



MALAYSIAN LAKSA NOODLE SOUP

Serves 4

For the laksa paste:

12g dried prawns
8 dried red chillies
2 lemongrass stalks (tender base only)
7g garlic cloves
60g shallots
15g peeled galangal
15g peeled ginger
½ tbsp. coriander seeds
12g cashew or macadamia nuts
1 tsp turmeric powder
1 ½ tbsp. vegetable oil

250g raw unshelled fresh/or frozen prawns (with shell!)
2 tbsp vegetable oil
400ml coconut milk
200ml chicken or vegetable stock
1 tbsp palm sugar or cassonade (dark brown sugar)
2 tbsp fish sauce
lime juice, to taste

For the topping:

200g rice noodles (5mm-wide)
2 eggs
½ cucumber
2 spring onions
8 fried tofu puffs
100g beansprouts

To serve:

lime wedges
crispy onions
mint leaves
coriander leaves

For the laksa paste:

Break open the dried chillies, remove and discard the seeds and put the chilli skins into a little bowl with the dried prawns. Pour boiling water onto the chillies and leave to soak for 20 minutes until soft.

Meanwhile, finely chop the lemongrass. Peel and crush the garlic. Peel and roughly chop the shallots, galangal and ginger.

Put the coriander seeds in a frying pan and roast for a few minutes until fragrant. Grind the seeds in a pestle and mortar.

Drain the prawns and chillies and put in a blender, reduce to a paste. Add the remaining laksa paste ingredients and blend to a paste.

For the laksa soup base:

Peel and devein the prawns (and remove the heads if they have any), keeping the shells and heads. Refrigerate the prawns until needed.

Heat 1 tbsp of oil in a heavy-based saucepan and fry the prawn shells and heads for a couple of minutes until crisp and golden. Add 1.2l of water and bring to the boil. Leave to simmer for about 30 minutes until reduced to approx. 750ml.

Meanwhile, prepare the toppings:

Drop the rice noodles into boiling water, take off the heat and leave to soak for about 5 minutes until just tender.

Boil the eggs for 6 ½ minutes, drain and put under a tap of running cold water. Once cool enough to handle, peel the eggs and cut in halves.

Cut open the cucumber lengthwise and remove the seeds with a teaspoon. Cut the cucumber into thin strips.

Trim the spring onions and slice.

Once the prawn stock has reduced, strain the stock through a sieve and set aside.

Heat 1 tbsp oil in the saucepan used for the stock and fry the laksa paste for a few minutes until fragrant.

Add the coconut milk, prawn stock and chicken or vegetable stock and bring to the boil. Add the palm sugar and season with fish sauce and lime juice to your liking.

Strain the laksa soup base through a sieve to remove the chunky paste ingredients, and put back into the saucepan.

Bring back to the boil and add the tofu puffs, prawns and beansprouts, cooking them for approximately 3-5 minutes until cooked through.

Assembly:

Distribute the rice noodles between 4 bowls.

Top each with a few ladles of laksa soup base, a few shrimps, 2 tofu puffs, one egg half, cucumber slices and sprinkle with crispy onions, mint and coriander.

