

- RECIPES BOOK -



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STORY

My name is Vannak Pho, proud father of my wonderful family. We live in a modest house in the outskirt of Battambang city, where my cooking class takes place.

I started to think about working in the food business around 20 years ago.

I was already dealing with tourism when it first arrived in Battambang, around 1998. Back then, I was driving tourists around with my motorbike and all I heard about Khmer food was that it was not too good, too oily and not various and tasty as Thai food. People also kept referring at basic ingredients as “thai basil” or “thai lemongrass” ecc..

I thought that was not fair and also far from reality. Khmer food has a long story of tradition and specific local recipes that have their origins in family cooking.

Also, Cambodia does not import ingredients from Thailand or other nearby Countries, we just have similar or even the same ones.

I believe that Khmer traditional cooking does have a long history, but because of the war that has affected our Country, there was a big generation gap in learning and transferring cooking knowledge through families.

People who are now in their 60s have been 20 during the war, therefore they have not been able to experience daily home-cooking, learn it and teach it.

I personally had the luck to be born in a cooking family and I had the chance to learn how to prepare my parents’ recipes. I’m very grateful for this heritage and I would love to spread this knowledge to everyone.

I would also like to change the stereotype idea that people got about Asian ingredients, which are now very popular but come mainly from other Asian countries (such as soy, oyster sauce, ketchup, etc.). Our cuisine is mostly based on garlic, lemongrass, kaffir, fish sauce and palm sugar. That is why I decided to open a restaurant with traditional dishes and to organize a cooking class where people can experience real flavors of Cambodia and authentic cooking (such as going to the village market to get organic vegetables and to sustain the people from the countryside or cooking on small fire-pots instead of using electric or gas ones).

FISH AMOK

Ingredients (serves two):

1 tsp of palm sugar
2 tsp fish sauce
3 mushrooms - cut in half
Straw mushrooms
250 ml coconut cream
2 leaves of banana - cut into squares
1 tbsp of curry paste

Curry Paste:

2 thin slices of ginza
20 gr (1 stock) lemongrass - thin slices
1 to 2 thick slices of turmeric
2 kaffir lime leaves without stems - thin slices
5 cloves garlic without skin - crushed
2 to 4 dried red chillies remove seeds and chilli heads - sliced
2 small green chillies (optional)



Method:

Add everything mixed in a bowl (except for banana leaves) and then, after mixing, add everything into the banana leaves and steam for 25 mins on a high heat on the Chinese steam pot.

Note:

Chicken, beef, pork, tofu, seafood, vegetables may also be used. Use only one tbsp of paste.
The paste can be stored in a fridge for up to two weeks.
If you use coconut milk from a tin, then use 50/100 ml mixed with 5 tbsp of water.
Pepper foil can be used instead of banana leaves.

BEEF LOK LAK

- LOK LAK SOC KO -

Ingredients (serves one):

150gr beef, sliced into strips and cubed
 1 tsp of palm sugar
 0,5 tsp MSG (optional)
 1 tbsp oil (any kind of oil)
 1 tbsp chilli sauce (in a bottle)
 (Sweet chilli sauce)
 1 tbsp of fish sauce
 1 tsp black pepper - crushed
 2 cloves of garlic - chopped (1 tbsp
 of chopped garlic)
 1 tsp Soy sauce (optional)
 100 ml water

Vegetables:

1 small tomato - medium sliced
 0,5 onion - sliced
 Some salad
 1 cucumber slice (for decoration)

Pepper sauce:

1 tsp pepper
 1 tsp vinegar or lemon juice (2tsp)
 0,5 tsp salt
 0,5 tsp white sugar
 1 tsp MSG (optional)
 1 tbsp of hot or cold water
 2 tsp chopped garlic
 Mix everything in a small bowl



Method:

Mix the beef with the fish sauce, palm sugar, black pepper, soy sauce and leave it. Put the oil into a wok or pan over a high heat. Add the garlic to fry until it becomes a bit brown. Then add the beef and the water and fry for two mins. Add the chilli sauce and fry for few seconds. Turn off the heat and then serve on top of the salad that you already prepared. If you like, you can place a fried egg on top. Serve with rice.

Note

Add the water when needed to prevent from burning. You can use chicken, pork or fish instead of beef. The ingredients need to be mixed at least two mins before frying.

