

# **STEAMED, PAN-FRIED & ROASTED**

Neung, Yaang, Ob | ນຶ່ງ ຢ່າງ ອຸປ

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## **When There is No Oven**

I think of these recipes as “put them in and let them go” kind of dishes. In the West, these would be things you put into the oven, but since Thai people do not cook with ovens, these are foods that we steam or grill.

The steamer is our oven. It is what we use to cook large pieces of protein, such as a whole fish, and it is how we often cook our

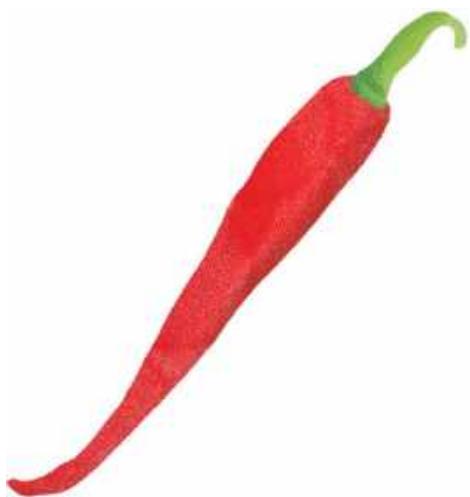
desserts. Grilling is not often done at home, so most grilled foods in Thailand are sold by restaurants or street vendors. But luckily grilling is much more accessible here with barbecues in most backyards, and at least a broiler in the oven that can get the job done in a pinch.

Pan-frying isn't something we do much of since traditionally we only use woks. My family didn't own skillets until much later when we started venturing into Western cooking. So there aren't really any Thai dishes that are supposed to be pan-fried, but I have modified a few recipes to be made in a skillet, as there really isn't a better tool for creating a good sear.

## Steaming 101

If you have only ever steamed vegetables but not meats or whole dishes, here are some pointers for success. For more on steaming implements, see [this page](#).

- **Always preheat the steamer.** Just like the oven, you want the food to go into a hot chamber, so before cooking, bring the water to the temperature indicated in the recipe (boil, simmer, etc.). For most dishes, the water should be boiling.
- **Keep an eye on the water.** Having all the water boiled dry and the bottom of your pot scorched is not fun, but I also don't add an excessive amount of water as it takes forever to preheat. I usually start with about 2 inches of water.
- **Beware of steam burns.** You can put a baking sheet into a 350°F oven with bare arms and the dry hot air will not burn you in that short time. But the moist heat of a steamer transfers much more efficiently, which means it can burn you in seconds. When placing food into a steamer, always use oven mitts or steamer tongs.



# 3-Flavor Fish

Pla Raad Prik Saam Roht | ปลาราดพริกสามรส

SERVES 4

COOKING TIME: 25 minutes

*Saam roht* means “three flavors,” which in this case refers to the sauce—it’s sweet, salty, and sour in equal measure. It’s an easy dish that looks impressive—a simple pan-seared fish drenched in a glossy red sauce. Traditionally, we deep-fry a whole fish for this, but I find that a well-seared fish, especially with its skin, is equally satisfying. I live in Vancouver, and lingcod is my favorite local species to serve with this sauce, but you can use any white fish that’s tender and flaky, as long as it’s got a thick enough meat to stand up to the flavorful sauce.

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8 sprigs cilantro

6 cloves (30 g) garlic, chopped

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

1 to 2 Thai chilies, or to taste

$\frac{1}{4}$  (70 g) red bell pepper, finely chopped

4 tablespoons (60 ml) neutral oil, divided

$\frac{1}{3}$  cup (65 g) finely chopped palm sugar, packed

3 to 4 tablespoons (45 to 60 ml) tamarind paste, store-bought or homemade ([this page](#)) 3 tablespoons (45 ml) fish sauce

1 pound (450 g) white fish fillet

$\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup (38 to 75 g) all-purpose flour or cornstarch

Jasmine rice, for serving

**If you're using fish that is thicker than 1 inch (2.5 cm),** preheat the oven to 350°F (175°C) in case you need to finish cooking the fish in it.

**Cut the cilantro sprigs in half,** separating the part with leaves from the stems alone. Finely chop the stems, and set the leafy parts aside for garnishing.

**Using a mortar and pestle, pound the cilantro stems,** garlic, and peppercorns into a fine paste. Add the chilies and pound to form a rough paste. Add the bell peppers and crush gently just until the pepper pieces are smashed and some juices are released.

**In a small pot over medium heat, pour in 1 tablespoon (15 ml) oil** and cook the pounded pepper mixture for about 3 minutes, stirring constantly. Once the mixture has lost about half of its liquid, add the palm sugar, tamarind paste, and fish sauce. Keep cooking until the sugar is dissolved, then let the sauce simmer for 3 to 4 minutes to thicken to the consistency of a thin syrup.

**Turn off the heat,** then taste and adjust the seasoning as needed. If it is too strong, you can add a splash of water to dilute; if it is too weak, reduce the sauce a bit longer. Remember that this sauce will go on completely unseasoned fish, so its flavor should be quite strong on its own. Cover the pot while you fry the fish.

**Pat the fish dry with paper towel,** then generously sprinkle it with flour, coating the fish on both sides. Shake off any excess flour so you have a thin, even coating.

**Heat a large nonstick skillet** over medium-high heat, then pour in enough oil so the bottom is thoroughly coated. When the oil is very hot, carefully place the fish, skin side up, into the pan, letting it drop away from you. There should be a loud, excited sizzling as soon as the fish touches the pan.

