

# ONE-DISH MEALS (RICE & NOODLES )

Ahaan Jaan Diew | อฮาาน jaan diew

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## Street Food at Home

“One-dish meal” is a literal translation of the Thai term for this category of dishes, *ahaan jaan diew*, because it appears in stark contrast to how we eat most other foods. These are the sandwiches of Thai cuisine—something you eat for a quick lunch, or when you’re by yourself. A lot of these also happen to be street food, because street food is what most people eat when they don’t have much time or when they’re alone.

This is not to say these dishes are any less appropriate for an at-home dinner, but it does mean that many of these recipes have had to be simplified, because they are not things most people cook at home, with the exception of the fried rices.

## Mastering Thai Noodle Soups

I've provided a few noodle soup recipes here, but I'd like you to use them as a guide or a template for making your own, changing up the meats and veggies, and experimenting with the broth.

When you make noodle soups from scratch, it can feel like there are a lot of ingredients to stay on top of, but the cooking actually goes very quickly. In Thailand, a noodle soup vendor who has all their prep done can make your bowl in less than 1 minute! In the context of home cooking, the secret is to have as much of the prep done in advance as possible. The first time you make a noodle soup meal, it might still feel a bit chaotic, but you'll get the hang of it soon.

**There are two things you absolutely should do in advance:** make the stock and fry the garlic. These are the only components that take time to make; everything else is pretty manageable. The stock will keep for at least 1 week in the fridge, or it can be frozen in freezer bags. If you can soak the noodles in advance then drain and keep them in the fridge, that will help too.

## Tips for Perfect Thai Noodle Soups

**ALWAYS, ALWAYS USE HOMEMADE STOCK.** This makes all the difference. There are times when it's okay to use store-bought stocks, but this is not one of them. The stocks you buy at the store are made with Western aromatics, with ingredients like celery and thyme or other herbs, depending on the brand. This does not work in Thai noodle soups. They are also not made with many bones, so they don't have the body that a homemade stock would have. Not to mention, the most common stock we use is pork stock, which isn't usually available premade. See [this page](#) for a Thai-style homemade stock,

but even if you just boiled bones and water without any aromatics, you'd be better off than using store-bought.

**ALWAYS ADD FRIED GARLIC AND GARLIC OIL.** It sounds like just a final flair that can be omitted, but these two ingredients are incredibly important. You will not find a single noodle soup in Thailand that doesn't come with fried garlic, and it makes a big difference. Get this made ahead of time (see the recipe on [this page](#)), and keep it in the fridge so you have it ready to go.

**PRE-SOAK THE RICE NOODLES.** Although you can cook rice noodles from dried, they have the best texture when rehydrated, then blanched for only a few seconds. You can soak them in advance, drain, and keep them in a sealed container in the fridge for up to a few days. In the refrigerated section of larger Asian grocery stores, you can find fresh, uncooked rice noodles specifically made for noodle soups; they do not need to be soaked and can be cooked in boiling water for only 5 to 10 seconds. Don't confuse these with the fresh *cooked* rice noodles, which are not meant for noodle soups; the uncooked ones should still be translucent and quite hard, but not dried.

**GET A NOODLE STRAINER.** This utensil helps a lot, especially if you have at least three mouths to feed. Asian-style noodle strainers are a cylindrical sieve with a hook that allows them to be hooked onto the edge of a pot (see photo on [this page](#)).

To use, put one portion of noodles along with the veggies into the strainer, then jiggle it in boiling water for 5 to 10 seconds. Lift, shake off excess water, and plop the noodles and veggies right into the serving bowl. Repeat with the remaining portions.

A metal sieve could be used instead if it's the right size and can be submerged into the water, but many are awkward to use because they're too wide and shallow. Draining noodles into a colander requires you to cook all the noodles at once, which is okay to do, but separating cooked noodles is much more of a pain than separating uncooked ones.

You could fish out the noodles using a large slotted or mesh skimmer or a spider, but if you plan on cooking noodle soups again in the future, it may be worth buying a noodle strainer from your Asian grocery or kitchen supply store; it'll cost only a few dollars and will make a world of difference.

Once you've tried the noodle soup recipes in this book, check out my other noodle soup recipes on my YouTube channel:



*Noodle Soup Playlist*



# Egg Noodles with Shrimp Gravy

Bamee Raad Na Goong | บะหมี่ราดหน้ากุ้ง

SERVES 4

COOKING TIME: 20 minutes

*Raad na* is one of the quintessential street food dishes of Thailand. It's ubiquitous at food courts around the country and a popular option for lunch. Fresh noodles topped with a light gravy, with Chinese broccoli and any kind of meat or seafood, this dish of Chinese origins has been adopted and is widely loved in Thailand. Most commonly, this is made with fresh wide rice noodles, like the ones used in the popular Thai dish, *pad see ew*, but those are harder to find and work with, so the egg noodle version is perfect for a no-fuss meal. I use the kind of egg noodles that are sold fresh and are usually labeled "wonton noodles." They are quite thin and delicate, not thick and chewy like ramen noodles.