FISH SOUR SOUP

-SOM LAW MACHU KROEUNG TREY-

Ingredients (serves one):

200 gr fish / 150 gr
 600 ml water
 1 tsp salt or 1 tbsp fish sauce
 made from 0,5 tbsp fish paste and
 0,5 tsp salt
 0,5 tsp sugar
 4 tbsp oil
 2 green chillies - chopped
 5 round egg plants
 0,25 tbsp fish paste
 3 tbsp tamarind juice (mix
 tamarind with a little hot water
 until it becomes a soft mixture)

2 tsp MSG
 1 tbsp curry paste (crushed
 ingredients)
 1 handful of basil leaves

Curry Paste:

20 gr lemongrass - thinly sliced
 3 thinly sliced pieces of ginza
 2 thick slices of turmeric
 2 kaffir lime leaves - chopped
 7 cloves garlic
 4 dried red chillies - sliced
 0,5 tsp salt
 3 small green chillies - crushed -
 used if you like the meal to be
 spicy, if not, do not use



Method:

Put the oil into a wok over a high heat. Add the curry paste and fish paste and fry for approx. 1 min. Add some water (approx. 100 ml) and then the fish and fry for 2 mins.

Add the remaining water, salt, sugar and MSG. Add the eggplant and chillies and cook for 5 mins. Turn off the heat and add the tamarind juice. Just before serving, add the basil leaves.

Note

Morning glory or winter melon can be used as a vegetables. Also chicken, beef or pork can be used instead of fish.

STIR FRY WITH BASIL LEAVES

- CHHA MRAH PROW -

Ingredients

(serves 2/3):

120/150 gr meat - thinly sliced

3 snake beans

1 tsp palm sugar

1 tbsp fish sauce

1 round tbsp curry paste

2 tbsp roast peanut

5/10 small red chillies

1 tbsp chopped garlic

20/30 basil leaves

1 tbsp vegetable oil

Add water at intervals to prevent from burning



Method:

Put oil into a wok and add garlic and curry paste and gently fry until garlic is brown.

Add the meat and fry for 3 mins. Then add water, chillies and red pepper and fry for 1 min. Add basil leaves and serve with peanuts.

Note

Marinade the meat before cooking with the soy sauce and tomato sauce. If you would like some vegetables you can add cauliflower, green beans, morning glory or onion and remember to add more water to prevent the food from burning. If you don't have snake beans you can use 1 large chilli sliced and 7 stems of morning glory (cut in 3 cm pieces) as substitutes.

FRIED BEEF WITH GINGER

- CHHA KHNEI SACH KO -

Ingredients:

50 to 100 gr fresh ginger - stripped
120 gr beef - thinly sliced
1 tbsp fish sauce
1 tsp soy sauce
1 tsp palm sugar
0,5 tbsp chilli sauce
0,5 tbsp chopped garlic
1/2 tbsp oil - any type
2 stalks spring onion - chopped



Method:

Put the oil into a wok, add garlic, palm sugar, fish sauce and fry until it gets slightly brown. Add the beef and fry for 2 mins. Add some water to prevent from dry. Then add ginger and stir fry again. Add chilli sauce, and garnish with spring onion.

Note

Pork, fish, frog, seafood can be used instead of beef. Use water anytime to prevent burning, but do not add too much.

MANGO SALAD

Ingredients:

1 medium green mango - shredded
1 small shallot - skin removed and thin sliced
2 garlic - skin removed and thin sliced
1 tbsp roast peanuts - skin removed, little crushed
1 tbsp fish sauce or 1 tsp salt
2 tsp white sugar
1 to 5 chilli - sliced
30 sweet basil leaves



Method:

Cut the shallots and the garlic in thin slices, then add shredded mango, and stuff with fish sauce, sugar, peanuts and a bit a basil, chilli and well mix together until the sugar and the sauce are absorbed by the mango. Garnish with sweet basil and peanuts on top and serve anytime.

Note

Dry shrimps, 1 tbsp or smoked fish (skin and bones removed) can be add if you like it.

This salad can be served as a salad itself or with rice.

KHMER CURRY WITH CHICKEN

Ingredients:

100 gr chicken - sliced
300 ml coconut cream
250 ml water
1 tbsp palm sugar
1,5 tbsp fish sauce
0,5 of a small onion - cut in 4 pieces
1 snake bean - cut in 3 cm pieces
1 small potato - cut in 4 pieces
1 tsp curry powder, 5 coriander seeds, 5 cumin seeds and 5 pieces of star anice



Method:

Put 5 tbsp of coconut cream into a wok or pan and fry until you see the oil separate, then add curry powder, curry paste, fish sauce, palm sugar and keep frying for about 1 min. Use some water to prevent from burning. Then add the chicken to cook for 2 min, then add onions, snake bean, potato, water and bring back to boil for 5 to 10 mins. Then add the rest of coconut cream and bring back to boil for one more minute, garnish with kaffir lime and serve with rice.