**Fry the fish without moving it for 2 to 3 minutes**, until it is well browned and about halfway cooked. Flip and cook on the other side for another 2 to 3 minutes. If you’re using a thick fillet, you may need to finish it in the oven for about 5 minutes or so. Check the doneness of the fish either by carefully cutting open the center of the fillet with a dinner knife (the flesh should flake easily and look opaque) or inserting an instant-read thermometer into the center—the internal temperature should be a minimum of 145°F (63°C).

**Place the cooked fish on a serving platter** that has some depth to hold the sauce. Reheat the sauce if needed, and if it has dried out while it sat, you can also stir in a splash of water. Pour the sauce over the fish.

**Chop the reserved cilantro leaves** and sprinkle overtop to garnish. Serve with jasmine rice.

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***Do-ahead:*** Make the sauce up to 1 week in advance and keep in the fridge.

### Three Friends

Saam roht has three flavors, but there’s another trio hidden in the dish called saam glur, or “three friends.” This is the pounded mixture of cilantro roots (or stems), garlic, and white peppercorns. It’s essentially the Thai mirepoix, a flavor base for so many dishes, especially marinades and sauces. When I smell saam glur as I’m pounding them in my mortar, that is the smell of Thailand to me.





# Steamed Prawns in Garlic Lime Sauce

Goong Neung Manao | ກຸ່ງນຶ່ງມະນາວ

SERVES 4

COOKING TIME: 20 minutes

Bright, tart, garlicky, fresh, this sauce is everything you want on fresh seafood. Don't eat prawns? Substitute any seafood here and it'll be fantastic. The most common version of this dish is done with a whole fish, and in Thailand, steaming a whole fish is part of everyday cooking, as you can find whole fish just about everywhere, and every kitchen has a large steamer. Here in North America, it is not always so easy to find whole fish, and I remember being shocked that I couldn't find it at non-Asian supermarkets! So making this dish with prawns simplifies things, but it's also common to use squid. Get the largest prawns you can find (or even lobster) for an elegant presentation.

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1 pound (450 g) large prawns, at least 16/20 count, peeled and deveined  
(see note on [this page](#))  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup (125 ml) unsalted chicken stock

6 cloves (30 g) garlic, finely chopped

1 to 2 Thai chilies, minced

1 tablespoon (12 g) finely chopped palm sugar, packed

3 tablespoons (45 ml) lime juice

2 $\frac{1}{2}$  tablespoons (37 ml) fish sauce

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup (60 g) small-diced celery, plus an optional handful of celery leaves, for garnish

$\frac{1}{3}$  cup (80 ml) chopped cilantro, plus extra for garnish

Jasmine rice, for serving

**Set up the steamer** and bring the water to a full boil over high heat.

**Place the prawns in a heatproof dish** with enough depth to catch the liquid that will be released during cooking; a pie plate works well (note: this will be your serving dish). You can stack the prawns if needed, but keep the height even so that they cook in the same amount of time.

**Make the sauce** by adding the stock to a small pot and bringing it to a boil over high heat. Turn off the heat and add the garlic and chilies; stir for 30 seconds to allow the garlic to infuse into the stock. Stir in the sugar, lime juice, and fish sauce. Taste and adjust the seasoning as needed.

**Steam the prawns for 4 to 8 minutes, until fully cooked.** The timing will vary depending on the size of the prawns, so it's a good idea to check them early so as to not overcook them.

**Carefully remove the prawns from the steamer** and place the dish on a plate lined with moist paper towel for easier handling (the paper towel keeps it from sliding). You'll notice a lot of liquid around the prawns; spoon off 3 tablespoons (45 ml) and add it to the sauce, then pour or spoon off the rest and discard (it's okay to leave a little bit behind).

**Stir the celery and cilantro into the sauce** and pour it over the prawns, then garnish with celery leaves and cilantro.

**Serve** with jasmine rice and a generous helping of sauce.





# Steamed Black Cod with Thai Miso

Pla Hima Neung Tao Jiew | ปลาhimะนิ่งเต้าเจี้ยว

SERVES 4

COOKING TIME: 20 minutes

In my biased opinion, no one does steamed fish better than Thai people. Although we don't have a huge variety of steamed fish dishes, we have a handful of sauces that are tried and true. This one is a favorite of mine for fatty fish like black cod. The generous amount of ginger and the sharp, salty fermented soybean paste cut the fat so perfectly. You can steam a whole fish if you like, but fish steaks are great and more manageable, since they don't require such a large steamer. Fillets work too, but steaming fish bone-in keeps the meat more moist and delicious.

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1 pound, 2 ounces (510 g) black cod steaks (see [note](#))

4 teaspoons (20 ml) soy sauce, divided

1 tablespoon (15 ml) neutral oil

4 cloves (20 g) garlic, chopped

2-inch piece (24 g) ginger, finely julienned

$\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon (1 ml) ground white pepper

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup (125 ml) unsalted Thai-style chicken or pork stock, store-bought or homemade ([this page](#)) 2 tablespoons (30 ml) fermented soybean paste

1 tablespoon (15 ml) granulated sugar

1 green onion, chopped, white and green parts separated

Jasmine rice, for serving

**Set up the steamer** and bring the water to a full boil over high heat.

**Place the fish on a heatproof dish** with some depth for the sauce; a pie plate works well (note: this will be your serving dish). Drizzle 1 teaspoon (5 ml) soy sauce evenly onto the fish and spread it around with your fingers. Steam for 7 to 8 minutes, until the fish is cooked through.

