

Miang Kham Recipe

(Thai Recipe)

Ingredients:

6 shallots, peeled and finely minced
4-inch young ginger, remove skin and minced
75 g dry-roasted peanuts, skinned
50 g dried shrimps, soaked in warm water to soften, drained and minced
3 tablespoons crisp-fried garlic
1 large lemon, skin washed and dried, skin and flesh finely diced, seeds discarded
8-10 red or green bird's eye chilies, chopped, or 1-2 large red or green chilies, minced
50 g fresh grated or desiccated coconut, toasted in a dry wok until golden brown
wild pepper leaves or butter lettuce leaves

Sauce:

3 tablespoons dry-roasted peanuts
1 tablespoon dried shrimps, soaked in warm water to soften
3 tablespoons freshly grated or desiccated coconut
3 shallots, peeled and minced
1 stem lemon grass, tender inner part of bottom 3 inch only, thinly sliced
1 teaspoon finely minced ginger
1 teaspoon finely minced galangal
2 teaspoons dried shrimp paste, toasted
300 ml water
60 g finely minced palm sugar
1 teaspoon salt

Method:

Prepare the sauce by processing the peanuts to a fine powder in a spice grinder, then transfer to a saucepan. Do the same for the dried shrimps and then again for the coconut. Add the shallots, lemon grass, ginger, galangal and shrimp paste and process to a smooth paste, adding a little of the water if needed to keep mixture turning. Transfer the paste to the saucepan and add water, palm sugar, and salt. Bring to the boil, stirring. Reduce heat and simmer uncovered, stirring frequently, until the sauce thickens and is reduced to about $\frac{3}{4}$ cup, around 15 - 20 minutes. Leave to cool, then transfer to four small serving bowls.

Arrange separate piles of shallots, ginger, peanuts, dried shrimps, garlic, lemon, chilies, and coconut on a large serving plate. (If you like, you can prepare these ingredients in advance and keep them, covered, in containers for about an hour, although it is best to cut the lemon just before serving.)

Arrange the wild pepper (betel) leaves or lettuce leaves on a plate and serve with the filling ingredients. Everyone adds a little of the ingredients, then spoons over some of the sauce before tucking up the leaf and eating.

Note: This delightful and pleasurable appetizer is normally made using wild pepper leaves (cha plu in Thai, bo la lot in Vietnam). Do not worry if you have to substitute these with lettuce. The unexpectedly piquant flavors and contrasting textures of the filling still taste great. There is fair amount of preparation, but this can be done in advance and at the last minute, all you need to do is arrange the ingredients decoratively and serve.