



Thai Fish Cakes

In Thai cuisine, dishes such as fish cakes and spring rolls are snacks, often bought from street vendors between meals. Thai fish cakes, tod man pla, have a springy texture, achieved by repeatedly ‘slapping’ the minced fish against the side of the bowl to develop the protein. Red fish works particularly well for fishcakes as it readily develops this texture, if you use a different fish, the slapping is even more important and you may need to add a tablespoon or so of beaten egg to help bind the mixture. The cakes can be shaped hours in advance, covered and refrigerated on an oiled plate then fried just before serving. Ajat, a cucumber relish is the typical sweet and sour dipping sauce served with Thai deep-fried dishes to cut through the oiliness. A little ground roasted peanut is often added to the ajat served with fish cakes.

Makes 8 pieces

INGREDIENTS

- 500g redfish fillets, skin off, pin-boned and chopped
- 2 tablespoons Thai-style red curry paste
- 2 tablespoons fish sauce
- Pinch castor sugar
- 50g green beans, finely sliced
- 1 kaffir lime leaf, very finely shredded
- Vegetable oil, for deep-frying

Ajat

- ¼ cup castor sugar
- ¼ cup water
- ¼ cup distilled white vinegar
- Salt flakes, to taste
- ½ Lebanese cucumber, seeded and finely diced
- 2 red shallots, finely sliced
- ½ long red chilli, seeded and finely chopped

METHOD

1. Make Ajat: heat sugar, water, vinegar and salt in a small saucepan until sugar dissolves; set aside to cool. Stir in cucumber, shallot and chilli, transfer to a serving dish and set aside.
2. Place fish, curry paste, fish sauce and sugar in a food processor and blend for a minute or so, until well pureed. Transfer to a large bowl.
3. Gather handfuls of the mixture and repeatedly throw it against the side of the bowl for several minutes, until it becomes firmer and holds together.
4. Mix in beans and lime leaf.
5. Heat oil in a wok or saucepan.
6. Meanwhile, lightly oil the palm of one hand and use it to pick up about ¼ cup of the fish mixture, squeezing it to form a patty.
7. Place on a plate and repeat with remaining mixture.
8. Fry patties for 2-3 minutes each side, until well coloured. Drain on paper towel.
9. Serve immediately with Ajat.