**While the fish steams, make the sauce.** Put a small pot or a skillet over medium heat, then add the oil, garlic, ginger, and white pepper, and sauté for about 2 minutes, until the garlic starts to turn golden. Add the stock, fermented soybean paste, sugar, and the remaining soy sauce, and simmer for about 2 minutes to allow the garlic and ginger to infuse into the sauce. Remove from the heat and add the white part of the green onions.

**Once the fish is done, carefully remove it from the steamer** and place the dish on a plate lined with moist paper towel for easier handling (the paper towel keeps it from sliding). Spoon or pour off most of the collected water around the fish; it's okay to leave a little bit. For some fish, such as black cod, there will be pin bones that should be visible now that the fish is cooked. Use tweezers or your fingertips to pull them out; they should slide out easily—if they're sticking, it means the fish is not yet cooked through.

**Pour the sauce over the fish.** Top with the green part of the onions. Serve with jasmine rice.

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**Do-ahead tips:** *The sauce can be made up to a few days in advance and stored in the fridge until ready to use, then brought to a simmer before pouring onto the fish.*

**Note:** *If black cod is not available, use any mild, tender white fish.*





# Self-Saucing Steamed Pork with Ginger

Moo Sub Neung Taochu | หมูสับนึ่งเต้าหู้

SERVES 4

COOKING TIME: 30 minutes

Thai people use ground pork a *lot*. My fridge is always stocked with ground pork, and as soon as I run out, it immediately goes on the shopping list. This dish always seems a bit magical to me because you put a mess of ground pork into a bowl, but upon opening the steamer you find a beautiful patty sitting in an incredibly flavorful sauce that you'll want to drench your rice with. The soft tofu lightens and adds creaminess, which I love, but if you're serving veggies on the side, you can skip it.

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5 thin slices (12 g) ginger

1 tablespoon (15 ml) neutral oil

3 cloves (15 g) garlic, finely chopped

1.7 ounces (50 g) fresh shiitake mushrooms, large stems removed,  $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch (6 mm) diced

12 ounces (340 g) ground pork, preferably not lean

1 tablespoon (15 ml) soy sauce

1 tablespoon (15 ml) oyster sauce

1 tablespoon (15 ml) Chinese cooking wine (optional, see [note](#))

1 teaspoon (5 ml) granulated sugar  
¼ teaspoon (1 ml) ground white pepper  
1 to 2 green onions, chopped, white and green parts separated  
5 ounces (150 g) soft tofu, cut in 1-inch (2.5 cm) cubes (optional)  
Jasmine rice, for serving

**Set up the steamer** and bring the water to a full boil over high heat.

**Finely mince 3 slices of ginger.** Finely julienne the remaining 2 slices for garnish, and set aside.

**In a small skillet, add the oil, garlic, and minced ginger,** and sauté over medium heat for 2 to 3 minutes, until the garlic starts to turn golden. Add the mushrooms and sauté for 1 minute. Turn off the heat and transfer the mixture to a mixing bowl to cool slightly.

**Add the pork to the mushroom mixture,** then add the soy sauce, oyster sauce, Chinese cooking wine, sugar, pepper, and the white part of the onions. Mix just until well combined.

**Taste the pork by cooking up a small chunk** in the microwave or in the steamer, if it's ready, then adjust the seasoning as needed.

**Place the pork in a heatproof dish** with some depth to catch the sauce; a pie plate works well (note: this will be your serving dish). Shape the pork into a disk, about 1 inch (2.5 cm) thick, flattening the surface.

**If using tofu, use your finger to make a deep hole in the pork,** then put a piece of tofu into the hole so that it's sticking out the top slightly. Repeat with the remaining tofu pieces, spacing them out evenly.

**Steam for about 15 minutes, until the pork is cooked through,** or until an instant-read thermometer inserted in the center of the patty registers at least 165°F (74°C).

**Turn off the heat, sprinkle the julienned ginger** and the green part of the onions on top of the patty, then close the steamer for 30 seconds or so, to steam the onions briefly.

**Carefully remove the dish from the steamer** and place on a plate lined with moist paper towel for easier handling (the paper towel keeps it from sliding). Serve with jasmine rice.

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**Do-ahead:** *The pork can be mixed up to 1 day in advance and steamed when ready to serve.*

**Note:** *I use salted Chinese cooking wine, which is widely available, but if you have the unsalted kind, even better. You can also substitute dry sherry or sake. No need to add salt, as the salted wine isn't very salty.*

### A Love Letter to Ground Pork

Ground pork is easily my favorite meat to use because of its versatility and ease of use (no chopping? I'm in!). Unlike ground beef, the flavor is mild enough that it can be used in any recipe, but unlike ground chicken, it's fatty and flavorful and generally makes for more delicious dishes. We put it into omelets, use it for meatballs, and add it to stir-fries and even salads! And it's the perfect stuffing for just about anything that can be stuffed. When I was a kid, we ground the pork by hand, mincing it with a big cleaver. It was my favorite task in the kitchen—the rhythmic sound of the cleaver hitting the butcher's block reminds me of home to this day. If you don't eat pork and want to substitute ground chicken, be sure to use ground dark-meat chicken so it isn't too lean and dry.





