

Siamese Laksa Recipe (Nyonya Recipe)

Ingredients:

600 g fresh coarse rice vermicelli

600 g hardtail (cencaru)

1 coconut, grated

Pounded finely (A):

2 stalks lemon grass (serai), sliced finely

Thumb-sized piece fresh young turmeric (kunyit)

6 dried chilies, soaked in warm water for 15 minutes

4 fresh red chilies, sliced

Pounded finely (B):

5 shallots, peeled

4 pips garlic, peeled

½ teaspoon shrimp paste (belachan)

2 pieces tamarind (assam keping)

4 young daun limau purut, do not use old leaves

1 thumb-sized piece galangal (lengkuas), bruised

5 tablespoons cooking oil

Garnish ingredients:

1 cucumber, shredded. Remove skin and pith.

1 small pineapple, skinned, washed, shredded. Remove eyes

2 bundles mint leaves (daun pudina), discard stalks

1 ginger flower bud (bunga kantan), minced

1 big red onion, peeled and cut into rings

2-3 fresh red chilies, sliced finely. Discard seeds

Black prawn paste (heh koh)

To serve, put coarse vermicelli into a bowl. Garnish and add gravy. Add prawn paste to taste

Method:

Add 1½ rice bowls of water to grated coconut and squeeze for first milk. Add another 2 rice bowls of water and squeeze for second milk. Set aside. Stir coarse rice vermicelli in a pot of boiling water until soft, but make sure it does not become too limp. Remove and drain. Remove scales and intestines of fish. Wash, clean and pat dry with kitchen paper towels. Pound ingredients (A) and (B) separately. Heat oil in cooking pot on a medium flame. When hot, add pounded ingredients and shrimp paste. Stir for a minute and reduce heat to medium. Add the second coconut milk carefully to the mixture in the pot. Stir well until fragrant. The ingredients should be bubbling in the oil. If it is too dry, add one or two teaspoonful of oil. Pour in remaining second coconut milk, then add fish, daun limau purut, galangal and tamarind. Increase heat and add salt to taste. Boil mixture for 2-3 minutes. Add all of the first coconut milk. Reduce heat and allow mixture to slow boil for 5 minutes. Set aside.

Note: Do not oversoak the fresh coarse rice vermicelli as it is already cooked when bought.

Oversoaking will result in soggy vermicelli. If you are using a metal pot, it is very important to control the heat, as oil gets hot very fast. If you stir too slowly, your ingredients will burn and stick to the bottom of the pot. Shrimp paste is a very important part of this recipe, so make sure you use one of good quality. It is advisable that coconut milk is added bit by bit while you are stirring the mixture in the pot. This will prevent your mixture from drying up.