Pad Kee Mao

[**MARK BITTMAN**](https://cooking.nytimes.com/ourcooks/mark-bittman)

* **YIELD**4 servings



Julia Gartland for The New York Times. Food Stylist: Liza Jernow.

This stir-fry of rice noodles and ground pork gives Pad Thai a serious run for its money. Pad kee mao translates loosely to “drunken noodles,” though there’s no alcohol here — just an easy-to-assemble dish that skews salty, sour and spicy from a glaze of fish sauce, soy sauce, rice vinegar and fresh chiles. Fatty ground pork imparts a lot of flavor, though you could swap in ground chicken or even firm tofu. If you’re sensitive to heat, leave out the smashed chiles, to finish — and add a pinch of sugar to offset the salty punch of the dish.

* **4** **tablespoons fish sauce**
* **2** **tablespoons dark sweet soy sauce(kecap manis)** Regular **soy sauce** mixed with brown sugar, added with a trace of molasses, can serve as a **substitute** for **sweet soy sauce**.
* **1** **teaspoon rice vinegar**
* **6** **garlic cloves**
* **5** **bird’s eye chiles, dried, hot red chilies**
* **3** **tablespoons vegetable oil**
* **½** **cup sliced onion**
* **1** **pound ground pork**
* **½** **cup sliced bell peppers**
* **12** **ounces fresh rice noodles**
* **2** **handfuls holy basil leaves (or Thai basil, in a pinch)**

1. Whisk together the fish sauce, soy sauce and vinegar, and set aside. Roughly chop the garlic and three chiles together. Smash the remaining two chiles using the flat of a knife, and set aside.
2. Heat a wok (or a large frying pan over medium-high. When it’s hot, add the oil, the chopped garlic and chiles, and the onion. Cook, stirring constantly, until the garlic is fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add the pork and a splash of the fish sauce mixture. Cook, stirring to break up the meat, until the pork is cooked through, about 5 minutes.
3. Add the bell peppers and noodles, turn the heat to high and add almost all of the sauce (save a spoonful or two to add later, if needed). Cook, tossing everything together and separating the noodles if necessary, until the noodles are coated in sauce and take on a slightly charred flavor from the wok. Taste, and add more sauce if needed. Toss in the basil and the smashed chiles, and serve immediately.