60 mls fish sauce
 - 120 mls lime juice
 - 10 red shallots, finely sliced
- Pound garlic, coriander, chillis, salt to a paste in mortar and pestle. Dissolve palm sugar in fish sauce, stir in the lime juice, shallots and paste.

Salad Ingredients:

- 3 green mangoes
- 1 cup coriander leaves
- 1 cup mint leaves
- 2 tablespoons roasted and crushed peanuts
- 2 tablespoons crispy fried shallots

To Serve: In large bowl, break the smoked fish into large chunks, add mango, coriander and mint and the dressing. Toss gently, transfer to serving platter, garnish with peanuts and crispy shallots.

Hot Tips

Cinnamon

Commonly used to give a pleasant aroma to chicken, beef or especially dessert dishes with fruits. Cinnamon also gives a robust depth to curries.

Cinnamon is the inner bark of a tree and has medicinal qualities, being a natural antiseptic.

The finest cinnamon is made by stripping the thin under layer of bark from cinnamon trees.

Cinnamon peelers carefully roll these moist, delicate layers into metre long quills prior to drying.

Found in powder form or in bark sticks, the bark retains its flavour far longer so buy cinnamon sticks.

Cassia is similar but lacks the delicacy of cinnamon.

Black Tea

A fully fermented tea, it is graded by size. In Northern China, different varieties of black tea can have aromas of rose or orchid blossoms, or a delicate smoky flavour. In the Southern Province, the flavours are quite different, much bolder.

Sauces & Sides

Peanut & Lime Sauce

Hot & Sour Sauce

Sweet Chilli Dipping Sauce

Spicy Cucumber Relish

Chilli Lemon Grass Sambal

Crispy Shallots



Peanut & Lime Sauce

Hot & Sour Sauce

Peanut & Lime Sauce

125 gms of roasted and crushed peanuts
2 red chillis, finely chopped
juice of 4 limes, strained
2-3 tablespoons fish sauce
2-3 tablespoons dark palm sugar

Combine palm sugar and fish sauce in small pan and cook over low heat until palm sugar is dissolved. Remove from heat and add remaining ingredients.

Hot & Sour Sauce

4 red chillies
8 cloves of garlic, chopped
4 tablespoons fish sauce, to taste
8 tablespoons of fresh lime juice
4 teaspoons palm sugar, to taste

Pound the chopped chillies and garlic together until forming a paste texture. Transfer to a bowl, add the fish sauce, lime juice and sugar to taste. Stir well to mix. Adjust the flavours so that the sauce is equally salty and sour with a light touch of sweetness.

Let the sauce sit for at least 15 minutes before using, to allow the flavours to merge.

Hot Tips

Chillies in Vinegar

This little side dish is very useful - especially handy for those diners who have a high chilli tolerance - just spoon some of these chillies over their food to increase the heat level.

½ cup of coconut vinegar
½ tablespoon of fish sauce
2-3 sliced red chillies to taste

Combine all ingredients in a small serving bowl, let stand 15 minutes for flavours to infuse.

Sweet Chilli Dipping Sauce

Coconut Vinegar

Available in most Asian supermarkets, coconut vinegar or palm vinegar is cloudy in appearance and has its own unique smoky coconut flavour.

Made from the sap of the coconut palm, it is less acid than ordinary vinegar.

While you can substitute white vinegar for palm vinegar, it is preferable to use palm vinegar to attain that true Asian flavour.

Never use wine vinegar as a substitute.

- 1 cup of coconut vinegar or white vinegar
- 1 cup white sugar
- 1 splash of fish sauce
- 1 tablespoon sambal olek
- 1 teaspoon crushed garlic

In a small saucepan, combine the vinegar and the sugar. Bring to the boil, stirring. Cook for 5 minutes.

Reduce the heat to low, add the fish sauce, sambal olek and crushed garlic. Simmer for a further minute.

Let cool, serve at room temperature. Will keep for 2-3 weeks stored in a screw-top jar or bottle in fridge.



