

Panang Curry with Pork

Swick

Serves 1 | Active Time: 1 hour 30 minutes | Total Time: 1 hour 30 minutes

Chef's Notes

Mace is the thin, red lace-like cover on the outside of the nutmeg. It has a very similar flavor to nutmeg; it's just a bit more delicate. If you can't find mace, you could substitute with a bit of nutmeg.

Sweet Thai basil is not the same as regular basil. Thai basil has a beautiful aroma and flavor, which really adds to this dish.

Take care when handling chilies, as you can burn your skin from the seeds and ribs of the chilies. Wear gloves or thoroughly wash your hands with hot soapy water after chopping.

Panang curry is excellent with chicken, beef or tofu. The paste will keep for quite a few days in the refrigerator or for several months in the freezer.

Cooking the Dish:

makrut lime leaves are very strong. You can halve the amount if you like. You may also find the torn pieces of makrut lime to be too tough. However, it is very common in Thai cooking to add larger pieces of the more aromatic ingredients. I have tried to chop the leaves smaller and then add them, but the flavor is much stronger and just not the same. Rather than bits of makrut here and there, it sort of permeates the whole dish.

When cooking pork, it is okay for it to be a bit pink in the middle. In fact, if it is, it will be more tender.

Wok:

Depending on the type of wok you use, you will likely have to play around with the heat. The one used here is a heavy "Western Style" cast iron wok, which retains heat very well.

Preparing Ingredients for Panang Paste

To start the paste, boil the peanuts until very soft. This should take about 45 minutes at a gentle boil.

Remove the seeds from the chilies, leaving a few seeds in if you like more heat. Soak the chilies in a pot of hot water for about 15 minutes.

Add a bit of water to the peanuts, if needed, as the water will boil down quite a bit. In the meantime, toast the cumin, coriander and mace/nutmeg, and set aside to cool.

When the chilies are soft, drain and squeeze out the excess water. Finely chop and set aside. Once the peanuts are soft, drain and set aside to cool completely.

Remove the outer skin and finely chop the galangal. Mince the bottom, white part of the lemongrass. Next, finely chop the garlic, shallot and the root of the coriander. Lastly, zest the makrut lime, and measure the shrimp paste.

Step 1: Preparing Ingredients for Panang Paste

- 4 tbsp unsalted, raw peanuts (optional)
- 10 dried, long, red chilies
- 1/2 tsp cumin seeds
- 1 tsp coriander seeds
- 1/4 tsp mace (or 1/4 piece of nutmeg, coarsely pounded)
- 1 1/2 tbsp galangal
- 2 tbsp lemongrass
- 2 tbsp garlic
- 3 tbsp shallots
- 1 tbsp coriander root
- 1 tsp makrut lime zest
- 1/4 tsp shrimp paste (or to taste, optional)

Making the Panang Paste

To make the paste, in a mortar and pestle, grind the cumin, coriander and mace/nutmeg until you have a fine powder. Next, grind the chilies along with a good pinch of salt. Scrape down the sides of the pestle from time to time, and pound the chilies until very fine. Add the galangal. Pound each ingredient in fully, before adding the next, adding the lemongrass, garlic, coriander root, shallots, lime zest and shrimp paste. Finally, grind in the peanuts.

Step 2: Making the Panang Paste

- 1 large pinch sea salt

Preparing the Pork

Trim and cut the pork tenderloin lengthwise into 4 equal strips. Cut on an angle into thin slices.

Step 3: Preparing the Pork

- 1 whole pork tenderloin (approx. 1 lb or 2 cups once sliced)

Making the Panang Curry

Tear half of the makrut lime leaves into small pieces, removing the tough stem in the middle; chiffonade the other half. Slice the chili on a slight angle. Set all of this aside, reserving a bit of the basil for garnish.

Remove the basil leaves from the rest of the stems and set aside. Measure the palm sugar and fish sauce. Finally, measure out the coconut cream into 1 cup portions.

Heat your wok over medium-high heat. Once hot, add the first cup of coconut cream and let cook until the coconut oil begins to separate, about 3 to 5 minutes. Add about 5 to 6 tablespoons of the Panaeng paste. Fry this for a minute or two until very fragrant, before adding the pork. Cook the pork until the outside is cooked.

Add the remaining cup of coconut cream and bring to a gentle boil. Then turn the heat down to medium, add the palm sugar, fish sauce and the torn pieces of lime leaves. Stir and let cook for a few minutes.

Test one of the larger pieces of pork for doneness. Once done, add the basil leaves. Scoop into a bowl and garnish with a drizzle of coconut milk, the chiffonade of lime leaves, red chilies, and remaining basil. Serve.

Step 4: Making the Panang Curry

- 6 to 8 makrut lime leaves
- 1 long, red, chili (for garnish)
- 1/2 cup Thai basil
- 2 tbsp palm sugar
- 2 tbsp fish sauce
- 1 cup thick coconut cream (to cook the paste)
- 1 cup thick coconut cream (for the sauce)
- 5 to 6 tbsp Panaeng paste
- 2 tbsp coconut milk (optional, to garnish)