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Easy Thai Chicken or Veggie Soup by Guest Blogger, Janet Hammer

Hi! Happy 2013!

My friend Lori, the owner of this blog, and I have known each other for 10 (ahem...I mean 20+) years. Strangers who were chosen based off of an early personality test to share a 250 sq. ft. room as freshmen our first year at Drexel University in Philadelphia, PA. She is from Maryland, I am from Jersey. Amongst some early trials and tribulations we, strong minded, passionate women became integral to each other's lives as friends, confidants, sisters, and each other's motivator. Our motto: "We Can Do It!"

I always knew she had a peanut allergy. From our first day as roommates she taught me how to use her Epi-pen, just in case. Overtime, as you know, she has been made aware of a gluten intolerance too. She asked me to share some recipes with her readers that are GF and Peanut free. Cooking is a hobby for me. It brings me back to sane. I have a full time job selling wine for a California wine producer, married 14 years, and 2 great kids. So, with my hectic schedule, cooking gives me a chance to be creative and decompress. Cooking for others fulfills me, gives me clarity, purpose.

Recently, I was inspired by my cousin Tammy and her GF husband who cook a lot of Thai because it can be made gluten free. Lori told me that it is often a type of food that people with peanut allergies can't enjoy either. The recipe I am sharing does not contain peanut oil, nuts, or any wheat. But, it has tons of satisfying flavors and I find myself going back to it over and over.

Easy Thai Chicken or Veggie Soup (Tom Ka Kai)

You can use just chicken, just veggies, or both.

Serves 4 to 6

Prep time: 10 mins.

Cook time: 20 mins.

Wine Pairing: dry Riesling

INGREDIENTS (always check food labels for any food allergens/intolerances):

2 TBSP Vegetable oil



1 TBSP fresh Ginger, minced
3 cloves Garlic, sliced
2 TBSP Red Curry Paste (mixture of lemongrass, galangal, chili peppers, lime leaves found in traditional recipes) *Paste can be found in regular grocer*
6 cups Stock (chicken or vegetable)
2 Chicken Breasts or 4 boneless Thighs (optional), sliced thin or bite sized
1/2 cup Broccoli Florets
1/2 cup Bell Pepper (usually red because it's sweeter), sliced thin
1/2 cup Mushroom (button, cremini, or shiitake), sliced thin
1 TBSP Tamari Sauce (Kikkoman makes a GF soy sauce, Tamari based, should be found in regular grocer)
2 TBSP Fish Sauce (or oyster sauce) *Found in regular grocer*
1 tsp. Brown Sugar
3 Limes (2 for juice, 1 for garnish)
1 can light Coconut milk (saves on fat and calories)
3 Green Onions, sliced thin
1/2 cup Cilantro, chopped
Siracha Chili Garlic Sauce to taste (optional)
Rice Noodles package prepared

DIRECTIONS

1. In a non-reactive large pot (ceramic, stainless, or with a coating), add oil, ginger, garlic, Red Curry Paste, and sauté for 1 minute to release flavors, add stock then heat to boil.
2. Add chicken, bring back to boil, then lower temperature to simmer for 10 minutes. Tip: It's important to simmer the chicken rather than boiling to keep it tender.
3. Add vegetables and cook till tender about 5 minutes.
4. Add Tamari sauce, fish sauce, brown sugar, and juice from 2 limes. Stir, and then simmer for 2 minutes to absorb.
5. Reduce heat to low, add coconut milk and stir to incorporate.
6. Taste. If you need more salt, add more fish sauce to taste. If you want more tang and sourness, add more lime. More heat, add Siracha to taste. Tip: The soup should be a balance of sweet, salty, sour and spicy.
7. Add rice noodles, cooked to package specs.
8. Finish with Cilantro and green onion and sliced lime as garnish.

Enjoy!

Janet Hammer

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Note from peanutfreerd (Lori):

Janet & I have been best friends for a long time as she mentioned! Janet was a hotel restaurant major at

Drexel University. Not only is she a great friend, but she is an excellent cook and is a bit modest about her cooking. Even though we live in separate states we keep in touch regularly via words with friends, Facebook, and phone. I knew she would be a great addition as a guest blogger. Janet is always making something new and creating amazing things from leftovers. I made this recipe the other night and wow is it tasty! I have never had Thai food due to my deadly peanut allergy. I will definitely make again and again. My toddler even loved it, minus the siracha on top. After making the soup I would add that because Janet is such a good cook, I think the prep times are a little short compared to how long it took me. It took me at least 20 minutes to prep the ingredients. Once you have the ingredients ready, actually making the soup does not take long. You can cook the rice noodles while you cook the soup. Don't forget the toppings, cilantro, green onions, siracha and more lime. Thanks Janet for sharing this great recipe. ENJOY!



Janet & I at a 5K in Oct 2010



Rice noodles



She loved it!



My Thai Chicken Soup