If you like it to be hot, you can add some chillies (1 to 5).

Note

Potatoes need to be cooked separately before adding them to the rest.

CURRY PASTES

Curry Pastes are usually made up of a combination of fresh and dried ingredients. If some of the ingredients are difficult to obtain then it is a good idea to make the pastes in large quantities so that you do not have to get all the ingredients together too often. When you are making a paste any dried ingredients needs to be made into a powder form before they can be added to the fresh ingredients, otherwise they will not be pounded properly. If possible, it is best to use the dried ingredients in their natural form (e.g. coriander seeds as opposed to coriander powder) and then make them into a powder yourself as the flavour is better.

To do this, you will need to put the dried ingredients into a wok, don't use any oil, and roast them until they get a brown colour. The different ingredients must be roasted separately as some of them will burn before the others turn into brown. E.g. cumin seeds usually go brown much faster than mace. Once the dried ingredients have been roasted, they can be put into a mortar and pounded into a powder. If you use a blender to make the paste, then you can use a coffee grinder to grind the seeds. Once you have prepared the dried ingredients, then you need to prepare the fresh ones. If you are going to use a pestle and a mortar to make the paste, it is a good idea to chop the ingredients finely as this will mean less pounding later. If you are using a blender, the ingredients can be roughly chopped but you will need to add 250 ml, 1 cup of water into the blender along the paste ingredients, otherwise it will not be able to blend them together.

If you use a blender, the paste will have a runny consistency because water has been added, but this does not matter. If you are making a curry that needs coconut milk, fry the thick coconut milk as normal and add the paste ad normal and the extra water will evaporate while the curry is cooking. Once you have made the paste it can be stored in the refrigerator for about one week. If not, it can be frozen and stored in the freezer for approx. 6 months. If you are going to freeze it, it may be an idea to use an ice cube tray, so that you can just defrost the amount of cubes you need.

However, if you want to make a large quantity of paste, the best way to store it so that it lasts for long time, is to fry it in oil. To do this, you will need about 250ml/1 cup of oil to 1kg/ 2,5 cups curry paste. Our recipes for about 3 people use about 100 grams/ 4 tablespoons of curry paste so the above mentioned quantity would be enough paste for about 10 curries for 4 people. Put the oil into a wok and when it is hot, add the curry paste until there is an aroma released and the paste will slightly change colour. If you have made the paste in a blender it will take longer to fry than paste made using a pestle and a mortar as the extra water that has been added needs to evaporate.

Once the paste is ready, it can be stored in a jar along with a tight fitting lid. You should store the paste along with the oil that was fried as the oil will help the curry paste to keep its colour and flavour. It can be stored in a jar for about one month, but if you store the jar in a refrigerator it will last for a few months. You will probably use the curry paste before it goes off.

MAIN INGREDIENTS

BASIL (Mra Prow)

There are 3 different types of basil. The first is called holy or purple basil, Mra Prow, and it has a purple stem and purple leaves. It has a hot flavour and it is used in stir fries. It is added at the last minute.

The second type is called lemon basil, Bai Manglak, and it has a light green stem and light green leaves. It has a lemony flavour and it is used in soups, salads and curries, especially those containing seafood. It is added at the end too.



The third is called sweet basil, Bai Horapa, and it has a purple stem and dark green leaves. It has an aniseed flavour and it can be used in all types of dishes including curries, stir fires and curry pastes. It is often used as a garnish. This is the type of basil most commonly found abroad. Basil is stored by wrapping it in tissue paper and

then putting it into a plastic bag. It can be stored in the refrigerator for about one week. It can also be frozen.

Sweet basil can be used as a substitute for the other kinds. Dried basil and mint can also be used as substitute if none of the fresh forms are available.



CHINESE CELERY (Khunchay)

Chinese celery looks similar to coriander but has bigger leaves. However it has a flavour similar to celery. The stalks and leaves of normal celery may be used as a substitute.



SHALLOTS (kateum krorhom)

Shallots or purple onions are small onions which have a purple skin. The outside skin is removed and they are used the same way as normal onions. Normal onions, chives, spring or scallion onions can be used as substitutes.

COCONUT MILK (Gati doung)

In Cambodia it is possible to get fresh coconut milk, but it also comes in tins as a dried powder and in a creamed form. It is used in soups, curries and in desserts. Fresh coconut milk is made from coconut flesh, which is grated or chopped by putting it into an electric blender.

To make 750ml/3 cups of coconut milk you need 500gr/ 1lb of grated coconut. Then add 500ml/ 2 cups of warm water to the grated coconut. This then needs to be squeezed by hand for 10 mins or longer to obtain the milk. It is then put through muslin or a strainer. It is then left for 10 mins and a thick or coconut cream and thin coconut milk will separate out.



