Thai Coconut Curry Soup

2 cans (14-ounce/400 mL each)of premium coconut milk

1 heaping tablespoon (20 mL) of Thai curry paste

the tender stems of 1 bunch of cilantro, rinsed well

2 chicken breasts, thinly sliced

2 cups (500 mL0 of chicken broth

1 carrot, shredded

4 or 5 lime leaves

2 stalks of lemon grass, halved lengthwise, woody leaves removed

2 tablespoons (30 mL) of fish sauce

the zest and juice of 2 limes

a small knob frozen ginger

a handful bean sprouts

a 8 ounce (225 g) package rice noodles

1 bunch of cilantro leaves, rinsed well

2 or 3 green onions, thinly sliced

a sprinkle or two salt or soy sauce

Scoop the thick coconut cream from the top of just one of the cans into a large stockpot set over a medium-high heat. Melt the cream, add the curry paste and stir for a few minutes until they begin to sizzle.

Add the cilantro roots and chicken and sauté until the chicken is cooked through, about 5 minutes.

Add the coconut juice from the first can and all the contents of the second can along with the chicken broth, carrot, lime leaves, lemon grass, fish sauce and lime zest and juice. Grate the frozen ginger into the broth with a Microplane grater or standard box grater. Simmer for 20 minutes or so.

Stir in the bean sprouts. Add the rice noodles, gently pushing them beneath the surface of the broth. Turn off the heat and let stand until the noodles soften, about 5 minutes. Rice noodles don't need to simmer like pasta to cook; they simply need to rehydrate in the hot liquid.

Stir in most of the cilantro leaves. Remove the lemon grass stalks. Taste and season with a touch more salt (or soy sauce) as needed. Ladle into large bowls and garnish with the green onions and remaining cilantro leaves.

Variation

Thai curry pastes get their heat from chili peppers, but they're also loaded with other flavours. You may use as much or as little as you like. Yellow is the mildest; green the hottest. Try stirring in a head of chopped Asian greens or baby spinach with the bean sprouts. You may easily substitute beef or shrimp for the chicken.