

# Thai Hot and Sour Soup

## Tom Yum Goong

Aromas of lemongrass, kaffir lime leaves and galangal waft through the dining arena where this lightly sweet, spicy, brothy treasure is served. On my last journey to the small city of Lumnaria in the Lopburi province of Thailand, the family of one of my former students, Fah Vorarittinapap, showed me how rural Thais add a natural layer of sourness with chopped young tamarind leaves. Alas, we don't grow tamarind in the West, so we use fresh lime juice.

If you can't find head-on shrimp, use stock (seafood or chicken) instead of water for this broth. Whenever you cook shrimp, collect the shells in your freezer. They can be used to enrich stock for soups like this. Just simmer them with the stock for thirty minutes, and then strain. The nuance of flavor they add can make all the difference.

*Makes 4 to 6 servings as part of a multi-dish meal*

- 2 lb. (.9 kg.) Medium shrimp, head-on
- 1 Tbsp. Vegetable oil
- 2 Tbsp. Thai Chili Jam (*nam prik pow*) (pg. 132)  
or store-bought Chili Paste in Soybean Oil  
(pg. 56)
- 1 tsp. Minced cilantro roots or 1 Tbsp. minced stems
- 4 to 6 Thai bird chilies stems removed split in  
half lengthwise
- 8 cups (2 L.) Water or broth (seafood or chicken)
- 6 stalks Lemongrass, trimmed, sliced on diagonal into  
3-inch (7.5 cm.) lengths and lightly bruised with  
blunt object
- 3 slices Galangal, sliced 1/8 inch (0.3 cm.) thick
- 10 Kaffir lime leaves, bruised
- 2 Plum/Roma tomatoes, cut into 1-inch (2.5 cm.) chunks
- 1/2 can (15 oz. or 425 g. can) Straw mushrooms, drained  
(liquid discarded), halved
- 1/4 cup Fish sauce (*nam pla*)
- 1/2 cup Lime juice
- 1/4 cup Cilantro leaves

1. Peel shrimp, reserving and quickly rinsing the heads and shells, leaving tail attached; de-vein the shrimp and refrigerate.
2. Heat oil in 4 qt. (4 L.) saucepan or wok over high heat; add shrimp heads and shells. Cook, stirring constantly, 1 minute. Add chili paste, chilies, cilantro stems and water; bring to a boil, and then lower to simmer for 10 minutes. Strain into a new pot.
3. Add lemongrass, galangal and lime leaves; simmer 5 minutes. Add shrimp, tomatoes, mushrooms, and fish sauce. Bring back to a simmer; cook 30 seconds, until shrimp are just cooked. Remove from heat.
4. Taste and adjust seasoning with fish sauce and lime juice. Place cilantro leaves into bowls, and then ladle soup over them; serve immediately.



*This humble but doubles as an outdoor cooking facility and dining area.*

## How and Why

1. Using shrimp heads creates richest flavor and color. The head contains much of the orange pigments in shrimp, known as carotenoids. Also some shrimp heads contain an orange dot, which is actually a droplet of delicious shrimp fat, which adds greatly to the essence of the broth.

2. By adding lime juice at the last moment, you keep the flavors bright. Once lime juice has been boiled much of its delicate aroma and bright flavor dissipate.



*In Thailand the shrimp shells are often left on, resulting in a more resilient texture. Here you see a hot pot where the center chimney is filled with a gelled fuel to keep the soup fiery hot.*