Spicy Cucumber Relish

- 1 cup of coconut vinegar or white vinegar
- 1 cup white sugar
- 1 splash fish sauce
- 1 large cucumber
- 4 small red chillies, finely chopped
- ½ cup roasted, unsalted peanuts crushed or finely chopped
- 1/3 cup chopped coriander, including stems

Combine the vinegar, sugar and salt in a small saucepan over medium heat. Bring to boil, stirring occasionally, cook for 1 minute at a gentle boil.

Remove from heat and cool to room temperature.

Peel cucumber, scrape out seeds, cut into a small dice. Place the cucumber, chillies, peanuts and coriander in bowl. Pour over cooked dressing and toss gently.

N.B. The dressing can be made one day in advance and refrigerated. Add to relish ingredients just before serving.

Hot Tips

Spicy Cucumber Relish

A traditional accompaniment to many Thai dishes, the cooling cucumber and coriander leaves are tossed in a sweet and sour dressing then garnished with crunchy crushed peanuts and chopped chilli.

Use as a side dish with fish, satays and any barbecued meats.

Cucumber

Buy crispy cucumbers that are green, with no yellow patches. Cucumbers do not like being cold, that's why they are sold in plastic sleeves in the supermarket. If storing in fridge, leave the plastic sleeve on, they will keep for around 5-7 days.

A Lebanese cucumber, picked when about 10 cm in length, is sweeter and juicier than a Continental cucumber which is thinner and is picked when 15-20 cm long. There's no need to peel or deseed - it's purely a preference of the cook!

Chilli Lemon Grass Sambal Crispy Shallots

Sambals

There are numerous varieties of Sambals from many South East Asian countries. They are a hot mixture of chillies and spices and are used as a relish with other foods such as stirfry or noodle dishes.

Chilli Lemon Grass Sambal

250 gms large red chillies, deseeded and finely chopped
 ½ cup ginger, peeled and chopped
 ½ cup garlic, peeled and chopped
 100 mls coconut vinegar
 2 stalks of lemon grass, tender part only, finely diced
 ½ cup palm sugar
 1 teaspoon salt
 ½ tablespoon lime zest
 ¼ cup vegetable oil

Puree chillies, ginger, garlic, lemon grass and lime zest in blender with vinegar and oil.

Transfer to saucepan with salt and sugar, cook over low heat, stirring often until oil rises to surface and the sambal darkens in colour. Allow to cool and transfer to sterilised jar. Store in fridge.

Crispy Shallots

A wonderful crunchy garnish for stir fries or salads, buy them in packets in Asian supermarkets or make your own.

500 gms of red or golden shallots, peeled and sliced thinly and evenly
 4 cups vegetable oil

Heat the oil in wok, add all the shallot slices and cook slowly on gently heat so that they don't burn. When shallot slices are golden brown, remove from wok with slotted spoon and drain on paper towel. Store in air tight container in refrigerator. Bottle the oil when it has cooled - it will have a lovely shallot flavour and can be used for cooking vegetables, noodles or fried rice.



Annette Fear

Annette was the original Spirit House Head Chef when the restaurant opened in 1995.

Annette's fragrant Thai inspired food set the standard for all our chefs and apprentices who followed in her culinary footsteps.

After 3 years heading a kitchen team of 7 chefs and apprentices, Annette 'retired' to teach the Asian classes in the newly opened Cooking School.

With an absorbing passion for the food of S.E. Asia, an encyclopaedic knowledge of Asian ingredients and cooking methods, her classes are informative, full of chef's insider knowledge, and above all, fun.

When she's not firing up a wok, Annette spends her time pottering in her home garden of Asian herbs and aromatics. Whenever her credit card allows, she's off travelling throughout S.E. Asia researching and tasting regional Asian food.

Hot Tips

Cooking School

The Spirit House holds 4 classes each week.

All are completely 'hands-on' and limited to 16 participants.

Each class starts at 9.30 a.m. and winds up around 2.00 p.m., dining on your culinary efforts in our outdoor garden pavilion!

Visit us on www.spirithouse.com.au for all class details.

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