

FROM THE KITCHEN AT SIBOYA BUNGALOWS



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TOM KA SEAFOOD (*Galangal Coconut Soup - Seafood*) serves 6-8

Ingredients:

a 2 to 3-inch section fresh or frozen Thai galangal, or 6-8 dried pieces
2 stalks lemon grass
750 mL (3 cups) rich coconut milk
750 mL (3 cups) water
2 mL (1/2 tsp) salt
2 mL (1/2 tsp) baking soda
8 medium-size prawns
4-5 whole baby squid
8-10 mussels in the shell
1/2 a Dungeness crab, preferably uncooked
8 large sea scallops
1 small onion, quartered and sliced crosswise 1/4 inch thick
3-4 red Thai chili peppers, to desired hotness cut in large slivers
4 fresh (or frozen) Kaffir lime leaves, thinly slivered
2 cups fresh mushrooms, sliced about 1/4 inch thick
60-90 mL (4-6 Tbs) fish sauce (nam pla), to taste
juice of 1-2 fresh limes, to desired sourness
30-60 mL (1-2 Tbs) palm sugar, to taste
1 mL (1/4 tsp) freshly ground white pepper
a handful of cilantro leaves or short sprigs

Method:

- Slice the galangal root thinly; it is not necessary to peel unless the outside has turned old and brown.
- Lemon Grass... Cut and discard the bottom tip of the lemon grass and remove the loose outer leaf or leaves. Slice at a long slanted angle, about an inch apart, all the way up the stalk to near where the grass blade starts... Smash and bruise these pieces with the flat side of a cleaver to release the aromatic oils and flavour.
- Place both galangal and lemon grass in a soup pot.
- Spoon as much of the thick cream off the top of the coconut milk as you can and reserve for later use.
- Add the remaining watery part along with 3 cups of water to the herbs in the pot.
- Bring to a boil, then simmer covered over low heat for 10-15 minutes.

In the meantime... prepare the seafood and remaining ingredients.
Shell and butterfly the prawns. Sprinkle with 2 mL (1/2 tsp) salt and 30 mL (2 Tbs) of

water. Mix well and set aside for about 10 minutes. Then rinse a few times to remove all the salt. Clean the squid, cutting the tube-like body into 3-4 circles about an inch apart. Leave the tentacles whole. Store in cold water until ready to use.

And... Scrub the mussels to remove any sand and mud from the shells. Cover with cold water with 2 mL (1/2 tsp) of baking soda added. Pull off the crab legs and claw. Use only the top half of the legs; disjoint the claw in two pieces. Crack each leg and claw piece with the back of a cleaver or heavy knife. Cut the body half into 2-3 pieces. Leave the scallops whole. Prepare the remaining ingredients as indicated above.

-- When the herbs have simmered sufficiently to draw out their flavors, add the sliced onion, slivered chilies and Kaffir lime leaves. Simmer 2-3 more minutes. Then add the mushrooms and reserved coconut cream. Stir well to blend into the broth and season to taste with fish sauce. Bring to a slow boil over medium heat. Drain the mussels and squid. When the soup has just reached the boiling point, add the mussels and crab pieces. Stir. After 15 seconds, stir in the remaining seafood. Add half the lime juice. Stir, then taste; if you wish the soup to be more limy, add more lime juice. Adjust the sour and salty flavors with enough palm sugar to return the sweet, rich taste of the coconut milk.

-- The seafood should be ready in about a minute or so. Turn off heat and sprinkle with freshly ground white pepper. Stir well, then transfer to a soup tureen, or ladle into individual serving bowls, and garnish the top with cilantro.

Notes:

-- This recipe is written with canned coconut milk in mind.

-- If you are using freshly made coconut milk, start with the lighter milk from the second or third pressing to simmer the herbs, reserving the richer cream for the later addition.

-- Because it is a rich soup, Thai people eat it more like a curry -- just a few spoonfuls with some rice -- and seldom will eat an entire bowl by themselves, like Westerners, who are used to rich cream soups, will do.

Thai people usually do not strain herbs out of their soups, but if you find the fibrous lemon grass and strong galangal to be distracting, you may wish to remove them before adding the rest of the ingredients. This may be a wise idea if you are having guests for dinner who have never had Thai food and may not know what to do should they bite into a piece of hard lemon grass or pungent galangal.