

Prawns with Cardamom, Vanilla & Coconut

This sounded like an interesting starter, perhaps to begin an evening of spicey food. I got this from the Wine Society blog.

Planning

serves:	4
prep time:	15 mins
cooking time:	30 mins

Ingredients

16 tiger prawns, defrosted if frozen
2 tablespoons of sunflower or similarly neutral oil
a scant teaspoon of toasted sesame oil
4 banana shallots, finely sliced
200ml coconut milk
150ml full fat crème fraîche
a vanilla pod, split
5 whole green cardamom pods, lightly crushed
1 green medium chilli, deseeded & finely chopped
1 lime
16 coriander leaves, washed & dried
Salt & pepper

Method

Firstly, deal with the prawns. If they're shell-on, remove heads, all shells and tails. De-vein them and rinse them in well salted water. Pat them with kitchen paper and leave them on a plate until completely dry.

Preheat the oven to 200°C/Gas 7. Put the prawns in a small roasting dish. Add half the sunflower oil and all the sesame oil and season well with salt and pepper. With clean hands, make sure every prawn is well coated. Roast for just 6-8 minutes until the prawns are pink, opaque and firm to the touch. Set them aside to cool, and once they have done so, refrigerate them until you are ready to assemble.

In a frying pan, heat the rest of the sunflower oil and brown the onions or shallots. They should be golden and crisp. Lift them out and let them drain on kitchen paper.

Now wipe the same pan with kitchen paper before adding the coconut milk, crème fraîche, vanilla and cardamom, along with half the diced chilli. Bring up to a simmer and let this mixture reduce gently to half its volume, tasting as you go. It may need a little seasoning, but remember that the prawns will be quite salty and toasty. Once it tastes right (rich, creamy, subtly spicey and slightly sweet) fish out the vanilla pod and cardamoms. Stir in the rest of the diced chilli and finish with the juice of half a lime, adding a little more if you feel it's needed.

Divide the mixture into 4 ramekins. Sprinkle with the reserved onion ringlets, and put in the fridge to chill and thicken.

An hour before serving, remove your components from the fridge to assemble. Arrange four prawns on top of the sauce, interleaved with the coriander leaves (or inter-coriander-leaved, I suppose).