Tinned coconut milk needs to be shaken before using. To separate the thin and thick coconut milk, the tin can be frozen for 10 mins.

Powdered and creamed coconut milk need to have water added to them and then they are used as normal. Instructions will be given on the packet. Soya bean milk or milk can be used as alternatives if you don't want to use coconut milk, as it is very high in cholesterol.

CORIANDER (Chee Van Souy)

This is known as cilantro or Chinese parsley. The root, stem, seeds are used for making curry pastes. The root has a stronger flavour and a aroma than the leaves and the stem can be used as a substitute for the root. The leaves are dark green colour and are used as a garnish. If the leaves are a pale green or yellow colour, then the coriander is not fresh.



The seeds need to be roasted in a wok over a low heat until they get a brown colour. They can then be crushed and made into a powder form. They are then ready to be used in a curry paste.

Coriander is stored by wrapping it in tissue paper and then by putting it into a plastic bag. It can be stored in the refrigerator for

one week. It can also be frozen. The dried coriander seeds can be used as a substitute for the root. Dried coriander and parsley can be used as a substitute. One tablespoon of dried coriander is the equivalent of two tablespoons of fresh coriander. However, coriander is widely available abroad.

EGG PLANT (Trob Veng)

Egg plants come in many sizes. They can be white, green or purple. They vary in size. They can be quite large which are called aubergines. Large egg plants are green and white and are the same as tomatoes. The stalk is cut off the top and then the egg plant is cut into bite sized pieces. Large egg plants are used in all types of dishes.

The small or pea egg plant are green. They are crunchy on the outside and have a bitter taste. They are used in soups, stir fries, curries and dipping sauces.

Once the egg plants have been cut they will go brown very quickly. If the egg plant are to be prepared in advance, they should be stored in water with salt, the juice of one lemon or lime or vinegar to prevent the going brown. This also removes the bitter flavour. The other option is to prepare them just before they are to be used. They can be stored in the refrigerator for one week and can also be frozen. Large purple aubergines, bamboo shoots or peas can be used as substitutes.



FISH SAUCE (Tek Trie)

Fish sauce is a thin, brown, salty liquid which is made from fermented or pickled fish. It is used instead of salt in nearly every dish.

The darker the colour of the fish sauce, the higher the quality. High quality fish sauces are more expensive than low quality ones. The high quality fish sauces have a strong fishy taste as more fish and less salt is used to make them. They can be stored at room temperature. Soy sauce or salt can be used as a substitute.



MUSHROOMS (Pset)

Tinned straw mushrooms, button and oyster mushrooms can be used as substitutes. Straw mushrooms are often used in Cambodian cooking and are used in stir fries, soups and curries. Chinese mushrooms are used in stir fries. Dried Chinese mushrooms should be soaked in water for 1 min before using.





KAFFIR LIME (Sluk Kroch)

A kaffir lime is a dark green knobby lime. The skin is used for making pastes. The juice is sometimes used in soups and the leaves are used in curries and soups. The kaffir lime leaves should be turned into pieces, discarding the stem are often added at the end of cooking for their aroma.

The leaves can be stored in the refrigerator for two weeks and they can be frozen.

Dried kaffir leaves or finely grated lemon or lime rind can be used as a substitute. A kaffir lime leaf is the equivalent of 0,5 teaspoon of lemon rind.

LEMONGRASS (Sluck kreı)

Lemongrass or citronella is a straw like grass which has a distinctive leemony flavour. The outer layer is discarded along with the straw like top. Only one third of the bottom is used. It can be sliced or chopped. It is used in soups and curry pastes and it is also used to make drinks or tea. If it is in big slices it is not to be eaten.



Lemongrass can be stored in the refrigerator for two to three weeks and it can also be frozen. Dried powder is the equivalent of two stalks of fresh lemongrass. Lemon peel can be used as a substitute.

FISH PASTE (Prohoc)

Prohoc is called cheese in Cambodian way and it is stinky and well known as like an ingredient being used in several khmer meals. It is a fermented fish and salt and they are using in small quantity in several dishes. Fish paste can be used to replace fish sauce and salt. But not many people would like it.





TAMARIND (**ompil**)

Tamarind comes from a tree and it looks like brown long beans. It is peeled and inside is the flesh which has seeds in it. There are 2 varieties. One is sweet and one is sour. The sweet one is eaten as a fruit and the sour one is made into a juice and used in cooking.

To make tamarind juice, hot water is poured onto the sour tamarind and then the tamarind is squeezed to extract the juice.