# Thai Pork Omelet

Kai Jiew Moo Sub | ກ້າຍົວໜຸ້ສັບ

SERVES 1 OR 2

COOKING TIME: 10 minutes

If I had to choose a national dish for Thailand, this would be a strong contender. In its simplest form, it requires nothing but eggs and fish sauce, and yet it manages to be so delicious and nourishing for the soul. It is our “nothing else to eat” or “dorm life” dish, which can be found in every culture, I’m sure. You can omit the ground pork for a truly basic *kai jiew*, but the meat and green onion make for a more substantial meal that doesn’t seem quite as desperate. You can get fancy by adding oyster sauce, chopped onion, or white pepper, but using only fish sauce is the original formula. I’ve provided recipes for two versions; the two-egg is perfect for a solo meal—for one of those alone and lazy nights—and it’s also much easier to flip an 8-inch (20 cm) omelet than a larger one. The three-egg version is great for two people or for sharing as part of a bigger meal.

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FOR A 3-EGG OMELET (10-INCH/25 CM SKILLET)

3 large eggs (see [note](#))

4 ounces (115 g) ground pork (see [note](#))

2 teaspoons (10 ml) fish sauce (see [sidebar](#)) 1 green onion, chopped (optional)

3 tablespoons (45 ml) neutral oil

**FOR A 2-EGG OMELET (8-INCH/20 CM SKILLET)**

2 large eggs (see [note](#))

2.5 ounces (75 g) ground pork (see [note](#))

1½ teaspoons (6 ml) fish sauce (see [sidebar](#)) 1 small green onion, chopped (optional)

2 tablespoons (30 ml) neutral oil

**FOR SERVING**

Jasmine rice

Sriracha-style hot sauce

**In a small mixing bowl, beat the eggs** with a fork until no streaks of egg whites remain. Add the ground pork, fish sauce and green onions, and mix until the pork is all broken up.

**Place a nonstick skillet over high heat** and add the oil; there should be enough oil to evenly and generously coat the bottom. Wait for the oil to get very hot. Test the oil temperature by dropping a small amount of egg into the oil; it should puff up excitedly right away.

**Pour the eggs into the pan** and quickly scramble the center of the eggs for 5 to 8 seconds; this will allow the omelet to cook more evenly. Don't stir the edges, so that you keep a nice round shape, and don't stir for too long or you'll end up with scrambled eggs.

**Turn the heat down to medium** and cook the omelet for about 3 minutes, until the underside is well browned and it's set enough to flip; the top will still be a bit runny, which is okay.

**Flip the omelet.** If you're so inclined, toss the pan to flip the omelet in one piece. (A tip: if you've never pan-flipped before, this is not the dish to experiment with!) For a "safer" flip, use your spatula to cut the omelet into 3 wedges, like a pizza, then flip them with the spatula one piece at a time.

**Cook the second side** for about 2 minutes, until well browned and cooked through. Serve immediately with rice and hot sauce.

See image on [this page](#)

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**Notes:** If you are using different-sized eggs, you will need to adjust the amount of fish sauce accordingly. A large egg in North America weighs about 2 ounces (56 g).

Ground chicken or shrimp can also be used.

For a meatless omelet, use 1 teaspoon (5 ml) fish sauce for every 2 large eggs.

### EyeBalling Fish Sauce

Most of the time, if I'm cooking for myself, I eyeball the ingredients, as I'm sure many of you do. But speaking from past experience, use measurements for the Thai Pork Omelet. It is so hard to get the right number of glugs of fish sauce, and because fish sauce is so potent, half the time I'd end up with an omelet that was too salty, which is frustrating and not really fixable. After too many salty omelets, I decided to stick to a formula. The ratio in this recipe is a good one to start with, but you may need to adjust depending on the brand of your fish sauce and the size of your eggs, or if you're adding other fillings.



# Steamed Tofu Deluxe

Taohu Neung Song Kreuang | ເຕັກຫຼຸ້ນໆທຽບເຄືອງ

SERVES 4

COOKING TIME: 10 minutes

In Thai, the term *song kreuang* is used to describe a version of a dish that has a lot of extra ingredients added so it looks, well, deluxe. Steamed tofu sounds rather plain, but with the abundance of colorful sautéed veggies around it, this is one of the most delicious and beautiful ways to eat tofu. Soft tofu becomes creamy when steamed, but what makes this dish special is the sauce. Salty, savory, and sweet, this meal is one even a meat eater will find truly satisfying.

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## SAUCE

1½ tablespoons (22 ml) Chinese cooking wine (see note on [this page](#)) 1  
tablespoon (15 ml) soy sauce

1 tablespoon (15 ml) fermented soybean paste

1½ teaspoons (7 ml) brown sugar

¼ teaspoon (1 ml) ground white pepper

10.5 ounces (300 g) soft tofu

1 tablespoon (15 ml) neutral oil

2 cloves (10 g) garlic, chopped

¼ medium (60 g) yellow onion, julienned

1-inch piece (12 g) ginger, julienned  
½ medium (30 g) carrot, julienned  
1.7 ounces (50 g) Asian mushrooms, such as shimeji, enoki, or shiitake  
8 snow peas, julienned  
Jasmine rice, for serving

**Set up the steamer** and bring the water to a full boil over high heat.

**Make the sauce** by combining the cooking wine, soy sauce, soybean paste, brown sugar, and white pepper in a small bowl; stir to dissolve the sugar.

**Unmold the tofu** into a heatproof dish with some depth for the sauce; a pie plate or a pasta bowl works well (note: this will be your serving dish).

**Set aside 1 tablespoon (15 ml) sauce** and pour the remaining sauce over the tofu. Steam the tofu for about 8 minutes, until hot all the way through.

