Main dishes / Thailand

Shrimp Pad Thai

Rice noodles wok-fried at volcanic heat with plump shrimp, egg scrambled directly in the pan, and a sauce of tamarind, fish sauce, and palm sugar — finished with a blizzard of crushed peanuts, a wedge of lime, and the snap of fresh bean sprouts.

Time 45 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 60 parts Raw shrimp, peeled and deveined (16/20 count)
- ☐ 20 parts Eggs
- ☐ 15 parts Fish sauce (Tiparos or Megachef)
- ☐ 15 parts Neutral oil (rice bran, vegetable, or lard)
- ☐ 4 parts Garlic cloves, finely minced
- ☐ 20 parts Firm tofu, diced into small cubes (optional)
- ☐ 10 parts Roasted peanuts, roughly crushed
- ☐ 5 parts Lime wedges
- ☐ 8 parts Green onions (scallions), cut into 4 cm lengths
- ☐ 100 parts Dried sen lek rice noodles (3 mm wide), soaked until pliable but still firm
- ☐ 20 parts Tamarind paste (from a block dissolved in warm water, strained)
- ☐ 10 parts Palm sugar, finely grated or broken
- ☐ 10 parts Shallots, thinly sliced
- ☐ 8 parts Preserved radish (chai poh), rinsed and chopped
- ☐ 30 parts Bean sprouts, fresh
- ☐ 5 parts Fresh coriander (cilantro), leaves only
- ☐ 2 parts Dried chili flakes (phrik bon)

Let's make it.

01 To make the pad thai sauce, dissolve the tamarind paste: break off a 50 g piece from the block, pour over 100 ml of hot water, and work it with your fingers until dissolved. Pass through a fine sieve, pressing on the solids, to yield a smooth, dark, sour-sweet liquid. Combine this tamarind water with the fish sauce and palm sugar in a small bowl. Whisk until the palm sugar is fully dissolved — you may need to warm the mixture gently if using hard palm sugar. Taste: the sauce should balance sweet, salty, and tart in roughly equal measure, slightly more savory than sweet, with no single note dominating. Adjust with fish sauce for salinity, palm sugar for sweetness, or tamarind for sourness. This sauce should be made before any wok cooking begins — you cannot pause mid-wok to adjust.

02 Heat a wok over the highest possible flame until it begins to smoke — the metal should be so hot that a drop of water evaporates instantly with a single crack. Add the oil in one shot; it should shimmer and ripple immediately. Add the shrimp in a single layer and do not touch them for 60 seconds. The goal is a slight char on the surface — you cannot achieve this if you crowd the pan or stir too early. Flip and cook 30 seconds more. The shrimp should be just cooked, curled into a 'C' shape. Push them to the side of the wok. Add the shallots and garlic to the empty center of the wok and cook, stirring constantly, for 30 seconds until fragrant. Add the preserved radish and tofu (if using) and toss everything together for 1 minute.

03 Add the soaked (but still firm) rice noodles to the wok. Pour the pad thai sauce over the noodles immediately. Using tongs or two long chopsticks, toss and fold constantly, lifting the noodles from the bottom of the wok and turning them over, for 2–3 minutes. The sauce should reduce and caramelize slightly as it hits the hot wok surface, coating each noodle strand in a sticky, amber glaze. If the noodles begin sticking severely, add 2–3 tablespoons of water to the wok and toss again. The noodles are ready when they are soft but still have the faintest bite (al dente), and the sauce has reduced to a tacky glaze rather than a pool of liquid.

04 Push the noodles to one side of the wok, creating a clear space on the other. Add a small extra drizzle of oil to the empty space and crack the eggs directly into it. Let the egg whites begin to set for 15 seconds without stirring, then break the yolks and scramble the eggs into large, custardy curds with a spatula — do this in the wok's residual and flame heat, not over the center. Before the eggs are fully set (while still glossy and slightly wet), fold the noodles over the eggs and toss everything together, so the eggs break apart and coat the noodles in creamy yellow ribbons. Add the green onions and toss for 30 seconds more. The egg should be fully set and integrated but still moist and custardy — not dry or scrambled-dry.

05 Remove the wok from heat. Add the bean sprouts and toss just twice — the residual heat of the wok will warm them slightly but they must not cook through; raw crunch is structural to the finished dish. Plate immediately in a mound in the center of a warm plate. Arrange a small nest of fresh bean sprouts on top (raw, not from the wok), scatter the crushed peanuts generously, add coriander leaves, and prop a wedge or two of lime on the side. Provide a small pinch of dried chili flakes on the plate. In Thailand, pad thai is served with a side tray of condiments (fish sauce, sugar, chili flakes, and dried chili in vinegar) for self-seasoning at the table — the dish at the table is the starting point, not the finished statement.

Recipe & provenance ForkRecipe Kitchen / ForkRecipe / FoodML and contributors / CC BY-SA 4.0.
Original recipe and attribution CC BY-SA 4.0
Servings are an estimate; check quantities in the source recipe.
recipes.dvs-services.be / shrimp-pad-thai