Sauces / Thailand

Larb Dressing

The punchy, toasted-rice-thickened dressing of Lao-Thai larb — fish sauce, lime, dried chili, and khao kua (toasted rice powder) stirred together, giving the finished salad its signature nutty crunch and herbal punch.

Time 15 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 2 parts Raw glutinous rice (for toasting)
- ☐ 3 parts Fish sauce
- ☐ 3 parts Fresh lime juice
- ☐ 1 parts Dried red chili flakes (prik bon), coarsely ground
- ☐ 0.5 parts White sugar or palm sugar
- ☐ 1 parts Fresh mint leaves, roughly torn
- ☐ 1 parts Fresh coriander, leaves and tender stems

Let's make it.

01 Place the raw glutinous rice in a dry wok or heavy skillet over medium heat. Stir constantly with a wooden spoon — the rice must move at all times or it burns in patches. Toast for 8–12 minutes until every grain has turned a deep golden-brown, the color of dark caramel. The kitchen will smell of popcorn and toasted nuts. Remove immediately to a plate to stop carryover cooking. Once completely cool, transfer to a mortar or spice grinder and grind to a coarse powder — the texture should be like coarse cornmeal, not fine flour. A few larger fragments are desirable. This powder, khao kua, is what gives larb its signature nutty crunch and acts as a light thickener for the dressing.

02 In a mixing bowl, combine the fish sauce and lime juice, then add the sugar and stir until dissolved. Taste the base: it should be aggressively sour and salty in roughly equal measure, with the sweet just barely perceptible as a rounding note. Add the dried chili flakes and stir in. Finally, stir in about half the toasted rice powder — the dressing will immediately begin to thicken slightly and take on a golden hue. Reserve the remaining half to be added over the warm meat just before serving, where it provides the most distinct crunch.

03 Add the torn mint leaves and coriander to the dressing. Toss briefly — they should be lightly coated rather than submerged. This dressing is meant to be tossed over freshly cooked, still-warm larb meat (minced pork, chicken, or beef) the moment it comes off the heat. The residual warmth of the meat slightly wilts the herbs, bruises them just enough to release their fragrance, and the warm fat in the meat emulsifies lightly with the lime juice. Sprinkle the remaining reserved rice powder over the top of the plated larb at the very end for maximum crunch. Serve immediately.

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Servings are an estimate; check quantities in the source recipe.
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