

Grilled Fish in Banana Leaf Recipe

Ingredients:

100 ml vegetable oil
2½ tablespoons rich red curry paste
1½ tablespoons shaved palm sugar
50 ml fish sauce
1 large piece banana leaf
1 x 200 g fillet sea bass or other white-fleshed reef fish
2 kaffir lime leaves, julienned
1 red chili, seeded and julienned
10 Thai basil leaves
100 ml coconut cream

Rich red curry paste:

1 medium-sized red onion, chopped
5 cloves garlic, peeled
4 coriander roots, scraped and cleaned
1 x 4 cm piece galangal, finely sliced
1 stalk lemon grass, white part only, finely sliced
1 teaspoon dried prawns (shrimp), soaked in warm water
50 g smoked trout
1 tablespoon roasted shrimp paste
10 long dried chilies, seeded and soaked
1 tablespoon sea salt
1 tablespoon white peppercorns, ground

Method:

Heat oil in a pan to a moderate heat. Add the curry paste and fry until the oil releases from the paste. Add the sugar and fish sauce and taste for seasoning. It should be hot, salty and sweet. Let the paste cool for 5 minutes in a mixing bowl. Meanwhile, place the banana leaf on a work surface and wipe clean with a damp cloth. If using an older leaf, blanch in boiling water or steam for 2 - 3 minutes to make it pliable. Cut out the middle rib and discard. Smear the paste all over the fish and place on the banana leaf. Sprinkle with the lime leaves, chili, 5 basil leaves and half the coconut cream. Bring the middle and ends of the banana leaf together and secure in the middle with a wooden toothpick. Set a grill to a medium to high heat. Place the banana leaf parcel on the grill, turning every 2 minutes to ensure even cooking. The length of cooking time depends on the thickness of the fish and the heat of your grill. If you do not have a grill, you can cook the parcel on a tray in an oven preheated to 180 degrees Celsius for about 15 - 30 minutes. Remove the parcel from the heat. Open the banana leaf and place the fish on a serving plate. Garnish with the remaining basil and drizzle over the coconut cream. Serve.

For the red curry paste:

Pound the onion, garlic, coriander roots and galangal in a mortar and pestle until a uniform paste. Place in a food processor. Pound the remaining ingredients except the peppercorns to a uniform paste and add to the food processor. Blend to a smooth paste. Mix through the pepper. Store in an airtight container. The paste keeps for 4 - 6 days in the refrigerator. It freezes well.