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Spicy Journey

THAI RECIPES FROM

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CONTENTS

6	Crispy Pork Rinds	78	Grilled Fish
8	Deep-Fried Sun-dried Pork Strips	80	Meat Steamed in Banana Leaf
10	Deep-Fried Fish Cakes	82	Fried Chicken Wings with Fish Sauce
12	Money Bags	84	Northern Thai Sausage
16	Coconut soup with chicken	86	Isan Sausage
18	Noodle Soup With Chicken	88	Fried Fermented Pork Ribs
20	Bok Choy Soup	92	Sticky Rice
24	Northern Thai Pork Curry	94	Chicken Rice
26	Northern Thai Mixed Curry	96	Stir-Fried Rice Noodles
28	Northern Thai Coconut Curry With Noodles and Chicken	98	Broad Noodles with Soy Sauce
30	Green Curry	102	Banana in Coconut Milk
32	Red Curry	104	Mango Sticky Rice
34	Jungle Curry	106	Thai Coconut Pancakes
36	Bok Choy Curry	108	Rice Dumplings in Coconut milk
38	Northern Thai Burmese-style Curry	110	Coconut Ice Cream
40	Karen Rice Curry	112	Thai Fried Bananas
44	Galangal Chili Paste	114	Coconut Jelly
46	Pork & Tomato Chili Paste	116	Mung Bean Custard
48	Minced Pork Chili Paste	118	Red Rubies Dessert
50	Eggplant Dip	120	Rice Cracker
54	Mashed Jack-fruit		
56	Spicy Grilled Pork Salad		
58	Minced Pork Salad		
60	Mushroom Salad		
62	Fish Salad		
64	Long Bean Salad		
66	Green Papaya Salad		
68	Glass Noodle Salad		
72	Stir-Fried Crispy Pork With Basil		
74	Stir-Fried Pork With Basil Pizza		
76	Steamed Fish With Spicy Lime Sauce		



Traditional Thai dishes include soups (tom), salads (yam), pounded dishes (tam), and curries (gaeng). Deep-fried, stir-fried, and steamed dishes were derived from other cuisines, such as Lao, Burmese, and Chinese, and adjusted to Thai taste.

There are three distinct traditional cuisines in Thailand: everyday cuisine, cuisine for auspicious days and celebrations, and the intricate Royal Thai cuisine. Additionally, there are the distinct flavors and methods of food preparation in Southern, Central, Northern, and Isan regions.

This book mostly covers everyday cuisine from Northern Thailand, however, you will also find included some of the most notable dishes from other cuisines and regions.





Appetizers



Thai appetizers can be served before the main meal, as a quick bite on the go, or with drinks. They are little bites full of delicious Thai flavors, usually served with some fresh or steamed vegetables and a dipping sauce or paste on the side.

Ranging from simple pork crackers or grilled sticky rice to more elaborate dishes, such as patties or stuffed pastries, there's a variety of choices when it comes to appetizers and they are available everywhere so you can always grab a tasty bite.



DEEP-FRIED FISH CAKES

Tod Man Pla

SERVES: 4

PREP: 20 MIN

COOK: 1 HR

TOTAL: 80 MIN

Tod Man Pla is a common Thai street food and makes for a boldly flavored snack. Good fish cakes are well-seasoned and have a firm and bouncy texture. Western versions often lack the curry paste and are much less flavorful than the Thai version. Use a fish with tender meat (cod or bass works great) for softer cakes. If using firmer fish, you can add another egg.

INGREDIENTS

- ✓ 300 g minced fish meat
- ✓ 100 g long bean, sliced
- ✓ 5 kaffir lime leaves, sliced
- ✓ 1 tbs fish sauce
- ✓ 1 egg
- ✓ 1 tsp brown sugar
- ✓ ½ tsp stock powder

Sauce ingredients

- ✓ 3 fresh chilies
- ✓ 3 Tsp chopped garlic
- ✓ 100 ml vinegar
- ✓ 100 g palm sugar
- ✓ 1/4 tsp salt
- ✓ 4 sprigs coriander, sliced
- ✓ 100 g crushed roasted peanuts
- ✓ 2 diced cucumbers

Curry paste ingredients

- ✓ 2 tsp sliced lemon grass
- ✓ 5 small shallots, sliced
- ✓ 8 cloves garlics, sliced
- ✓ 4 slices ginger
- ✓ 4 dried chilies
- ✓ 4 slices galangal

COOKING DIRECTIONS

Prepare the dipping sauce by pounding fresh chilies with garlic. Mix in the vinegar, sugar, and salt until the sugar and salt dissolve. Mix in the peanuts, coriander, and cucumber. Set aside.

Pound curry paste ingredients in a mortar or blend until you have a fine paste.

To make the fish cakes, pound the fish meat until sticky. Add the curry paste, egg, kaffir lime leaves, fish sauce, and stock powder. Mix the ingredients well.

