

We tossed the cooked mussels with an ample amount of coarsely chopped cilantro. Although the taste was good, tasters desired a bit more color—with just the mussels, broth, and herbs, the dish looked a little drab. A sprinkling of diced tomatoes proved ideal, and the fruity flavor added yet another dimension to the dish. We left the lime juice up to the diner, passing wedges at the table.

### Southeast Asian–Style Steamed Mussels with Rice

SERVES 4

TIME: 25 MINUTES

*As when making a stir-fry, it is imperative to have the ingredients ready and nearby. All can be prepared well ahead of time, however, and the dish finished at the last minute.*

- 1½ cups jasmine rice, well rinsed and drained
- Salt
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 2 large shallots, sliced thin
- 2 medium jalapeño chiles, stemmed, seeded (if desired to reduce heat), and sliced thin
- 3 medium cloves garlic, minced or pressed through a garlic press (about 1 tablespoon)
- 1 cup unsweetened coconut milk
- ½ teaspoon brown sugar
- 2 pounds mussels, well rinsed and debearded (see the illustration on page 135)

- 3 medium plum tomatoes, cored, seeded, and diced medium
- ½ cup coarsely chopped fresh cilantro leaves
- 1 lime, cut into wedges

1. Bring the rice, 2¼ cups water, and ¼ teaspoon salt to a boil in a medium saucepan over high heat. Reduce the heat to low, cover, and cook until the liquid evaporates, about 17 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat, fluff the rice with a fork, and sandwich a clean kitchen towel between the lid and the pan to absorb excess moisture (see the illustration on page 215).

2. While the rice is cooking, heat the oil in a large Dutch oven over medium-high heat until shimmering. Add the shallots, chiles, and ½ teaspoon salt and cook, stirring frequently, until the shallots soften and are just beginning to brown, 2 to 3 minutes. Add the garlic and cook until aromatic, about 30 seconds. Reduce the heat to medium and stir in the coconut milk and brown sugar (add the coconut milk slowly and stand back to protect yourself from the steam). Add the mussels and cover. Cook for 2 minutes. Using a wooden spoon, stir the mussels. Cover and cook until all the mussels are just open, 2 to 4 minutes longer.

3. Stir in the tomatoes and cilantro. Transfer the mussels to a serving bowl, pour the sauce over them, and serve immediately with the rice, passing the lime wedges at the table.