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Kuaytiaw Neua Sap

RICE NOODLES WITH GROUND BEEF, TOMATO, AND ONION “GRAVY”

ก๋วยเตี๋ยวเนื้อสับ

Nowadays, you don't often see *kuaytiaw neua sap*, wide rice noodles covered in a gravy-like mixture of ground beef, onion, and tomatoes, in Thailand. Odds are you won't spot it in the pots at the corner noodle shops, with their squat plastic stools and folding tables spilling onto the sidewalk, or among the clusters of night-market vendors, with their woks set over propane-fueled burners. In fact, I've only seen it in one genre of restaurant: the increasingly scarce diner run by Chinese cooks who once worked in the homes of Brits living abroad.

More typical in former British colonies, which Thailand is not, these restaurants were once fairly common in Bangkok. They're places where your meal might come with sliced white bread and butter. Where tables might sport bottles of Worcestershire rather than fish sauce. Where you can order the kind of food these cooks might have made for their old employers – pork chops with tinned peas, stewed tongue in gravy (also with tinned peas), and *phat macaroni*.

Like these dishes, *kuaytiaw neua sap* reflects a sort of fusion, a delicious melding of East and West born of practicality. It features a slurried texture thickened with starch, the umami bump from fish and soy sauces, and rice noodles – all familiar to fans of Chinese and Thai cookery – but also a subdued flavor, curry powder (the British approximation of a South Asian spice blend), and, yes, the occasional addition of tinned peas. Note that these noodles, like those for *kuaytiaw khua pet* and *phat macaroni*, are served over lettuce. While it might seem strange to the uninitiated, the addition of uncooked lettuce, typically iceberg, is common to many noodle dishes served in Thailand's Chinatowns. And while lettuce isn't typically eaten raw in China, the vegetable has been cultivated there for well over a thousand years. Whatever the reason, the addition is good, not mere garnish, and should not be omitted.

Makes 6 plates (6 servings)

FLAVOR PROFILE

Umami-rich, salty

SUGGESTED KHRUANG PHRUNG

Phrik Naam Plaa (Fish Sauce– Soaked Chiles)

Phrik Naam Som (Vinegar-Soaked Chiles)

Phrik Pon Khua (Toasted-Chile Powder)

Sugar (preferably raw cane sugar)

See [Ingredients List](#)

SUGGESTED UTENSILS



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now *that's*
a MOUTHFUL

THE GRAVY

2 tbsp neutral oil, such as canola, soybean, or rice bran
42 g / 14 garlic cloves, peeled and crushed into small pieces in a mortar
12 oz lean ground beef
5 oz / 1 cup diced (½ inch) yellow onion
1 lb / 2 cups roughly chopped (½ to ¾ inch) cored tomatoes
4 cups Naam Sup Muu ([Pork Stock](#)), warm
3 tbsp Thai oyster sauce
1½ tbsp Thai fish sauce 1 tbsp Thai thin soy sauce
1 tbsp Thai seasoning sauce
13 g / 1 tbsp granulated sugar
1 g / ½ tsp finely ground Asian white pepper
1 g / ½ tsp curry powder
1 g / ¼ tsp MSG (optional)
2¼ oz / ½ cup tapioca starch
¼ cup water

THE DISH

36 oz / 9 cups sen yai (freshwide rice noodles; about 1½ inches wide)
2 tbsp Thai black soy sauce
12 oz / 6 cups lightly packed torn (2-inch pieces) green-leaf or iceberg lettuce
3 tbsp neutral oil, such as canola, soybean, or rice bran
12 g / 6 tbsp very roughly chopped cilantro (thin stems and leaves)
Suggested [khruang phrung](#)

Make the Gravy

In a medium pot over medium-high heat, heat the oil until it shimmers. Add the garlic and cook, stirring frequently, until it's golden brown and fragrant, about 2 minutes. Turn the heat to high, add the beef, and cook, stirring and breaking up any clumps, until it's more or less cooked through, 1 to 2 minutes. Add the onions and cook, stirring occasionally, until the onions are translucent, 2 to 3 minutes.

In a small bowl, combine the tapioca starch and water and stir until smooth. While whisking, slowly drizzle about half of the mixture into the pot. The sauce will thicken to a viscous gravy. Gradually add more of the tapioca starch mixture if need be. Cook, stirring frequently, for 1 minute more, then turn off the heat. Cover to keep warm.

Make the Dish

In a large mixing bowl, combine the noodles and black soy sauce and toss to coat well. Put 2 oz / 1 cup lettuce on each of six serving plates.

Cook the noodles in three batches. Set a flat-bottomed wok over very high heat and heat until it smokes lightly. Add 1 tbsp of the oil and swirl the wok to coat the sides. Add 12 oz / 3 cups noodles to the wok, spread them out slightly, and cook, stirring but not flipping, until they begin to char on the bottom, about 30 seconds. Flip the noodles and cook, stirring but not flipping, until they're charred in spots, about 45 seconds more. Split the noodles between two of the prepared plates and cook the rest.

Bring the plates of noodles and pot of gravy to the table. Invite guests to ladle ¾ to 1 cup of the gravy over the noodles in each plate and top with 2 g / 1 tbsp cilantro. Serve with the khruang phrung alongside.

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