

RECIPES TO MAKE IN BULK

Tum Wai Tid Krua | ทำไว้ติดครัว

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To Make or To Buy

If you want to make Thai cooking a regular part of your weeknight repertoire, there are some things you will want to have ready to go. Many of these items can be bought, and there is nothing wrong with doing that, but these recipes are here if you want to DIY. These all either freeze or last in the fridge for a long time.

To help you decide whether to make these recipes or to buy, here's what I usually do.

I Make:

TAMARIND PASTE | Homemade has a richer flavor and stronger acidity.

FRIED GARLIC | The garlic flavor is much stronger when homemade, plus you get to keep the oil which is where half of the flavor is.

ROASTED CHILI FLAKES | I like to make it so I know that all the chilies used are thoroughly cleaned and that they're toasted to my liking.

FIVE-SPICE POWDER | I prefer the flavor of my homemade version to most store-bought ones. Also, I make a little at a time, so the spices remain fresh.

STOCKS | Western-style stocks have different flavors from Thai ones. They also tend to be salted and not very full-bodied (they don't gel up in the fridge) unless you buy bone broths, which are expensive.

THAI CHILI PASTE | I sometimes make this and use it as a spread or for a special occasion, but for everyday cooking I use a store-bought one.

I Buy:

RED, YELLOW AND GREEN CURRY PASTES | It's too much work for my busy life right now, and the good brands are perfectly delicious. I also buy red curry paste to use as a base for building up other curry pastes that are not readily available.

THAI CHILI PASTE | Store-bought ones are perfectly fine for everyday use.



How to Make Curry Pastes: The Basics

Choosing Dried Chilies

Most Thai curry pastes use dried red chilies as the base, the source of flavor and color. The good news is that you don't have to use Thai chilies to make an authentic-tasting curry paste, as most dried chilies will give you similar flavors. The big variable here is heat.

Mild dried red chilies: You want the bulk of your chilies to be on the milder side so that you can add more color and flavor without the paste being overwhelmingly spicy. You can tell how spicy chilies are based on their size: the larger, the milder. In Thailand, spur chilies, or *prik chee fa*, are typically used, but guajillo and puya peppers also work beautifully; they can be found at stores that sell Latin American ingredients. I have also had great results with gochugaru, Korean dried pepper flakes.

If you can only find smaller, spicier chilies, remove all the seeds and the white pith to reduce the heat.

Spicy dried red chilies: If you want some real heat, add small chilies. You can add as many as you want, so long as your mouth can handle it, or none at all. Dried Thai chilies, chiles de árbol, or the generic dried chilies at Chinese markets are among those that will work.

Wash Those Dried Chilies!

It might seem strange to wash a dried product, but it is important because some brands can be quite dusty, and you can even feel this dustiness with your hands. I wash the whole bag of chilies when I get them home so that I don't need to worry about it every time I use them.

Before you wash, inspect the chilies and discard any that are moldy. This isn't that common, but it's always good to check. Mold on dried chilies will look like grayish-green dust.

To wash them, fill a large bowl with plenty of cold water, then put the chilies in the water and quickly swish them around for just a few seconds; do not let them linger in the water or they'll absorb it.

Drain well and spread them out on a towel-lined baking sheet, and use a kitchen towel to dry the tops as much as you can. Let them dry at least overnight, preferably with a fan to help them dry faster. Once they are dried *completely*, pack them up for storage. If you've got lots of sunshine where you live, you can dry them out in the sun for the day (as long as there are no birds around that might come for a snack!). It's important that they are completely dried before packaging, so feel them for any soft, moist spots, to be sure.

Shrimp Paste

Most recipes for Thai curry pastes call for a small amount of fermented shrimp paste, or *gapi*, which provides some umami funk and also saltiness. You can omit this if you cannot find it; the fish sauce you will use to season the curry will provide a similar effect. But in some cases, such as with our sour curries, shrimp paste is a key flavor, so you should not omit it. There is no good flavor substitute for shrimp paste; if you've tried it, you'll know that nothing else tastes like it! Having said that, Japanese miso or Korean doenjang can be used instead to provide umami and saltiness.

