



Ingredients

for the squid

500 grams baby squid (cut into rings)

3 tablespoons groundnut oil (for frying)

salt

For the dressing

1 bunch fresh coriander (or mint or mixture of both)

1 clove garlic (peeled)

2 tablespoons Thai fish sauce (nam pla)

½ teaspoon caster sugar

1 green chilli (deseeded (optional))

1 lime

6 tablespoons groundnut oil (peanut oil!)

For the salad

200 grams mizuna leaves or rocket

1 small red onion

Don't worry if the word mizuna means nothing to you. It's a tenderly peppery Japanese salad leaf,

which some greengrocers, and even supermarkets, stock these days, but you can easily use rocket instead. This makes a wonderful starter to a full-blown summer dinner party, but I love it, with nothing before or after, except perhaps a bit of fruit, when I've got a couple of friends coming over for lunch.

(1) Tear the coriander and mint leaves from the stalks, not worrying if a few stalky bits are attached and throw into the food processor along with the garlic, fish sauce and sugar, plus the chilli if you are using it; this is completely up to you and simply depends on whether you want any heat or not. Peel the lime by first cutting off a slice at the ends so that you can make the lime sit on a wooden board and then just cut strips downwards so that peel, and pith, come off cleanly. Add the peeled lime, halved and with the pips removed, to the bowl and process everything until it is a smooth pulp, then drizzle the oil in, down the funnel, with the motor running, to emulsify the sauce. Scrape into a bowl to use later.

(2) Arrange the salad leaves - mizuna or rocket, whichever you're using - in a bowl or on a large plate. Peel the onion, cut it in half and then slice into very thin half moons and sprinkle them over the greenery.

(3) Slice the baby squid, leaving the tentacles whole, and fry in a large pan with a little groundnut oil; you will have to do this in a couple of batches. Remove the cooked squid to a bowl, sprinkle with salt, then, once you've got all cooked and cooled a little, toss in the lime and herb dressing and arrange over the waiting leaves and onions.

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