

Mee Siam Recipe

(Rice vermicelli fried with spice pastes recipe in nyonya version)

Ingredients: Serves 10

500 g (1 lb) beehoon (dried rice vermicelli), soaked in cold water until softened, drained

500 g (1 lb) bean sprouts, tails removed

300 g (approximately 9 oz) shrimps, shelled and de-veined

5 taukwa (firm soya bean cakes), diced

oil for deep-frying

2 cups water

Sambal (spice paste):

2 cups of peeled shallots

60 dried chilies, soaked in hot water to soften

3 tablespoons belachan (dried shrimp paste)

4 tablespoons dried shrimps

2 tablespoons sugar

1 teaspoon salt or to taste

Gravy:

1 large onion, peeled and sliced into rings

6 tablespoons taucheow (brown soya bean paste)

3 tablespoons heaped assam (tamarind) paste, mixed with a cup of water, then strained

7 cups water

5 tablespoons sugar

1 tablespoon salt or to taste

1 cup stock, made with the shrimp shells

Garnishes:

10 eggs, hardboiled, shelled and sliced into wedges

A handful of chives, cut into short lengths

10 calamansi, halved

Method:

Peel shrimps and set aside. Boil shells in cup water until shells turn pink. Strain and reserve stock. Heat a wok quarter full with oil and fry diced taukwa in batches until they brown. It will take some time, but this can be done a day before. Leave aside. In a chopper, process shallots, softened chilies, belachan, dried shrimps until fine. Heat half cup of oil left over from the frying of the taukwa. Brown spice paste until oil rises to the surface. Add sugar and salt. Divide this paste into three lots. To make gravy, place one lot of spice paste into a large pot. Add the sliced onions, taucheow, assam water, shrimp stock, sugar and salt. Pour in the water and bring to the boil. Adjust seasoning. It should be sweet and sour. Set aside. Fry the second lot of spice paste in a wok, add the shrimps, followed by the bean sprouts. Pour in 2 cups of water and bring to the boil. Push ingredients to one side and place beehoon into the gravy. Cover with ingredients and allow beehoon to cook for a few minutes, then mix well. To serve, pour hot gravy over beehoon and garnish with wedges of hardboiled eggs, chives and browned taukwa cubes. Offer a halved calamansi and some of the last lot of sambal on the side.

Note: To make this less spicy, de-seed soaked dried chilies first, using gloves before processing in the chopper.