THAILAND / WILL AND FRIENDS

SOUTHERN STIR-FRIED SQUID

Pla mek is a Southern Thai stir-fry of fresh squid in a pounded black pepper, garlic, shallot and turmeric paste, with water spinach, spring onion and red chilli. It takes about 10 minutes.



SERVES	PREP	COOK	TOTAL	DIFFICULTY	SPICE
4	20 min	8 min	28 min	Easy	Medium

INGREDIENTS

FOR THE PASTE

1 tsp black peppercorns

4 garlic cloves

3 shallots

15 g fresh turmeric, peeled

FOR THE STIR-FRY

500 g fresh squid, cleaned and cut into rings or scored pieces

2 tbsp neutral oil

2 spring onions, cut into 3 cm lengths

100 g water spinach, cut into 5 cm lengths

2 red chillies, sliced

120 ml water

1 to 2 tbsp fish sauce, to taste

TO SERVE

Steamed rice

METHOD

MAKE THE PASTE

1. Pound the peppercorns, garlic, shallots and turmeric in a mortar to a coarse paste.

STIR-FRY

2. Heat the oil in a wok over medium-high heat, not too hot. Fry the paste for 1 to 2 minutes, until fragrant.
3. Add the squid and stir-fry for 1 minute.
4. Add the spring onions, water spinach and chillies. Toss for 30 seconds.

FINISH

5 Pour in the water and season with fish sauce. Cook for 1 to 2 minutes, until the squid is just tender and the vegetables are wilted. Do not overcook or the squid will turn rubbery.

6 Serve straight away with steamed rice.

USEFUL SHORTCUTS FOR HOME COOKS

Squid is best cooked fast or very slowly. Keep this one to under 3 minutes in the pan.

Water spinach can be replaced with spinach or pak choi.

Fresh turmeric stains. Use gloves or a spoon to peel it.

Will is in Palm's home town on the south coast of Thailand. The night before he went squid fishing from the boats and, as he admits, caught nothing himself. The morning after, he is back at Palm's family home, with Palm's grandmother and parents around the table.They cook pla mek, southern stir-fried squid, a dish that has been on the...