MYANMAR

MOHINGA

Mohinga is Myanmar's breakfast soup: rice noodles in a thick, fragrant broth of fish, lemongrass, ginger and toasted rice, topped with crisp fritters, egg and lime. Every stall in Yangon has its own version.



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

INGREDIENTS

FOR THE BROTH

- 600 g catfish or other firm white fish, cleaned, on the bone
- 2 l water
- 3 lemongrass stalks, bruised and tied in a knot
- 40 g ginger, sliced
- 1 tsp ground turmeric

FOR THE PASTE

- 2 onions, roughly chopped
- 5 garlic cloves
- 30 g ginger, peeled and chopped
- 2 lemongrass stalks, white part only, sliced
- 2 dried red chillies, soaked
- 4 tbsp neutral oil
- 1 tsp sweet paprika

TO THICKEN AND SEASON

- 3 tbsp uncooked jasmine rice
- 3 tbsp chickpea flour (besan)
- 200 g banana stem, peeled and sliced (or tinned banana stem)
- 3 tbsp fish sauce
- 1 tsp ground black pepper

TO SERVE

- 400 g thin rice vermicelli
- 2 hard-boiled eggs, quartered
- 8 split pea or gourd fritters (see tips)
- Coriander leaves
- Fried shallots
- Dried chilli flakes
- 2 limes, cut into wedges

METHOD

MAKE THE FISH STOCK

1. Put the fish, water, knotted lemongrass, sliced ginger and turmeric in a large pot. Bring to the boil, then simmer for 15 minutes, until the fish is just cooked.

2 Lift out the fish, let it cool, then flake the flesh off the bones. Return the bones to the pot and simmer for another 20 minutes. Strain and keep the stock.

TOAST THE RICE

3 Dry-roast the rice in a pan over medium heat for 5 to 6 minutes, until golden. Grind it to a powder. Toast the chickpea flour in the same pan for 2 minutes, until it smells nutty.

COOK THE PASTE

4 Pound or blend the onions, garlic, ginger, lemongrass and chillies to a coarse paste.

5 Heat the oil in a large pot over medium heat. Fry the paste with the paprika for 8 to 10 minutes, stirring, until it is soft, deep orange and the oil separates.

6 Add the flaked fish and stir for 2 minutes, breaking it up into the paste.

BUILD THE SOUP

7 Pour in the fish stock. Whisk the rice powder and chickpea flour with a ladle of cold water until smooth, then stir it into the pot.

8 Add the banana stem, fish sauce and pepper. Simmer gently for 20 minutes, stirring often so it does not catch, until the broth is thick enough to coat a spoon. Add water if it gets too thick.

SERVE

9 Cook the rice vermicelli following the packet, drain and divide between bowls.

10 Ladle the hot broth over the noodles. Top with egg, broken fritters, coriander, fried shallots and chilli flakes, with lime on the side.

USEFUL SHORTCUTS FOR HOME COOKS

Banana stem is sold fresh in Asian markets and tinned in brine; if you cannot find it, leave it out or use a few slices of bamboo shoot.

For quick fritters, mix 100 g chickpea flour with water, salt and a little turmeric to a thick batter, add sliced onion and fry spoonfuls until crisp.

The broth keeps for 2 days in the fridge and tastes better the next morning.

Will is in Yangon, the old Rangoon. The film starts at the golden Shwedagon Pagoda, then goes down into the city's markets: women cutting vegetables on the ground, trays of fried snacks, steel bowls of red curries lined up on the counters.The dish that stops him is mohinga, the fish and rice noodle soup that Myanmar eats for breakfast. It…