



This Thai basil chicken soup is warming in the winter, but is also light enough to enjoy in the summer.

THAI THIS CHICKEN SOUP

A delicious alternative using fresh basil

BY ROGER MOOKING

If I could cook soup every day without driving my family insane I would. Soup is a staple food that works well any time of the year. And Thai basil chicken soup works especially well for any season as it's warming enough for winter but light and refreshing enough to enjoy in the summer.

Thai basil, which can be found in any Asian market, is a favourite ingredient of mine, and the possibilities with this herb are endless. This type of basil is different than regular sweet basil in that it has a more assertive, complex taste. It has a firmer, purpleish stalk with deep green leaves. Be sure your bunch is blemish-free, has a slightly rigid stock and vibrant colouring.

When storing fresh basil, keep it loosely wrapped in slightly damp paper towel in the fridge for four to five days, or sitting stem down in a cup of water with a plastic bag to cover the leaves; refrigerate for up to one week, changing the water every few days. For absolute fool-proof results, buy just the amount of basil that you will use within a day or two.

THAI BASIL CHICKEN SOUP

Serves four

Ingredients

- 1 medium onion, skin removed and cut in half
- 1 stalk of lemongrass, bruised
- ¾ lbs shitake mushrooms, stems and caps separated
- 1 bunch Thai basil stems
- 1 thumb ginger, pounded
- 1 red Thai chili split (seeded if no heat is desired)
- peel of 1 lime
- 1 tbsp (15 mL) black peppercorns
- 2 bay leaves

Soup Garnishes

- Thai basil chicken broth
- Red chili, optional
- ¼ cup (50 mL) fish sauce
- 1½ tbsp sugar
- juice of 2 limes
- salt
- leg meat pulled from broth
- ½ cucumber, peeled, seeded, sliced
- 4 plum tomatoes, quartered, seeded, cut into ½-inch triangles
- 1 bunch green onion, chopped
- sesame oil, for garnish
- 1 lime, cut into quarters, for garnish
- Thai basil, for garnish

Broth

1. Place all ingredients in a large pot.
2. Cover with approximately 2 to 2½ quarts of cold water.
3. Bring up to a boil, and then reduce heat to a simmer.
4. Cook for one hour at a low simmer. Skim the top to remove scum throughout cooking process.
5. Remove chicken from pot.
6. Peel away leg meat and reserve for soup.
7. Remove remaining meat from bone and reserve for personal use.
8. Strain stock into a clean pot.

3. Season with salt.
 4. Add pulled chicken meat, cucumber and tomato.
 5. Serve soup, piping hot.
 6. Garnish with green onion, sesame oil, remaining lime and Thai basil.
- Tips and recipe are courtesy of *Everyday Exotic* starring Roger Mooking, airing Thursdays at 12:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. ET on Food Network.

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