

# STIR-FRIES

Pad | ผัด

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## Mastering Thai Stir-Fries

Stir-fries are a staple of weeknight cooking. By definition they are fast, and often simple and forgiving. Stir-fries are what I call my “desperate” meal, meaning if I can’t think of anything to cook, I take whatever is in the fridge and I stir-fry it. I now keep a jar of my Universal Stir-Fry Sauce ([this page](#)) in the fridge for extra speed, and it makes just about anything delicious.

## How to Eat a Thai Stir-Fry

As with most things, stir-fries are always eaten with rice. The sauce for our stir-fries is never thickened with starch, so it'll be loose, but that's where the jasmine rice comes in. The fluffy, slightly sticky grains absorb this sauce perfectly well. I don't recommend basmati or short-grain rice with Thai stir-fries, as they do not absorb the loose sauce quite as well.

Some stir-fried noodles and fried rice dishes are eaten on their own as a one-dish meal, and they are not included here because they have their own chapter ([this page](#)). Everything in this chapter, including the noodle dishes, is meant to be served with rice.

## Tips for Successful Stir-Frying

Stir-fries are easy, but they're not without their issues, and to make a really epic one, you do need some technique.

**NEVER CROWD A WOK.** Too much food means the moisture in the food will get trapped at the bottom of the wok and doesn't have a way to evaporate, so you end up with a soupy dish. This is especially important to remember when cooking noodles, as they can become soggy and mushy with too much liquid. I never cook more than two portions of noodles at a time, and only one for delicate fresh rice noodles.

**IF YOU NEED TO COOK A LARGE PORTION, COOK THE MEAT SEPARATELY.** Fans of my show know I always cook the meat separately because I want precise control over how long it cooks, but it also works to prevent soupy stir-fries, which can happen if you are cooking a big batch. Stir-fry all the meat first, then remove it from the pan. Cook the rest of the stir-fry and add the meat back in once the vegetables are done.

**HAVE ALL YOUR INGREDIENTS READY TO GO AT ARM'S REACH.** Stir-frying moves quickly, so don't turn the heat under the wok on until you've got everything lined up.

# Ginger Soy Chicken

Gai Kem | ไก่เค็ม

**SERVES 4**

**COOKING TIME:** 25 minutes My grandmother is from Hainan, China, and in the Chinese culture, there are a few occasions where we offer foods to our ancestors. For Chinese Thais, a must-have on the offering table is a plain, boiled whole chicken. After the ceremony, we are left with a cold, bland bird, and this is where the magic begins. My grandmother chops up the meat, then stir-fries it with garlic, ginger, soy sauce, and other seasonings. The precooked, dried-out meat absorbs all the salty-sweet flavors, especially the little shreds of chicken that tear off during the chopping—they become extra flavorful. When my grandma cooks *gai kem* without an occasion, it's never quite the same, and we always joke that the ceremony really makes the chicken taste better. This recipe is my quick way to savor the flavor of Grandma's *gai kem* without having to cook a whole chicken. And even though it will never be as good, because my chicken hasn't done its ceremonial duties, it's still got the right flavor that takes me home.

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1 pound (450 g) boneless, skinless chicken thighs

1½ tablespoons (22 ml) soy sauce

1 tablespoon (15 ml) Thai seasoning sauce

¼ teaspoon (1 ml) white or black peppercorns

5 cloves (25 g) garlic

2 tablespoons (15 g) chopped ginger, plus extra julienned for garnish

2 to 3 tablespoons (30 to 45 ml) neutral oil

1½ tablespoons (18 g) finely chopped palm sugar, packed

½ to 1 teaspoon (2 to 5 ml) black soy sauce

5 to 6 sprigs cilantro, chopped, plus extra for garnish

#### FOR SERVING

Jasmine rice or plain rice porridge ([this page](#)) Side of vegetables

**Cut the chicken crosswise** into bite-sized, ½-inch (1.2 cm) thick strips and place in a mixing bowl. Add the soy sauce and seasoning sauce, and mix well; marinate for at least 15 minutes or up to 30 minutes at room temperature, or cover and refrigerate for up to 1 day.

**Using a mortar and pestle, pound the peppercorns** until fine, then add the garlic and ginger and pound into a rough paste.

**Place a wok or large skillet over high heat** and add enough oil to coat the bottom. Once the oil is very hot, add the chicken and spread it out in one layer. Let the chicken cook without stirring for 2 to 3 minutes, until the underside has developed some browning and the chicken is at least halfway cooked. Toss the chicken, and stir-fry until it's fully cooked. Turn off the heat and remove the chicken from the pan, leaving behind all the juices.

**With the heat still off, add the garlic-ginger paste** to the wok, then turn the heat to medium and sauté for 2 to 3 minutes, until all the chicken juices have dried up and the garlic starts to turn golden.

