

Pad Thai

Necessary Ingredients:

- flat rice noodles (expensive if not bought at an Asian market or winco)
- garlic
- onion AND/OR green onions
- thai chilies, fresh cayenne chilies, serranos, OR chile paste. chopped up fine.
- bean sprouts, cabbage, AND/OR carrots
- cilantro (as much as Tina can handle!)
- crushed peanuts (some chopped/crushed and some whole is fine; don't skimp on peanuts, they are important)
- vegetable oil
- tamarind paste (probably only at Asian markets, but is necessary. if you find it elsewhere it will be more expensive. The other option, although shameful, is ketchup)
- fish sauce (yes, it is necessary and soy sauce is not a replacement. it's one of pad thai's distinctive flavours; buy at an Asian store, as it will be expensive elsewhere)
- sugar (contrasts with the sour of the tamarind/lime/vinegar; get a good balance!)

Optional Ingredients:

- chicken, tofu, AND/OR eggs
- ginger (recommended; cheap at most places)
- lime AND/OR rice/white wine vinegar (optional, tamarind is also an acid, so can be used instead)
- chicken stock (or broth, but stock is more flavourful)
- white pepper (black is fine too, but inferior)
- soy sauce (real pad thai uses fish sauce exclusively)

Cooking steps:

1. soak rice noodles in cool water for 30 minutes, or until firm, but edible.
2. cut all the vegetables up. carrots and cabbage take longer to cook than many other vegetables, so cut them smaller or add them earlier. bean sprouts should be whole.
3. if you are using chicken/tofu, it is best to marinate it before hand. I would use a mixture of acid (e.g. lime, tamarine, etc; important!) and salty liquid (soy/fish sauce) and seasoning (chiles, ginger etc)
4. heat wok/large pan with a layer of oil. stir fry garlic, ginger, chiles and onions for a minute or so until fragrant.
5. add peanuts and slow cooking vegetables, like cabbage and carrots, and stir fry until almost done. Probably add meat/tofu here as well, depending on how it is cut and if it is raw.
6. add soaked and drained rice noodles, tamarind paste, other acids, fish/soy sauce, and sugar and stir fry on high heat until noodles seem done. Keep some chicken broth/stock nearby if it gets too hot or runs out of liquid (don't put too much liquid though!).
7. add bean sprouts and half of the cilantro and cook for a few more minutes.
8. take off heat, add rest of cilantro and any green onion left over. add salt/soy/fish sauce to taste.

Notes:

Pad Thai is all about balancing many flavours that easily overpower each other. As a result, it is easy to mess up and make it too bland or too strong flavoured. whenever possible, add ingredients incrementally and taste. Keep in mind that things like cilantro will not release all their flavour right away, so assume it will become a little stronger later. Alternatively, fish sauce tends to cook off a bit, so assume the flavour will lessen shortly after it is added.

Primary flavours to balance: acid (tamarind/lime/vinegar) vs sweet (sugar/ketchup)

Dont skimp on peanuts! They add a lot to the dish, but are easily overpowered.

if using lime, it is best added at the end, since high temperatures can make it bitter.

Stir frying works best at high temperatures, but it is easy to burn things. When pan frying anything, try to use EITHER water-based-liquids OR oil at any one time to prevent burning and sticking. Before you add noodles, you use oil. afterwards, you use water-based-liquids (e.g. broth, tamarind, fish/soy sauce). Oil by itself makes things crisp/caramelized. Water by itself cooks things fast and prevents burning. Both together makes things oily and soggy (Not good!).

Use the minimal amount of oil needed to stop sticking. If you add oil after other things are in the pan, move everything aside and pour oil directly on pan surface, so it heats up a bit before soaking into everything else.