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Thai Masaman Chicken, "Gaeng Masaman Gai"

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The "massaman" indicates that the recipe is of a "musselman" or islamic origin. It probably owes something to early Portuguese influences, and is similar in concept to the "sour and hot" Goan style vindaloo dishes. By Thai standards this is usually a fairly mild curry, so I find it is a good starting point.

Ingredients

about 1 pound chicken (you can also use pork or beef), cut into the usual "bite sized pieces"
3 cups of [coconut milk](#).
2 tablespoons roasted peanuts (unsalted)
5 peeled, but whole, small onions.

Method

Allow the coconut milk to separate and you will have about 1 cup of thick "cream" and two cups of thin "milk". In a small saucepan bring the milk to a simmer and add the chicken or pork. If you are using beef you will need another two cups of milk. Simmer the meat until it begins to become tender (beef takes longer, hence the additional milk).

Put the coconut cream in a wok and bring to a boil, add the massaman paste and "stir fry" until the flavor is brought out and maximized. The coconut oil will separate out and can be skimmed off with a spoon or ladle (this removes much of the vegetable cholesterol or whatever it is called, and makes the dish much less trouble for those watching their weight or heart).

Add the remaining cream and curry paste to the meat.

Add the peanuts. Taste and adjust the flavor until it is (just) sweet (by adding sugar), sour and salty (by adding tamarind juice, lime juice and fish sauce).

Add the remaining ingredients and cook until cooked.

Note : the potatoes used in Thailand for this dish are a yellow fleshed sweet potato of the type sometimes called a yam in the US. Western style potatoes can be used, but absorb less of the sauce and flavor. The potatoes act as a "moderator" to reduce the heat of the curry, and should not be left out.

You can either serve it on a bed of [Thai jasmine rice](#), or double the amount of potato and serve it alone.

Accompany it with a dressed green salad and a bowl of "ajad" (pickled cucumbers--see recipe below). The traditional Thai table also offers chilis in fish sauce (Phrik nam pla--see below) chilis in vinegar (prik dong--see below), and [powdered chilli](#) (not to be confused with the powdered chilli mix sold as chilli powder in the US), sugar, and often MSG. You can if you wish add about a teaspoon of MSG to the above recipe to bring out the flavors, but we don't think it is necessary.

Ajad

4 tablespoons [white rice vinegar](#)
1 teaspoon sugar
2-3 tablespoons cucumber, very coarsely chopped, or sliced
2 shallots (purple onions) chopped
3-4 [Thai chile peppers](#), thinly sliced

Combine the ingredients, and leave to stand overnight.

Nam pla prik

Put two thirds of a cup of [Thai chile peppers](#) or jalapeno peppers in a 1 pint jar, and fill with [fish sauce](#). Seal and keep for a week before using.

Prik dong

Put two thirds of a cup of sliced [Thai chile peppers](#) in a 1 pint jar, and fill with [white rice vinegar](#).

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