**While the tofu steams, cook the vegetables.** Place a wok or skillet on medium heat and add the oil, garlic, onions, and ginger. Sauté until the onions are wilted and the garlic is golden, 2 to 3 minutes. Add the carrots, mushrooms, snow peas, and reserved sauce and stir until the vegetables are cooked, 1 to 2 minutes. Turn off the heat but keep the veggies in the pan while you wait for the tofu to steam.

**Once the tofu is done, turn off the heat** and carefully remove it from the steamer. Place the dish on a plate lined with a moist paper towel for easier handling (the paper towel keeps it from sliding). You'll notice there is a lot more liquid in the tofu bowl now; use a spoon to gently stir the sauce, then give it a taste. It should be very flavorful, since the tofu is mild, but if it tastes too salty, you can add a splash of water to dilute.

**Arrange the vegetables on top of and around the tofu** and serve with jasmine rice.

### **Tofu in a Tube**

I use soft tofu that is packaged in a square container, but you can also get one that comes in a tube. In fact, when I was growing up in Thailand, soft tofu only came in tubes, so when I discovered squared packages, I thought it rather novel. To get the tofu out of the tube, simply cut it in half with a sharp knife right through the packaging and slide the tofu out. Then, for this recipe, slice the tofu into  $1\frac{1}{2}$ -inch (4 cm) thick pieces and arrange them on the heatproof dish you're using to steam.





# Tom Yum Mussels

Hoi Malang Pu Tom Yum | ဟိမယမလ္မဂုတ်မံ့

SERVES 4

COOKING TIME: 7 minutes

I credit the idea for this recipe to my best friend, Byron, who started steaming mussels in *tom yum* broth. It's a brilliant combination. It's as if the tart and citrusy flavors, plus the slight sweetness from the chili paste, were specifically made for mussels. Even if you don't have Thai chili paste, this recipe still works with an extra touch of sugar and some added tomatoes for umami. Usually, I'd say to serve with rice, but with this dish I love soaking a toasted crusty sourdough in the broth.

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2 stalks lemongrass, bottom halves only

1¾ cups (435 ml) unsalted Thai-style chicken or pork stock, store-bought or homemade ([this page](#)) ½ cup (50 g) julienned shallots

8 thin slices (20 g) galangal

2 to 3 Thai chilies, crushed

1½ tablespoons (22 ml) fish sauce

1 to 2 tablespoons (15 to 30 ml) Thai chili paste, store-bought or homemade ([this page](#)) 5 makrut lime leaves

2 pounds (1 kg) live mussels, cleaned and debearded

3 to 4 tablespoons (45 to 60 ml) lime juice

10 sprigs cilantro, chopped

Crusty sourdough toast, for serving

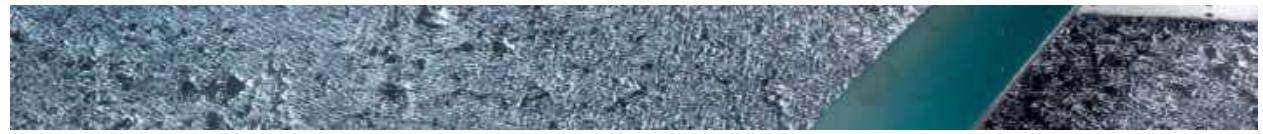
**Thinly slice 1 stalk of lemongrass and set aside.** Smash the second stalk until broken, then cut into 2-inch (5 cm) chunks. (I don't slice all of it, in order to keep the broth less "cluttered.") **In a large pot with a lid, combine the stock,** shallots, chunks of lemongrass, galangal, chilies, fish sauce, and 1 tablespoon (15 ml) Thai chili paste. Twist the makrut lime leaves to bruise them and release their aroma before tearing them into big chunks and adding to the pot, discarding any big center stems. Cover and simmer over medium heat for 4 to 5 minutes.

**Add the reserved sliced lemongrass and the mussels,** then cover the pot and cook for about 2 minutes, until the mussels open. If any are not open, cook them for another 30 seconds, and if they still do not open, discard them.

**Turn off the heat, then add 3 tablespoons (45 ml) lime juice** and swirl the pot around to mix. Taste the broth and adjust the seasoning with more lime juice and fish sauce as needed. If it needs more sweetness or a more robust flavor, add more chili paste. It's important to taste and adjust, because the mussels will release different amounts of liquid, so each batch will be different.

**Stir in the cilantro,** transfer to a serving bowl, and serve with crusty sourdough toast. You can remove the lemongrass, galangal, and lime leaves before serving, or if leaving them in, tell your guests they are not meant to be eaten.





# Baked Thai BBQ Chicken

Gai Yang Tao Ob | ໄກຍ່າງເຕາອບ

SERVES 4

**COOKING TIME:** 40 minutes, plus at least 30 minutes of marinating For many Thais, no other meat on the grill hits the spot quite like *gai yang*, served with sticky rice and *nam jim jeaw* as a dipping sauce. In Thailand, the chickens are grilled whole and spatchcocked, then chopped up into parts when served. For many years in Canada, I had no grill, so I oven-roasted my *gai yang*, and I always found it perfectly satisfying because the marinade is incredible no matter how you cook the chicken. Using chicken thighs instead of a whole chicken reduces the cooking time without sacrificing any flavor. This is a recipe to prep in advance because of the marinating time, but I've included a speedy version here that involves only 30 minutes of marinating time (see [sidebar](#)), because sometimes you just really need *gai yang* right away.

