



COOKING CLASSES

AT SUR LA TABLE

THAI RESTAURANT FAVORITES

WITH CHEF SCOTTY L.

THAI CUISINE

The cuisine of Thailand is heavily influenced by geography, religion, and history. Both Chinese and Indian ingredients and cooking methods have made their way into Thai dishes. The heavily Buddhist population of Thailand also shaped the cuisine with an emphasis on vegetables and smaller portions of meat. A typical Thai meal features steamed jasmine rice, a variety almost exclusively native to Thailand. Several different dishes, including stir-fries, noodle dishes, grilled or roasted items, and salads are presented at the same time and shared by everyone at the table.

The flavor profiles of Thai cuisine include sweet, sour, salty, and spicy, all carefully balanced to produce harmonious dishes. Though some of the flavors and ingredients may not be familiar, most are easily found in Asian markets and grocery stores. Many of these ingredients can be substituted with commonly found items, making Thai food simple to prepare at home.

THAI INGREDIENTS GLOSSARY

Bird's eye or Thai Chiles: Small red or green chiles widely used in Thai cooking. Thai chiles are extremely hot and should be used in moderation. Find them fresh in Asian markets or substitute other fresh chiles of choice. Always wear gloves when working with fresh chiles.

Chantaboon Rice Noodles: Translucent when dried, these flat noodles are used to make Pad Thai. They are soaked in water before cooking. Available in many grocery stores and Asian markets.

Coconut Milk: Often used as a base for soups, stews, and curries; easily found canned in most grocery stores.

Fish Sauce: A condiment made from fermented and pressed anchovies, a defining flavor of Thai food. Easily found in most grocery stores and Asian markets.

Fried Tofu: Deep fried tofu that is creamy on the inside and slightly spongy on the outside. Can be found in most Asian groceries or made by frying firm tofu in 350°F oil until crispy.

Galangal: A variety of ginger commonly used in Thai and other Southeast Asian cuisines. Often found in Asian markets. Fresh ginger can be substituted; however, galangal's distinct pine scent and peppery flavor makes it worth seeking out.

Jasmine Rice: A beautifully aromatic and slightly sticky long grain variety of rice native to Thailand. Widely available in grocery stores and Asian markets.

Lime Leaves: Shiny, deep green, oval leaves often joined in pairs. The leaves impart an intensely bright citrus flavor to sauces, soups, and curries. When unavailable, substitute one tablespoon grated lime zest for one leaf.

Lemongrass: A stalky plant with a lemony scent that grows in many tropical climates, most notably in Southeast Asia. A common ingredient in Thai cooking, lemongrass provides a zesty lemon flavor and aroma to many Thai dishes.

Palm Sugar: Made from the sap of the palm tree; light brown in color and often sold in round, flat disks in Asian markets. When unavailable, substitute equal amounts of light brown sugar.

Sriracha Hot Chili Sauce: A hot sauce named for a seaside town of Si Racha in Thailand. It includes chiles, salt, sugar, and vinegar, and is used as a condiment on a variety of dishes. Widely available at grocery stores and Asian markets.

Sweet Preserved Radish: A key ingredient in Pad Thai, this salted and sweetened radish is available whole or shredded in Asian grocery stores.

Sweet Rice or Glutinous Rice: Thai people in the northern and northeastern regions eat sticky rice in place of long grain rice. The rice is eaten with your hands by making a little ball and dipping it into other dishes. Found in Asian markets.

Tamarind: A sour paste made from the pulp inside the seed pods of the tamarind tree and typically used to flavor sauces. Tamarind can be purchased as pulp or concentrate in Asian markets. Only purchase Thai-style tamarind concentrate as brands vary widely in taste and texture.

Thai Basil: A leafy herb with a stronger flavor than that of Italian sweet basil. The plant has purple stalk and small leaves with a subtle mint or licorice flavor. You can purchase Thai basil at well stocked grocery stores and Asian markets.

PERFECT PAD THAI

Yield: 4 servings

No need to call for takeout when this classic noodle dish is simple and easy to make. Look for trays of fried tofu at Asian supermarkets and choose bean sprouts grown from mung beans for the best flavor and texture. Be sure to have each ingredient prepped and measured before beginning this recipe!

8 ounces Chantaboon rice noodles
1/3 cup peanut or vegetable oil
4 large eggs, lightly beaten
3 garlic cloves, minced
2/3 cup Pad Thai Sauce (recipe follows)
1 cup fried tofu, cut in 1/4-inch cubes
1/4 cup thinly sliced sweet preserved radish (optional)
1/2 cup thinly sliced green onion
2 1/2 cups bean sprouts, rinsed thoroughly, divided
1/2 cup roasted peanuts, finely chopped, plus more for garnish
1 lime, cut into wedges, for garnish

1. *To soften Chantaboon rice noodles:* Place noodles in a large bowl and cover with hot water. Soak for 30 minutes or until tender and soft. Drain in a colander and set aside, covered with a clean dish towel.
2. *To prepare Pad Thai:* Heat a wok over high heat, add the oil and swirl to coat the sides. Add the eggs and stir fry for 30 seconds. Stir in garlic and noodles, followed by the Pad Thai Sauce. Simmer noodles in the sauce until cooked through, 1 to 2 minutes. Stir in the tofu and radish.
3. Check the noodles; if they are not tender, add 1/4 cup water. When the noodles are tender, stir in green onions, 2 cups of bean sprouts, and peanuts; remove the wok from the stove. Be careful not to overcook the noodles or they will stick together. If this happens, add small amounts of water to separate them. When the water is absorbed, remove the wok immediately from the heat.
4. *To serve:* Place Pad Thai in a large serving bowl and garnish with remaining bean sprouts, lime wedges, and peanuts.

