

The combination of sugar, pepper, and shrimp wouldn't occur to most Western cooks, but it's a natural combination in Thailand.

Sweet and Spicy Shrimp

1/2 cup (125 ml) water
1/4 cup (60 ml) packed light brown sugar
1/4 cup (60 ml) Thai fish sauce*
2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
2 Tbs (30 ml) finely chopped cilantro (coriander) stems
1 Tbs (15 ml) white peppercorns, crushed
1 lb (450 g) large shrimp in their shells
Cilantro (coriander) sprigs for garnish

* Available in finer supermarkets and Asian specialty shops

Combine the water, brown sugar, and fish sauce in a large saucepan and bring to a simmer over low heat, stirring until the sugar is dissolved. Add the garlic, cilantro stems, and white peppercorns and bring to a boil over moderate heat. Boil until the sauce is slightly thickened, about 5 minutes. Add the shrimp and cook, stirring constantly, until the shrimp are opaque and just cooked through, no more than 2 minutes. Remove from the heat and allow to cool to room temperature. Chill in the refrigerator for up to 1 hour, tossing the shrimp in the sauce once or twice. Drain with a slotted spoon and serve garnished with sprigs of cilantro and plenty of napkins so the diners can peel the shrimp with their fingers. Serves 4 to 6.

Bon appetit from the Chef at World Wide Recipes