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Northern Thai Cuisine

NORTHERN THAI CUISINE

Authentic Lanna Recipes

A Journey Through the
Flavors and Traditions
of Northern Thailand

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Discover the Flavors and
Traditions of Northern Thai
Cuisine

Welcome to the captivating world of Northern Thai cuisine, known locally as Lanna cuisine — a cultural treasure of Thailand's mountainous north. Each dish is more than just a meal; it is a reflection of the region's rich history, connection to nature, and deep-rooted culinary wisdom passed down through generations. The charm of Northern Thai food lies in its bold, earthy aromas — derived from roasted dried chilies, forest-fresh herbs, and locally sourced ingredients. The flavor profile is distinctively different from Central Thai cuisine, favoring savory, slightly sour, and herbaceous heat over the sweetness found in Bangkok's famous dishes.

One of the region's most iconic dining traditions is the Khan Tok — a beautifully curated selection of small dishes served on a raised tray, meant for sharing. This communal style of dining celebrates both food and togetherness, bringing friends and family around the same table to enjoy a variety of textures and tastes.

At the heart of every Northern Thai meal is sticky rice, hand-rolled into small balls and used to scoop up spicy dips, hearty curries, and savory sides. Sticky rice is more than a staple — it is a cultural symbol that connects every dish in the meal.

In this book, you will discover 10 signature dishes that proudly represent the spirit of Lanna cuisine — from the creamy, curry-infused Khao Soi, to the fiery green chili dip known as Nam Prik Noom, and the rich, Burmese-influenced Gaeng Hang Lay curry. These dishes have not only captivated locals for centuries but have also won the hearts of food lovers around the world.

Whether you've wandered the bustling food markets of Chiang Mai, explored the historic streets of Lampang, or simply dreamt of Northern Thailand's flavors from afar, this book invites you to bring the authentic tastes of Lanna cuisine into your own kitchen. May every dish you create be filled with joy, flavor, and inspiration.

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Thank You & Call to Action



YOUR NORTHERN THAI KITCHEN ESSENTIALS

ESSENTIAL TOOLS & INGREDIENTS

Before you begin cooking Northern Thai cuisine, it's essential to understand the unique tools and ingredients that define these dishes. Many of these are deeply rooted in the traditional kitchens of Northern Thailand, and understanding them will help you recreate authentic flavors — even if you're cooking from halfway across the world.



Mortar and Pestle 01

Used to pound curry pastes and chili dips (like Nam Prik Noom and Nam Prik Ong). Hand-pounding enhances the aroma and texture compared to using a blender.

02 Sticky Rice Steamer

This traditional steamer, paired with a bamboo steaming basket, is key to cooking soft, fragrant sticky rice — the essential starch of Northern meals.



YOUR NORTHERN THAI KITCHEN ESSENTIALS

ESSENTIAL TOOLS & INGREDIENTS



Iron Wok

03

Essential for stir-frying and dry curries like Kaeng Ho or stir-fried fermented pork (Naem).

04 Khan Tok Tray

While not essential for cooking, this raised serving tray is iconic in Northern Thai dining, creating a beautiful and authentic dining experience if you want to go all in.



Key Ingredients

Quality ingredients that
create the perfect balance
of flavor and texture.
Essential ingredients that
bring out the best taste and
tenderness in every bite.





CURRY PASTES & DIPS (THE FLAVOR BASE)

Ingredients

- Large dried red chilies (mild heat, deep color)
- Thai garlic (small, pungent cloves)
- Thai shallots
- Galangal, lemongrass, kaffir lime leaves
- Fresh turmeric (essential for curries like Kaeng Hang Lay and Kaeng Khae)
- Northern shrimp paste (stronger aroma and saltier than southern shrimp paste)

Pantry Staples

Sticky rice

The heart of every meal

Pla Ra

(fermented fish sauce) – Used in rustic soups and stews like Jor Phak Kad

Nam Poo

(crab paste made from field crabs) – A unique Northern specialty used in chili dips and certain curries

Wild betel leaves (Bai Cha Plu)

Commonly served with dips or minced meat salads

Fermented pork sausage (Naem)

Used in stir-fries and snacks





Proteins

Pork belly & pork shoulder

Ideal for rich curries like Kaeng Hang Lay

Free-range chicken

Essential for Khao Soi and Kaeng Khae

Freshwater fish

Common in traditional soups and dips

Ground pork

Used for dips and Northern Larb



Unique Northern Herbs & Vegetables

Some are tricky to find outside Thailand — here are substitutes if needed.

Original Ingredient

Possible Substitute

Phak Chiang Da (local leafy green)	Kale or spinach
Dok Ngiew (cotton tree flowers for Nam Ngiew)	Dried lily flowers
Naem (fermented pork)	Homemade cured ground pork (salt + garlic)
Bai Cha Plu	Basil or mint leaves
Nam Poo	Fermented soybean paste mixed with miso