



Bit Spicy Thai Paste Recipes

Thai curry pastes, on the whole, are quite distinctive from other spice blends in that they consist of fresh or 'wet' ingredients and rely less on the usual blend of dry spices you would expect in a South Asian, Malay or Indonesian curry.

There are quite a few very good commercially available pastes out there, but with a food blender you can easily make your own at home. Nothing beats making your own paste and more importantly you can ensure there are no nasty additives.

The method is simple and essentially the same for all of these pastes: the whole spices are first gently roasted before being added to the 'wet' ingredients and blended to a smooth paste. The paste itself will keep in the refrigerator for a few weeks - or better, freeze it!

The colour of the Thai pastes comes from the chillies you use (always use fresh): mild red or green chillies will add flavour and no heat, but these can be substituted for hotter varieties if you prefer.

In addition, coriander root is not added as a garnish but an ingredient to impart a concentrated 'coriander' flavour. It is difficult to come by, so if you don't grow your own strip off the leaves from the lower stalks (retain these for garnish) and pound the stalks to a paste.

Finally, Thai curries depend far more on speed than the slow cook of Indian curries, therefore ensure all meat is thinly sliced to ensure a quick cook.

Here are three Thai paste recipes for you to try:

THAI GREEN CURRY PASTE

This paste can be extremely hot and gets its heat from the number of hot green 'birds eye' chillies used. Adjust quantities depending on your preference (or just use large green mild chillies).

Whole spices - to roast

- 2 tsp coriander seeds
- 1 tsp caraway seeds
- 1 tsp black pepper corns (optional)

In a dry frying pan gently roast the spices until fragrant. Allow to cool.

'Wet' ingredients

- 6-8 chopped whole green chillies (or more! - including seeds) - 'birds eye' green chillies are the best, but also quite hot!
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp ground nutmeg (optional)
- Thumb-sized piece of fresh galangal or ginger, roughly chopped (wash but don't peel)
- 4 shallots or 1 large onion, roughly chopped
- 4 cloves of garlic, roughly chopped
- 2 tsp coriander root
- 1 stalk of chopped lemongrass
- 1 tsp of shrimp paste



- At least 6 dried kaffir lime leaves
- Small handful of holy (or usual) basil (optional)
- 4 tsp of ground nut oil or vegetable oil

Grind the roasted whole spices and combine with the 'wet' ingredients in a food blender and blend into a smooth paste.

RED THAI CURRY PASTE

Red curry paste is extremely hot and gets its heat from the number of chillies used adjust quantities depending on your preference, but red chillies do on the whole tend to be hotter than green ones!

Whole spices - to roast

- 3 tsp coriander seeds
- 2 tsp caraway seeds
- 1 tsp black pepper corns (optional)

In a dry frying pan gently roast the spices until fragrant. Allow to cool.

'Wet' ingredients

- 4-8 chopped whole red chillies including seeds (if using some of the larger fleshy chillies like scotch bonnets - go easy on these!)
- 1 large red mild chilli chopped (optional - for colour and slight flavour)
- 1 tsp salt
- thumb-sized piece of fresh galangal or ginger, roughly chopped (wash - do not peel)
- 4 shallots or 1 large onion, roughly chopped
- 4 cloves of garlic, roughly chopped
- 2 tsp coriander root (see above)
- 1 stalk of chopped lemongrass
- 1 tsp shrimp paste
- at least 8 dried kaffir lime leaves
- 2 tsp paprika (optional, and again more for colour!)
- 4 tsp ground nut oil or vegetable oil

Combine the roasted whole spices with the 'wet' ingredients in a food blender and blend into a smooth paste.

YELLOW THAI CURRY PASTE (CHIANG MAI)

Yellow curry paste is quite a bit milder than the Red and Green curries. Use milder large red chillies (of at least 8cm or so)

Whole spices - to roast

- 3 tsp of coriander seeds
- 3 tsp of cumin seeds
- 2-3 cm cassia or cinnamon bark (optional)



In a dry frying pan gently roast the spices until fragrant - a few minutes (2-3 mins. max). Allow to cool.

