

VEggy Pad Thai

Hello and welcome to my not-so-weekly soundbite. So, the other night I had a really disappointing Pad Thai from a Takeaway, and so to right that wrong, and do justice to this banging Thai classic that we all love, I thought I'd just do my own! So, this is my Veggy – vegetarian-eggy – ha ha – Veggy Pad Thai.

First thing you do is you stick the kettle on. You put the noodles, which have to be those flat ones, the flat rice ones – don't have to be but it's better with those, you can do it with vermicelli noodles and I have in the past. So, you put the noodles into a big bowl, you boil the kettle and you pour the water on. Now make note of how long it says on the side of the pack to soak for, because the worst thing you could do at this stage is to break up those noodles. It's usually about 3, 4, 5 minutes, something like that. So then, your other bit of prep is you're going to mix the ingredients together for the sauce. That sauce, that's the absolute binding force of a Pad Thai: tamarind, soy sauce, lime juice, brown sugar. Add more or less of each of them to your taste but the weights are up there. But it's up to you how you like it, but that's the nice balance for me: 30 grams of tamarind paste, 20 mls of good, strong soy sauce, 30 mls of lime juice – you're gonna give it a squeeze at the end as well – and 15 grams of the soft, brown sugar.

Then, right, on to the cooking. Prep all of your veg first because this is a quick cook, so have everything shredded, cut, grated, whatever it is, have it all ready – just like Delia [Smith] did in the old days in little bowls. And then you get a big wide pan or a wok, but it needs to be wide because there's got to be a lot of surface area contact between the veg and the heat through the pan. So you're gonna get a nice pan, you're gonna put in a splash of veg oil and a little bit of sesame oil – up to you on the sesame oil, obviously – but not too much, it's not a serious fry, because when we're gonna throw the veg in, in a second, once it's spanking hot, we want it to pick up some colour and that colour we want it to be a bit blackened-y, rather than a fried golden brown, if you see what I mean. So not too much oil.

So now, first things to go in are the things that take longest to cook – that'll be your tenderstem broccoli and your Chinese leaf, all shredded nicely and chopped. And you put them in, leave them to get some contact, pick up a bit of colour, then start shuffling them round a bit. Just a couple of minutes, like I said. Everything goes in 1-2-3 right after the other. So, once they've got a little bit of colour and have begun to soften and get that fantastic smell that you get from outside Thai shops and Chinese shops, with their wok frying their greens, then, meanwhile, stick on a separate little pan for your eggies. You can do 2 eggs, 3 eggs, 4 eggs, it's up to you. It's veggy, this is one of the main sources of protein apart from the tofu and the seeds or nuts – whichever you're using – so you want it to be good and eggy, your veggy. So - 2, 3 or 4 eggs, up to you. Scramble them on the side, you go past the point of normal scrambled eggs, you want them to go into little pieces and you want them to be nicely browning in those little pieces, just a little bit browny on the outside.

So, you're working across 2 pans now, stirring away frantically, having a really good time, enjoying the smells. Then turn the eggs off and throw the carrots and the tofu and half the bean sprouts, and the drained noodles all in with the broccoli and the cabbage. Everything's going in now, you're nearly at the end. It's such a quick cook, this. But you want to be using not a spoon, you want to be using tongs or chopsticks to move it round at this stage, so that you don't break up those noodles, using a nice, light hand, keep it moving, keep it turning, keep it over. And you go at this stage until everything is just hot, you want it to be nice and hot, so the carrots can be still crunchy, but they're hot. The noodles – well, they've come from boiling water – you did remember to drain the noodles, didn't you? Yes, you did. So, then everything's in, the eggs go in as well, and all that you should be looking at now is your garnishes, which are a few bean sprouts that you've held back, your peanuts – or toasted seeds – crush the peanuts, and a couple of spring onions, sliced, wedges and limes, chili flakes. That's what you're going to finish it with. You've got a bowl of the sauce and some edamame [beans]. Everything else should be in at this stage.

So then pour the sauce ingredients in and turn the heat off. Turn it round. What you want is that sauce to get absorbed by the noodles, so don't worry if it's a bit saucy, the noodles will absorb it all. And if you feel like it, sometimes – I know this sound strange but it depends on the noodles – sometimes I've made a second round of that sauce and put it in as well. That is the key flavour of the Pad Thai, those four ingredients, so you really need that to be flavoursome, but do 1x recipe and see how it goes, and then add a bit more if you feel like it.

So, the heat's off, sauce is being absorbed, get your finishers ready. Throw the edamame in first, turn them through, an extra squeeze of lime juice if you feel like it, and then you move it all onto your beautiful serving dish, whatever that is, or your plates – whatever you're going onto – and you finish it with those other ingredients, as I said. There's a handful of bean sprouts at the end, some crushed peanuts. The easiest way to do that is put the peanuts on the board, and just put a saucepan on top and just kind of rocker them around and they just break up nicely. Or toasted seeds if you have a nut allergy. They work just as well. Pineapple – pineapple... muppet – pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, those kind of ones – obviously sesame seeds can go in there as well – allergies, allergies. A couple of spring onions that have been nicely sliced, chuck those on, wedges of lime on the side, a pile of chili flakes for people to dip into if they want. And that is your banging Veggy Pad Thai - Job's a good'un – enjoy!