**Put the chicken back in,** add the sugar, and turn the heat up to high. Toss constantly until the sugar is dissolved.

**Add the black soy sauce,** ¼ teaspoon (1 ml) at a time, until the desired color is reached. Turn off the heat, then taste and adjust the seasoning with more soy sauce or sugar as needed (if you want it sweeter, use granulated or brown sugar, which dissolve quickly).

**Toss in the cilantro and plate the stir-fry**, garnishing with more cilantro, if desired. Serve with jasmine rice or plain rice porridge, and a side of vegetables.

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***Do-ahead:*** Marinate the chicken up to 1 day in advance. Or, if you want to make the precooked version, poach the chicken 1 day in advance (see [sidebar](#)).

### **Getting Closer to the Real Gai Kem**

If you have the time and want to experience something closer to the “real” *gai kem*, it’s not too hard to make—and you do not have to offer it to your ancestors first. The key is starting with cooked chicken. Simply poach the chicken in lightly salted water until cooked through; a combination of dark and white meat will mimic the original dish made from a whole chicken. Chop or tear the meat into small bite-sized pieces. Then follow this recipe, but skip the chicken searing and, instead of marinating, just add all the seasoning when you add the chicken. Stir-fry until it’s completely dry, with all the sauce absorbed into the chicken.





# Dry Green Curry with Fish Balls & Eggplant

Gaeng Kiew Waan Look Chin Pla Pad Hang | แกงเขียวหวานลูกชิ้นปลาผัดแห้ง

**SERVES 4**

**COOKING TIME:** 20 minutes Thai-style fish balls are traditionally made by pounding clown featherback fish meat into a sticky paste with a mortar and pestle. It's then formed into rough balls and boiled. The results are bouncy deliciousness that are one of the most popular pairings with green curry. For a weeknight version, using store-bought fish balls is perfectly acceptable, even if the texture is slightly bouncier than that of homemade ones. Here I put fish balls in a “dry” green curry, i.e., a green curry stir-fry, but you can most certainly put them in a regular green curry as well. Thai eggplants are traditional, but I prefer the texture of Japanese eggplants, not to mention the fact that they're much easier to find!

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9 ounces (250 g) Japanese or Chinese eggplant, about 1 large eggplant  
2 to 3 tablespoons (30 to 45 ml) neutral oil  
1 cup (250 ml) coconut milk, divided  
2 to 3 tablespoons (30 to 45 ml) green curry paste, store-bought or homemade ([this page](#)) 6 to 7 makrut lime leaves (optional)



9 ounces (250 g) Asian-style fish balls, thawed if frozen, halved (see [note](#))  
⅓ cup (50 g) frozen peas (see [note](#))

½ tablespoon (7 ml) granulated sugar

1 cup (15 g) Thai basil leaves

1 to 2 teaspoons (5 to 10 ml) fish sauce (optional)

Small handful julienned red bell pepper, for garnish (optional)

Jasmine rice, for serving

**Cut the eggplant** into ½-inch (1.2 cm) thick slices on a diagonal, then cut each slice in half.

**Place a 12-inch (30 cm) skillet over high heat**, and add just enough oil to thinly coat the bottom. Once hot, add the eggplant in one layer; you may need to do this in batches. Cook the eggplant without moving it until browned on the underside, about 1 minute, then flip and cook the other side briefly, just until it has some brown spots. The second side won't brown as well because the oil will have all been absorbed, but that's okay. Turn off the heat and transfer the partially cooked eggplant to a bowl.

**Add about ½ cup (125 ml) coconut milk** to a wok and bring to a boil over medium heat. Stir in the curry paste. Twist the makrut lime leaves to bruise them and release their aroma before tearing them into big chunks and adding to the wok. Stir for 2 to 3 minutes, until the mixture is very thick.

**Add the remaining coconut milk**, fish balls, peas, and sugar; toss for about 1 minute, just until the fish balls are heated through. Add the eggplant and toss gently for about 1 minute.

**Turn off the heat and fold in the basil** just until wilted. Taste and add fish sauce as needed. Depending on the saltiness of the curry paste and how much you use, you may not need to add any fish sauce at all.

**Plate and sprinkle with julienned bell peppers.** Serve with jasmine rice.

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**Notes:** *You can find Asian-style fish balls in the freezer section or at the fresh seafood counter at Asian grocery stores. There are many kinds, but all will work; you could even get the assorted pack.*

*Use pea eggplants instead of peas for a more traditional version. They are a bit bitter, though, so I prefer peas.*





# Salt & Chili Shrimp

Goong Pad Prik Gleua | กุ้งผัดพริกเกลือ

**SERVES 4**

**COOKING TIME:** 20 minutes Here, juicy shrimp are tossed in a salty, slightly sweet, subtly spiced seasoning. This is a surprisingly delicious dish given how simple it looks. *Pad prik gleua* is one of the few preparations in Thai cuisine that uses salt as the main seasoning rather than fish sauce or soy sauce. The five-spice powder is not always used, but I love adding just a touch of it for a hint of warm, sweet flavor that just makes you wonder, “Hmm, what is that?” Typically, the shrimp are deep-fried instead of seared (because Thai people don’t pan-sear anything), so feel free to do that if you are so inclined.