'Wet' ingredients

- 2-3 chopped whole large red chillies including seeds
- 1 tsp salt
- Thumb-sized piece of fresh galangal or ginger, roughly chopped
- 4 shallots or 1 large onion, roughly chopped
- 4 cloves of garlic, roughly chopped
- 2 tsp coriander root
- 1 stalk of chopped lemongrass
- 1 tsp shrimp paste
- 1tbsp turmeric powder
- 4 tsp ground nut oil or vegetable oil

Combine the roasted whole spices with the 'wet' ingredients (except the turmeric) in a food blender and blend into a smooth paste. Add the turmeric and mix thoroughly.

Once you've made your pastes, here are a couple of great recipes to try:

GREEN BEEF CURRY

- 1tbsp groundnut or vegetable oil
- 500g good quality beef, sliced (or 4 large chicken breasts thinly sliced)
- 3 tbsp green curry paste (see above!)
- 2-3 tbsp fish sauce
- 1-2 tbsp finely chopped coriander
- 1 tbsp palm sugar (or any brown sugar)
- 100g bamboo shoots (optional)
- 125g creamed coconut dissolved in 300ml of boiling water (or a 400ml can coconut milk)
- handful of Thai 'pea' aubergine or ½ a normal aubergine
- cut into bite-sized pieces
- To garnish: finely chopped coriander, Thai basil (optional), 1 thinly sliced red chilli

Method

- 1 gently fry the paste in the oil with the beef for about 3-4 mins (until the beef is almost browned).
- 2 add the coconut milk and bring to a gentle boil.
- 3 turn the heat down to a simmer and mix in all the other ingredients (except the aubergine).
- 4 simmer until the beef is tender (30-40 mins).
- 5 if using chicken add raw with the aubergine 10-15 mins before serving
- 6 garnish with the coriander/basil and the red chilli.

Cook's notes

If it's looking too dry slowly add ¼ cup of water. Equally, to increase the coconut flavour add thinly shaved slices of creamed coconut.

RED PRAWN CURRY

- 700g raw prawns shelled
- 1 tbsp groundnut or vegetable oil
- 3 tbsp red curry paste (see above)
- 125g creamed coconut dissolved in 300ml of boiling water
- 4-6 chopped red chillies (with seeds)



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- 1 tbsp lemon juice (or to taste)
- 1 tbsp fish sauce
- ¼ cup of water
- To garnish: chopped coriander and red chilli, sliced

Method

- 1 Gently fry the spiced in the oil for 3-4 mins then add the coconut milk, fish sauce and the chillies.
- 2 Bring to the boil, then simmer gently for 30-40 mins.
- 3 10 mins before serving add the raw prawns - when the prawns are pink they are cooked.
- 4 Add the lemon juice and serve garnished with chillies and coriander.

Cook's notes

If the sauce looks too dry slowly add the water.

RED BEEF OR CHICKEN CURRY

- 500g thinly sliced beef or 4 chicken breasts thinly sliced
- 1 tbsp groundnut or vegetable oil
- 3 tbsp red curry paste
- 125g creamed coconut dissolved in 550ml of boiling water
- 4-6 chopped red chillies (with seeds)
- 1 tbsp crunchy peanut butter
- 1 tbsp soy sauce
- 1 tbsp fish sauce
- ¼ - ½ cup of water
- garnish: coriander and red chilli, sliced

Method

- 1 Gently fry the beef and the paste in the oil for 3-4 mins or until the beef is browned, then add the other ingredients.
- 2 Bring to the boil, then simmer for 30-40 mins or until the beef is tender.
- 3 For the chicken version, add the raw sliced chicken 10 - 15 mins before serving, ensuring it is cooked. Garnish with chillies and coriander.

Cook's notes

If at any point the sauce looks too dry slowly add some water.