



Are You in a Culinary Rut? & Thai Curried Shrimp and Green Beans

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Are you bored when it comes to food? You know the feeling. It happens this time of year. The warm and wonderful soups, stews and casseroles you embraced with enthusiasm in October have lost their appeal. As much as you love it, comfort food no longer brings comfort. You've moved out of the comfort zone and into the boredom zone.

However, knowing *ya gotta eat*, you listlessly put together a list for the supermarket. At the store you realize the list is not only incomplete, it is BORING with a capital B. You ignore the list and aimlessly wander the aisles, desperate for inspiration. Nothing looks good but you manage to fill the cart anyway. A few hours later you stare blankly into the now full refrigerator without a clue of what to cook.

What to do? You could stumble around your culinary rut for the next month or so. Perhaps you can live on the leftovers stashed in the back of the freezer. If not, you could go for take-out or try a new restaurant. In other words, hang tight until summer arrives with fresh local produce to inspire you.

Or you can stop moping, stretch your culinary muscles and jump out of that rut. It's easier than you think. A little chopping, tossing and a few fun herbs and spices are all you need to cook like a rock star, an iron chef or your neighbor's amazing grandma. (You choose.) Yes it might take a little effort but the rewards will be worth it. What rewards? You'll enjoy a fun and delicious evening with friends and family.

Even as a kid, I thought food was interesting. I was intrigued by (and envious of) the authentic Neapolitan fare cooked up by our next door neighbors. Eating out was an adventure, the more exotic the better. Although they were far from authentic, I lobbied for trips to the Chinese and Mexican restaurants down the road. At eleven I tried my first raw oyster at a fancy fish restaurant in Boston. Refusing to be intimidated, I took a deep breath and slurped it down. I thought that it was cool and daring to try new things. From spicy curries to sausages and sauerkraut, I was delight to try them all. Most, make that all, were wonderful. Even the whole trout who stared at me haughtily as I inelegantly removed the bones.



In a former life I was on and off airplanes every week. Many road warriors see constant business travel as a burden, a necessary evil of the job. Not me. It was a wonderful opportunity to meet fascinating people and work on interesting projects. And the foodie in me loved it. With each victory, my rapidly growing sales team provided a good excuse for a team dinner and celebration. Blinis and caviar in Moscow. Chicken with Preserved Lemons in Marrakech. Baba Ghanoush in Tel Aviv. And more, much more.

It's hard to get into a food rut when you are constantly enjoying something new and different. Of course, I couldn't keep these delicious discoveries to myself. I brought many back to my kitchen. Never hesitating to learn by trial and error, I asked questions and experimented. The rewards were and continue to be incredible – terrific food shared with wonderful people.

Celebrate spring by climbing out of your rut and delight your family and friends with something out of the ordinary. Have fun and

Bon appétit!



Thai Curried Shrimp and Green Beans

Wake up your bored taste buds with spicy Thai curry.

You'll be glad you did! Enjoy!

Serves 6

Vegetable oil

1 onion, cut in half and then in thin wedges

2 tablespoons (or to taste) Thai red curry paste

1 clove garlic, minced

1/4 cup dry white wine

1/4 cup chicken stock

1 cup unsweetened coconut milk

2 tablespoons Asian fish sauce

2 teaspoons brown sugar

1/4 cup loosely packed fresh basil leaves, cut in chiffonade

4-6 ounces green beans, cut into 2-inch pieces (about 1 – 1 1/2 cups)

About 1 1/2 pounds large shrimp, shelled and de-veined

Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper

1 red bell pepper, cut in match sticks

Juice of 1 lime

1 scallion, thinly sliced

Heat a little oil in a large heavy skillet over medium heat, stir in the curry paste, add the onion and cook, stirring, for 2-3 minutes. Add the garlic and cook for 1 minute more. Add the wine and chicken broth and stir to combine, bring to a simmer and cook until the liquid has been reduced by half.



Slowly stir in the coconut milk, fish sauce, sugar and basil. Continue to cook and stir until the sugar has dissolved. Add the green beans and toss to combine. Cover and cook for 2-3 minutes.

Meanwhile, season the shrimp with salt and pepper. Add the shrimp and red pepper to the pan and toss to combine. Bring to a simmer and cook, tossing, for 2-3 minutes or until the shrimp is cooked through. Add the lime juice and toss to combine.

Serve the curry with steamed basmati rice and garnish with scallion.



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