Tools for Making Curry Paste

The tools you use will be the biggest determinant of how curry paste making will go for you. The main challenge is that we want the paste to be very fine so that it will infuse seamlessly into the sauce and yield a smooth texture. If your paste is coarse, there will be a lot of flavor locked up in the chunky pieces, and the texture of the curry sauce will not be as luscious and silky as it should be. Here are all the ways to make curry pastes:

MORTAR & PESTLE: If you want to experience the traditional way of making curry paste and you have lots of time on your hands, this is the way to do it. A mortar and pestle is also great for making small amounts of paste because, unlike with machines, there is no minimum volume required for it to be effective. In fact, it can only process a small amount of ingredients at a time—unless it's a giant set. You want to use a large, heavy-duty stone mortar and pestle for making curry pastes, so no wood, marble, or anything cute here. I recommend an 8-inch (20 cm) size (external diameter) for the job, or at the very least a 6-inch (15 cm).

COFFEE GRINDER + MORTAR & PESTLE: Using a coffee grinder will save you a huge amount of time. The grinder is used for dried chilies, which take a long time to break down, and any other dried spices called for in the recipe. You can grind the rest of the ingredients by hand, and add the ground dried chilies once you have a fine paste.

COFFEE GRINDER + IMMERSION BLENDER: This is currently my favorite combination of tools, as it yields a fine paste in the least time. The coffee grinder takes care of the dry spices, and the immersion blender takes care of the moist ingredients. Process the dry and moist separately, then combine them with a few final blitzes of the immersion blender. You will need to make at least one full recipe of curry paste; with any less than that, there will not be enough volume to blend.

BLENDER: This is not my favorite method, as you need a lot of volume before it blends effectively, and getting the paste out of the blender jug is a pain. The main thing here is that you will need to add liquid to the paste in order for it to grind effectively; water is fine, but you'll spend longer trying to cook all the moisture off when you go to sauté the paste, so try to add as little as possible. If you're making a coconut-based curry, you can add the first portion of coconut milk called for in the recipe to help it blend, and then use the remaining coconut milk for the rest of the recipe. Coconut milk will reduce the shelf life of the paste significantly, though, so I would freeze any extra, rather than storing it in the fridge.

FOOD PROCESSOR: I don't recommend using a food processor, as it can't really get the paste as fine as it should be. For items that don't need to be super fine, such as Thai chili paste, it works all right, though you do need a relatively large amount of ingredients to make it grind effectively.

NOTE: In the recipes, I've provided methods for using a coffee grinder for the dried chilies because I think it's the most important time-saver. If you don't have one, you will need to cut the chilies into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch chunks and soak them in water for at least 30 minutes to soften. Then grind the rehydrated chilies with salt and any dry spices into a fine paste in a mortar and pestle before adding other herbs.

Curry Paste Storage

Curry paste will last in the fridge for up to 1 week, but I recommend freezing it to preserve the freshness if you're not using it within a day or two. I like to freeze it in flat disks, separated into portions for easy use.





Red Curry Paste

Prik Gaeng Kua/Prik Gaeng Ped | ພົກແກງຄ້ວ ພົກແກງເຝັດ

MAKES ABOUT $\frac{2}{3}$ CUP (160 ML), FOR TWO BATCHES OF 4-SERVING CURRY

There are two types of red curry pastes in Thailand, and both are pretty similar, though some purists may excommunicate me for saying that. *Gaeng kua* is the most basic paste and uses no dry spices, whereas *gaeng ped* includes coriander seeds and cumin seeds—at least, this is the line I draw, but people don't always agree on what the differences actually are. I prefer to keep *gaeng kua* in stock, since it is the most basic paste and can be easily turned into other pastes, such as *panang* ([this page](#)), *massaman* ([this page](#)), or southern curry paste ([this page](#)). Because of this versatility, consider making a big batch of it and freezing it in small portions.