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½ teaspoon (2 ml) table salt

½ teaspoon (2 ml) granulated sugar

¼ teaspoon (1 ml) five-spice powder, store-bought or homemade ([this page](#)) ¼ teaspoon (1 ml) ground white pepper

1 pound (450 g) large shrimp, at least 16/20 count, peeled and deveined, thawed if frozen 2 to 3 tablespoons (30 to 45 ml) neutral oil

8 cloves (40 g) garlic, chopped

6 cilantro stems, chopped (optional)

1 to 2 Thai chilies, chopped

½ cup (60 g) small-diced red and/or green bell pepper

1 to 2 green onions, chopped

Jasmine rice, for serving

**In a small bowl, combine the salt,** sugar, five-spice powder, and white pepper.

**Pat the shrimp very dry** with a paper towel to prevent them from splattering in the hot oil. Then place a large 12-inch (30 cm) skillet on high heat and add enough oil to coat the bottom. Once the oil is very hot, lay the shrimp down in one layer; you may need to do this in batches. Sear the shrimp without moving them until browned on the underside and at least halfway cooked, about 2 minutes. Flip and sear the other side until cooked through. Turn off the heat and use tongs to transfer the shrimp to a bowl, leaving all the oil behind.

**With the heat still off, add the garlic,** cilantro stems, and chilies, then turn the heat to medium and stir until the garlic is golden.

**Add the bell peppers and shrimp,** leaving behind any liquid that collected as the shrimp rested. Sprinkle the dry seasoning over the shrimp and toss for a few seconds, just until all the seasoning is evenly distributed.

**Turn off the heat** and toss in half of the green onions. Plate and sprinkle more green onions on top. Serve with jasmine rice.









# Garlic Pepper Chicken

Gai Pad Gratiem Priktaï | ไก่ผัดกระเทียมพริกไทย

**SERVES 4**

**COOKING TIME:** 25 minutes This is one of the most basic items you can get at a *raan kao gaeng*, a type of restaurant in Thailand where an array of ready-to-eat dishes are laid out on big trays and in pots, and you choose a couple of things to go on top of your rice. Chicken (or pork) is marinated in the ultimate Thai trinity of umami sauces: oyster, soy, and fish. It's stir-fried in garlic oil, with enough pepper to give it a little heat without it being spicy, then topped with golden, crispy fried garlic. It's super kid-friendly as well, not having any pesky vegetables to pick out and whatnot. You'll want to have a side of veggies or a soup to go with it, for a complete meal.

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- 1 pound (450 g) boneless, skinless chicken breasts or thighs
  - 1 tablespoon (15 ml) water
  - 1 tablespoon (15 ml) oyster sauce
  - 2 teaspoons (10 ml) soy sauce
  - 2 teaspoons (10 ml) fish sauce
  - 1½ teaspoons (7 ml) granulated sugar
  - ½ teaspoon (2 ml) ground white or black pepper
  - 3 tablespoons (45 ml) neutral oil
  - 8 cloves (40 g) garlic, chopped

¼ teaspoon (1 ml) black or dark soy sauce, plus more as needed  
(optional)

7 to 8 cilantro sprigs, chopped, plus extra for garnish

#### FOR SERVING

Jasmine rice

Side of vegetables

**Slice the chicken** into ½-inch (1.2 cm) thick strips, and once you get to the thick part of the breast, cut each piece horizontally in half to even out the size. Place the chicken in a mixing bowl and add the water, oyster sauce, soy sauce, fish sauce, sugar, and pepper. Marinate for at least 15 minutes or up to 30 minutes at room temperature, or cover and refrigerate for up to 1 day.

**While the chicken marinates, fry the garlic.** Place a small pot on medium-low heat, then add the oil and one “test” piece of chopped garlic. Once the garlic is bubbling, add the remaining garlic, then turn the heat down to low. Fry gently, stirring frequently, until the garlic is golden but not browned, about 5 minutes—browning will cause the garlic to become bitter. Strain the garlic through a metal sieve, reserving the oil.

**Place a wok or large skillet over high heat and add the garlic oil.**

Once the oil is very hot, add the chicken and spread it into one layer, letting it sear without moving it until starting to brown on the underside and at least halfway cooked, about 2 minutes. Toss the chicken and stir-fry until fully cooked. At this point, if you want, you can add the black soy sauce, ¼ teaspoon (1 ml) at a time, until the desired color is reached.

**Turn off the heat,** then toss in half of the fried garlic and chopped cilantro to taste. Plate and top with the remaining fried garlic and more cilantro, if desired. Serve with jasmine rice and a side of vegetables.

