THAILAND / WILL AND FRIENDS

KAENG CHOO CHEE PLA TUUK

Kaeng choo chee pla tuuk is a rich, thick Southern Thai curry of fried short mackerel in a coconut cream and dried chilli paste, finished with shredded kaffir lime leaf.



SERVES	PREP	COOK	TOTAL	DIFFICULTY	SPICE
4	30 min	20 min	50 min	Medium	Hot

INGREDIENTS

FOR THE CHOO CHEE PASTE

6 dried red chillies, soaked and drained

4 garlic cloves

3 shallots, chopped

20 g galangal, chopped

2 lemongrass stalks, sliced

1 tsp shrimp paste

1 pinch salt

FOR THE CURRY

4 short mackerel (pla tuu), about 150 g each, cleaned, or 4 small mackerel fillets

Neutral oil, for frying

200 ml coconut cream

1 tsp shrimp paste

1 tbsp palm sugar, grated

1 tbsp fish sauce, or to taste

TO FINISH

6 kaffir lime leaves, very finely shredded

1 red chilli, thinly sliced

METHOD

MAKE THE PASTE

1 Pound the dried chillies, garlic, shallots, galangal, lemongrass, shrimp paste and salt to a very fine paste. Add a little water if you are using a blender.

FRY THE FISH

2 Heat 2 cm of oil in a pan over medium-high heat. Fry the mackerel for 3 to 4 minutes on each side, until golden. Drain and keep warm.

COOK THE CURRY

3 Heat the coconut cream in a wok over medium heat until it splits and the oil rises, about 5 minutes. Add the paste and fry for 4 to 5 minutes, until the oil has separated and it smells fragrant.

4 Stir in the shrimp paste and palm sugar. Season with fish sauce.

TO SERVE

5 Lay the fish on a plate and spoon the curry over it. Scatter with shredded lime leaf and sliced red chilli.

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Mackerel can be replaced with pan-fried salmon or any firm fish fillet.

Lime leaves are the main scent here, so shred them as finely as you can.

The paste can be made a few days ahead and kept in the fridge.

Will is at Palm's family house in Southern Thailand, where Palm's mother, Khun Sai Jit, shows him one of her family recipes. The dish is kaeng choo chee, a thick dry curry, made with fried mackerel.The paste is pounded very fine from garlic, dried red chilli, galangal, lemongrass, shrimp paste and salt. Will notes that the kaffir lime leaves here...