$\frac{3}{4}$ ounce (20 g) mild dried red chilies, cut in $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch (1.2 cm) chunks (see [this page](#))

$\frac{1}{2}$ ounce (10 g) spicy dried red chilies, or to taste, cut in $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch (1.2 cm) chunks (see [note](#))

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon (2 ml) white peppercorns

1 teaspoon (5 ml) table salt

1 stalk lemongrass, bottom half only, thinly sliced

2 tablespoons (15 g) finely chopped galangal

4 cilantro roots, or 10 to 12 cilantro stems, chopped

2 teaspoons (10 ml) chopped makrut lime zest (optional, see [note](#))
6 cloves (30 g) garlic, chopped
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (70 g) chopped shallots
2 teaspoons (10 ml) fermented shrimp paste (optional)

IF MAKING PRIK GAENG PED

2 teaspoons (10 ml) coriander seeds, toasted
1 teaspoon (5 ml) cumin seeds, toasted

Using a coffee grinder, grind the dried chilies, peppercorns, and salt—and the coriander seeds and cumin seeds, if using—into a fine powder.

If using a heavy-duty mortar and pestle, add the lemongrass, galangal, cilantro roots, and makrut lime zest; pound into a fine paste. Add the garlic and shallots, and pound into a fine paste. Add the ground chili mixture and pound until well combined. Add the shrimp paste and pound to mix.

If using an immersion blender, place the lemongrass, galangal, cilantro roots, and makrut lime zest in a narrow container, such as a glass measuring cup. Top it off with the garlic, shallots, and shrimp paste (it is easier to blend with the moister ingredients on top). Use the immersion blender to blend everything until fine. You will need to lift and reposition the blender several times, stopping to scrape the bottom and bringing it to the top halfway through. Once the mixture is fine, add the ground chili mixture and blend to mix.

Use right away, store in the fridge for up to 3 days, or divide into two portions and freeze for up to a few months.

Notes: You can add as many of the small chilies as you like, depending on how spicy you want the paste to be. The seeds can be left in for more heat, or removed for less. For more on choices of chilies, see *How to Make Curry Pastes: The Basics* ([this page](#)).

If you don't have makrut lime zest, you can add 2 to 3 makrut lime leaves, torn into chunks, when making the curry. Or substitute regular lime zest in the curry paste.

Green Curry Paste

Prik Gaeng Kaew Waan | ພົກແກງເຂົ້າວ່ານ

MAKES ABOUT $\frac{2}{3}$ CUP (160 ML), FOR TWO BATCHES OF 4-SERVING CURRY

Green curry is basically red curry made with fresh green chilies instead of dried red ones. But that one difference alone creates an entirely different flavor profile. The challenge with green curry paste is that green Thai chilies can be very spicy, and adding enough for good color and flavor may render it inedible for some. Removing the seeds and pith will help with that immensely, and I also like to add Thai basil leaves for a more vibrant green color without the heat, though any other neutral-flavored leafy greens will work here too. Or omit the leaves from the paste and, when making the curry, if you think it needs a boost, blend some greens with a bit of the liquid and add it in.

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- 4 teaspoons (20 ml) coriander seeds, toasted
 - 2 teaspoons (10 ml) cumin seeds, toasted
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon (2 ml) white peppercorns
 - 1 ounce (30 g) Thai green chilies or serrano peppers
 - 1 ounce (30 g) mild green chilies (see [note](#))
 - 1 teaspoon (5 ml) table salt
 - 25 Thai basil leaves, finely julienned (optional, see headnote)
 - 1 stalk lemongrass, bottom half only, thinly sliced
 - 3 tablespoons (22 g) chopped galangal

2 teaspoons (10 ml) makrut lime zest, finely chopped (or lime zest)
4 cilantro roots, or 10 to 12 cilantro stems, finely chopped
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (70 g) chopped shallots
6 cloves (30 g) garlic, chopped
2 teaspoons (10 ml) fermented shrimp paste (optional)

Grind the coriander seeds, cumin seeds, and peppercorns into a fine powder using a coffee grinder or mortar and pestle.

Remove the seeds and pith from some or all of the chilies to reduce the spiciness, then finely chop them. Err on the side of it being too mild, as you can always add more chilies back in when you make the curry.