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***Do-ahead:*** Marinate the chicken and/or make the fried garlic 1 day in advance.





# Cashew Salmon

Pla Salmon Pad Med Mamuang Himapan | ปลาแซลมอน  
ผัดเม็ดมะม่วงหิมพานต์

**SERVES 4**

**COOKING TIME:** 20 minutes Before meeting me, my husband's favorite Thai takeout dish was cashew chicken. So, naturally, when I came into his life, it became his most requested Thai meal. Not wanting to make the exact same thing all the time, I changed things up by using salmon instead of chicken. It was fantastic, and it gave me a very good excuse to add more fish to our diet. The secret to making sure that the salmon doesn't break when you stir-fry is to not fully cook it, so the middle doesn't become flaky—that's what will hold the fish together. Not to mention that medium-cooked salmon is so much more moist and delicious anyway! Flavor-wise, any other fish will work, but stick to firm-flesh fish, since stir-frying delicate fish is a recipe for a broken mess. A delicious mess, mind you, but still a mess. See the sidebar for an alternative cooking method that works with delicate fish.

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## SAUCE

1½ tablespoons (22 ml) Thai chili paste, store-bought or homemade ([this page](#)) 1 tablespoon (15 ml) oyster sauce

2 teaspoons (10 ml) soy sauce

2 teaspoons (10 ml) fish sauce

2 teaspoons (10 ml) sesame oil

½ to 1 teaspoon (2 to 5 ml) roasted chili flakes, store-bought or homemade ([this page](#)), to taste (optional) **STIR-FRY**

2 tablespoons (30 ml) neutral oil

1 pound (450 g) salmon, cut in big chunks

5 cloves (25 g) garlic, chopped

¼ large yellow onion, cut in ¼-inch (6 mm) strips

4 ounces (120 g) shimeji or oyster mushrooms

½ red bell pepper, julienned

⅓ cup (45 g) unsalted roasted cashews, plus extra for garnish

½ to 1 teaspoon (2 to 5 ml) granulated sugar

1 to 2 green onions, chopped

Jasmine rice, for serving

**Make the sauce** by whisking all the ingredients in a small bowl.

**Place a well-seasoned wok or large nonstick skillet over high heat** and add the oil. Once the oil is very hot, add the salmon in a single layer without crowding the pan; you may need to do this in batches. Sear the salmon until browned on the underside and about halfway cooked, 1 to 2 minutes. Flip the salmon and sear the other side for just 30 seconds, then turn off the heat and remove the salmon from the pan, leaving all the oil behind; the salmon should be slightly undercooked—this will help keep it moist and prevent breaking.

**With the heat still off, add the garlic and onions to the pan,** then turn the heat to medium and stir until the garlic starts to turn golden.

**Turn the heat up to high and add the mushrooms** and peppers, and toss for about 1 minute.

**Add the salmon back in,** along with any collected juices, then add the sauce, cashews, and ½ teaspoon (2 ml) sugar. Toss gently for 10 to 15 seconds, just



until the salmon is evenly coated in the sauce, then turn off the heat. Taste the sauce and add more sugar if needed, as the sweetness of the chili paste can vary between brands.

**Transfer the salmon and veggies to a shallow bowl** and top with green onions. Garnish with more cashews, if desired, and serve with jasmine rice.

