Sauces / Thailand

Satay Peanut Sauce

A sauce of roasted peanuts dissolved into coconut milk with red curry paste and palm sugar — thick enough to coat a skewer and leave a trembling drop at the tip, with a warmth that builds slowly from the red curry's dried chilies rather than hitting all at once. This is the sauce that makes satay worth the wait.

Time 20 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 250 ml Coconut milk, full-fat
- ☐ 120 g Roasted peanut butter, natural (no added sugar)
- ☐ 30 g Thai red curry paste (store-bought or homemade)
- ☐ 25 g Palm sugar, grated
- ☐ 20 ml Tamarind paste, concentrated
- ☐ 15 ml Fish sauce
- ☐ 2 g Fine sea salt
- ☐ 30 g Roasted peanuts, roughly crushed, for topping
- ☐ 2 g Dried chili flakes, for topping (optional)

Let's make it.

01 Pour the coconut milk into a small saucepan over medium heat. When it begins to steam and show the first signs of simmering at the edges, add the red curry paste. Whisk constantly to break up the paste and disperse it evenly through the coconut milk. Continue to cook over medium heat for 3 to 4 minutes, stirring regularly. You are not just dissolving the paste — you are cooking out the raw edge of its dried chilies and spices, blooming them in the coconut fat the way you would bloom spices in oil. The mixture will shift from bright orange-red (raw paste) to a deeper, richer terracotta-orange as the paste cooks. The aroma will change from sharp and raw to roasted and complex. This bloom step is what separates a cooked satay sauce from a merely mixed one.

02 Add the peanut butter to the simmering curry coconut mixture. Whisk vigorously to incorporate — the peanut butter will resist at first, then suddenly combine into a thick, uniform sauce. Add the palm sugar, tamarind paste, fish sauce, and salt. Stir constantly over medium-low heat for 2 to 3 minutes until the sugar dissolves and all elements are fully integrated. The sauce will thicken as it heats — adjust consistency with small additions of warm water if it becomes too thick to pour easily. The finished sauce should flow off a spoon in a heavy, slow ribbon. Taste and balance: if too thick and sweet, add a teaspoon more tamarind; if too sharp, add a pinch more palm sugar; if flat, a few more drops of fish sauce. The balance to aim for is rich-sweet-slightly-sour-deeply-savory.

03 Transfer the warm peanut sauce to a serving bowl or pour it into a small clay pot for table presentation. Scatter the roughly crushed roasted peanuts over the surface — they should be chunky enough to provide texture but not so large they fall off a dipped item. Add a small pinch of dried chili flakes for color and a visual hint of heat. Serve warm alongside grilled chicken or pork satay skewers, fresh cucumber rounds, and the traditional Thai ajad (pickled cucumber relish). The sauce can be made up to 3 days ahead and refrigerated — it will thicken on cooling but returns to the correct consistency when gently reheated with a splash of water or coconut milk.

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