If using a heavy-duty mortar and pestle, pound the chilies with the salt into a fine paste; if the mixture feels too wet at any point, add the ground spices to absorb the liquid. Add the basil leaves and pound until fine. Add the lemongrass, galangal, makrut lime zest, and cilantro roots, and pound into a fine paste. Add the shallots and garlic, and pound into a fine paste. Add the shrimp paste and pound to mix.

If using an immersion blender, place all the ingredients in a narrow container, such as a glass measuring cup, putting the shallots and garlic on top (it is easier to blend with the moister ingredients on top). Use the immersion blender to blend everything until fine. You will need to lift and reposition the blender several times, stopping to scrape the bottom and bringing it to the top halfway through.

Use right away, store in the fridge for up to 3 days, or divide into two portions and freeze for up to a few months.

Note: Using both spicy and mild chilies allows us to pack in more flavor without too much heat. Korean markets usually have mild green peppers

available, and de-seeded jalapeños will also work.

Yellow Curry Paste

Prik Gaeng Garee | ພົມແກງກະທີ່

MAKES ABOUT $\frac{2}{3}$ CUP (160 ML), FOR TWO BATCHES OF 4-SERVING CURRY

The yellow in yellow curry comes from the fresh turmeric and the small amount of ground turmeric in the curry powder. You can use any kind of curry powder that you like here; the generic one commonly available at a non-Asian grocery store is fine. My rule of thumb when it comes to choosing curry powder is that if it smells good to you, it'll work. I do, however, prefer using fresh turmeric instead of ground, as I find the flavor smoother, and it is too easy to overdo it with the powder. Turmeric adds a unique flavor unlike any other spice, but too much, whether fresh or ground, will give an unpleasant medicinal taste. So treat it as one of those you-can-always-add-more-later-if-needed ingredients!

0.7 ounce (20 g) mild dried red chilies, cut in $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch (1.2 cm) chunks (see [this page](#))

1 tablespoon (15 ml) coriander seeds, toasted

$1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons (7 ml) cumin seeds, toasted

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon (2 ml) white peppercorns

1 teaspoon (5 ml) table salt

1 stalk lemongrass, bottom half only, finely sliced

2 tablespoons (15 g) chopped ginger

2 tablespoons (15 g) chopped galangal

1 tablespoon (8 g) chopped turmeric, or $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon (2 ml) ground turmeric

6 cloves (30 g) garlic, chopped

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup (70 g) chopped shallots

1 tablespoon (15 ml) curry powder

2 teaspoons (10 ml) fermented shrimp paste (optional)

Using a coffee grinder, grind the dried chilies, coriander seeds, cumin seeds, peppercorns, and salt into a fine powder.

If using a heavy-duty mortar and pestle, add the lemongrass, ginger, galangal, and fresh turmeric, and pound into a fine paste. Add the garlic and shallots, and pound into a fine paste. Add the ground chili mixture and pound until well combined. Add the curry powder, ground turmeric, and shrimp paste; pound to mix.

If using an immersion blender, place the lemongrass, ginger, galangal, and turmeric in a narrow container, such as a glass measuring cup. Then top it off with the garlic, shallots, and shrimp paste (it is easier to blend with the moister ingredients on top). Use the immersion blender to blend everything until fine. You will need to lift and reposition the blender several times, stopping to scrape the bottom and bringing it to the top halfway through. Once the mixture is fine, add the ground chili mixture, curry powder, and ground turmeric, and blend to mix.

Use right away, store in the fridge for up to 3 days, or divide into two portions and freeze for up to a few months.

Thai Chili Paste

Nam Prik Pao | ນໍາພົກພາວ

MAKES ABOUT 2 CUPS (500 ML)

COOKING TIME: 50 minutes

If you were going to make only one paste from scratch, it should be this one. I don't think homemade curry pastes are necessarily better than store-bought, but homemade *nam prik pao* is always superior: You can use good-quality palm sugar and fish sauce as seasonings. You can use less sugar to make it more versatile, and use a healthy, neutral-flavored oil, such as avocado oil. Once made, it keeps for months in the fridge and can be used to add robustness and umami to soups, salads, stir-fries, or even fried rice and noodles. We also enjoy it as a spread on toast and sandwiches, and use it on a burger or as a base for a canapé.

