

## ***Kao Soi* – Chiang Mai-Style Curry Noodles with Chicken and Condiments**

### **Curry Paste:**

- 2 Tbs. coriander seeds, roasted and ground
- 12 Thai cardamoms – hulled, roasted, then ground
- 2 tsp. cumin, roasted and ground
- 20 dried red chillies, roasted with a pinch of salt and ground finely
- 2 tsp. freshly ground nutmeg
- 2 tsp. ground mace
- 2 Tbs. yellow curry powder
- 1 Tbs. sea salt
- 2 Tbs. minced fresh turmeric
- 1/4 cup minced fresh ginger
- 2 Tbs. minced cilantro roots (or substitute with bottom stems)
- 1 head garlic, minced
- 5 shallots, minced
- 2 14-oz cans coconut milk (use *Chaokoh*)
- 3-1/2 cups water
- 2 1/2 lb. boneless chicken, cut into 1-inch chunks
- 2 lbs. fresh egg noodles (see notes)
- 3 cups peanut oil for frying noodles

### **Fried dried chilli flakes in oil:**

- 1/4 cup peanut oil
- 1/4 cup dried red pepper flakes
- 1/2 tsp. sea salt
- 4 shallots, cut into small 1/2-inch cubes
- 1 to 1 1/2 cups chopped salted or pickled mustard greens
- 1 1/2 limes, cut into small half-wedges (8 pieces per lime)
- 1/2 cup short cilantro sprigs
- 2 Tbs. black soy sauce
- 3-4 Tbs. thin soy sauce, or fish sauce (*nahm bplah*), to taste
- 2-3 tsp. palm sugar

Prepare the curry paste ingredients. Use a dry pan over medium heat to roast the seeds until they are both aromatic and have darkened. Likewise, roast the dried chillies in the pan with a pinch of salt, turning frequently, until they are dark red and slightly charred. Cool both seeds and chillies before grinding in a spice grinder (or clean coffee grinder) to a fine powder. Combine with the other powdered dry spices.

Using a heavy stone mortar and pestle, pound the minced wet paste ingredients with the sea salt until they are reduced to a fine paste. Combine with the ground dried spices and pound together to form a well-blended curry paste.

Heat 3/4 cup of thick cream from the top of one of the cans of coconut milk in a large saucepan over medium-high heat and reduce until thick and the oil has separated. Add the curry paste and fry in the cream for 3 to 5 minutes to release the aromas and flavors. Increase heat to high and toss in the chicken, stir-frying it with the spice mixture until most of the pieces are no longer raw and pink on the outside. Pour in the remaining coconut milk from the two cans, add 3-1/2 cups of water and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and cook partially covered over low to medium heat, so that the sauce boils very gently, until the chicken is tender (about 20 minutes).

In the meantime, cut or break half a package of the egg noodles into 2- to 3-inch lengths. Heat the peanut oil in a wok until it begins to smoke and fry a small handful of the cut noodles at a time over medium-high heat until golden brown and crispy. Remove from oil with a wire-mesh skimmer and drain.

Make the fried chilli oil by heating 1/4 cup of peanut oil in a small skillet until it begins to smoke. Turn off heat, wait 30 seconds before adding the dried red pepper flakes and salt. The hot oil may make the chilli flakes fume and foam (salt helps keep the fumes down). Transfer to a sauce dish and let cool. The chilli flakes should be dark red in color but not burned.

Prepare the remaining ingredients as instructed. Arrange the shallots, salted/pickled mustard greens and limes in 4 small side dishes and set aside.

When the chicken is tender, season the curry sauce as needed to taste with black soy sauce, light soy sauce or fish sauce and palm sugar. Cook a few minutes longer to blend in the flavors of seasonings.

Cook the remaining noodles in hot boiling water until they are cooked to your liking. Drain and dish into individual serving bowls. Spoon chicken and curry sauce over the noodles and top with cilantro sprigs and the crispy noodles. Serve with the side dishes of cut-up shallots, salted/pickled mustard greens and lime wedges and the fried chilli oil.

Serves 8 to 10.

**Notes:**

This noodle dish contrasts the soft and chewy texture of boiled noodles with the crunchy texture of crisp-fried noodles. For crisp-fried noodles, use the larger round strands of fresh Chinese egg noodles. The same kind of noodles may be used for the boiled noodles, but will tend to taste a bit starchy. I prefer to use the very thin egg noodles for boiling (the kind that cooks in 1 to 2 minutes), or the thin 1/4-inch flat noodles available in some Chinatown markets, which has a good velvety texture.