



Ingredient Substitution Guide

When someone asks “What can I use instead of...?” my follow-up question is always “For what dish?” Substitutes are rarely universal, and you can’t determine the best substitute until you know what role that ingredient plays in that dish. For the same ingredient, I may suggest different substitutes depending on the dish. Or I may tell you to just omit it. Or I may even tell you not to try to make that dish without it.

Having said that, there are some substitutions that generally work, so I have provided a guide here, but please use this guide in combination with your own good cooking judgment and intuition!

INGREDIENT	SUBSTITUTE
Basil, holy	Italian basil. Thai basil can also be used, but the flavor of Italian basil is more similar to that of holy basil, so it's my preferred substitute.
Basil, Thai	Italian basil.
Dried shrimp	Generally, you can omit , or use Japanese bonito flakes instead.
Fermented soybean paste (tao jiew)	Korean doenjang or Japanese miso , starting with the same amount, then tasting and adjusting as needed. <i>Tao jiew</i> is runnier, but it tends to be saltier.
Fermented shrimp paste (gapi)	Korean doenjang or Japanese miso , but this works only when used in small amounts. The flavors of these pastes are completely different,

	but it does work in adding some umami saltiness. Often you can just omit shrimp paste if only a small amount is called for.
Fish sauce	Soy sauce or Thai seasoning sauce , in equal amounts.
Galangal	No good substitute. Look for frozen galangal, which works well in all recipes, or dried galangal, which works in soups.
Lemongrass	No good substitute. Look for frozen lemongrass, which sometimes comes prechopped. Dried and powdered lemongrass are not recommended.
Makrut lime leaves	No good substitute. Look for frozen, which works well in all recipes. Dried leaves work in soups and curries. Lime zest doesn't have the same aroma, but can be added for a similar citrus effect.
Oyster sauce	Vegetarian stir-fry sauce , sometimes labeled as "mushroom vegetarian sauce," in equal amounts. Or substitute slightly less of soy sauce or Thai seasoning sauce.
Palm sugar	Light brown sugar , in equal amounts by weight and volume; 1 tablespoon (15 ml) packed finely chopped palm sugar = 1 tablespoon (15 ml) packed brown sugar.
Tamarind paste	Lime juice , in roughly equal amounts, though you always want to taste and adjust. In small amounts where it's used just to add a touch of acidity, a dash of Worcestershire sauce works too.
Thai seasoning	Maggi Seasoning, Bragg Liquid Aminos, or soy sauce , in equal amounts. If the recipe

sauce	already calls for soy sauce, you could use two different types of soy sauce.
White pepper	Black pepper in equal amounts.

Thai Cooking Equipment

MORTAR & PESTLE, STONE | KROK HIN | คอกหิน Mortar and pestles are our blender, food processor, and spice grinder all in one, and every Thai home has one because we make a lot of herb pastes in Thai cooking. It's more work to use, but they are superior to machines in that they can grind anything, wet or dry, no matter how small the amount, and without ever having to add extra liquid. If you don't have one yet but want one, I recommend getting a granite mortar and pestle that is at least 6 inches (15 cm) in external diameter, which is a good all-purpose size. If you want to make curry pastes in it, get an 8-inch (20 cm) one. For the record, I have 4-inch (10 cm), 6-inch (15 cm), and 8-inch (20 cm) stone mortars, and one clay salad mortar (see below).

MORTAR & PESTLE, SALAD | KROK SOM TUM | คอกลั่นต้ม Most Thai homes have a larger light-duty mortar made from clay or wood that comes with a wooden pestle. These are made specifically for pounded salads, such as the famous green papaya salad, or *som tum*. They're generally less useful than the granite one, so there's no need to own one of these unless you plan on having Thai pounded salads on the regular.

STEAMER | SEUNG | ชาม When I came to Canada, I was surprised to learn that many people here do not own a steamer, a core piece of cookware in Thai homes. The steamer is the reason whole fish are part of everyday Thai home cooking. Steaming also cooks things very quickly compared