

VIETNAMESE CANH CHUA (Sweet and Sour Soup)

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VIETNAMESE SWEET AND SOUR SOUP WITH SHRIMP

Conveniently, Vietnamese Sweet and Sour Shrimp Soup can be made in one single pot. A 4 quart Dutch oven is ideal, but any medium-sized pot or larger will work.

INGREDIENTS

200g Shrimp, peeled and deveined
100g Bean Sprouts
2 Tomatoes, cut into wedges
1 Fresh Pineapple, cut into bite-size pieces
100g Taro Stems, peeled and sliced
5 Okra Pods, peeled and cut
30g Tamarind Concentrate
Water
Fish Sauce, Salt, Sugar, Garlic and Chili
Coriander and Chinese Coriander

INSTRUCTIONS

- Chop the garlic and sauté it in a pot until fragrant. Add the tomatoes and pineapple, and fry them for about 3 minutes.
- Add three tablespoons of fish sauce to the pot.
- Put in water, tamarind, salt and sugar. Mix well and boil.
- Place the shrimp in the pot and simmer for a couple of minutes, then add taro stems, okra, and beans and cook for 10-15 minutes.
- Season and adjust the taste to your preference.
- Pour the soup into a bowl and garnish with chopped coriander and Chinese coriander.
- Serve hot with steamed rice.



VIETNAMESE SWEET AND SOUR SOUP WITH SEAFOOD

One of the most popular versions of the soup include a mix of shrimp, squid, fish, vegetables and herbs.

INGREDIENTS

100g Prawns, peeled and deveined
100g Squid, cleaned and sliced
100g Crab Meat, stir-fried with rice wine
1 Tomato, cut into wedges
1 Small Pineapple, cut into bite-sized chunks
100g Taro Stems, skinned and sliced
30g Tamarind Concentrate
Sugar, Salt, Fish Sauce and Garlic
Sawleaf, Coriander and Chinese Coriander

INSTRUCTIONS

- Cut the squid into bite-size pieces and peel the shrimp. Marinate them with pepper and seasoning powder.
- Stir-fry crab meat with white wine until fragrant, lightly marinating it with pepper.
- Heat 1 tablespoon of oil in a pan, sauté minced garlic and stir-fry the seafood.
- Meanwhile, boil 1 liter of water with 1 teaspoon of seasoning powder, 1/3 teaspoon of salt, 1/2 cup of tamarind concentrate and 1 teaspoon of sugar for the broth.
- Mix the seasoned seafood into the boiling broth, add some veggies and then turn it off.
- Finalize the dish by seasoning it with 1 tablespoon of fish sauce. Add chopped cilantro and sliced chili for an extra burst of flavor.
- Serve hot with steamed rice.



VIETNAMESE SWEET AND SOUR FISH SOUP

This is the most famous version of the soup.

INGREDIENTS

2 Catfish Steaks, cut 1-1/2"-2" thick
 2 Tomatoes, cut into wedges
 1/2 Pineapple, cut into bite-size pieces
 30g Tamarind Concentrate
 Water or Fish Stock
 Garlic, Shallot, Fennel, Vietnamese Coriander (laksa leaf)
 Salt, Fish Sauce, Black Pepper and Chilies
 Sliced Okra Pods, Sliced Taro Stem and Bean Sprouts (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

- Clean the fish properly, then marinate it for about 20 minutes with some salt, fish sauce, minced garlic and shallots to enhance the flavors and eliminate any unpleasant fishy smell.
- Sear the fish to prevent the meat from flaking out when cooking the soup.
- Add the tomatoes and cook until they are soft.
- When the fish is almost done, add water, tamarind, and pineapple and cook for 5 minutes. Season the soup to your preference.
- If you want to have a fiber-rich soup, incorporate okra pods, taro stems and bean sprouts.
- Bring the soup to a boil, then add in the chopped fennel and laksa leaf.
- Garnish with chilies for a bold, spicy kick.
- Serve hot with steamed rice.