Traditionally, the paste is hand-pounded in a large mortar and pestle, but a food processor saves a lot of time and effort and works perfectly with this large volume of ingredients.

1.7 ounces (50 g) mild dried red chilies (see [note](#))

3.5 ounces (100 g) garlic, about 2 heads, unpeeled

7 ounces (200 g) shallots, peeled, cut in 1-inch (2.5 cm) chunks

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup (30 g) dried shrimp, coarsely chopped if large

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup + 1 tablespoon (80 g) finely chopped palm sugar, packed

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup (60 ml) tamarind paste, store-bought or homemade ([this page](#))

3 tablespoons + 1 teaspoon (50 ml) fish sauce
1 teaspoon (5 ml) fermented shrimp paste (optional)
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup (185 ml) neutral oil + more if needed

Preheat the broiler to high and set the rack 6 to 8 inches (15 to 20 cm) away from the element.

Place the dried chilies on a foil-lined baking sheet and broil them until charred in some spots, watching them *all the time*, as this takes less than 1 minute and they can burn in a few seconds. If you want a smokier flavor, flip the chilies and char the other side, which will take even less time than for the first. Remove the chilies from the oven, keeping the broiler on, and transfer them to a plate.

Separate the garlic into cloves but leave the skin on, and place them on one side of the baking sheet. Place the shallots on the other side of the baking sheet, cut side down. Move the rack to the top level, then broil the garlic and shallots until charred spots have formed on the shallots, about 5 minutes. The garlic peel will not look like it has browned much, but the cloves themselves will be.

Flip both the garlic and shallots and broil the other side until more charred spots form, about 3 minutes. Remove from the oven and allow to cool slightly before peeling the garlic. The garlic skin should come off easily.

Cut or break the chilies down into smaller pieces so they will fit in a coffee grinder. Grind them into a powder; you'll need to do this in batches. Place the ground chilies in a bowl.

Without cleaning the grinder, add the dried shrimp and grind into fine, fluffy flakes.

Place the garlic and shallots in a food processor, then add all the other ingredients except the oil and process into a paste. Try to get it as fine as

possible, but it does not need to be smooth. You can add some of the oil to help it grind more easily. Scrape the sides of the food processor down once or twice during the process.

Pour the oil into a wok or large skillet, then add the chili paste. Don't use a small pot or it will take much longer to cook off the liquid. Turn the heat to medium or medium-low and, using a rubber or silicone spatula, stir the paste constantly as it cooks, scraping the bottom and sides of the pan frequently, until the paste turns dark and thick, about 20 minutes. If it's burning at the edges, lower the heat. When it's ready, the oil should be separated from the paste, and it should have the consistency of a spread. If you want a looser, oilier paste, add more oil to reach the consistency you like.

Taste the chili paste and adjust the seasoning with more fish sauce, sugar, or tamarind as needed. If it tastes generally weak, cook the paste longer to concentrate the flavors.

Store in a tightly sealed jar in the fridge for at least 6 months. It can also be frozen indefinitely.

Note: *Guajillo or puya peppers work well. If you can only find smaller spicy chilies, remove the seeds and pith from some or all of them.*





Universal Stir-Fry Sauce

Sauce Pad | ซอสผัด

MAKES $\frac{1}{2}$ CUP (125 ML), ENOUGH FOR 8 SERVINGS

COOKING TIME: 5 minutes

I learned about this technique from working in various Thai restaurants, where a premade mix of sauces is used in just about every stir-fry. The sauce is used as a base, then each dish gets its own modification with other ingredients, so you still end up with dishes with various flavors. Sometimes, for simpler dishes, the sauce is added by itself, and it's still totally tasty. Make a jar of this to keep in the fridge, and you will save yourself so much time later on!

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup (60 ml) oyster sauce

2 tablespoons (30 ml) soy sauce

1 tablespoon (15 ml) fish sauce

1 tablespoon (15 ml) Thai seasoning sauce

Whisk all the ingredients together and keep in a well-sealed jar in the fridge indefinitely. Shake or stir the sauce before using. When using, use about 1 tablespoon (15 ml) per serving of stir-fry.

What About the Sugar?

