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Thai Chicken Soup  
With Coconut Milk and Lemongrass

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1 stalk lemongrass  
1 Tb. canola oil  
1 medium onion, minced  
1 garlic clove, minced  
2 tsps. Thai red curry paste or curry powder  
Six  $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch-thick slices galangal  
or fresh ginger root, not peeled  
3 lime leaves, dried or fresh  
4 cups chicken stock  
1 pound boneless, skinless chicken breast  
2 cups shiitake mushrooms  
One 13- to 14-ounce can unsweetened  
coconut milk  
Juice of 2 limes  
2 Tbs. nam pla or nuoc mam (Asian fish sauce)  
3 scallions, trimmed and minced  
on the diagonal  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  cup minced fresh cilantro

Trim the lemongrass of its outer sheath and hard ends, whack it in a few places with the back of a knife, then cut it into two or three pieces. In a deep skillet or medium saucepan, combine the oil, onion and garlic and turn the heat to medium. Cook a minute, stirring, then add the lemongrass, curry paste, galangal (or ginger) and lime leaves.

Cook, stirring, 3 or 4 minutes, then add the stock. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat to medium and cook at a moderate boil about 15 minutes. (You may prepare the soup in advance up to this point; refrigerate in a covered container for up to two days.)

While the broth cooks, cut the chicken breast into  $\frac{1}{2}$ - to  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch cubes. Remove the stems from the mushrooms and discard or reserve for stock; cut the caps into quarters or eighths.

Add the coconut milk, then the chicken and the mushrooms, to the broth. Cook for about 5 minutes, or until the chicken is done.

Stir in the lime juice and nam pla; taste and adjust the seasoning. Divide among four bowls, then garnish with the scallions and cilantro and serve. You may remove the galangal and lemongrass before serving or leave them in — they are delicious to gnaw on at the table. *Makes 8 cups; serves 4 as main course.* 