WILL MEYRICK

MALAYSIA

MALAYSIAN FISH CURRY

Malaysian fish curry is a Penang-style dish: a whole snapper simmered in a fresh curry paste and fried spices, soured with tomato and tamarind and finished with coconut milk. It is better the next day.



SERVES	PREP	COOK	TOTAL	DIFFICULTY	SPICE
4	30 min	35 min	1 h 5 min	Medium	Hot

INGREDIENTS

FOR THE CURRY PASTE

6 garlic cloves

30 g fresh ginger, peeled

25 g galangal, peeled

2 lemongrass stalks, tender part only

4 shallots

1 small handful coriander roots and stems

FOR THE FISH CURRY SPICES

1 tbsp coriander seeds

1 tsp cumin seeds

1 tsp fennel seeds

1/2 tsp turmeric powder

1 tsp chilli powder

FOR THE CURRY

1 whole snapper (about 1 kg), scaled, gutted and cut into 3 or 4 pieces on the bone

3 tbsp oil

500 ml fish stock or water

3 tomatoes, quartered

6 okra, halved

1 aubergine, cut into chunks

2 tbsp tamarind pulp, mixed with 60 ml warm water

200 ml coconut milk

Salt, to taste

TO SERVE

Steamed rice

METHOD

MAKE THE SPICE MIX AND PASTE

1. Dry-roast the coriander, cumin and fennel seeds in a pan until crisp and smelling nice. Grind to a powder with the turmeric and chilli powder.

2 Blend the garlic, ginger, galangal, lemongrass, shallots and coriander roots to a smooth paste.

COOK THE PASTE

3 Heat the oil in a wide pot. Fry the spice mix for a minute. Add the curry paste, turn the heat down and cook slowly until the oil splits from the paste and it smells rich.

ADD THE FISH

4 Pour in the stock or water. Add the snapper, tomatoes, okra and aubergine. Season with salt and bring to the boil.

5 Stir in the tamarind and cook at a gentle simmer for 10 to 12 minutes.

FINISH

6 Pour in the coconut milk and heat through without boiling hard. Taste and adjust the salt and tamarind.

7 Serve with steamed rice. The head for the adventurous, the body for everyone else.

USEFUL SHORTCUTS FOR HOME COOKS

Use whole fish on the bone. The head and bones give the sauce its body.

Make it a day ahead: the flavour improves overnight. Keep it in the fridge for up to 2 days.

Add more chilli powder if you want it hotter.

Will cooks with his friend Palm Amatawet. They found the dish in Penang and cook their own version of it here.It starts with a curry paste of garlic, ginger, coriander, galangal and lemongrass, and a fish curry spice mix that is fried first. Palm says that with Malay or Indian curry you fry the spices before anything else. A whole...