When you use this sauce in a stir-fry, I recommend adding a little bit of sugar as well, to balance the saltiness, but I don't add sugar to

this recipe because different dishes need different amounts of sugar, and sugar doesn't dissolve well in this thick sauce. You can, however, dissolve 2 teaspoons (10 ml) of sugar in a little bit of hot water and add to the sauce, or add 1 tablespoon (15 ml) sweet soy sauce, as a baseline sweetness, then taste and add more as needed when you cook.

Fried Garlic & Garlic Oil

Gratiem Jiew | ກະເທິມເຈີວ

MAKES ABOUT $\frac{1}{3}$ CUP (80 ML) OF FRIED GARLIC, AND $\frac{1}{4}$ CUP (60 ML) OF GARLIC OIL

COOKING TIME: 10 minutes

I never have a Thai noodle soup without topping it with a drizzle of garlic oil and a sprinkling of fried garlic. And if you go to Thailand, all the noodle soups will come with it. At home, it means extra prep, but it takes a noodle soup from good to great, and it's worth making extra to have on hand for when the soup urge strikes. If you want the fried garlic to remain crispy, make it fresh. But for topping noodle soups, where the garlic will become soggy anyway, you can make this in advance and keep it in the fridge for months. If you want to take it to the next level, do it the old-school way, by rendering some pork fat and using that to fry the garlic!

1 head garlic (see [note](#))

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup (80 ml) neutral oil

Chop the garlic so the pieces are no bigger than 1/8 inch (3 mm), but don't mince it finely.

Add the oil to a small pot or round-bottomed wok, then put a piece of garlic into the oil as your test piece. Turn the heat to medium. Once the garlic is bubbling, add the remaining garlic. If the oil doesn't quite submerge the garlic, add a little bit more to keep the garlic barely covered.

Turn the heat down to medium-low and stir constantly, keeping the bubbling gentle, until the garlic is golden and the bubbling has mostly subsided, 5 to 8 minutes. The more you make, the longer it will take. Don't let the garlic darken too much or it will be bitter; you want it golden, not brown. It will also continue to darken slightly after frying.

Drain the garlic through a metal sieve, catching the oil in a bowl underneath, and it's ready to use. Keep the garlic and oil separately in airtight containers; in the fridge they will last for at least a few months. The oil may harden in the fridge, depending on what kind you use, so be sure to bring it out to room temperature at least 30 minutes before using.

Note: You can scale this recipe up as much as you want; just be sure to use enough oil to cover the garlic.

No Bubbling = Crispy

If you want your fried garlic crispy, a reliable indicator of crispiness is the lack of bubbling in the oil. When food is still moist, the moisture evaporates into vapor and pushes its way out of the food—that's what the bubbles are. So when there is very little moisture left, i.e. food is crispy, there is also very little bubbling left. You don't need to have zero bubbles, but the bubbles should definitely look "tired" before you pull the garlic from the oil.

Five-Spice Powder

Pohng Palo | ພົງພະໂລ

MAKES ABOUT $\frac{1}{4}$ CUP (60 ML)

COOKING TIME: 5 minutes

I know there are six spices on this list, but hey, some store-bought powders have only four, so I'm being generous here! As with most spice mixes, the combination of spices is not set in stone, but the four you absolutely need to have are cinnamon, star anise, clove, and coriander. Fennel seeds and Sichuan peppercorns I consider optional. Don't make too much at a time, as ground spices lose their aroma quickly.

2 teaspoons (10 ml) coriander seeds (see [note](#))

1 piece star anise

20 whole cloves

1 teaspoon (5 ml) Sichuan peppercorns (optional)

1 teaspoon (5 ml) fennel seeds (optional)

1 tablespoon (15 ml) ground cinnamon, or 6 inches (15 cm) cinnamon stick

In a dry skillet, toast the whole spices, including the cinnamon stick, if using, over medium-high heat until the coriander seeds darken slightly and there is smoke coming up from the pan. Pour immediately onto a plate to cool. This toasting step is optional, but it will be beneficial, especially in soups, where the spices will not be exposed to high heat.

Place the spices in a coffee grinder, add the ground cinnamon, if using, and grind until fine. Store in an airtight container for up to 6 months in a cool, dry, and dark place.

