

VIETNAMESE SWEET & SOUR CATFISH SOUP (CANH CHUA CA TRE)

Serves 3-5

INGREDIENTS

Fish

- 1/2 lb catfish (Thoroughly clean and slice into 1-inch steaks)
- 2 teaspoons fish sauce

Soup

- 8 cups water
- 5 tablespoons granulated white sugar
- 2 tablespoons tamarind powder (or 40 grams tamarind pulp dissolved in 1/3 cup hot water, strained and discard pulp)
- 1 tablespoon chicken or mushroom stock powder
- 1 teaspoon salt

Vegetables / Other Ingredients

- 4 large tomatoes (about 1 lb; quarter)
- 2 cups bean sprouts
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 2 cloves garlic (mince)
- 8-10 sprigs Thai Basil (remove leaves from stem and cut into thin strips)
- 1 Thai chili pepper (optional for those who like it spicy)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Marinate catfish with fish sauce at room temperature for at least 15 minutes.
2. Add water (8 cups) to a medium-sized pot and bring it to a boil.
3. Add catfish, along with its juices. Cook for 15 minutes on low heat. Use a mesh or small spoon to scoop out any scum that floats to the top.
4. Add sugar, tamarind powder, chicken stock powder and salt. If you are using tamarind pulp instead of tamarind powder, ladle a cup or so of hot water from the pot into a small bowl. Add the tamarind pulp to the hot water. Smash the pulp with the back of a spoon until it separates from the seeds. Strain the pulp back into the pot, discarding any tamarind seeds that remains.
5. Add tomatoes and cook for 2 minutes. Turn off heat.
6. Add the bean sprouts. The residual heat will cook the bean sprouts.
7. In a small saucepan, heat up the vegetable oil high and fry the garlic until golden brown. Transfer fried garlic and oil to the pot.
8. Top with basil and chili pepper.