

Chilli Mud Crab with Rice noodles

By Teage Ezard (of Ezard)



Ingredients

1 live mud crab weighing around 1.5 kg
 2½ tablespoons peanut oil
 6 cloves garlic, finely chopped
 2½ cm piece ginger, finely chopped
 300ml asian brown chicken stock
 6 spring onions, cut into 2½ cm pieces
 ½ bunch garlic stems, cut into 2½ cm pieces
 2 long red chillis, cut into rounds
 100 g Pixian chilli broadbean paste
 100g chilli jam
 1 tbs castor sugar
 100ml Shao Xing cooking wine
 1 tbs sesame oil
 250g rolled rice noodles,
 cut into 2½ cm pieces
 ½ bunch coriander, picked into sprigs

CHILLI JAM (MAKES 1 CUP)
 250g roma tomatoes
 5 cloves garlic, peeled
 1 inch knob ginger, peeled, roughly chopped
 2 red Lombok chillis, roughly chopped
 1 birds eye chilli, roughly chopped
 250g red capsicum, deseeded,
 roughly chopped
 250g red shallots, peeled, roughly chopped
 150g palm sugar, grated
 100ml fish sauce
 100ml lime juice

ASIAN BROWN CHICKEN STOCK (MAKES 2L)
 2 kg chicken carcasses
 1 tablespoon peanut oil
 2 medium brown onions, roughly chopped
 6 cloves garlic, bruised
 2.5 cm piece ginger, bruised
 2 large carrots, roughly chopped
 1 bunch celery, roughly chopped
 1 leek, roughly chopped
 1 tablespoon Sichuan peppercorns
 250 ml Shao Xing wine
 3 litres water

Hints and Tips

This simple, flavorsome dish is wonderful in summer with cold beer.

It is best to make the chilli jam in this recipe a few days early as the flavors mature over time.

Instead of one mud crab, you can also use several large fresh blue swimmer crabs equaling the same weight.

You should be able to find the more obscure items at your local Asian grocer.

My family always loves an Asian twist on their Christmas feast, and seafood has always been a huge part of the food I've done at home and at work. We're so lucky to have such an abundance of amazingly fresh seafood right on our doorstep, it just makes sense to incorporate it into a Christmas spread.

SERVES 6

Preparation

CHILLI JAM

Place a heavy based pot onto low heat. Add the tomatoes, garlic, ginger, both chillis, capsicum and the shallots. You need to cook them out slowly constantly stirring the pot. The natural sugars in the vegetables will start to stick, so you need to make sure you stir it consistently enough that it doesn't stick.

After about 3 hours most of the liquids will have evaporated and it will start to look like a jam. Add the palm sugar at this stage and cook out for a further 35 minutes before letting cool then placing it in to a food processor and puréeing to smooth. Add the fish sauce and lime juice and store in an air tight container until needed. you can even pour a tiny bit of oil over the top to trap out the air, this will help it keep for months.

ASIAN BROWN CHICKEN STOCK

Place a heavy based pot onto the heat. Reheat the oven to 180°C. Rinse chicken carcasses to remove any blood or innards. Place them on a tray and roast for around 1 hour, or until dark brown.

Heat the oil in a large pot and brown the onion, garlic, ginger, carrots, celery and leek. Add the Sichuan pepper and Shao Xing wine and simmer until reduced by half. Add the roasted chicken carcasses and water and bring to the boil. Skim off any scum that rises to the surface then gently simmer the stock for 4-6 hours.

Top up with fresh water from time to time to keep the liquid at its original level. Strain the stock into another pot and set aside to cool.

Once cool, skim any fat from the surface and return the stock to the boil. Reduce it by a third. Allow to cool, then pour into a container and refrigerate or freeze.

Method

Kill the crab quickly and humanely by turning it over on its back and inserting a large metal skewer in its middle where the flaps meet. Leave the spike inside the crab for 3-4 minutes or until the crab has died. Alternatively, place the crab in a freezer for 1 hour, which will send it to sleep.

Pull the top shell of the crab away from the body and discard. Discard the gills and rinse the crab.

With a large sharp knife or cleaver, cut the crab into six pieces with the legs and claws attached. Crack the claws and legs with a mallet or the back of a cleaver (this helps them to cook evenly and allows the flavours to get in).

For this dish, I find it is best to steam the crab until it is nearly cooked and then toss it through the sauce that you will make separately in a wok. You will need two bamboo steamer baskets, that fit all the crab pieces in without having them overlap too much so as they cook evenly, the other basket is to steam the rice noodles at the same time. These baskets need to fit snugly over the top of a heavy based saucepan of rapidly boiling water.

The crab should take 7 or 8 minutes to cook through so as soon as you put the crab on to steam you need to be ready to make your sauce. When you are ready to begin, get your crab steaming along with the rice noodles in a separate basket on top of the crab.

Heat your wok with the peanut oil until it is beginning to smoke a little, add the garlic and ginger and stir fry until fragrant, throw in the spring onion, garlic stems and chilli rounds then stir fry for another minute.

Now add the Pixian chilli paste and the chilli jam and stir fry for a minute until the chilli pastes are just beginning to go a little darker in colour, at this stage add the sugar and sesame oil and cook for another minute, before deglazing with Shao Xing and chicken stock.

You should continue to cook the sauce down until it is a nice coating consistency this should be about as long as it takes for the crab to finish steaming.

When your sauce is ready and your crab is cooked through you can combine and toss the sauce through the crab and noodles.

Serve the crab on a large shallow bowl showcasing the claws. Garnish with julienne spring onion, coriander sprigs and some more chilli rounds. Make sure you have crab crackers and lobster picks for you guests.

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