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## Give your palate and nose a chance to acclimatize to Thai cooking

Sweet, hot, sour, salty, bitter— this is the essence of Thai cooking. Over the last few years, I've been venturing into some new cuisines and Thai has been my favourite for awhile now. The unique combination of flavours is something you can't help but appreciate.

Whenever I teach my cooking classes, I realize that many people have the mistaken impression that Thai food means hot food. That is not so. The principle behind Thai cooking is to balance the five flavours— hot, sweet, sour, bitter and salty. So, although you can make it very hot if you like, that is certainly not the intention.

The recipe shown here today will be a bit spicy for some if you use the full two teaspoons of curry paste. Simply cut that in half if you are not a lover of heat. This recipe also calls for crabmeat as well as roasted red peppers. You can put these in and the soup is delicious, but you also can make it without (as I did for the photo) and the soup is still yummy!

Many local grocery stores carry a good variety of ingredients today that will allow you to make a wide variety of Thai dishes.

In your local store look for fish sauce, vermicelli rice noodles, sambal, shitake mushrooms, rice vinegar, soy sauce, long finger chillies, curry paste, coconut milk, fresh coriander, lemongrass, fresh ginger, limes, wonton wrappers (which can be used to replace spring roll wrappers in a pinch) and more.



What's cookin'?

Lori Gysel  
Gerry Kentner

Some items, like spring roll wrappers, gangal, kafir lime leaves and Thai basil, you will still have to travel for.

One important thing to consider if you are new to some of these ingredients is do not eliminate them because you think you don't like the appearance, aroma, texture, whatever.

Any of these ingredients individually is not necessarily something you'd want to sit down and eat a bowl of. But, when you combine them all together in the correct proportions, wonderful things will happen!

For example, if you were unfamiliar with Worcestershire sauce and opened the bottle for the first time, you might say that it is too strong tasting or too salty and therefore you don't want to use it. But if you tried to drink a bloody Caesar without it, it wouldn't be the same! Or what if you tried to bake a cake without baking powder or baking soda because when you smelled the box, you didn't like the scent?

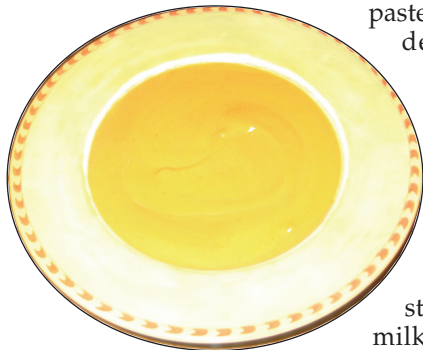
Follow the recipe— at least the first time; have fun and keep cooking!

## Thai Sweet Potato with Crab Soup

(makes 4-6 servings)

### Ingredients

- 2 tbsp vegetable oil
- 1 large onion, diced small
- 2 large cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tsp Thai red curry paste
- 1 tsp ground coriander
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- 1 large sweet potato (approx 12 oz), peeled and diced small
- 2 cups chicken or vegetable stock
- 2 cups coconut milk
- 4 oz shelled, cooked crabmeat (about 1 cup)
- 1 small roasted red pepper, diced
- fresh coriander sprigs for garnish



paste, ground coriander and ground cumin and sauté for 30 seconds longer.

2. Add the sweet potato and sauté for 30 seconds.

3. Add the stock and coconut milk. Bring the mixture to a boil, then reduce

the heat and simmer until the sweet potato is cooked through. Approximately 20-30 minutes.

4. Remove from the heat. Process the soup in a food processor in batches. Pour the soup back into the pot to reheat. Add the crabmeat and roasted red pepper. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

5. Garnish with a fresh coriander sprig and a little crabmeat.

### Method

1. Heat the vegetable oil over medium-high heat in a large saucepan. Add the onion and sauté until transparent. Add the garlic and sauté for 30 seconds. Add the Thai curry



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