

CHILLI AND HONEY-CURED DRIED BEEF ★★

DRYING IS AN ANCIENT METHOD OF PRESERVING FOOD, WHICH ALSO INTENSIFIES THE FLAVOUR OR POTENCY OF MOST INGREDIENTS. IN THIS TRADITIONAL SOUTH-EAST ASIAN DISH THE CHILLIES ADD A WONDERFUL KICK TO THE MEAT WHILE THE HONEY ADDS A SUBTLE SWEETNESS.



2 Using a mortar and pestle, grind the chopped lemon grass, garlic and chillies to a paste. Stir in the honey, *nuoc mam* and soy sauce. Put the beef into a bowl, add the paste and rub it into the meat. Spread out the meat on a wire rack and place it in the refrigerator, uncovered, for 2 days, or until dry and hard.



3 Cook the dried beef on the barbecue or under a conventional grill (broiler) until heated through, and serve it with rice wrappers, fresh herbs and a dipping sauce.

SERVES 6

INGREDIENTS

- 450g/1lb lean beef sirloin
- 2 lemon grass stalks, trimmed and chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, chopped
- 2 dried Serrano chillies, seeded and chopped
- 30–45ml/2–3 tbsp honey
- 15ml/1 tbsp *nuoc mam*
- 30ml/2 tbsp soy sauce
- rice wrappers, fresh herbs and dipping sauce, to serve



1 Trim the beef and cut it across the grain into thin, rectangular slices, then set it aside.

COOK'S TIP

Drying is an ancient method of preserving food, which also intensifies the flavour or potency of most ingredients. In hot countries beef can be dried quickly in the sun, but in cooler areas it dries more slowly, so needs to be put in the refrigerator to prevent it going off.

VARIATION

This recipe also works well with venison. Cut the meat into thin strips and you have a South-east Asian version of the South African *biltong*.