It can be stored for 2 or 3 weeks in the refrigerator. Tamarind paste may be diluted in water and used as a substitute. Lime or lemon juice can also be used as substitutes.



TUMERIC (**Romeat**)

Tumeric is a small root and it has a bright orange colour. It looks similar to ginger. Before it is used the outside skin needs to be removed. It is used for its colour when making pastes and it is also used in fish dishes to take away the fishy smell. It can be stored in the refrigerator for 2 to 3 weeks

and it can also be frozen. Tumeric powder can be used as a substitute.

RICE (**Orngkor**)

Rice comes in many forms. There is long and short grain rice and it can be white, brown, red or black.

PLAIN RICE (**Bay**)

Plain rice is popular all over Cambodia. To cook it, for every single measure of rice, you put two measures of water into a pan and boil the water. Boil the water until the rice is soft on the outside, but still hard in the center for about 1 to 15 min. The time will vary depending on how much rice is being cooked. Put the lid on the pan, turn the heat right down and let the rice cook until the water has evaporated for about 5 to 10 mins. If the rice on the top is cooked, then all the rice in the pan will be cooked as well.



Once the water has evaporated, you must be careful not to burn the rice at the bottom of the pan.

STICKY OR GLUTINOUS RICE (Ongkor domneub**)**

Sticky rice is a different grain of rice from plain rice. It is eaten using hands. The sticky rice needs to be soaked in water for at least 3 hours or overnight before it is cooked.

It is then drained and put in the top part of the steamer. If the steamer has large holes in it, then a muslin cloth needs to be put in the steamer to stop the rice from falling through the holes. The water in the bottom part of the steamer is then brought to the boil. Once the water is boiling, it will start to cook the rice. When steam can be seen coming through the sticky rice, then the lid is put on the steamer for 5 mins and if it is not hard in the middle it is cooked. If the middle of the rice rice is still hard then the lid needs to be replaced for another few mins.



Once it is cooked the heat is turned off and the sticky rice is put on a tray or plate. A spoon is used to move the rice around to get rid of all the hot steam. If you do not do thid, the rice will go soggy.

The sticky rice is then ready to be eaten. It can also be kept to eat later in the day.

CHILLI (M'tei)

There are a number of different types of chillies used in Cambodian cooking. Young chillies are green in colour and are spicier than the red ones, which are ripe. However, the small

chillies are much spicier than the large ones, whatever the colour. The small chillies or birds eye chillies, prik khii nlii, are the spiciest and are often used for their colour when making pastes. They are also used in spicy soups and salads. They are used in their fresh form.



faa, are used for their colour when making pastes and may be used instead of the small ones if you do not want the paste to be too spicy.

The large chillies, prik num, are not spicy and are used in stir fries or as a garnish. Dried chillies are obtained by drying the big red chillies in the sun for 4 or 5 days. Dried chillies usually have their seeds removed so they are not so spicy. They need to be soaked in cold

water for at least 10 mins or for 5 mins in hot water to soften them before they are used. They are usually used for making pastes.

The big red dried chillies are used to make chilli powder. They need to be dried in the sun for 2 hours or roasted in a wok until the outside gets a dark and crisp colour. The stem is removed and the chillies can be pounded or blended into a powder.

Chillies can be made less spicy by removing the seeds or by leaving them all, but make sure not to eat the entire chilli if they are left whole. Fresh chillies can be stored in the refrigerator for a couple of weeks or can be frozen in plastic containers. Chilli powder and green and red peppers can be used as substitutes.

PALM SUGAR (Skoo krohom)

Palm sugar is one of the unique flavour which is used in making sweets, drinks and most of the dishes, and it's a typical home-made ingredient. It takes a long time to prepare it. Palm sugar is the juice of the fruit itself, boiled for many hours, until it becomes caramel. Palm sugar can be used as fresh or dried. It is well known around Cambodia and over south east Asia as well. The dry form can be stored by itself in a block or jar at least 6 months to a year.



GINZA (M'deng)

This is also known as Galanga Siamese ginger, M'deng or laos powder in Indonesia. It is a pale yellow root similar to ginger but it has a very distinctive taste. The outside skin is removed before using it. It is used for making curry pastes then it needs to be well chopped as it is quite hard to pound. If it is in slices in a soup it is not to be eaten.



It will keep for 2 to 3 weeks in the refrigerator and it can be cut into thin slices and frozen. Dried sliced Ginza needs to be soaked in water. One teaspoon of dried

Ginza powder is the equivalent of 5 slices of fresh Ginza.

Ginger can also be used as a substitute.