

ສະບາຍ

SABAI

100 Simple Thai Recipes
for Any Day of the Week



Bestselling and
award-winning author of
Hot Thai Kitchen



PAILIN CHONGCHITNANT



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แพลิน จงจิตรนันท์

appetite
by RANDOM HOUSE

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Library and Archives of Canada Cataloguing in Publication is available upon request.

ISBN: 9780525611714

eBook ISBN: 9780525611721

Cover and book design by Talia Abramson, adapted for ebook Photography by Janis Nicolay

Published in Canada by Appetite by Random House®, a division of Penguin Random House LLC.

www.penguinrandomhouse.ca



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To Kaan: Never forget your roots.



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Introduction

The Two Things I Want

After more than 12 years of teaching people all over the world how to cook Thai food, I've had a lot of time to think about what it is that I ultimately want people to take away at the end of my lessons. And I've come to the conclusion that there are two things.

First, I want people to experience the Thai flavors that I grew up with. While Thai food at most restaurants outside Thailand is enjoyable, ask any Thai person living abroad and they will all agree that it can be a challenge to find one that really tastes like home.

Second, and perhaps more important, I want people to feel that they *can* cook real Thai food, and that they can do it regularly, on any given night of the week. I've been amazed by the number of emails I've received over the years in which the writer uses the word "intimidated" to describe how they felt about cooking Thai food before watching my videos. I want to assure you that it's not any harder than any other cuisine, and it's not more complicated. There is a bit of a learning curve if you're new to these ingredients and techniques, but it will all fall into place with a bit of practice.

Cooking Thai Food Is Not Hard

For many of us, cooking food from an unfamiliar cuisine usually starts out as a project. You take the time to read the recipe, watch a YouTube video or two, make a trip to a specialty grocer or even a few...it's a real investment! And it's truly upsetting if, after all that, the recipe fails. And even if it doesn't, the whole process can still feel like a lot of work.

This first experience too often leaves people with the wrong impression that this new cuisine is too difficult or time-intensive, and so it gets relegated to the land of “weekend projects” forever. Few people realize, though, that it has nothing to do with the cuisine itself.

Cooking any new cuisine for the first time is going to be a bit of work because there’s a lot to deal with that you don’t normally have to when cooking your “comfort cuisine.” You have to get to know the ingredients, source them, and then actually read the recipe word for word because you don’t know how to wing it. It’s a bit like learning how to ride a bike, and it can seem like you’ll never get your feet off the ground.

But I can assure you it’s not the fault of the cuisine itself, because when I was living in Thailand, I tried to learn Western cooking, and wow...what’s oregano? What’s a potato masher? Canned tomatoes —people *can* tomatoes? Imagine doing that when you couldn’t google any of it. It left me thinking, “Man, this *farang* food is hard!” It happens to everyone.

But once you try a few dishes, get to know some of the ingredients, and understand some new techniques, it will click. Then next thing you know, you’ll have enough ingredients in your pantry to pull off many Thai dishes on a whim, and you’ll have the confidence to do it too.

Some Thai Dishes Are Complicated, but These Recipes Are Not

When most people think of Thai food, they’re usually thinking of dishes served in restaurants or by street vendors in Thailand. But those dishes represent only a fraction of Thai cuisine, ones cooked by professionals. Dishes cooked in the home are much more manageable and simpler. Thai people need quick weeknight dinners too, you know!

That is what this book is for. My goal for this book was to put together a compilation of authentic recipes that are straightforward and quick to make, or what I call “weeknight friendly,” while giving

you just enough of the “Thai Cuisine 101” info to support you without overwhelming you. For a deeper dive into the foundational principles and cultural context of Thai cuisine, my first book, *Hot Thai Kitchen*, is a great resource.

Recipes You Can Cook Sabai-Sabai

I have never believed in enticing but unachievable promises like “15-minute meals,” because we all know those 15 minutes don’t include unpacking your grocery bags, washing your vegetables, or doing dishes because you need that pan again, and you have to make sure you chop quickly and do absolutely no cleaning as you go.

I picked the recipes in this book based on whether I can use the word *sabai* to describe the process of making them. *Sabai* is the Thai word that describes the state of being at ease or comfortable. Relaxed. Not rushed. Easy-peasy. From prepping to cooking to eating, everything is *sabai-sabai*, as we like to say. Essentially, these are dishes that are simple, with no tedious, time-consuming steps—definitely no skewering or individually wrapping anything (okay, the salad rolls on [this page](#) require wrapping, but it’s quick and totally worth it). Finally, these recipes are hard to screw up. Nothing here requires you to be particularly skilled or precise, so you can actually cook *sabai-sabai*. Some recipes, such as for braises and stews, may require relatively long hands-off time, and some benefit from an overnight marinade. These are perfect for making on your day off when you’ve got the time, which makes the day-of an absolute breeze.

In other words, all of these are dishes you can pull off on a weeknight, with opportunity for advance prep if you’re into that. Ultimately, I’d love for Thai food, with the help of this book, to be part of your regular meal repertoire. I hope you love reading and cooking from this book as much as I have loved writing it.

P.L.







How to Use This Book

I have given you more than just recipes in this book: I've also provided useful information that will help you immensely when navigating recipes if Thai cuisine is unfamiliar to you. With these extra tidbits, you'll feel much more equipped to make cooking Thai food a part of your regular repertoire.

SIDEBARS: For most recipes, I've provided additional information in a sidebar that gives cultural context to the dish, suggests a modification, or explains an unusual step. As regular viewers of my YouTube show know, I believe it's important not only to have the how-to but also to understand the dishes you're cooking in a deeper way. You'll be a much better cook in the long term.

INGREDIENTS DICTIONARY: If you are new to Thai cuisine and are unfamiliar with our ingredients, I've provided a Thai ingredient dictionary of a sort ([this page](#)). I've kept it brief so that you can quickly get just what you need, but if you want a more detailed study, watch the videos on the "Thai Ingredients 101" playlist on my YouTube channel.

EQUIPMENT DICTIONARY: You can certainly cook Thai food with the pots and pans you've got at home, but there are a few items that will help make it much easier. Consult the equipment section ([this page](#)) for an overview, and you can also check out my website, where I post a comprehensive list of all the equipment I use on the show.

HOW TO COMPOSE A THAI MEAL: Thai home cooking is always served family style, with every meal consisting of multiple dishes that complement each other. While you certainly can make just one dish for a meal, if you want