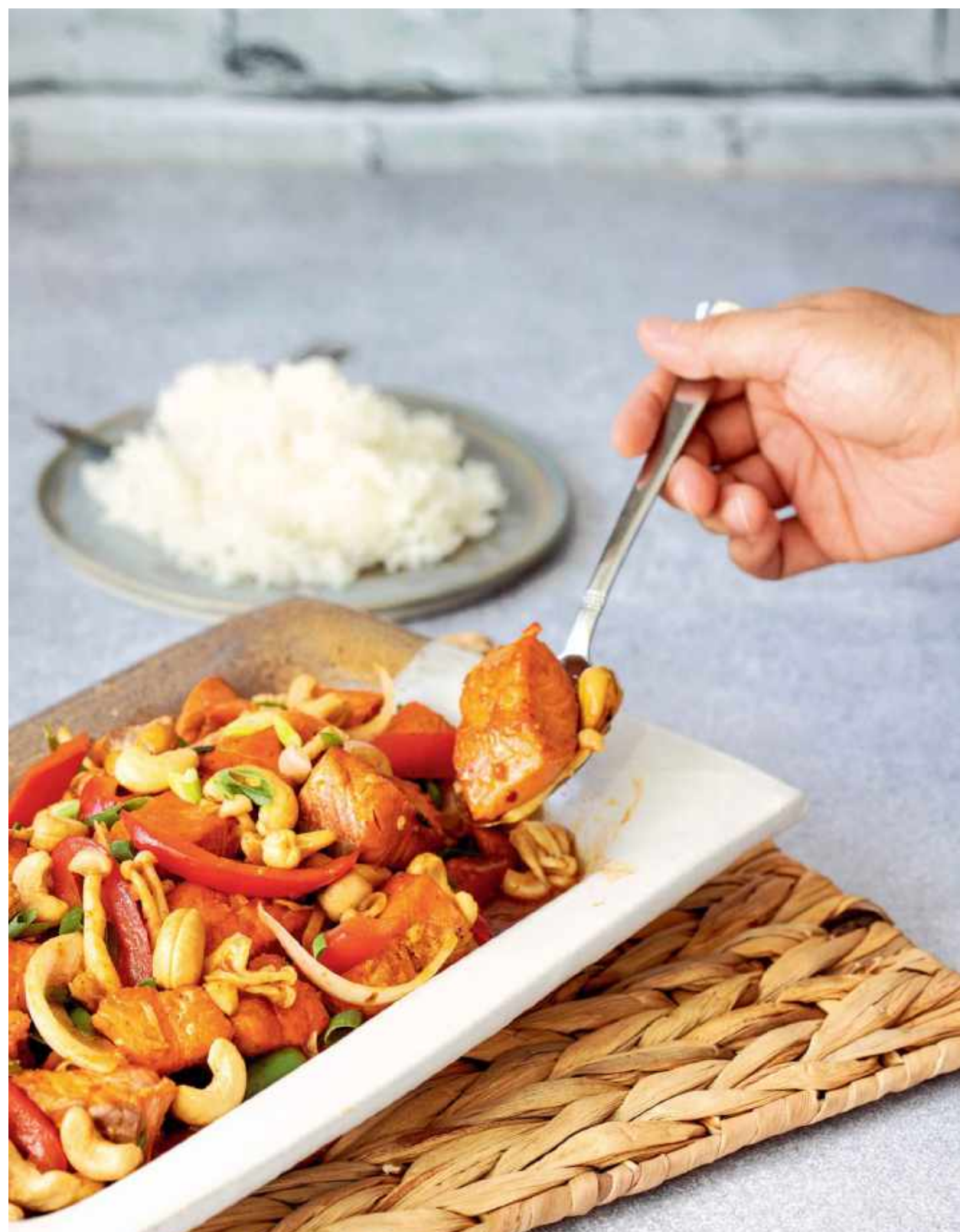
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***Do-ahead:*** Make extra sauce and keep it in the fridge so you have it ready to go; it will keep indefinitely.

### **Using Delicate Fish**

If you've ever ordered a fish stir-fry from an Asian restaurant, you may have noticed that the fish is always battered and deep-fried before being tossed in the wok. That is because the fried batter becomes a sort of "shell" that prevents the fish from falling apart in the aggressive tossing. This is what you would need to do if you want to use delicate, flaky fish. Alternatively, you can pan-sear whole fillets and put them on a serving platter. Then cook the veggies with the sauce as per the recipe and pour it over the fish, which makes for a more elegant presentation.







# No-Fry Sweet & Sour Pork

Moo Pad Pried Waan | หมูผัดเปรี้ยวหวาน

**SERVES 4**

**COOKING TIME:** 20 minutes When you hear “sweet and sour pork,” you probably think of a Chinese takeout meal rather than a Thai dish. Rest assured, the two are very different. The Thai version is much lighter and fresher. And while you would never call the Chinese-American version a healthy meal, the Thai version makes a pretty well-balanced meal with some rice. The meat isn’t breaded and deep fried, and the sauce isn’t thick and syrupy sweet. Instead, the stir-fry is loaded with veggies, with a light sauce that is moderately sweet. A little heat from the sriracha keeps it interesting too. It’ll change how you look at what a “sweet and sour” dish can be!

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12 ounces (340 g) pork tenderloin

2 teaspoons (10 ml) soy sauce

2 tablespoons (30 ml) neutral oil

5 cloves (25 g) garlic, chopped

½ medium (100 g) onion, cut in ⅓-inch (8 mm) strips

1½ cups (150 g) halved, sliced Persian or Japanese cucumber

1 cup (150 g) diced fresh pineapple (see [note](#))

1 cup (100 g) julienned bell pepper, any color

½ cup (70 g) unsalted roasted cashews, plus extra for garnish

1 to 2 green onions, chopped (optional)

Jasmine rice, for serving

#### **SWEET & SOUR SAUCE**

2 tablespoons (22 g) packed brown sugar

2 tablespoons (30 ml) white vinegar

2 tablespoons (30 ml) oyster sauce

2 tablespoons (30 ml) sriracha-style hot sauce

1 tablespoon (15 ml) soy sauce

2 teaspoons (10 ml) toasted sesame oil

**Remove any silver skin from the pork**, then cut the tenderloin in half horizontally. Cut each half into ½-inch (8 mm) slices and place them in a small mixing bowl. Add the 2 teaspoons (10 ml) soy sauce and mix well to coat.