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6 to 7 cilantro sprigs

2 teaspoons (10 ml) toasted coriander seeds

1½ teaspoons (7 ml) white peppercorns

5 cloves (25 g) garlic

2 tablespoons (15 g) minced lemongrass, from bottom half only

1 tablespoon (15 ml) granulated sugar

3 tablespoons (45 ml) soy sauce

2 tablespoons (30 ml) fish sauce

1 to 2 teaspoons (5 to 10 ml) black soy sauce  
½ cup (125 ml) water  
8 chicken thighs (2½ pounds/1.2 kg), bone-in, skin-on  
1 to 2 tablespoons (15 to 30 ml) neutral oil, for brushing  
Sticky rice ([this page](#)) or jasmine rice, for serving **JEAW DIPPING SAUCE (NAM JIM JEAW)**  
1 tablespoon (15 ml) uncooked jasmine rice  
2 tablespoons (15 g) minced shallots  
2 tablespoons (30 ml) tamarind paste, store-bought or homemade ([this page](#)) 1 tablespoon (15 ml) fish sauce  
1 tablespoon (15 ml) lime juice  
1 tablespoon (12 g) finely chopped palm sugar, packed  
¼ to ½ teaspoon (1 to 2 ml) roasted chili flakes, store-bought or homemade ([this page](#)), or to taste **Cut the cilantro sprigs in half**, separating the part with leaves from the stems alone. Finely chop the stems, and set the leafy parts aside for the dipping sauce.

**Make the marinade** by grinding the coriander seeds and peppercorns into a powder with a mortar and pestle. Add the cilantro stems and garlic, and pound into a fine paste. Add the lemongrass and pound into a rough paste. Scrape it into a small mixing bowl.

**To the herb paste, add the sugar**, soy sauce, fish sauce, black soy sauce, and water (omit the water if speed-marinating; see [sidebar](#)); stir until the sugar is dissolved.

**Place the chicken in a large freezer bag** or a casserole dish that's just large enough to fit the chicken in one layer. Pour the marinade over the chicken and toss the pieces to coat well. Seal the bag or cover the dish and marinate for

at least 2 hours or overnight, flipping the chicken halfway through to ensure even marinating.

**Preheat the oven to 400°F (200°C)**, or 375°F (190°C) on convection, and set the rack in the middle. Line a roasting pan with aluminum foil or parchment paper for easier cleanup, and place a rack on top of it. Remove the chicken pieces from the marinade, shaking off any excess and discarding the marinade, and put them on the rack, skin side up, making sure they are not touching each other. Roast for 20 minutes, then once the skin is dry, pull them out of the oven and brush the skin with some neutral oil, which will help it brown and shine. Roast for another 15 to 25 minutes, until the internal temperature reaches 175°F (80°C).

**While the chicken roasts, make the dipping sauce.** In a dry skillet, toast the uncooked rice over medium-high heat, moving it constantly, until the rice has a dark-brown color, about 5 minutes. Grind into a powder using a coffee grinder or mortar and pestle.

**In a small bowl, combine the shallots, tamarind paste**, fish sauce, lime juice, palm sugar, and chili flakes; stir until the sugar is mostly dissolved. Don't worry about a few stubborn chunks; they'll have dissolved by the time you need the sauce. When ready to serve, chop the reserved cilantro and stir it into the sauce along with the toasted rice powder.

**Allow the chicken to rest for 10 minutes** before serving. Serve with sticky rice and dipping sauce. Note: *Nam jim jeaw* is intense, and a little bit goes a long way. So a drizzle or a dip is sufficient; don't pour it on like gravy!

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**Do-ahead:** Marinate the chicken up to 1 day in advance. You can also make the dipping sauce 1 day in advance, but add the toasted rice powder and cilantro close to serving time.

### Speed-Marinating

Even though *gai yang* tastes best when you marinate it for at least 2 hours, it is possible to do it in only 30 minutes. Omit the water from the recipe to make the marinade more concentrated, and increase the fish sauce to 3 tablespoons (45 ml). With less liquid to go around, make sure you flip the chicken halfway through for even distribution. While it's marinating and roasting, you'll have plenty of time to make the sauce and the rice.





# No-Skewer Chicken Satay

Gai Sa Te | ໄກສະເຕະ

SERVES 4

**COOKING TIME:** 40 minutes, plus at least 20 minutes of marinating It took a lot of self-convincing for me to include a recipe for chicken satay, because for years I've been preaching about the fact that 99% of satays in Thailand are pork, not chicken. But it occurred to me that if you're going to cook boneless, skinless chicken breasts one way or another, the satay treatment is one of the best things you can do to this otherwise unexciting protein. I've omitted the most dreaded part of satay, the skewering, which instantly makes this weeknight-friendly. Throw the chicken on the grill if you have one, or pan-sear indoors. The *ajaad*, or quick pickles, are extra but a nice contrast to a rich dish, though you can also eat this with any tart pickles you already have in the fridge.

