

Seafood Laksa

One stemming from the New Forest, where we found a kit for a Singaporean Laksa and enjoyed it. At home, I wanted a more genuine recipe without short cuts and this is the one that appealed to me. It must be reasonably genuine because it uses galangal and shrimp paste, so I have a high degree of confidence in it. Besides, it has the Delia stamp of approval.

Planning

serves:	4
prep time:	30 mins
cooking time:	25 mins

Ingredients

24 raw tiger prawns
500g fresh mussels
110g medium white rice noodles
400ml tinned coconut milk
50g shelled, unsalted peanuts
1 tbs groundnut oil
50g cucumber, peeled
110g beansprouts
juice of 1 lime
a small bunch fresh basil, leaves roughly shredded
a small bunch fresh mint, leaves roughly shredded
For the paste:
3 medium red chillies, deseeded & chopped
1 dessertspoon dried shrimp paste
4 shallots, peeled
2 stems lemon grass, roughly chopped
2-3cms piece fresh galangal or root ginger, peeled & roughly chopped
1 dsp ground turmeric
Salt & pepper

Method

Prepare the seafood. If necessary, peel the prawns, then run the point of a small, sharp knife along the back of each one and remove any black threads that may be present (Personally, I tend to buy bags of frozen prepared king prawns from my favourite supermarket.) Now scrub the mussels under cold running water and remove any barnacles and pull off the little hairy 'beards'. Discard any mussels that are broken or don't close when given a sharp tap with a knife.

The Noodles. Put the rice noodles in a bowl and cover with boiling water, then leave to soak for 10 minutes. They won't need any further cooking, just re-heating. Drain the noodles in a colander when they are ready, then rinse in cold water and set aside.

Make the laksa paste. Place all the paste ingredients, plus a tablespoon of water, into a liquidizer and blend until smooth. (It is said that you could use a food processor instead but I have doubts.)

Making the dish. Place the peanuts in a medium saucepan and dry-roast over a medium heat until golden brown, then remove to a plate to cool a little. Add the oil to the same pan and, when warm, add the prepared paste and cook over a medium heat for 2 minutes. Add the coconut milk and stir, then leave to simmer gently for 10 minutes. Meanwhile, cut the cucumber into four slices lengthways, then cut each into four long strips. Now roughly chop the cooled toasted nuts. When the coconut-milk mixture is ready, add the noodles, cucumber, $\frac{3}{4}$ of the beansprouts and the lime juice. Now season with salt to taste before bringing back to a simmer. Add the mussels and cook for 2 minutes, then add the prawns and cook for another 3 minutes. The mussels should have opened - discard any that do not - and the prawns be pink. Now add half the shredded herbs.

To serve, first mix the remaining herbs with the chopped nuts. Now ladle the laksa into bowls before sprinkling over the remaining $\frac{1}{4}$ beansprouts and the herb & nut mixture.