



traditional fish noodle soup

မုန့်ဟင်းခါး | mohinga

The taste of mohinga is instant comfort food for me. It brings back fond memories of early morning visits to Shwedagon Pagoda with an essential breakfast stop at a mohinga stall nearby. Mohinga is considered the Burmese national dish eaten for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Not surprisingly every family has their own variation and this is my family's recipe. Nowadays I prefer to eat mohinga nearer lunchtime and invite a group of friends to join in this hearty Burmese brunch.

prepare the fish

300g catfish (or use whole trout)
1 lemon grass stalk, bruised
¼ teaspoon ground turmeric
500ml water

to make the onion paste

1 large onion, finely chopped
3 cloves garlic, crushed
½ inch ginger, sliced
2 lemon grass stalks, finely chopped
1 teaspoon dried chillies flakes
1 teaspoon shrimp paste
½ teaspoon paprika
½ teaspoon ground turmeric
50ml groundnut oil

method

Put the fish in a large pan and add 500ml water. Add the lemon grass and turmeric and bring to the boil. Simmer for 6 mins or until the fish is just cooked. Remove the fish from the pan and when cool enough to handle, peel off the skin and flake the flesh, discard any bones. Drain the broth through a sieve and reserve it for the soup.

Pound the onion, garlic, ginger, dried chillies and lemon grass in a pestle and mortar into a paste. If you don't have a pestle and mortar just chop everything as finely as you can.

Heat the oil in a saucepan and add the onion mixture. Cook over moderate heat for 20-30 mins until the onions have turned reddish brown and the oil has returned.

Add the shrimp paste, work with a spoon to dissolve it then add turmeric and paprika. Cook for a couple of minutes, then add the fish. Pop the lid on and cook over low heat for 5-10 mins. Let all the flavours from the onion mixture and shrimp paste infuse with the fish.

to make the soup

1.5 litre water
100g young banana stem, sliced
(alternatively use 12 small shallots, peeled)
75g roasted rice powder (see appendix 240)
50ml fish sauce
1 teaspoon ground black pepper

eat with

500g fine rice noodles or soft wheat noodles, cooked
3 limes, halved
5 hard boiled eggs, peeled & quartered
2 handfuls of fresh coriander, chopped
crispy fritters (see page 7)
extra fish sauce & chilli flakes

The soup paste is done, if you are making this in advance, then cool the mixture completely and freeze it. It will keep in the freezer for up to 1 month.

To make the soup: put the soup paste (completely defrosted if using from frozen), rice powder, water and fish broth (500ml extra water if not using fish broth) in a large pan. Bring the mixture to a boil, stirring continuously to make sure the rice powder doesn't clump. Add the shallots or banana stem and simmer for 20-30mins until they are tender. Add the fish sauce and taste for seasoning, add more fish sauce or salt as necessary. Finally lots of black pepper before serving.

Serves: 6

Cooking time: 1hr 30mins

how to serve it

Put a handful of noodles in a medium sized bowl and ladle the soup over until it just covers the noodles. Allow each person to add the condiment to suit their taste. It should taste spicy, salty and slightly sour from the limes.