**Make the sweet and sour sauce** by combining all the ingredients in a small bowl; stir until the sugar is mostly dissolved.

**Place a wok on high heat and add the oil.** Once it's very hot, add the pork and spread it out into one layer (you may need to do this in batches). Let the pork cook without moving it until browned on the underside, 1 to 2 minutes. Toss and stir for about 30 seconds, or just until most of the exterior looks cooked; don't worry about the inside being done at this point. Place the pork in a bowl, leaving behind any oil and juices.

**In the same wok on medium heat**, add a little more oil if needed, then add the garlic and onions and stir until the garlic starts to turn golden.

**Turn the heat up to high** and add the cucumber, pineapple, bell peppers, and sauce. Toss for about 2 minutes.

**Add the pork back in** and stir for 30 seconds, just until heated through. Be careful not to overcook the pork, as lean meat like tenderloin becomes dry quickly. (Pork is perfectly safe to eat medium-cooked to a minimum internal temperature of 145°F/63°C). Turn off the heat and stir in the cashews and green onions.

**Plate and top with more cashews** and green onions, if you like. Serve with jasmine rice.

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***Note:*** *Using fresh pineapple makes a big difference here; I buy it pre-cut in the ready-to-eat food section at the supermarket.*







# Pork Shoulder Red Curry Stir-Fry

Pad Ped Moo | ผัดเผ็ดหมู

**SERVES 4**

**COOKING TIME:** 20 minutes I love introducing people to *pad ped* as a way to show them that curry pastes do not have to be used for curries. It's just a paste of herbs and spices, so you can use it anywhere you would add herbs and spices! It is such a quick and easy dish, and delivers a boatload of flavor. I also love that it can work with a lot of different meats and veggies. The basil adds a lovely floral freshness, but it's not necessary. Makrut lime leaves alone are perfectly sufficient; I always have those in the freezer, and you should too.

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- 1 pound (450 g) pork shoulder
  - 1 tablespoon (15 ml) fish sauce
  - 2 tablespoons (30 ml) neutral oil
  - 3 tablespoons (45 ml) red curry paste, store-bought or homemade ([this page](#)) ½ cup (125 ml) coconut milk
  - 1 tablespoon (12 g) finely chopped palm sugar, packed
  - 5 to 6 makrut lime leaves (see [note](#))
  - 2 cups (175 g) diced firm vegetables of your choice (see [note](#)) 1 cup (15 g) Thai basil leaves, loosely packed
  - Jasmine rice, for serving



**Slice the pork shoulder into thin pieces**, against the grain, no thicker than 1/5 inch (5 mm), and place in a small mixing bowl. Add the fish sauce and mix well to coat.

**Place a wok or large skillet over high heat and add the oil.** Once the oil is very hot, add the pork and spread into a single layer as much as you can, working in batches if needed. Cook the pork without stirring for 1 to 2 minutes, until the underside has browned a bit and the pork is at least halfway cooked. Then stir the pork for about 15 seconds, just until the exterior is no longer raw. Immediately turn off the heat and remove the pork from the pan, leaving behind all the juices. (Do not worry about cooking the pork through at this stage. It will cook through by the end.) **With the heat still off, add the red curry paste** and stir to mix it with the oil. Turn the heat to medium-low and sauté the paste for about 2 minutes, deglazing with a splash of the coconut milk if it sticks or seems a bit dry.

**Add the remaining coconut milk and sugar**, then twist the makrut lime leaves to bruise them and release their aroma before tearing them into big chunks and adding to the pan, discarding any big center stems. Stir to mix with the sauce.

**Turn the heat up to high and add the vegetables**; cook until the veggies are 90% done to your liking. If the sauce is drying up, add a splash of water.

**Add the pork back in, along with any collected juices**, and toss for about 30 seconds to heat through. Turn off the heat, then add the basil and toss just until wilted.

**Taste and add more fish sauce as needed**, keeping in mind this will be served with plain rice so it should be well seasoned. How much fish sauce you need will depend on how salty the curry paste is. Serve with jasmine rice.

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**Notes:** *If you have Thai basil, you can omit the lime leaves, and vice versa; you just want at least one herb in there.*

*Traditional vegetables I use are Thai eggplant and long beans, but anything firm and crunchy will work, such as sugar snap peas, green beans, or carrots. You can use a few kinds, if you wish.*

### **Pork Shoulder for Stir-Fries**

Most people in North America use pork shoulder (aka pork butt) for braising and stewing. But I'm advocating for this cut to be used for stir-frying because it is so much more flavorful than the leaner cuts people are generally tempted to use. It's got a bit more chew, but when sliced thinly against the grain and not overcooked, it's such a satisfying texture, and the abundance of fat ensures that it's never dry. Try it once and you will be hooked!