PAD THAI SAUCE

Yield: 2 1/2 cups (enough for 3 recipes of pad Thai)

This makes more than enough sauce you need for one recipe of Pad Thai (see previous recipe). Store leftovers in the fridge for up to 2 weeks or freeze in 2/3-cup batches.

2/3 cup tamarind concentrate (Thai brands only)
2/3 cup white vinegar
1/3 cup light soy sauce
1/3 cup fish sauce
1 teaspoon sea salt
1 cup grated palm sugar or light brown sugar
3 tablespoons garlic powder
1/8 to 1/4 cup Sriracha chili sauce, depending on preference

1. Place all ingredients in a medium saucepan and bring to a boil over medium heat. Cook sauce until it thickens and coats the back of a spoon, about 10 minutes. Set aside.

STEAMED THAI CHICKEN DUMPLINGS WITH SWEET CHILI DIPPING SAUCE

Yield: about 30 dumplings

These dumplings can be assembled and frozen in an airtight container for up to 1 month.

Filling:

*1 pound ground chicken
1/2 cup thinly sliced green onion
1/2 cup chopped fresh Thai basil leaves
3 lime leaves, finely chopped
1 tablespoon finely chopped lemongrass, tender white part only
1 tablespoon peeled and grated fresh ginger
1 tablespoon Thai green curry paste, such as Mae Ploy
2 tablespoons grated palm or light brown sugar
3 tablespoons fish sauce*

*1 package (3-inch round) dumpling wrappers
Cabbage leaves for lining steamer baskets*

Sauce:

*3 tablespoons fish sauce
3 tablespoons fresh lime juice
1 tablespoon grated palm or light brown sugar
3 tablespoons Thai sweet chili jam*

1. *To make filling:* To a medium bowl, add the filling ingredients and stir with a spatula until thoroughly combined. To taste, cook about a teaspoon of the filling in a small skillet and adjust the seasoning as needed.

2. *To assemble dumplings:* Lay one wrapper on a clean work surface and place a teaspoon of filling just below the center of the wrapper. Using a small pastry brush or your fingertip, brush a thin layer of cold water around the edge of the wrapper. Fold the wrapper in half over the filling and pinch it to adhere just at the midpoint. Pleat one open side towards the center making three pleats to close. Repeat on the other side, aiming the pleats towards the middle of the wrapper opening. (Alternately, you can also use a dumpling press to assemble dumplings.) Place dumpling, pleated side up, on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Cover dumpling with a clean kitchen towel to prevent drying. Repeat with the remaining wrappers and filling.

3. *To cook dumplings:* Pour water into a wok or large pot to a depth of 3-inches and heat over medium-high heat to a strong simmer. Line bamboo steamers or steamer insert with thin cabbage leaves or oiled sheets of parchment paper. Arrange dumplings in steamers at least 1/2-inch apart. Place bamboo steamers in the wok or place insert into the pot. Steamer should not touch the surface of the water. Cover steamer and steam dumplings until filling is cooked through and wrappers are translucent, 6 to 8 minutes.

4. *To make sauce:* Add all the ingredients to a small bowl and whisk to combine.

5. *To serve:* Arrange dumplings onto warmed plates or platters and serve immediately with dipping sauce on the side.

LEMONGRASS SHRIMP SOUP

Yield: 4 servings

You can place lime leaves, galangal, lemongrass, and ginger into a sachet made out of cheesecloth. Remove the sachet prior to serving soup.

*4 cups low-sodium chicken broth
1 stalk lemongrass, white part only, cracked open with the flat side of a knife
3 lime leaves, fresh or dried, hand torn
1 (3-inch) piece fresh galangal root, peeled and thinly sliced
1 (3-inch) piece fresh ginger, peeled and thinly sliced
2 small Thai chiles, halved lengthwise
2 garlic cloves, crushed
1 (13-ounce) can unsweetened coconut milk
2 tablespoons Thai fish sauce (nam pla)
1 1/2 teaspoons grated palm or light brown sugar
2 cups sliced mushrooms (such as straw, shiitake, or button)
3 tablespoons fresh lime juice
1/2 pound medium shrimp, peeled and deveined
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro leaves*

1. To a medium saucepan set over medium heat, add chicken broth and bring to a simmer. Add the lemongrass, lime leaves, galangal, ginger, chiles, and garlic. Lower the heat to medium-low, cover, and gently simmer for 10 minutes to let the aromatics infuse the broth.
2. Uncover and stir in the coconut milk, fish sauce, sugar, mushrooms, lime juice, and shrimp. Simmer for 5 minutes to cook the shrimp through; taste and adjust seasoning with additional fish sauce, sugar, and lime juice.
3. *To serve:* Ladle the soup into a soup tureen or individual serving bowls. Garnish with cilantro. Be careful to avoid chewing the lemongrass, ginger, or lime leaves.

STEAMED JASMINE RICE

Yield: 6 servings

1 ½ cups jasmine rice
1 tablespoon vegetable oil
1 tablespoon minced ginger
2 garlic cloves, minced
2 cups water or low-sodium chicken broth
Sea salt

1. *To prepare rice for cooking:* Rinse jasmine rice with cold water until water runs clear and is no longer cloudy.
2. To a medium saucepan with tight fitting lid set over medium-high heat, add oil. When oil is shimmering, add ginger and garlic and sauté until aromatic, about 1 minute. Add rinsed rice and sauté until lightly toasted, about 2 minutes.
3. Add water and salt and bring to boil. Reduce heat to a simmer, cover the pan with a lid, and cook until rice is tender and liquid has evaporated, about 15 minutes. Remove from heat and allow to stand for 5 minutes.
4. *To serve:* Fluff rice with a fork, taste, and adjust seasoning with salt.