

Roasted Red Chili Paste

Nabm Prik Pow

This is a common store-bought condiment, usually labeled "Chili Paste in Soya Bean Oil or Roasted Red Chili Paste in Oil." I consider it a sort of chili jam with its deep roasted flavor, sweet and salty taste, and slightly pungent dried shrimp aroma. With it, you can create deeply flavored stir-fries in a snap. It's often used a foundation for hot and sour soup, and lends its deep red color to Thai salads. Young people can be caught spreading on white bread as part of a sandwich. I am partial to it with sliced cucumbers!

Makes 1 cup

- 1/2 cup Vegetable oil
- 1 Tbsp. Dried shrimp (pg. 93)
- 1 cup Sliced shallots, about 1/8 inch (0.3 cm.) thick
- 1/2 cup Sliced garlic, about 1/8 inch (0.3 cm.) thick
- 1/4 cup (1/4 oz. / 7 g.) Dried red chilies, stems and seeds removed
- 2 Tbsp. Fish sauce (*nabm pla*)
- 2 Tbsp. Tamarind pulp (pg. 109)
- 3 Tbsp. Light brown palm sugar (pg. 58)

1. Soak shrimp in warm water for 5 minutes, drain and dry with paper towels
2. Brown aromatics: Heat oil in a large skillet or wok over medium heat; add shrimp. Cook until they darken, about 2 minutes. Strain; return oil to wok. Reserve shrimp. Fry shallots while stirring often until a majority of edges are deep golden brown, about 2 minutes. Strain; return oil to wok. Fry garlic while stirring often until light golden brown, about 1 minute. Strain; return oil to wok. Fry the chilies until lightened in color, about 5 seconds. Strain; combine with shrimp, shallots, and garlic. Cool.
3. Use a mortar to pound ingredients to a smooth paste or use a mini-food processor or transfer shrimp mixture and cooking oil into a mini-food processor, and puree until very fine.
4. Give it a final cook: In a wok, combine shrimp puree with fish sauce, tamarind pulp, and sugar; and boil for 1 minute while stirring constantly. Cool to room temperature before transferring to container to store in refrigerator for up to two months.

How and Why

Use a medium heat to achieve the proper doneness with each fried item. Medium heat gives the center time to fully develop flavors without burning.