# Old-School Pad Gaprao

## Pad Gaprao Moo Kai Dao | ผัดกะเพราหมูไข่ดาว

**SERVES 4**

**COOKING TIME:** 10 minutes, plus 5 to 10 minutes if frying eggs *Pad gaprao*, sometimes written (incorrectly) as *pad kra pao*, is a true staple of the Thai diet. It's sold by street vendors and at fancy restaurants, and made at home all over the country. I call this the “old school” version because it's the old style that differs from the newer variants that are more popular today. It's much simpler, seasoned with only fish sauce, and has no vegetables, so the flavor of the basil really shines. Modern variations include soy sauce, oyster sauce, and veggies like onions and long beans. There's no wrong way to do it, and I want to share this piece of history before it disappears—and also because it's much simpler to make than modern versions, but equally delicious!

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2 to 3 Thai chilies, or as many as you can handle

⅓ cup (40 g) chopped mild red peppers (see [sidebar](#)) 7 cloves (35 g) garlic

Oil for frying eggs (optional)

4 eggs (optional, see [note](#))

2 to 3 tablespoons (30 to 45 ml) neutral oil

1 pound (450 g) lean ground pork

2 tablespoons (30 ml) fish sauce

2 teaspoons (10 ml) granulated sugar

1½ cups (22 g) holy basil or Italian basil leaves (see [note](#)) Jasmine rice,  
for serving

**Using a mortar and pestle, pound the Thai chilies until fine,** then add the mild red peppers and garlic and pound into a rough paste.

**If you're making fried eggs, make them now.** In a small nonstick frying pan, heat about ⅓ inch (8 mm) of oil over medium-high heat. Test the temperature of the oil by adding a little piece of vegetable scrap, like the garlic or pepper, and it should bubble excitedly right away. Once the oil is hot, add 1 egg. The white should bubble up right away. Using a spoon to occasionally baste the top of the egg with oil to help it cook faster, cook for about 1 minute for a runny yolk, or 2 minutes for a set yolk. You want the white crispy and browned, so if it's not browning, turn up the heat. Remove the egg from the pan and drain on paper towel; repeat with the remaining eggs.

**Place a wok on medium heat,** then add the oil and garlic-chili paste. Stir for about 2 minutes, until the smallest bits of garlic start to turn golden.

**Turn the heat up to high, add the ground pork,** then quickly toss to mix with the garlic-chili paste. Add the fish sauce and sugar, and keep tossing and breaking up the pork until it is fully cooked.

**Turn off the heat, then add the holy basil** and cook just until wilted. Taste and adjust the seasoning with fish sauce and sugar as needed.

**Plate and serve with jasmine rice.** If serving as a one-dish meal, place the rice on a plate, spoon the pork over it, and top everything with the fried egg.

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**Notes:** *Pad gaprao is typically paired with a fried egg when served as a one-dish meal. If serving as part of a multi-dish Thai meal, you can omit the egg.*

*You might be tempted to use Thai basil instead, but Italian basil is actually the better substitute.*

### More Than Just Heat

I usually say you can make things as spicy as you want, but for the real *pad gaprao* experience, you should make it as spicy as you can handle! But it's not just about the heat, as chilies also provide flavor that's important to this dish. This is why we use mild and hot chilies; the mild ones add the needed chili flavor without making the dish too spicy. Red bell pepper will work, but preferably something smaller and less watery. The seeds and pith can be removed to reduce heat.









# Mushroom & Tofu Holy Basil Stir-Fry

Taohu Pad Gaprao | เต้าหู้ผัดกะเพรา

**SERVES 4**

**COOKING TIME:** 20 minutes, plus 5 to 10 minutes if frying eggs This vegan version of the ever so popular *pad gaprao* was an instant hit when I first made it. My unsuspecting carnivorous husband devoured it, and was surprised when I told him it was vegan. (Not even a drop of fish sauce??) Put it on top of hot jasmine rice and it's really all you need for a simple meal, but if you eat eggs, try serving it with a runny fried egg, the way we love to do it in Thailand.

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12 ounces (340 g) extra firm tofu, drained

4 ounces (120 g) fresh shiitake mushrooms

2 to 3 Thai chilies, or as many as you can handle

⅓ cup (40 g) chopped mild red peppers (see sidebar, [this page](#)) 7 cloves (35 g) garlic

2 tablespoons (30 ml) soy sauce

2 teaspoons (10 ml) Thai seasoning sauce

½ to 1 teaspoon (2 to 5 ml) black or dark soy sauce (optional)

Oil for frying eggs (optional)

4 eggs (optional, see [note](#))

2 tablespoons (30 ml) neutral oil  
¼ large (50 g) yellow onion, diced  
2 teaspoons (10 ml) granulated sugar  
1½ cups (20 g) holy basil or Italian basil leaves  
Jasmine rice, for serving

**Crumble the tofu with your hands** into rough chunks that resemble cooked ground meat, then place them on a paper towel-lined plate to absorb excess moisture.

