

SERVES 1

15-Minute Express Laksa

● PREP: 5 MINS
● COOK: 10 MINS

Jetlagged after a flight to Singapore, I sat in a hawker centre and enjoyed a bowl of spicy laksa noodle soup with a friend. In such hot, humid weather, it seemed strange to be slurping a hot broth, but the sweat was worth it.

A good laksa doesn't have to take hours to cook (life doesn't always allow the time to slow-simmer a pot of soup), and my quick version is perfect for a weeknight dinner when you can't be bothered to stand over the stove for longer than needed. Ready in a flash, this laksa tastes like you've made it from scratch.

FOR THE LAKSA

- 100g (3½oz) dried vermicelli rice noodles (thin egg noodles also work here)
- 4-5 raw peeled king prawns (shrimp)
- 2-3 fried tofu puffs
- 2-3 frozen fish balls
- 30g (1oz) beansprouts

FOR THE SOUP BASE

- 1 tbsp cooking oil of choice
- 1½ tbsp Thai red curry paste
- 1 tbsp medium-hot curry powder
- 200g (7oz) canned full-fat coconut milk
- 500ml (generous 2 cups) chicken or seafood stock
- 1 tbsp fish sauce, plus extra to taste
- ½ tbsp granulated sugar

TO SERVE

- 1 handful of chopped coriander (cilantro)
- 1-2 lime wedges
- 1 soft-boiled egg

Cook the noodles in a pan of boiling water according to the packet instructions. Drain and rinse briefly under cold running water. Place the noodles in a serving bowl.

Meanwhile, make the soup base. Heat the cooking oil in a deep sauté pan on a medium heat. Add the Thai curry paste and sauté for a minute to release the aroma. Add the curry powder, coconut milk, stock, fish sauce and sugar, then stir until combined. Bring the soup base to a gentle boil, then taste and adjust the seasoning, adding more fish sauce, if needed.

Throw in the prawns, tofu puffs, fish balls and beansprouts. Return the pan to a gentle boil and cook for 2-3 minutes, until the prawns turn pink.

Ladle the soup on top of the noodles in the bowls and scatter over the coriander. Squeeze over the lime, to taste, and serve topped with a soft-boiled egg.