Note: Always buy whole coriander seeds and grind them yourself. Store-bought ground coriander has very little aroma compared with whole seeds. If you can't find them at your usual stores, try stores that carry a lot of Indian ingredients.

Roasted Chili Flakes

Prik Pohn | ພົກປັນ

COOKING TIME: 10 minutes

Prik pohn is a staple condiment in every Thai household. It's added to many dishes and also used as a table-side condiment for adding heat to any dish that needs it, without the extra flavors or oils that hot sauce or other spicy condiments would add. When you buy noodle dishes in Thailand, for example, they always comes with *prik pohn* for you to customize the spice level. And, if you use enough of it, it'll also add a slight smokiness, which comes from the roasting. You can use any type of dried chilies that are spicy, whether Thai, chiles de árbol, or the generic dried chilies sold at many Chinese markets.

Any amount of spicy dried red chilies, washed (see Wash Those Dried Chilies! [this page](#))

In a dry wok or skillet, toast the chilies over medium heat, stirring constantly, until they develop some charred spots and smell smoky. If you're not making a huge amount, this will happen in just a few minutes, so keep an eye on them. Transfer the chilies to a plate to cool.

Grind the chilies into small flakes using a coffee grinder or mortar and pestle. If using a grinder, allow the chili dust to settle before slowly opening the lid. Store in the fridge or freezer, as over time dried chilies can get mold that won't be visible.





Thai-Style Chicken or Pork Stock

Nam Stock | ນໍາສົດອົກ

MAKES ABOUT 12 CUPS (3 L)

COOKING TIME: at least 55 minutes for chicken stock, 1 hour 40 minutes for pork stock

Using store-bought stock in Thai cooking is okay...sometimes. For soups where the flavor of the stock is key, you will be much better off making your own, because store-bought stocks are made with Western aromatics and have the wrong flavors. In Thailand, pork stock is our basic stock that's used the most often, but chicken stock will work just fine.

Amounts do not need to be precise

2 pounds (1 kg) chicken or pork bones (see [note](#))

14 cups (3.5 L) water

5 cloves (25 g) garlic, smashed

1 onion, large-diced

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon (1 ml) white peppercorns, crushed

4-inch (10 cm) piece daikon, peeled, large-diced (optional, see [note](#))

2 to 3 cilantro roots, or about 8 stems (optional)

2 stalks lemongrass, top half only, cut in chunks (optional)

Wash the bones in cold water and place them in a big stockpot. Add the water and bring to a simmer over high heat. Once simmering, turn the heat down to low.

After simmering for about 15 minutes, skim off any scum that has floated to the top, then add all the vegetables and aromatics. If making chicken stock, simmer for at least another 30 minutes (for a total of 45 minutes). If making pork stock, simmer for at least another 1 hour and 15 minutes (for a total of 1½ hours). The longer you simmer, the more flavorful it will be. Top it up with water as needed to keep the bones submerged.

Strain the stock. It is now ready to use. The stock will keep for 1 week in the fridge and indefinitely in the freezer. If using freezer bags, do not overfill or the bags may burst in the freezer. When thawing the stock in freezer bags, always put the bag in a bowl in case there's a small tear in the bag, especially if it's been rubbing against other things in the freezer.

Notes: You can buy pork bones in the meat section of most Asian grocery stores; pork neck or back bones are perfect for making stock.

When peeling daikon, peel off a few layers until the color turns from a bright, opaque white to a darker, translucent white. The outer layer of the daikon is a bit bitter.

Waste Not!

Depending on what kind of bones you're using, there can be a lot of meat left on the bones. I always use pork neck bones because they're particularly meaty, and in addition to a great stock I also end up with enough meat for another meal for two! So once you've made the stock, pick all the meat off the bones and throw it into soups, stews, stir-fries, fried rice...anything! The meat will be very tender but rather bland, so I always toss it with a bit of soy sauce first before adding it to dishes.

