

Cambodian Sweet Tamarind Sauce

Background:

In Cambodia rice harvest time generally occurs in between early December to February and the farmers are very busy with the dry season farming work. With the receded tide from the flooding and wet season under the influence of monsoon, the Nature has been rewarding Cambodian people with plenty of fish which came with the flood and were left behind in the rice fields. The tamarind trees are full of ripe tamarind and the very special tree call “Doeum Sdao” that naturally grow on most of the rice field are blooming with edible lovely flower with sweet-bitter taste to complement the season.

Cambodian people have been enjoying the beauty and gift by utilising the accessible natural resources to fashion their culinary diet with recipe to pass on from generation to generation.

Like most Cambodian, my grand mother took advantage of the seasonal food to create a very nice sauce to suit her taste by using ripe tamarind combine with fish sauce, palm sugar, fried garlic and onion and mince pork cook together and use it to eat with grilled fish and the Sdao’s flower, cucumber and the chise cabbage.

Here in Australia when I found a good fresh fish such as Barramandy, Sea Perch or Coral Trout I would get it to grill and make the sauce to eat with the fish. I can obtain the imported frozen Sdao’s flower from most of Chinese - Cambodian grocery in Cabramatta. I sometimes use the sauce with chicken or other meat as my children don’t like fish very much.

Ingredients:

Tamarind paste, fish sauce, palm or brown sugar, salt, garlic, peanut oil, onion, mince pork, bacon or chicken (optional), fresh corianda and chile.

Preparation:

The tamarind paste usually comes in a block of 375 grams pack. Take about 1/6 of the portion from the pack to place in a container, add 1 cup of hot boiling water and rest it until it soft or warm enough to mash then strain to get the thick liquid of it. Chop ¼ of a medium size onion, 2 cloves of garlic finely, ¼ cup of mince or chopped bacon.

Cooking instruction:

Heat 2 table spoons of oil in a saucepan on medium high heat, add onion first then garlic and toss it until golden brown. Add the meat and stir it well until cooked then add 3 table spoons of fish sauce, ¼ cup of palm or brown sugar, 1 teaspoon of salt and mix them well. Add the tamarind last and bring it to boil then turn off the heat.

Note:

The sauce can be garnished with chopped fresh corianda and chile to individual preference before serving. This should be enough to serve 4-6 people.