



THAI RED CURRY

Delicious and Easy to Prepare

BY ANDREW M. MALEC

Without a doubt, my “go to” comfort food is a Thai curry. It also happens to be my favorite dish to cook, and I have prepared many Northern, Central, and Southern Thai curries over the years (coconut milk based, water based, and dry curries). I have extensively researched Thai cuisine and love curries because of the spices and the balance between the sweet, salty, and spicy notes of the curry. They are also easy to prepare. I have literally prepped, cooked, and started eating a curry in 20 minutes, which is less time than it would take to place and pick up a carry out order.

Since my eggplant and basil were ready to be harvested from my garden and since I always keep a well-stocked pantry of various curry pastes, I decided to make a red curry utilizing those ingredients with the addition of some tofu, carrots, onions, and mushrooms.

This is a great dish to prepare because you get the crunch of the onion and carrots balanced with the sponginess of the eggplant, tofu, and mushrooms which help to absorb the flavorful curry. And there is no mistaking the aromas that fill the house.

Curries can also be adapted to other readily available ingredients. For example, you can easily substitute other proteins for the tofu and use other vegetables growing in your garden. You can even add pineapple or mango if you want to take your curry in that direction.

If you are so inclined, please give this dish a try. Enjoy!

INGREDIENTS

8 oz. *extra firm tofu, cubed*
 2 *tblsp. refined coconut oil*
 4 oz. *red curry paste*
 14 oz. *coconut milk*
 8 oz. *water or chicken broth*
 2 *tblsp. palm sugar or light-brown sugar (can substitute white sugar)*
 2½ *tblsp. fish sauce*
 1 *Japanese eggplant, diced (can also substitute Thai eggplant)*
 1 *large onion, sliced*
 1 *large carrot, sliced*
 8 oz. *of mushrooms, sliced*
 Thai *chili pepper (ground chili or fresh chili to desired level of spiciness)*
 ½ *cup of basil leaves*

INSTRUCTIONS

Tofu:

- ◆ Make sure to use extra firm tofu so that it will hold its integrity.
- ◆ An important step when cooking with tofu in a curry or stir-fry is to first gently press the tofu in a gallon size freezer bag to release its water, drain the water, then cut the tofu into cubes.
- ◆ Freeze the tofu in a gallon size freezer bag for future use (allow at least three hours to freeze).
- ◆ The idea here is that freezing the tofu allows for a firmer texture when cooking and will allow the tofu, upon thawing out, to better absorb the curry.

Curry:

- ◆ Heat two tablespoon of refined coconut oil in a pot over medium-high heat.
- ◆ Add the curry paste and cook about two to three minutes while stirring constantly until bloomed (the curry paste becomes aromatic and starts to bubble).

- ◆ Add half of the coconut milk and cook over medium-high heat until the oil separates from the curry, about three minutes.
- ◆ Add the remaining coconut milk, chicken stock or water, sugar, fish sauce, and chili (per your level of desired spiciness). Bring to a boil, then simmer over medium-high heat for three to five minutes.
- ◆ Add the tofu and eggplant and cook for two minutes.
- ◆ Add the remaining vegetables and cook for another two to three minutes.
- ◆ Taste the curry and adjust your seasonings as appropriate (i.e., fish sauce, sugar, chili, etc.)
- ◆ Turn off the heat, then add the basil leaves, stir, and allow the basil leaves to wilt.
- ◆ Plate and serve with jasmine rice.

Notes:

- ◆ Pressing the water out of the tofu and freezing the tofu is very important. Do not skip this step.
- ◆ I like to use Thai basil. However, you can also use sweet basil. I found that if I use sweet basil, the addition of fennel seeds or fennel powder will provide the anise flavor needed to substitute nicely for Thai basil.
- ◆ If you feel inclined to begin cooking Thai food, I would encourage you to research this cuisine and associated products, and visit an Asian grocer to stock up on curry pastes, sauces, condiments, noodles, etc.



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