Homemade Tamarind Paste

Nam Makaam Piak | ນໍາມະຫມເປີກ

MAKES ABOUT 2 CUPS (500 ML)

COOKING TIME: 20 minutes plus 20 minutes soaking

I grew up making tamarind paste at home fresh whenever we needed some. When I came to Canada, I was over-the-moon excited at the convenient premade jars you can buy. But I was quickly disappointed, as that paste can be quite diluted and barely sour, and I needed to use so much of it to get good flavor. So I'm going back to basics here. Homemade tamarind paste is packed with acidity and flavor, not to mention that it's easy and costs you much less than store-bought. You can keep the paste in mason jars—it will keep for many months in the fridge—or freeze it into ice cubes and it'll last indefinitely. The process of making tamarind paste is probably easiest to understand by watching a video, so check it out by scanning the QR code on the left.

½ pound (225 g) seedless tamarind pulp (see [note](#))

2 cups (500 ml) hot water

Use your hands to pull apart the tamarind block into small chunks and place them in a large, heatproof mixing bowl.

Pour the hot water over the tamarind and let it sit until it's cool enough for you to handle, at least 20 minutes. You can let it sit for as long as you need at this point—the longer it sits, the easier the next step will be.

Use your hand, preferably gloved if you don't want tamarind stuck in your nails, to squeeze and scrunch the pulp to loosen it from the fibers. You should end up with something that has the consistency of a smoothie.

Once you can feel that most of the pulp has been released from the fibers, strain the tamarind mixture into a pot through a sieve, but avoid a fine-mesh sieve, as the paste will be thick (Asian noodle strainers work great for this). Push as much of the liquid through as possible, and scrape the bottom of the sieve occasionally.

Gradually pour about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (125 ml) room temperature water over the remaining fibers in the sieve while using your hand to mix it all around. This will rinse off any last little bit of tamarind still stuck in the fibers.

You can use the tamarind paste right away for cooking, but for storage, cook it over medium-high heat until it boils, stirring constantly, because it is quite thick and can bubble and jump at you if you don't stir. Allow it to bubble for 4 to 5 minutes to ensure that it is thoroughly heated through before turning off the heat.

Transfer the hot tamarind paste to clean 1-cup (250 ml) mason jars. I like using the smaller ones so each jar will not be open for as long. Close the lids while the paste is still hot and let cool at room temperature before moving to the fridge for storage. You can also freeze the paste in ice cube trays and then store the cubes in freezer bags.

Note: Buy tamarind pulp that comes in a rectangular block, and it should be a product of Thailand. Do not use tamarind pulp from whole pods, as those are sweet tamarind meant for eating, not cooking.



How to Make Tamarind Paste

Fish Sauce & Chilies Condiment

Prik Nam Pla | ພົກນ້າປລາ

Some call it *prik nam pla*, others call it *nam pla prik*, but either way, this is the most beloved condiment in Thailand. If I ask for it at a Thai restaurant and the server doesn't know what I'm talking about, I'm taking a lot of points off that place. *Prik* means "chilies" and *nam pla* means "fish sauce," and at the basic level that's all you need, but often a squeeze of lime is added for a touch of acidity. It's our all-purpose condiment that can be added to anything that needs extra seasoning. Salty, acidic, and a little spicy (or a lot if you eat the chilies), it just boosts all the flavors and brings to life any dish that seems a little dull. It's our salt and pepper, our general fix-all.

You don't really need a recipe for this because you can just make as much as you need, and the ratios are entirely up to you, depending on how spicy or tart you want to make it. I make *prik nam pla* only when I need it, so that the lime juice flavor stays fresh, but it will keep indefinitely in the fridge.

Fish sauce

Thai chilies, chopped (see [note](#))

Lime juice

Chopped garlic (optional)

Chopped shallots (optional)

Place the fish sauce in a bowl, then add as many chopped chilies as you like, depending on how spicy you want it. Add a squeeze of lime. I never measure for this recipe, but a rough ratio is about three parts fish sauce to one part lime juice, though you can add more if you want it tarter. Add chopped garlic and shallots, if desired.

If you add shallots and garlic, let it sit for 15 minutes before using, to allow the flavors to infuse.

Note: *If you do not want to eat the chili pieces, leave them quite chunky so it's easy to avoid them. Otherwise, chop them finely.*



