

THE INDONESIAN TABLE



PHAIDON

Chicken Soto with Turmeric
and Lemongrass

Chicken Soto with Turmeric and Lemongrass

This is my ultimate comfort food, especially on a grey day in England. The explosion of flavours and textures brings a smile to my world.

Nearly every community around the archipelago, and the world for that matter, has its version of chicken soup and chicken noodle soup. Layered with flavour, this light dish captures both.

Here, we have a clear broth with turmeric, lemongrass and glass noodles or rice vermicelli, making this dish gluten-free and dairy-free! Additional toppings, a touch of lime juice and spoons of sambal make it even more flavoursome. In some regions, coconut milk is added.

Chicken Soto with Turmeric and Lemongrass

Origin: Java

Preparation time: 20 minutes

Cooking time: 55 minutes

Serves 8

For the soto:

- * 1 tablespoon sunflower oil
- * 1 quantity Yellow Spice Paste
- * 1 (1.2-kg/2 lb 12-oz) chicken, cut into 8 pieces and skin removed
- * 4 lime leaves, torn
- * 2 stalks lemongrass, crushed
- * Salt, to taste
- * 200 g/7 oz dried rice vermicelli or glass noodles

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Cooking time: 55 minutes

Serves 8

For the toppings:

- * 4 eggs (optional)
- * 2 large tomatoes, seeded and cut into ½-cm/¼-inch cubes
- * 150 g/5½ oz (1½ cups) shredded cabbage
- * 3 tablespoons bean sprouts
- * 3 tablespoons chopped Chinese celery or celery leaves
- * 4 tablespoons Koya
- * 8 slices lime, halved

To serve:

- * 8 lime slices
- * 1 quantity Boiled Sambal
- * Melinjo crackers or prawn crackers

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To make the soto, heat the oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add the spice paste and sauté for 3–4 minutes. Add the chicken and cook for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the lime leaves, lemongrass and 1.5 litres/50 fl oz (6¼ cups) of water. Season with salt. Bring to a boil, then cover and reduce the heat to medium-low. Simmer for 45 minutes, skimming any scum from the surface with a ladle.

Meanwhile, prepare the dried noodles according to the package directions. Drain, then transfer to a bowl of cold water. Drain again, then set aside.

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Put the eggs, if using, into a small saucepan of water. Bring to a boil and boil for 10 minutes. Drain, then transfer to a bowl of cold water to stop the cooking process. When cool enough to handle, peel the eggs and cut them in half.

Transfer the chicken to a chopping (cutting) board and let cool. When cool enough to handle, pull the meat away from the bone and cut into slices. Set aside.

Put the noodles into bowls. Add the tomatoes, cabbage, bean sprouts and chicken. Ladle 2–3 spoons of hot broth into the bowls. Sprinkle with Chinese celery and koya. Add half an egg and a lime slice to each bowl. Serve with sambal and melinjo crackers on the side.

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Variations:

- Chicken Soto Banjar (Soto Banjar)

Replace the yellow spice paste with White Spice Paste.

When frying the paste, add 3 green cardamom pods, 2 star anise, 1 (5-cm/2-inch) stick of cinnamon and 1 teaspoon each of ground nutmeg and clove. Omit the koya.

- Jakartan Soto with Noodles (Soto Mie Jakarta)

Replace the yellow spice paste with White Spice Paste.

Replace the chicken with beef topside (top round) or cheeks and cook for 1½ hours, or until the beef is tender. Replace the rice noodles with egg noodles. Omit the koya and egg.