

CHICKEN IN SPICY COCONUT SAUCE

SERVES 8

ACTIVE TIME: 40 MIN START TO FINISH: 2 HR

If you like curries, you'll love this recipe. The sauce is rich with coconut flavor and redolent with spice. Don't be alarmed by the number of red chiles—these are mild.

- 3 lb chicken drumsticks and thighs
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 2 rounded tablespoons tamarind from a pliable block
- ½ cup hot water
- 1 cup chopped shallots (4 large)
- 10 (5½-inch) fresh Holland red chiles, sliced crosswise (1 cup), including seeds
- 1 tablespoon chopped peeled fresh ginger
- 2 teaspoons chopped peeled turmeric (fresh or thawed frozen) or 1 teaspoon ground turmeric
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 2 teaspoons ground coriander
- 2 fresh lemongrass stalks, 1 or 2 outer leaves and all but lower 6 inches discarded
- 6 cups well-stirred canned unsweetened coconut milk (48 fl oz; not low-fat)
- 1 (1-inch) piece galangal (fresh or thawed frozen), sliced crosswise
- 2 teaspoons packed dark palm sugar or dark brown sugar

- Rub chicken with salt and let stand at room temperature 30 minutes.
- While chicken stands, gently mash tamarind with hot water in a bowl using your fingertips until pulp is softened, then force with a rubber spatula through a medium-mesh sieve into a small bowl, discarding solids. Pulse shallots, chiles, ginger, and turmeric with cumin and coriander in a food processor until finely chopped. Lightly smash lemongrass stalks with bottom of a heavy skillet.
- Stir together coconut milk, tamarind purée, shallot mixture, lemongrass, galangal, and palm sugar in a 6- to 7-quart wide heavy pot. Add chicken and bring to a simmer over moderately high heat, stirring frequently, then reduce heat and gently simmer, partially covered, until very tender, 40 to 45 minutes. Transfer chicken with tongs to a bowl and simmer sauce, uncovered, stirring frequently, until thickened and reduced to about 4 cups, 20 to 25 minutes. Remove from heat and let stand 5 minutes, then skim off any

fat if desired. Discard lemongrass and season sauce with salt. Add chicken and stir to coat.

COOKS' NOTE: Chicken can be made 2 days ahead and cooled completely in sauce, uncovered, then chilled, covered. Reheat over moderately low heat.

PERFECT STEAMED RICE

SERVES 8

ACTIVE TIME: 15 MIN START TO FINISH: 35 MIN

If you don't have a rice cooker, this is the way to prepare absolutely perfect rice. The liquid cooks down before you cover the pot, so you have more control over how much liquid evaporates; this makes all the difference between mushy and fluffy rice.

- 3 cups Thai jasmine rice (1 lb 5 oz)
- ¾ cups water

▪ Rinse rice in several changes of cold water until water is clear, then drain well in a large fine-mesh sieve. Bring rice and water (3½ cups) to a boil in a 4-quart wide heavy pot and boil, uncovered, without stirring, until steam holes appear in rice and grains on surface look dry, 5 to 7 minutes. Reduce heat to very low, then cover pot with a tight-fitting lid and simmer 15 minutes. Remove from heat and let stand, covered, 5 minutes. Gently fluff rice with a fork.

MANGO PUDDINGS

SERVES 8

ACTIVE TIME: 30 MIN

START TO FINISH: 9 HR (INCLUDES CHILLING)

Although this dessert is not traditional (Nonya sweets typically call for unusual ingredients that are not readily available in the U.S.), you'd likely find a version of it at a contemporary Malaysian restaurant. It's extremely important to use very ripe mangoes—it's their fresh flavor that makes these puddings so delicious.

- 2½ to 2¾ lb very ripe mangoes (4 or 5)
- 1 (¼-oz) envelope unflavored gelatin
- 1¼ cups water
- ½ cup sugar
- ¾ cup canned evaporated milk
- GARNISH: 1 mango, peeled, pitted, and diced

▪ Peel and pit mangoes, then purée in a food processor until smooth (you should have 2½ cups purée). Force through a medium-mesh sieve into a bowl to remove

any fibers, scraping bottom of sieve with a rubber spatula (discard fibers).

▪ Sprinkle gelatin over ¼ cup water in a small bowl and let stand 1 minute to soften. Heat sugar and remaining cup water in a small saucepan over moderately high heat, stirring, until sugar is dissolved, then add gelatin mixture and stir until dissolved. Add puréed mango and heat, stirring, just until mixture reaches a bare simmer. Remove from heat, then stir in evaporated milk until combined well. Cool to room temperature, stirring occasionally, about 30 minutes.

▪ Divide among 8 (½-cup) goblets and chill, covered, at least 8 hours and up to 24 (for flavors to develop; puddings will be softly set).

BEER ADVICE is on page 56. For more information about the specialty ingredients called for in this menu, see **SHOPPING LIST**, page 226.

GAME PLAN

1 WEEK AHEAD

Make peanut sauce

Make sambal belacan for green-papaya salad

5 DAYS AHEAD

Make lime cordial syrup

3 DAYS AHEAD

Make Nonya chicken stock

Braise pork

2 DAYS AHEAD

Make chicken in spicy coconut sauce

1 DAY AHEAD

Marinate beef for satés

Make mango puddings

6 HOURS AHEAD

Cut water spinach

4 HOURS AHEAD

Thread marinated beef onto soaked skewers

Peel, devein, and cut shrimp for water spinach

30 MINUTES AHEAD

Make steamed rice

Make green-papaya salad

JUST BEFORE SERVING

Reheat peanut sauce and grill beef satés

Make lime cordials

Reheat braised pork

Reheat chicken in spicy coconut sauce

Make mint soup

Make water spinach with shrimp