Rama-a-Bathing (Pra Ram Lon Son)

Rama-a-Bathing is a Thai speciality requiring top quality beef - we recommend fillet steak thinly sliced - as cooking time is very short. Do not stint on the spinach - it may seem unnecessary but the result is divine!

Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

- 120g/ 4oz creamed coconut, dissolved in 300ml/ 1/2 pint hot water; or a tin of coconut milk
- blend together 4-5 cloves garlic, a thumb-sized piece unpeeled ginger, 1 medium chopped onion, 5-6 fresh Thai chillies, chopped, including seeds, and 1 stalk lemongrass, finely chopped
- 500g/ 1lb fillet steak, finely sliced
- 2 tbsp each of fish sauce and soy sauce
- 1 tbsp brown sugar (see below)
- 4 tbsp crunchy wholenut peanut butter
- 500g/ 1lb fresh spinach

RECIPE

1. Reserve 2 tbsp of the creamed coconut for serving.
2. Cook the rice, as this takes longer than the rest!
3. Bring the remaining creamed coconut to the boil in a wok or large pan, and add the sauces, sugar and beef. Simmer for a few minutes until the beef is cooked through. Remove the beef from the liquid and keep warm whilst you finish the sauce.
4. Add the blended ingredients and peanut butter to the coconut milk, bring to the boil and simmer for 5 minutes. Add some water if it looks too dry - you want plenty of sauce!
5. Blanch the spinach, place on a serving dish and pile on the beef. Pour over the sauce.
6. Garnish with red chillies and the reserved coconut milk, and serve with the rice. Have some soy sauce on hand if you feel it needs a little more tang.

COOK'S NOTES

- Put the steak in the freezer for half an hour before slicing - you get thinner and more even slices.

- This recipe would traditionally use palm sugar, but soft dark sugar is an excellent substitute. Demerara is also fine.

- If you are buying spinach from the supermarket, use this easy method: tear the bag slightly and microwave for a couple of minutes, in advance of the meal. Just before serving, give it another couple of minutes and squeeze out the water before placing on the serving dish.