**If the shiitake mushrooms have thick stems, cut them off**, then slice the caps into ¼-inch (6 mm) slices.

**Using a mortar and pestle, pound the Thai chilies until fine**, then add the mild red peppers and garlic and pound into a rough paste.

**Make the sauce in a small bowl** by combining the soy sauce, seasoning sauce, and ½ teaspoon (2 ml) black soy sauce.

**If you're making fried eggs, make them now** following the instructions on [this page](#).

**Place a wok on medium heat** and add the oil and garlic-chili paste. Once the garlic is bubbling, keep stirring for about 2 minutes, until aromatic and the garlic starts to turn golden.

**Add the onions and mushrooms**, then turn the heat up to high and cook for 1 minute, until the mushrooms are wilted. Add the tofu, sauce, and sugar, then toss for 2 to 3 minutes, until any pooling liquid in the pan has dried up. If you want a darker color, add a little more black soy sauce.

**Turn off the heat and add the basil**, tossing just until wilted. Taste and adjust the seasoning with soy sauce and sugar as needed.

**Plate and serve with jasmine rice.** If serving as a one-dish meal, place the rice on a plate, spoon the tofu over it, and top everything with the fried egg.

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**Note:** *Pad gaprao is typically paired with a fried egg when served as a one-dish meal. If serving as part of a multi-dish Thai meal, you can omit the egg.*





# Glass Noodle Stir-Fry with Eggs & Asparagus

Woonsen Pad Kai Gub Naw Mai Farang | วุ้นเส้นผัดไข่กับหน่อไม้ฝรั่ง

**SERVES 4**

**COOKING TIME:** 20 minutes In Thailand, we have a rustic, homey dish in which glass noodles are stir-fried with eggs and a vegetable called *cha-om*, or climbing wattle. It's a delicate needle-shaped green with a distinct flavor and aroma. Unable to get *cha-om* in Canada, I decided to try this dish with another vegetable with a distinct flavor—asparagus, sliced thinly to mimic the shape and tenderness of *cha-om*. While it doesn't taste the same, and the aroma is not nearly as strong as *cha-om*, it is just as lovable.

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2.8 ounces (80 g) dried glass noodles

½ pound (225 g) asparagus

3 tablespoons (30 ml) neutral oil

5 cloves (25 g) garlic, chopped

4 large eggs

½ teaspoon (2 ml) ground white pepper

Jasmine rice, for serving

**SAUCE**



¼ cup (60 ml) water or unsalted chicken stock

1 tablespoon (15 ml) granulated sugar

1 tablespoon (15 ml) oyster sauce

1 tablespoon (15 ml) soy sauce

1 tablespoon (15 ml) fish sauce

**Soak the glass noodles in room temperature water** for 7 to 10 minutes, until soft and pliable. Drain, then use scissors to cut the noodles into 3-inch (8 cm) sections.

**Cut off about 1.5 inches (3.5 cm) from the bottom of the asparagus** to remove the tough parts. If the asparagus are on the thicker side, thinly slice them on a sharp diagonal so you have elongated ovals at least 1 inch (2.5 cm) long, leaving the tip intact. If they are very thin, you can cut them into 2-inch (5 cm) sections.

**Make the sauce** by stirring together all the ingredients in a small bowl until the sugar is dissolved.

**Place a wok or large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat** and add the oil and garlic. Once the garlic is bubbling, stir until it turns golden.

**Turn the heat up to high, then add the eggs.** Break the yolks with your spatula, then let them cook undisturbed for about 15 seconds, until the whites are set on the underside. Scramble the eggs slightly, keeping them chunky and marbled.

**Once the eggs are about halfway done,** add the noodles, asparagus, and pepper, then drizzle the sauce on top of the noodles and toss everything together until the sauce is evenly distributed and absorbed.

**Give the noodles a taste** to see if they are done to your liking, and if you prefer them softer, add a splash of water and keep tossing until they're dry again.

Turn off the heat, then taste and adjust the seasoning. Plate and serve with jasmine rice.

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**Note:** *The eggs are the only protein here, though you could substitute half of them with shrimp or ground pork, which is quite commonly done. But isn't it nice sometimes to not have to deal with raw meat for dinner?*

### **Scrambled Eggs for Dinner**

One thing I noticed shortly after moving to Canada was that eggs rarely make an appearance on the dinner table. In Thailand, eggs are a staple ingredient in all our meals. We make salads, omelets, steamed egg custards—and we also scramble them into stir-fries, like in this dish. You're probably used to seeing eggs in fried rice and maybe fried noodles, but quite often we simply stir-fry vegetables, such as cucumber or kabocha squash, and scramble some eggs in at the end. The eggs absorb the sauce and become delicious, tender morsels, and make for an easy, no-fuss protein.