VEGETARIAN VIETNAMESE SWEET AND SOUR SOUP

INGREDIENTS

200g Tofu, cut into small cubes
 100g Bean Sprouts
 2 Tomatoes, cut into wedges
 1 Small Pineapple, cut into bite-size pieces
 100g Taro, peeled and sliced
 5 Okra Pods, sliced
 30g Tamarind Concentrate or 4-5 Dracontomelon
 Water or Vegetable Stock
 Salt, Chopped Garlic and Chili (optional)
 Coriander, Chinese Coriander and other Fresh Herbs of preference

INSTRUCTIONS

- Stir-fry the tomatoes and pineapple in a pot with a little oil until they become slightly tender. Add some salt for seasoning.
- Pour in water or vegetable broth and bring to a boil.
- Add tamarind concentrate or Dracontomelon and salt, and let it cook for about 5 minutes or until the acidic fruits are soft.
- If using Dracontomelon, scoop them out and mash them. Add them back to the soup.
- Add the tofu, okra pods and taro stems. Season accordingly and boil for 5 minutes, then add the bean sprouts.
- Serve hot, garnish with chopped coriander, Chinese coriander and sliced chilies.
- Serve hot with steamed rice.





VIETNAMESE SWEET AND SOUR SOUP WITH PORK RIBS

INGREDIENTS

500g Pork Ribs
4 Ripe Tomatoes
2 Dried Onions
4-5 Dracontomelon
Green Onions and Coriander
Fish Sauce, Salt, Seasoning Powder and Pepper

INSTRUCTIONS

- Start by cutting pork ribs and blanching them in salted, boiling water. Marinate with 1/2 tsp seasoning powder, 1 tsp fish sauce, 1 tsp salt, and 1/2 tsp pepper for 15-20 minutes.
- Next, cook the ribs on the stove until tender, skim off the foam for clear water.
- Cut the tomatoes. Slice and finely chop the green onions and coriander. Then fry the dried onions, add 1/2 of the tomatoes, 1/2 teaspoon salt and 1 teaspoon fish sauce, and cook until soft.
- Boil Dracontomelons in another pot, mash, strain to get the sour juice and set aside.
- Once the ribs are sufficiently stewed, add the sautéed tomatoes for color. Add the remaining 1/2 portion of tomatoes and bring it to a boil.
- Adjust the seasoning with salt, seasoning and fish sauce, and adjust the sourness with Dracontomelon juice to taste.
- Finally, include chopped coriander and green onions, turn off the stove, stir well and serve.
- Serve hot with steamed rice.

NOTES

CATFISH OR OTHER FISH: Have your fish market clean and cut a whole catfish into steaks, 1.5"-2". If the skin feels slimy, rub it with some salt, then rinse it off with cold water. Frozen catfish, catfish filets or any mild flaky fish will work great in this recipe, i.e. carp, snakehead fish, red tilapia or any other meaty fish of your liking (preferably fresh water fish).

SHRIMP: Use with head and shell on.

TAMARIND CONCENTRATE: This is the heart and soul of the soup and unfortunately, there isn't an alternative to this. You can't make Canh Chua without it. You can buy tamarind concentrate online.

FISH SAUCE: Another main flavoring component, adding a depth of flavor along with brininess and umami to the soup.

TARO STEMS (BAC HA): aka Elephant Ear for its large leaves. Although it doesn't add much flavor, it acts (and looks) like a sponge, soaking up soup and adding a delightfully unique crunchy texture. To prepare taro stems, peel off the tough outer skin row by row. Cut crosswise into half inch thick slices on a bias to expose more of the spongy texture. Substitute with celery stalks if you're unable to find taro stems.

RICE PADDY HERB (NGO OM): Has a bright, fresh, citrusy flavor to it. It's the perfect palate cleanser for a soup loaded with so many different flavors. A rough chop is all you need to do to prepare rice paddy herb. If you can't find it, you can use Thai basil or lemon basil as a substitute.

LEMONGRASS: This adds a bright lemony flavor with hints of ginger and rounds out the soup base. To prepare lemongrass, remove the dry, green outer layers until you have a pale yellow core. Trim and discard the top half of the lemongrass, which doesn't have much flavor. All the flavor is in the thick end of the stalk. With the back of a knife or a pestle, carefully pound and bruise the thick ends to release the citrusy flavor.

FRIED SHALLOTS: You can find fried shallots in the dried food aisle of most Asian markets. This is an optional topping, but like most ingredients here, I recommend it if you have it.

DRACONTOMELON: You can find this fruit at the Asian market when in season. (pictured below)

