

PENANG LAKSA

Ingredients:

- 500 g fresh or dried thick round rice noodle
- 2 cups tamarind paste
- 1 kg fresh wolf herring (*ikan parang*) or mackerel (*ikan kembong*) - cleaned, kept whole
- 3 heaped tbsp sugar
- Salt
- 14 sprigs *laksa* leaves (Vietnamese mint or *polygonum odoratum*)
- 2 wild ginger buds (*bunga kantan*)
- 4 pieces dried *asam gelugor*
- 3 tbsp prawn paste (*haeko* - pronounced 'hey-ko', *otak udang* in Malay), mixed with 1 cup warm water
- 6-8 garlic
- 5 stalks lemon grass, thinly sliced
- To be ground or blended
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- 250 g shallots
- 1 inch fresh galangal (*lengkuas*)
- 12 dried chili, soaked
- 1½ tbsp *belacan* (dried shrimp paste)

Ingredients for Garnishing:

- 1 large seedless cucumber, skinned and thinly shredded
- 2 red onions, finely sliced
- 1 fresh pineapple, cut into thin strips
- 10 sprigs fresh mint leaves, stems discarded
- 1 torch ginger [*bunga kantan*], finely chopped
- 4 red chilies, seeded and finely sliced
- Prawn paste [locally called *haeko*, or *otak udang*, in Malay]

To Prepare Gravy :

1. Clean and scale fish and simmer in 1 liter lightly salted water for 15 minutes or until fish is cooked. Strain, reserving stock.
2. Discard head and remove flesh from bones, discarding skin. Keep half of the fish in large pieces and flake the other half.
3. Using a mortar & pestle or blender, grind garlic, lemongrass, fresh turmeric, shallots, chili and *belacan* into a paste.

4. Soak tamarind in 2 cups of warm water, squeeze and sieve into a saucepan - repeat 3 times with the same water, pour into a stockpot.
5. Bring tamarind water to a boil, add ground paste, sugar, *laksa* leaves, Torch ginger, *asam gelugor* [dried tamarind slices], boil rapidly for 15 min.
6. Add in the fish stock, and half of the flaked fish meat that cooked earlier, simmer stock uncovered for 20-30 min to intensify flavor
7. Remove and discard the *laksa* leaves, Torch Ginger and *assam gelugor*
8. Add salt and sugar (optional) accordingly. Keep gravy hot on low heat, for serving

To Prepare Noodles:

1. If using dried noodles bring a pot of water to a rapid boil, parboil noodles until tender.
2. Remove noodles from boiling water, immediately run under cold water to stop cooking, drain well
3. If using fresh rice noodles, use a sieve to blanch noodles in hot water briefly

To Serve:

1. Assemble individual serving bowls - put a handful of noodles in each bowl, ladle piping hot gravy over the noodles
2. Sprinkle a little of each garnishing on top – flaked fish meat, shredded cucumber, onion, mint leaves, torch ginger and chilies
3. Add a dollop of prawn paste [*haeko* or *otak udang* [optional] - and serve hot immediately

MALAY LAKSA (LAKSA KEDAH)

Ingredients:

- 500 g fresh or dried thick round rice noodle
- 2 cups tamarind paste
- 1 kg fresh mackerel (*ikan kembong*) or horse mackerel (*ikan selar kuning*) - cleaned, kept whole
- 3 heaped tbsp sugar
- Salt
- 14 sprigs *laksa* leaves (*Daun kesom*, or Vietnamese mint or *polygonum odoratum*)
- 2 wild ginger buds (*bunga kantan*)
- 4 pieces dried *asam gelugor*
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- To be ground or blended
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- 6-8 red onion
- 10 pieces dried chili, soaked
- 1½ tbsp belacan (dried shrimp paste)
- Dried salted fish flake (optional)

Ingredients for Garnishing:

- 1 large seedless cucumber, skinned and thinly shredded
- 2 red onions, finely sliced
- Chili *padi*, whole or finely sliced
- *Daun selom*, finely chopped
- Half-boiled egg, halved

To Prepare Gravy:

1. Clean and scale fish and simmer in 1 liter lightly salted water for 15 minutes or until fish is cooked. Strain, reserving stock.
2. Discard head and remove flesh from bones, discarding skin. Grind or blend the fish flesh into a paste.
3. Using a mortar & pestle or blender, grind onion, chili and *belacan* into a paste.

4. Soak tamarind in 250g of warm water, squeeze and sieve into a saucepan - repeat 3 times with the same water, pour into a stockpot.
5. Bring tamarind water to a boil, add ground paste and fish paste, sugar, *laksa* leaves, wild ginger buds, *asam gelugor* [dried tamarind slices], heat up to boil.
6. Add in the fish stock, and half of the flaked fish meat that cooked earlier, simmer stock uncovered for 20-30 min to intensify flavor
7. Remove and discard the *laksa* leaves, wild ginger buds and *assam gelugor*
8. Add salt and sugar (optional) accordingly. Keep gravy hot on low heat, for serving

To Prepare Noodles:

1. If using dried noodles bring a pot of water to a rapid boil, parboil noodles until tender.
2. Remove noodles from boiling water, immediately run under cold water to stop cooking, drain well
3. If using fresh rice noodles, use a sieve to blanch noodles in hot water briefly

To Serve:

1. Assemble individual serving bowls - put a handful of noodles in each bowl, ladle piping hot gravy over the noodles
Sprinkle a little of each garnishing on top