



PAD THAI

There's a few rules that need to be followed when making pad thai. If you stick to them, you're set to go. No cheating!

First of all, you need to have all your ingredients prepped and ready to go. Once you start, there's no way you'll have the time to do last-minute chopping.

Second of all, you can always ever make one portion at a time. Don't even try to make two portions of pad thai at once – it will most definitely be doomed to failure. You see, the secret to pad thai is frying your noodles on a super high heat – quickly! If you add too many ingredients, the temperature will drop, and your pad thai become a lame version of what it could be.

Which leads me to my third point: for it to work, your wok needs to be as hot as can be – at smoking point. This is best achieved on a gas hob, or, if you must, on induction (but I doubt it will properly work). Sorry, but I don't think you stand a chance on an electric hob. So, get your wok smoking and then constantly stir your noodles, and let them develop a slightly smoky flavour– down to something funnily called the wok's breath (it's so hot it lightly chars the content).

If you want to make pad thai for more people, make a big batch of sauce, and always only add about 6 tablespoons of sauce per portion. Fry the portions in batches, wiping clean your wok in between (if it stays full of sticky, burnt bits, you may need to rinse the wok).

Prep: 45min – Serves 1 – Easy

80g dried rice stick noodles*

For the sauce:

2 tbsp Thai fish sauce
2 tbsp tamarind water or concentrate
2 tbsp water
2 tbsp soft palm sugar**
¼ tsp dried chili flakes
½ tsp white wine vinegar

2 Thai shallots or ½ red onion
3 spring onions
60g firm tofu
30g peanuts
2 tbsp sunflower oil
1 egg
1 tbsp bonito flakes
100g beansprouts
1 lime, to serve

1. Cook the noodles in a pot of boiling water for 2 ½ minute until very al dente. Drain and rinse under a cold running tap while stirring the noodles with your hand (this makes sure the starch washes off and it separates the noodles). Set aside.
2. Put all the sauce ingredients into a small saucepan and warm up, stirring until the sugar has dissolved. Take off the heat and set aside.
3. Peel the shallots or onion and chop into rough chunks. Wash and trim the spring onions and cut into slices. Cut the tofu into small cubes and set aside.
4. Crush the peanuts in a pestle and mortar and set aside.
5. Now you're ready to go.
6. Put the wok on a high heat and add the sunflower oil. Fry the shallots or red onion until starting to brown. Add the egg and stir for a minute until the egg is mostly cooked. Add the noodles and fry for 30 seconds, stirring constantly.
7. half the sauce and keep on stirring until all the liquid is absorbed. Add the remaining sauce and repeat.
8. Once most of the sauce is absorbed, add the beansprouts and fry for another minute until the beansprouts start to soften. Add the spring onions, tofu and bonito flakes and fry for another minute, stirring all along. Test the seasoning – if you want it saltier add a dash of fish sauce. Remember that you're going to drizzle fresh lime juice over it when eating, so it will become a tad more sour.
9. Put the pad thai onto a plate, sprinkle with peanuts and serve with a few raw beansprouts, raw spring onions and with a lime wedge.

*you will often find that recipes call for soaking the rice noodles in water before using them. You can do this technique if you prefer: soak the noodles for 10 minutes in in warm water, drain, then briefly put into boiling water for 30 seconds. Drain and rinse under a cold, running tap. It's essential that you briefly cook the noodles either way, and rinse them in cold water. This will prevent the noodles from sticking to each other when stir-frying. So, don't skip the cooking and rinsing stage!

**If you can't get hold of soft palm sugar, you can use soft muscovado sugar or cassonnade.

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