



# Pho Bo (Vietnamese Beef Noodle Soup)

*from Hot Sour Salty Sweet*

*yields 3 quarts broth; serves 6 to 8*

- 5 pounds oxtails or beef short ribs
- 6 quarts water
- 5 star anise
- One 2-inch cinnamon stick
- 5 cloves
- 1 teaspoon black peppercorns
- 2-3" piece (about 2 ounces) ginger
- 2 medium onions, cut in half
- 1 pound stewing beef, trimmed of excess fat
- 5 tablespoons Vietnamese or Thai fish sauce, or to taste
- Salt to taste
- 1 pound thin or medium dried rice noodles, soaked in warm water for 15 minutes and drained
- 2 cups bean sprouts, rinsed
- 1 pound eye of round or other boneless lean beef, very thinly sliced across the grain into 1-2"-long slices
- 1/2 cup Asian basil or sweet basil leaves
- 1/2 cup coriander leaves
- 3 shallots, thinly sliced
- 1-2 bird or serrano chiles, min
- Lime wedges
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Place the oxtails or ribs in a large pot, cover with cold water, and bring to a boil. Boil vigorously for 5 minutes, then drain. Rinse out the pot well, rinse off the oxtails or ribs and place back in the pot.

Add 4 quarts of the water and bring to a boil. Add the star anise, cinnamon stick, cloves, and peppercorns. Using tongs, char the ginger over a gas flame, then add to the pot; use the same method to char the onion pieces, then add to the pot. Alternatively, heat a heavy skillet over high heat, add the ginger and onion pieces, and scorch well on all sides before adding to the pot.

Let the broth boil gently, uncovered, skimming off foam and scum, for about 30 minutes. Add the remaining 2 quarts water, bring back to the boil, and continue to boil gently, skimming off foam. When foam has stopped rising to the surface, lower the heat to medium-low and simmer for another hour.

Add the stewing beef and fish sauce, bring back to a boil, and simmer, uncovered, until the meat is very tender, about 2 hours. Leaving the soup at a simmer, remove the stewing beef and cool slightly. Slice as thin as possible and set aside.

Remove the soup from the heat and remove and discard the bones and solids. For a traditionally clear broth, line a colander with a double layer of cheesecloth and strain the soup into a clean bowl. Let the stock cool, then refrigerate, covered, for at least 2 hours.

Skim off the layer of fat from the top of the stock and discard. (The soup can be made ahead to this point and stored in the refrigerator, beef and stock in separate well-sealed containers, for up to 2 days, or frozen for up to 1 month.) About 20 minutes before you wish to serve the soup, remove the meat and stock from the refrigerator and set the meat aside. Transfer the stock to a pot and heat until warm. Strain through cheesecloth as described above (GFL: I skipped this step and it was totally fine), return to the pot, and bring to a boil. Taste for seasonings and add fish sauce or salt as desired, then simmer gently, half covered, while you prepare the accompaniments.

Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Drop in the rice noodles and cook until just tender but not mushy, 30 seconds to 1 minute.

Transfer to a colander, rinse with cold water, and set aside. Blanch the bean sprouts briefly in the same boiling water, then set aside.

Provide each guest with a spoon and a pair of chopsticks. Set out the raw beef, along with small dishes of the herbs, shallots, bean sprouts, lime, and sliced chile. Offer salt and pepper as well.

To serve, divide the noodles among 6 to 8 large bowls. Top each serving with a

generous pinch of bean sprouts, a few shallot slices, several basil leaves, slices of cooked beef, and slices of raw beef. Ladle the hot broth over and sprinkle with the coriander.