Be Inspired BY Roberta!
FOOD ~ WINE ~ TRAVEL

Laksa Paste

Laksa paste is the soul of any laksa, get this right and everything else is just assembly. The turmeric, ginger and galangal provide much of the flavour in this paste, peel them gently with a small knife rather than a vegetable peeler so you don't lose too much flesh. As you only use the white end of the lemongrass for the paste, save the rest and steep in hot water to make a refreshing lemongrass tea. Don't be tempted to nibble on the candlenuts raw as they contain compounds that can cause a mild upset stomach when eaten raw; they are harmless once cooked. Traditionally this paste would have been pounded in a mortar with a pestle, so do that rather than using a stick blender if you prefer. And for those times when you don't have time to make your own laksa paste, I find the Malaysian brand Ayam is a very good quality short-cut.

Makes about 1½ cups

INGREDIENTS

- 6 small–medium dried red chillies
- 3 red shallots, peeled
- 2 cloves garlic, peeled
- 1 stalk lemongrass (white part only)
- 10g fresh turmeric
- 2 candlenuts, roughly chopped (do not eat raw)
- 3 teaspoons finely grated ginger
- 2 teaspoons finely grated galangal
- 1½ teaspoons belacan

METHOD

1. Seed chillies and soak in warm water for 15 minutes.
2. Meanwhile chop shallots and garlic, slice lemongrass finely and peel and chop turmeric.
3. Place in a stick blender jug with candlenuts, ginger, galangal and belacan.
4. Drain and roughly chop chilli and add to the jug.
5. Use a stick blender to grind all ingredients to form as fine a paste as possible.
6. Set aside until needed.

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