

Thai Basil, Roasted Duck & Cellophane Noodle Salad with Spicy Peanuts

2 duck breasts
3 Tbsp canola oil
4 Thai bird chilies
salt and fresh ground pepper to taste
1 tsp lime juice
½ tsp sesame oil
4 cups cellophane noodles, blanched
½ cup soy sauce
2 Tbsp sweet chili sauce
¾ cup carrot, julienne
½ cup shallot, thinly sliced
½ cup cucumber, peeled, halved,
seeded and sliced ¼-inch thick
2 Tbsp chili oil (recipe on page 111)
1 cup spicy peanuts (recipe follows)
½ cup Thai basil, chiffonade

peanut oil for frying
1 cup peanuts, skinned and halved
½ tsp salt
¼ tsp cayenne pepper
¼ tsp coriander seed, ground

This is not a salad for the timid. Like most Thai dishes, this one packs a wallop in the spice department thanks to small, yet powerful Thai bird chiles, hot chili oil and spicy peanuts. Though the cold noodles do their part to help tame this dish down, its flare is still the flare.

YIELD – 4 servings

Score the skin side of the duck breasts in a diagonal pattern. Heat the canola oil in a pan over medium-high heat. Add the chilies and cook, stirring, for 30 seconds. Remove the chilies from the pan. Season the duck breasts with salt and pepper and place them in the pan skin side down. Sear until golden brown, 3 to 4 minutes. Flip the duck breasts over and cook until they are medium-rare, about 2 minutes. Deglaze the pan with lime juice. Add the sesame oil and cook until the liquid has evaporated. Remove the duck breasts from the pan and let stand for 10 minutes.

Toss the noodles, soy sauce, sweet chili sauce, carrot, shallot and cucumber together in a large bowl.

To serve, place a mound of the noodle salad in the middle of a square salad plate. Slice the duck breasts 1/4-inch thick on the bias and lean the slices around the noodles so that they come together at the top of the mound. Garnish the edge of the plate with drops of the chili oil. Sprinkle spicy peanuts on top of the mound, top with basil and serve.

Spicy Peanuts

YIELD – 1 cup

Heat the oil at 375 degrees in an electric fryer or large pot. Add the peanuts and cook for 3 to 4 minutes. Remove from oil and drain on paper towels. Season the peanuts with salt, cayenne and coriander. Let cool before serving.