Shape into small patties, approx a quarter of a size of hamburger patty. Deep fry at medium heat until golden brown. Move the cakes while frying and turn them, so they don't stick to the bottom of the pan and fry evenly. When done, take them out of the oil and place them on paper towels to soak some of the oil.

Serve with dipping sauce, a lime wedge, and fresh vegetables.



Soups



There is a great variety of Thai soups to choose from: a light vegetable broth to hydrate you during a hot day, a hearty noodle soup to fill you up, or a rice soup for a quick and easy breakfast. There are even sweet soupy desserts to round off a meal!

Thais expect their soups to cover a spectrum of tastes from spicy to salty and sweet to sour. To this end, soups are served with a range of condiments, so that every diner can adjust the taste to their liking.





Curries

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*Thai curries are richly layered dishes that consists of a curry paste, water (northern Thailand) or coconut milk (southern), main ingredients (fruit, vegetable, and/or meat), herbs, and condiments.*

*The word for a Thai curry is 'gaeng' while Thais use the word 'curry' to refer to Indian-style curries.*

*Thai curries are usually eaten with sticky rice in northern Thailand, although some (such as Kao Soi) are prepared with noodles.*

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NORTHERN THAI COCONUT CURRY WITH NOODLES AND CHICKEN

Kao Soi Gai

SERVES: 4

PREP: 20 MIN

COOK: 70 MIN

TOTAL: 1.5 HR

Kao Soi is one of the most famous dishes from northern Thailand and the only northern curry originally prepared with coconut milk. It has Burmese origins due to Lanna kingdom being colonised by Burma between 1558-1774. Originally, Kao Soi was prepared with chicken but a beef version is becoming increasingly popular. For an especially authentic dish, offer some sliced shallots, lime wedges, and pickled cabbage on the side.

INGREDIENTS

- ✓ ½ tsp salt
- ✓ 1 tsp Thai roasted shrimp paste
- ✓ 400 g fresh egg noodles
- ✓ 3 tsp vegetable oil
- ✓ 800 ml coconut milk
- ✓ 1 cup chicken stock
- ✓ 2 Tsp palm sugar
- ✓ 4 chicken legs
- ✓ Fish sauce

Curry paste ingredients

- ✓ 2 dry bird chilies
- ✓ 4-5 small shallots, sliced
- ✓ 4-5 garlic cloves
- ✓ 1 lemon grass stalk, soft bottom part, thinly sliced
- ✓ 1 tsp kaffir lime zest
- ✓ 4 cm sliced turmeric root
- ✓ 4-5 thin slices of ginger
- ✓ 1 bunch cilantro, thick stalks only
- ✓ 1 tsp coriander seeds
- ✓ 4-6 pods Thai black cardamom or 1 pod green cardamom

COOKING DIRECTIONS

Wrap the curry paste ingredients in aluminum foil. If you have a gas stove, hold the pouch over the flame and turn occasionally until aromatic and smoky, approx 8 min, otherwise place the pouch in a wok over high heat and turn occasionally for approx 10 min.

Let the ingredients cool slightly, then put them in a large mortar and add salt. Pound into a fine paste, then add shrimp paste and incorporate. Alternatively, use a blender. Set the paste aside.

Take approx 100g of the noodles. Heat vegetable oil in a wok over high heat and, in batches, stir fry the noodles until golden brown and crispy. Transfer to a paper towel and set aside.

Keep 1 Tsp of oil in the wok and add 2 Tsb of fat skimmed off the top of the coconut milk. At high heat, stir until the oil begins to smoke, approx 2 min. Add curry paste and stir for 1 min.

Slowly whisk in the coconut milk, chicken stock, and palm sugar. Add the chicken and bring to a simmer. Cook, turning the chicken occasionally, until tender, approx 30 min. Add fish sauce to taste.

Bring a pot of salted water to a boil. Add the remaining noodles and cook them al dente, approx 1 min. Drain the noodles and divide between four bowls, add the chicken and pour over the broth. Top with fried noodles and serve immediately.



Pastes

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*Thai meals come accompanied with a variety of dipping sauces (nam jin) and chili pastes (nam prik). No meal is really complete without at least one of them. Chili pastes have to be pounded in a mortar for a real depth of flavor to come through.*

*While ubiquitous throughout Thailand, chili pastes really come into their own in the north where they accompany grilled and fried meat, sausages, pork rinds, and fresh vegetables which pair particularly well with the pastes.*

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Salads



When thinking about Thai salads, the first that comes to mind is probably the famous papaya salad or som tam, however, there is much more variety here.

Tam salad types also include other fruit and vegetable salads, and even salads made with sausage or ant eggs. Then there is the yam family of salads which are often based on protein and noodles. Another notable family are the larb salads that originated in Laos but are very popular in Thailand. Finally, we have the phla group, which is based on rare to lightly cooked meats.