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## MARINADE

1½ teaspoons (7 ml) coriander seeds  
½ teaspoon (2 ml) cumin seeds  
½ teaspoon (2 ml) white peppercorns  
1 tablespoon (15 ml) brown sugar  
¾ teaspoon (3 ml) table salt  
¾ teaspoon (3 ml) ground turmeric  
½ teaspoon (2 ml) ground cinnamon

1 tablespoon (15 ml) tamarind paste, store-bought or homemade ([this page](#))  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup (125 ml) coconut milk

2 large boneless, skinless chicken breasts (1.2 pounds/ 550 g), cut in long  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch (1.2 cm) thick strips Jasmine rice and/or white toast, for serving (see [this page](#)) **PEANUT SAUCE**

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup (70 g) unsalted roasted peanuts

$1\frac{1}{4}$  cups (310 ml) coconut milk, divided

2 tablespoons (30 ml) red curry paste, store-bought or homemade ([this page](#)) 2 tablespoons (30 ml) tamarind paste, store-bought or homemade ([this page](#)) 2 tablespoons (24 g) finely chopped palm sugar, packed

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

#### **AJAAD—QUICK CUCUMBER PICKLE, (OPTIONAL)**

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup (125 ml) white vinegar

$\frac{1}{4}$  cup (50 g) granulated sugar

Pinch of table salt

5 ounces (150 g) cucumber

1 to 2 Thai chilies, chopped (optional)

#### **FOR THE MARINADE**

**Grind the coriander seeds, cumin seeds, and peppercorns** with a coffee grinder or mortar and pestle until very fine, then transfer to a mixing bowl. Add the brown sugar, salt, turmeric, cinnamon, tamarind paste, and coconut milk; stir to mix well.

**Add the chicken to the marinade** and mix very well to ensure all the pieces are coated. Marinate at room temperature for 20 minutes or cover and refrigerate for up to 1 day. The longer it marinates, the better—just stir it once or twice during the marinating time.

#### **FOR THE PEANUT SAUCE**

**Using a mortar and pestle or a food processor,** grind the peanuts until mealy. If using a machine, be careful not to turn them into peanut butter; you want texture in the peanut sauce.

**Put about  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup (80 ml) coconut milk in a small pot** and bring to a boil over medium heat. Add the curry paste and cook for about 3 minutes, stirring constantly until the mixture is very thick and the coconut oil starts to separate from the paste (the oil may not separate depending on the coconut milk you're using; this is okay).

**Add the remaining coconut milk and stir to mix well.** Add the peanuts, tamarind paste, and palm sugar, and simmer gently for 5 minutes, stirring frequently, until thickened into a dip consistency. Be sure to scrape the bottom of the pot when stirring to prevent scorching. If the sauce gets too thick before 5 minutes of cooking time is up, add a splash of water so that you can give it the full 5 minutes to develop the flavor.

**Taste and add fish sauce as needed.** If it tastes a little flat, add a bit more tamarind paste to bump up the acidity.

#### **FOR THE AJAAD**

**In a small pot, combine the vinegar, sugar, and salt.** Cook over medium heat just until the sugar is completely dissolved. Let cool completely.

**Cut the cucumber in half lengthwise,** then thinly slice crosswise so you get half-moon pieces. Place the cucumber and chilies in a small serving bowl and pour the cooled vinegar mixture overtop. Keep covered until ready to serve. Don't combine the cucumber with the pickling liquid more than 30 minutes before serving, as it's best when the cucumbers are still fresh and firm.

#### **COOKING THE CHICKEN**

**To grill:** Preheat the grill on high heat, then arrange the chicken perpendicular to the grates, discarding the marinade. Cook with the lid open for 2 to 3 minutes,

then flip and cook on the other side for another 2 minutes or until cooked through. The internal temperature should reach 165°F (74°C).

**To pan-fry:** Place a large nonstick skillet over high heat. Pour in enough oil to thinly coat the bottom. Once hot, use tongs to lift the chicken strips one piece at a time, shaking off any excess marinade, and place them in the pan. You'll need to do this in batches so you don't crowd the pan. Turn the heat down to medium-high and let the chicken sear until well browned, 2 to 3 minutes, then flip and sear on the other side until fully cooked, about another 2 minutes. Remove from the pan and repeat with the remaining chicken, discarding the marinade.

**Serve the chicken with the peanut sauce** for dipping, with the pickles and jasmine rice and/or toast on the side.

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**Do-ahead:** *The sauce can be made in advance and kept in the fridge for at least 1 week. The chicken can be marinated 1 day in advance, and the pickle brine made in advance.*

### You Want Toast with That?

In Thailand, it is common to serve satay with a piece of white toast. While it's not necessary, I don't feel satay is complete without it, because dipping the toast in the sauce between bites of meat is my favorite part of satay. And you'll likely have some leftover sauce, so you're going to need to eat it with something! I've even tried this as an open-faced sandwich—piling the chicken, the sauce, and the pickles on top of a piece of toasted hearty bread—and it was brilliant.





# Isaan Steak Dinner

Neua Yang Jim Jeaw Makeua Ted | ້່ນຍ່າງຈິມແຈ່ວມະເຂອ  
ເທດ

SERVES 4

COOKING TIME: 30 minutes

In my house, on our low-energy days, we slap a steak on the barbecue or in the frying pan. No chopping, just salt and pepper, and done. Sound boring? That's because I haven't told you yet about the dipping sauce: *nam jim jeaw*, a classic sauce from northeastern Thailand (Isaan) that we use for all manner of grilled meat. Let me tell you, gravy's got nothing on *jeaw*. Add sticky rice and, if you're so inclined, make a pounded salad like the cabbage slaw on [this page](#), and you've got a perfect Isaan steak dinner. I've added fresh tomatoes to this version of *jeaw* because the tomato chunks add some freshness to each bite of steak that I really love.

