

## **Thai Coconut Chicken Soup**

1 tablespoon of vegetable oil

2 tablespoons of grated ginger

4-6 teaspoons of Thai red curry paste

6 cups of low-sodium chicken broth

3 tablespoons of fish sauce or soy sauce (fish sauce preferred)

1 tablespoon light brown sugar

2 14-ounce cans of coconut milk (make sure *not* to use cream of coconut)

1 pound of boneless, skinless chicken, sliced thin into 1-inch strips, OR

1 pound of shelled fresh shrimp OR

1 pound of fish, sliced thin into 1-inch strips

½ pound of white mushrooms, trimmed and sliced thin

3 tablespoons of lime juice, preferably fresh, but reconstituted is OK

Fresh Asian noodles

Fresh baby bok choy

Salt, to taste

½ cup whole fresh cilantro leaves

This is a favorite at St. Junia's House.

Make certain you do not use cream of coconut which is heavily sweetened and inappropriate for savory dishes in general. These 2 are not interchangeable. Coconut milk is simply shredded coconut meat stepped in water, then strained, pressed, and mashed to release as much liquid as possible. Cream of coconut is sweetened, with thickeners and emulsifiers and is fine for cocktails but never used in soups)

The Thai red curry paste and fish sauce are sold in Asian markets, and the coconut milk is generally cheaper in Asian markets. I use *Arroy-D* red curry paste, which comes in a small plastic container and must be refrigerated once it is opened. You should mix your

batch and taste test it -- the curry paste is hot and spicy -- so be careful. You can add more if needed.

I prefer to make chicken broth from scratch and to keep it on hand. However, when time does not permit, the flavor of canned broth can be greatly enhanced by boiling one piece of chicken to derive broth and mixing the two.

I did not use cilantro in this dish, although the recipe calls for it.

I added fresh Chinese noodles and baby bok choy, a green Chinese vegetable, both to expand the recipe and to be able to use the soup as the main dish and a balanced meal. Both are readily available at Asian markets. Be sure that you get the baby or small bok choy as it will cook quickly, whereas the large bok choy is tougher and takes a lot longer. Canned chicken broth is also sold at Asian markets and is generally cheaper than in American grocery stores.

I use crispy Rice Cakes, also available in Asian markets, as a garnish when it is served.

Heat the oil in a large Dutch oven over medium heat until shimmering. Stir in the grated ginger and curry paste, cooking for one minute. Then add ½ cup of the broth and stir until the curry paste dissolves. Then stir in the remaining broth, fish sauce, brown sugar. This is the point to taste test and to decide how "hot" you want it and whether to add more curry paste. Bring to a simmer, cooking partially covered for 15 minutes.

Then stir in the coconut milk and mushrooms.

If you're using bok choy, it should go in next. Then chicken. Then noodles.

If you're using seafood, put it in last as the cooking time is very short and you do not want to overcook shrimp or fish.

This soup can be cooked, covered, and refrigerated for up to 2 days if using chicken. If you're using seafood, I recommend that you do not add it until you're ready to serve this soup. This recipe will serve 4-5 people.