Fish & Meat

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*Thai meat dishes are most commonly prepared with pork or chicken although duck and beef are also used.*

*Fish dishes are prepared from a variety of saltwater and freshwater fish that are readily available throughout the country.*

*Meat and fish can be prepared in a variety of ways: minced, chopped, roasted, grilled, skewered, steamed, fermented, dried, or even eaten raw.*

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MEAT STEAMED IN BANANA LEAF

Hor Neung

SERVES: 6

PREP: 15 MIN

COOK: 35 MIN

TOTAL: 50 MIN

This is a traditional Lanna dish that used to be prepared as an alms offering for monks during Songkran festival (Thai New Year). Now, the dish can be found year round at food stalls in Northern Thailand. Steamed in banana leaves, all tastes are contained and blended together. The banana leaf itself also gives the dish just a hint of flavor.

INGREDIENTS

- ✓ 2 Tsp rice flour
- ✓ 400 gr meat or tofu
- ✓ 600 gr vegetables of choice, cubed
- ✓ Soy sauce to taste
- ✓ 20 sweet basil leaves
- ✓ 10 spring onions, sliced
- ✓ Banana leaves (if not available, use cloth or foil)

Paste ingredients

- ✓ 8 dry or fresh green chilies
- ✓ 10 cloves garlic
- ✓ 1 shallot
- ✓ 1 stalk lemon grass
- ✓ 1 small piece turmeric
- ✓ 1 tsp shrimp paste (optional)

COOKING DIRECTIONS

Roast rice flour in a dry pan on low heat until lightly brown. Stir constantly.

Pound or blend paste ingredients until they are nearly smooth but still just a bit chunky.

In a bowl, mix the paste, finely cut meat or tofu and vegetables of choice, rice flour, soy sauce, basil leaves, and spring onion. Mix well.

Preheat banana leaves or cloth so it's warm. Divide the mixture into four portions and wrap in double layered banana leaves, cloth, or foil. Steam the wraps for at least 20 minutes. You can also grill them on low heat.

When they're done, unwrap and taste. Serve with sticky or plain rice.



Rice & Noodles



It's difficult to imagine eating a meal in Thailand that doesn't include either rice or noodles. One or the other is served with or is an ingredient of soups, curries, salads, appetizers, and even desserts.

Then there are the famous Thai stir-fries that are full meals based on rice or noodles. They can be quickly made at home or bought from street-side stalls. These might well be some of the most well-known Thai dishes abroad: Pad Thai, Kao Soi, Pad See Ew, Drunken Noodles, etc.





Desserts



Thai sweets, kanom, can be served after a meal as desserts or eaten between meals as snacks. They come in a variety of styles, from sweet coconut soups with small chevy dumplings, through pancakes and ice creams, to deserts with sticky rice and fruit.

Some of the desserts are traditionally Thai while others were derived from foreign cuisines and given a distinctly Thai twist. Thai desserts are often light, refreshing, and always very inventive.



RICE DUMPLINGS IN COCONUT MILK

Bua Loy

SERVES: 4

PREP: 5 MIN

COOK: 40 MIN

TOTAL: 45 MIN



Bua Loy, which directly translates into “floating lotus”, is a popular Thai dessert that combines sweetened coconut milk with chewy colorful dumplings that resemble lotus seeds in size. If you’re using glutinous rice flour, the dumplings will be chewy and soft. With tapioca flour, they will be a similar consistency to tapioca pearls that are added to drinks.

INGREDIENTS

- ✓ 400 ml coconut milk
- ✓ 200 ml water
- ✓ 1/2 pandan leaf, optional
- ✓ 150 g palm sugar
- ✓ Pinch of salt
- ✓ 100 g glutinous rice flour or tapioca flour
- ✓ 100 g cooked and mashed taro, purple sweet potato, pumpkin, beetroot, or other ingredient for color

COOKING DIRECTIONS

Put the coconut milk, water, pandan leaf, sugar, and salt into a pot and cook over medium heat, stirring until the sugar dissolves. Turn off the heat and remove the pandan leaf. Set the pot aside.

Mix the glutinous rice flour and mashed taro (or other ingredient you’re using for color) with your hands. Add water if needed, a little at a time, and knead until a dough forms. The dough should be of the consistency of play dough and not sticky. If it gets sticky, add a little more flour and knead until it no longer sticks to your fingers.

Work in manageable batches and roll them into 1 cm thick logs. Cut the logs into 1 cm long pieces and roll each piece into a little ball.

Bring a pot of water to a boil and prepare a large bowl of cold water and have it handy. Drop the Bua Loy into the boiling water in small batches. As soon as they float, in approx 1 minute, fish them out and put them in the cold water where they will sink.

Drain the Bua Loy well and add them to the coconut milk. Heat to a simmer and turn the heat off immediately. Serve warm or at room temperature.