

Thai Yellow Pork Curry

Ingredients

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| Pork shoulder, cubed | 2½ lbs | Fresh pineapple | 1½ cups |
| Coconut cream | 2 (13.5 oz.) cans | Fish sauce | 3-6 Tbsp. |
| Yellow curry paste | 5 Tbsp. | Brown or turbinado sugar | 3 Tbsp. |
| Russet potatoes | 1½ lbs | Chicken stock | 2 cups |
| Carrots, medium | 3 | Neutral oil | 2 Tbsp. |
| Yellow onion, large | 1 | Limes | 2 |
| Shallots | 3 | Fresh cilantro | for garnish |
| Garlic cloves | 6 | Thai basil | for garnish |
| Fresh ginger | 3 Tbsp. | Salt | to taste |
| Lemongrass stalks | 2 | | |

Chili Oil

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|---------------------------------|-------|-------------------------|-------|
| Neutral oil | ½ cup | Garlic cloves | 2 |
| Dried árbol chilies | 15-20 | Salt | pinch |
| Fresh serrano peppers | 3-4 | | |

Directions

Cut **pork shoulder** into 1½" cubes — Cut **potatoes** into 1½-2" chunks — Peel and roll-cut **carrots** into 1" pieces — Cut **onion** into 1" wedges — Slice **shallots** — Mince **garlic** — Mince **ginger** — Bruise and cut **lemongrass** into 3" pieces — Cut **pineapple** into 1" chunks — Remove stems from **árbol chilies** — Slice **serrano peppers** thin (seeds in) — Slice 2 **garlic cloves** thin for oil — Zest and juice **limes**

Prepare the Chili Oil

1. In a small saucepan, combine **neutral oil**, **dried árbol chilies**, and sliced **garlic**. Place over medium-low heat.
2. Heat gently, watching carefully. When **chilies** darken and become fragrant (about 2-3 *minutes*), immediately remove from heat.
3. Add sliced **serrano peppers** and pinch of **salt** to the hot oil off-heat. Let steep for at least 20-30 *minutes*. Strain or leave **chilies** in for presentation. Set aside.

Make the Curry

1. Open both cans of **coconut cream** without shaking. Scoop the thick cream from the top of one can into a large Dutch oven or heavy-bottomed pot (should yield about $\frac{3}{4}$ -1 cup thick cream). Reserve the remaining coconut liquid and the second can.
2. Heat the thick **coconut cream** over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally. It will begin to separate and the fat will "crack" (you'll see oil pooling). This takes *3-5 minutes*. When you see clear oil separating, you're ready.
3. Add the **curry paste** to the coconut fat. Fry the **paste**, stirring constantly, until it darkens, becomes very fragrant, and the oil takes on the **paste's** color, about *3-4 minutes*. The mixture should smell toasted and complex, not raw.
4. Add sliced **shallots** to the **paste** and cook for *2 minutes* until softened. Add minced **ginger** and cook for *1 minute*. Add minced **garlic** and cook for *30 seconds*.
5. Add **pork cubes** and stir to coat completely with the **curry paste** mixture. Let the **pork** sear slightly in the **paste**, stirring occasionally, for about *5 minutes*. You want some browning on the meat.
6. Add the remaining **coconut cream** (from both cans), **chicken stock**, bruised **lemon-grass stalks**, **potatoes**, **carrots**, and 3 Tbsp. **fish sauce**. Stir to combine.
7. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to maintain a gentle simmer. Cover partially and cook for *75-90 minutes*, stirring occasionally, until **pork** is very tender and **potatoes** have softened and begun to break down slightly, thickening the sauce.
8. Add **onion** wedges and continue simmering for *10 minutes* until **onions** are tender but still hold their shape.
9. While **onions** cook, heat a skillet over high heat. Sear **pineapple** chunks quickly, about *1-2 minutes* per side, until lightly caramelized. Add seared **pineapple** to curry.
10. Taste the curry broth. Add additional **fish sauce** 1 Tbsp. at a time, up to 3 more Tbsp., tasting between additions. Add **brown sugar** 1 Tbsp. at a time, tasting as you go. The curry should be balanced: rich, slightly sweet, savory, with subtle sour notes from the **pineapple**.
11. Simmer for final *5 minutes* to meld flavors. Taste and adjust seasoning with **salt** if needed (**fish sauce** usually provides enough).
12. Remove **lemongrass stalks**. Turn off heat and stir in **lime juice** and **lime zest**.
13. Ladle curry over steamed jasmine rice. Garnish with fresh **cilantro** and **Thai basil** if available. Provide **lime wedges** and the **chili oil** on the side. For heat, drizzle *1-2 tsp.* of **chili oil** over individual portions.

Equipment Required

- Large Dutch oven or heavy-bottomed pot (6-8 quart capacity)
- Small saucepan (for chili oil)
- Large skillet (for searing pineapple)
- Cutting board and sharp knife
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Wooden spoon or silicone spatula
- Fine-mesh strainer (optional, for chili oil)
- Vegetable peeler
- Citrus zester or microplane
- Ladle

Mise en Place

- Chill **coconut cream** cans overnight or for several hours to ensure proper fat separation
- Cut all vegetables and **pork** before starting
- Prepare **chili oil** while curry simmers or up to several days ahead
- Have all aromatics prepped and ready before beginning to cook
- Bruise **lemongrass** by smashing with the flat of a knife to release oils

Ingredient Tips

- **Pork shoulder** (Boston butt) is essential - the intramuscular fat creates silky richness as it breaks down
- Use russet or Yukon gold **potatoes** for their starch content which naturally thickens the curry
- Mae Ploy brand **curry paste** is recommended for consistent results
- **Fish sauce** brands vary in saltiness - Red Boat and Three Crabs are more concentrated than Squid or Tiparos brands
- Fresh **pineapple** is strongly preferred over canned for better texture and less sweetness

- If **lemongrass** is unavailable, substitute with lemon zest added at the finish
- **Palm sugar** can replace brown sugar for more authentic flavor

Preparation Tips

- The "cracking" of **coconut cream** is critical - don't rush this step. You must see clear oil separating before adding **curry paste**
- Properly blooming the **curry paste** in the fat until darkened and fragrant is what elevates this above takeout quality
- Cut **potatoes** larger than you think - they will break down and smaller pieces will disintegrate
- Don't skip searing the **pineapple** - the caramelization adds complexity
- The curry should simmer gently, not boil hard, or the **pork** will toughen
- Taste and adjust seasoning multiple times - the balance of sweet, salty, sour is crucial
- Add **lime juice** and zest at the very end to preserve bright citrus notes

Make Ahead & Storage

- **Chili oil** can be made up to *2 weeks* ahead and stored at room temperature
- Curry can be made *1-2 days* ahead and often tastes better as flavors meld
- Store curry in refrigerator for up to *4 days*
- Curry thickens significantly when refrigerated - thin with **stock** or **coconut milk** when reheating
- Freezes well for up to *3 months* - thaw overnight in refrigerator
- Reheat gently over medium-low heat, stirring frequently
- Add fresh **lime juice** and herbs after reheating for brightness

Serving Suggestions

- Serve over steamed jasmine rice (traditional) or sticky rice
- Accompany with Thai cucumber salad for cooling contrast
- **Chili oil** can be drizzled on individual portions for customizable heat
- Garnish generously with fresh **cilantro**, **Thai basil**, and **lime wedges**
- Crispy fried shallots make an excellent textural garnish
- Pairs well with a crisp Riesling or light lager beer
- Leftover curry can be used as a filling for savory crepes or over noodles
- For a complete meal, serve with spring rolls or satay as appetizers