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4 steaks, cut of your choice

Salt and ground black pepper

Sticky rice, for serving

## ISAAN-STYLE TOMATO DIPPING SAUCE (JEAW MAKEUA TED)

1 tablespoon (15 ml) uncooked jasmine or sticky rice

2 tablespoons (15 g) minced shallots

2 tablespoons (30 ml) tamarind paste, store-bought or homemade ([this page](#)) 1 tablespoon (15 ml) fish sauce

1 tablespoon (15 ml) lime juice

1 tablespoon (12 g) finely chopped palm sugar, packed

$\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon (1 to 2 ml) roasted chili flakes, or to taste

$\frac{1}{3}$  cup (60 g) diced tomatoes

6 to 7 sprigs cilantro or mint leaves, chopped

**Take the steaks out of the fridge** up to 1 hour before cooking. If you've got at least 45 minutes before you need to start cooking, season the steak with salt and pepper. If you have less than 45 minutes, leave the salting until right before cooking. Salting for less than 45 minutes will draw out moisture from the steaks but it won't have time to seep back in.

**To make the dipping sauce**, toast the uncooked rice in a dry skillet over medium-high heat, moving it constantly, until the rice has a dark-brown color, about 5 minutes. Grind into a powder using a coffee grinder or mortar and pestle. Set aside.

**In a small bowl, combine the shallots, tamarind paste**, fish sauce, lime juice, sugar, and chili flakes; stir until the sugar is mostly dissolved. Don't worry about a few stubborn chunks; they'll have dissolved by the time you need the sauce.

**You can cook the steaks however you usually do**, to whatever doneness you like. If grilling, oil the steaks beforehand and grill on high heat, uncovered. If pan-frying, use high heat and add enough oil to generously coat the bottom of the pan, for even browning. A cook time of 5 to 6 minutes will get you to about medium doneness for a 1-inch (2.5 cm) thick steak, and I flip the steak every  $1\frac{1}{2}$  minutes for even cooking. Rest the steaks for at least 5 minutes before cutting, 10 minutes if the steak is large.

**While the steaks rest, finish the sauce** by stirring in the toasted rice powder, tomatoes, and cilantro or mint to taste.

**If you want to serve the steaks Thai style, slice them** into thin pieces and serve with sticky rice and the dipping sauce. Note: *Nam jim jeaw* is intense, and a little goes a long way. So a drizzle or a dip is sufficient; don't pour it on like gravy!





# Seared Scallops with Tom Yum Sauce

Hoi Shell Raad Sauce Tom Yum | หอยเชลล์ราดซอสต้มยำ

SERVES 4

COOKING TIME: 10 minutes

Over the years, I have shared many a *tom yum* recipe, from various versions of the traditional soup to *tom yum* pizza. *Tom yum* is my favorite flavor for instant noodles, chips, and pretzel sticks. You might say I'm a little obsessed, but this is true of many Thai people, not just me! This dish is the most elegant *tom yum* dish I've ever made. So luxe, yet so easy and quick, perfect for a special occasion that you might not have much time to prep for, like a weeknight anniversary dinner. For a side dish pairing, I suggest some sautéed Asian mushrooms, such as oyster or shimeji. Because mushrooms are usually a must-have in a traditional *tom yum*, they would go very well together.

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

1 pound (450 g) scallops (see [note](#))

$\frac{1}{4}$  cup (30 g) julienned shallots

1 tablespoon (7 g) minced galangal (optional)

1 to 2 Thai chilies, minced

1 stalk (20 g) lemongrass, bottom half only, thinly sliced

5 makrut lime leaves

$\frac{1}{4}$  cup (60 ml) unsalted chicken stock or water

1½ tablespoons (22 ml) fish sauce

1 tablespoon (15 ml) Thai chili paste, store-bought or homemade ([this page](#)) 1 teaspoon (5 ml) granulated sugar

1½ tablespoons (22 ml) lime juice

Chopped cilantro, for garnish (optional)

Jasmine rice, for serving

**Place a 12-inch (30 cm) skillet over high heat** and pour in just enough oil to coat the bottom of the pan. Once the oil is hot, add the scallops, one at a time, without them touching each other; they should sizzle excitedly right away. Turn the heat down to medium-high and sear the scallops until the underside is browned, about 2 minutes. Flip and cook the other side for 1 to 2 minutes, to medium doneness; looking at the scallops from the side, you should still see a small band of translucent meat in the center.

**Turn off the heat and transfer the scallops** to a plate; don't pile them into a bowl or they will steam each other and you'll lose that nice browned crust.

**In the same pan, turn the heat to medium** and add the shallots, galangal, chilies, and lemongrass. Twist the makrut lime leaves to bruise them, then tear them into big chunks and add them to the pan, discarding any big center stems. Sauté the mixture for 2 to 3 minutes, until the shallots are soft and translucent.

**Deglaze the pan with the stock**, then add the fish sauce, chili paste, and sugar. The scallops should have released some liquid as they sat; pour this tasty liquid into the sauce and stir to mix. Simmer the sauce for about 1 minute to infuse the flavors of the herbs into the liquid.

**Turn off the heat and stir in the lime juice.** Taste and adjust the seasoning as needed, and if it is too strong, add more stock or water to dilute.

**Pour the sauce onto a serving plate** and arrange the scallops overtop. Garnish with cilantro and serve with jasmine rice.

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**Notes:** Ideally, you want scallops that are about 16 pieces to a pound, which are about 1½ inches (4 cm) in diameter when raw. Larger ones are okay, but they will take longer to cook. Avoid small scallops, as they are not meaty enough to withstand the strong flavors of the sauce.

### A Little Less Fancy

If there are no occasions to justify scallops, this sauce works wonderfully with other seafood too, like big, juicy shrimp, pan-seared fish, or squid. Even chicken will work. In fact, once you've made the sauce, it's likely that you'll want to put it on everything!