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- 1 jalapeño or other hot pepper, thinly sliced
- 2 to 3 tablespoons (30 to 45 ml) white vinegar
- 2 tablespoons (30 ml) neutral oil
- 6 cloves (30 g) garlic, chopped
- 3 cups (750 ml) unsalted Thai-style chicken or pork stock, store-bought or homemade ([this page](#))
- 3 tablespoons (45 ml) fermented soybean paste
- 1½ tablespoons (22 ml) soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon (15 ml) Thai seasoning sauce
- 1½ tablespoons (22 ml) granulated sugar

$\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon (2 ml) ground white pepper  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  cup (30 g) tapioca starch or cornstarch  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  cup (60 ml) water  
12 ounces (340 g) shrimp, size 26/30 or larger, peeled and deveined  
7 ounces (200 g) Chinese broccoli (*gai lan*), stems thinly sliced, leaves coarsely chopped (see [note](#)) 12 ounces (340 g) fresh wonton noodles

**Bring a large pot of water** to a boil for the noodles.

**Make the chili vinegar** by putting the pepper in a nonreactive bowl and covering with the vinegar.

**Make the gravy** by placing a wok or medium pot on medium heat. Add the oil and the garlic. Once the garlic is bubbling, stir until the pieces start to turn golden.

**Add the stock, fermented soybean paste,** soy sauce, seasoning sauce, sugar, and pepper; bring to a full boil over high heat. While you wait, dissolve the tapioca starch in the water and set aside. Once the gravy boils, add the shrimp and the Chinese broccoli, and cook for just 30 seconds.

**Stir the tapioca starch slurry** and pour about three-quarters of it into the sauce while stirring. Wait until the gravy returns to a boil to see how thick it is, and if it needs more thickening, add the remaining slurry. (The starch reaches full thickening power near boiling temperature, so you don't want to judge the thickness prematurely.) **Remove the wok from the heat**, then taste and adjust the seasoning as needed.

**Pull the noodles apart to loosen them.** Add them to the boiling water and stir briefly, then cook for 1 to 2 minutes (the timing will vary for different noodles), until they are fully cooked.

**Drain the noodles or scoop them out** with a mesh skimmer. If not serving right away, toss the noodles with some oil to keep them from sticking together.

Otherwise, divide them among the serving bowls and pour the gravy over the noodles.

**Serve immediately with the chili vinegar.** You can drizzle the noodles with a bit of the vinegar to add some tartness, and you can eat the pickled chilies as well.

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**Note:** Choose younger, smaller *gai lan* if possible, as they are more tender and less likely to be bitter.

### The Mystery of Thinning Gravy

When you eat *raad na*, you'll discover that toward the end of the meal, the gravy becomes runny. By the time you're done, the gravy sometimes looks like there was no starch in it at all, but if you just leave it, it stays thick for days. Maybe you've noticed this similar thinning happening with clam chowder, potato soup, or other starch-thickened soups. It's common knowledge among Thai people that this is what happens to *raad na*, but few stop and wonder why it happens. After investigating, I found out that as you eat, the spoon carries digestive enzymes from your mouth back into the gravy, and these enzymes break down starches. The important takeaway: don't double-dip the communal bowl of gravy!



# Street-Style Noodle Soup with Pork Meatballs

Guay Tiew Look Chin Moo | กวยเตี๊ยวลูกชิ้นหมู

SERVES 4

COOKING TIME: 30 minutes

This is perhaps the most basic, classic noodle soup in Thailand. No matter where you are in the country, you won't be far from a vendor selling noodle soups with *look chin*, which are Asian-style meatballs. They're the perfect protein for weeknight meals because they're precooked and ready to go. Noodle soups can require a bit of organization, so using no-effort proteins makes it a lot easier. *Look chin moo*, or pork meatballs, are the most common type in Thailand, but you can substitute other types of meatballs in this recipe. If you have any leftover meats, like steak or cooked chicken, lingering in the fridge, thinly slice and add them to the soup—*guay tiew* is the perfect home for random odds and ends. For more tips on noodle soups, see Mastering Thai Noodle Soups ([this page](#)).

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## NOODLE SOUP

8 ounces (227 g) dried rice noodles, size small (see [note](#))

8 ounces (227 g) Asian-style pork meatballs (see [note](#))

2 cups (120 g) bean sprouts

2 cups (10 g) spinach or another leafy green

About 1½ tablespoons (22 ml) fried garlic and garlic oil, store-bought or homemade ([this page](#)) 1 green onion and/or 5 to 6 sprigs cilantro,

chopped

Roasted chili flakes, store-bought or homemade ([this page](#)) (optional)

#### BROTH

4½ cups (1.1 L) unsalted Thai-style pork or chicken stock, store-bought or homemade ([this page](#)) 2 tablespoons (30 ml) soy sauce

1 tablespoon (15 ml) fish sauce

1½ teaspoons (7 ml) granulated sugar

Freshly ground white pepper, to taste

**Soak the noodles in room temperature water** until they are completely pliable, about 20 to 30 minutes. If you're short on time, use warm water and they will take less time to soften.

**Bring a large pot of water to a full boil** for blanching the noodles and vegetables.

**Meanwhile, make the broth** by adding the stock to a medium pot on high heat. Add the soy sauce, fish sauce, sugar, and pepper; bring to a simmer.

**Add the meatballs to the broth** and simmer for 1 minute to heat through. Cover and keep the broth hot on the lowest heat possible while you wait for the noodle water to boil.

**Place one portion each of the noodles**, bean sprouts, and spinach in a noodle strainer or a metal sieve that will fit into the pot. Dunk the strainer into the boiling water and wiggle it around for 5 to 8 seconds. Lift it out, shake off as much water as possible, and then plop the noodles and veggies into a serving bowl. Repeat with the remaining portions.

**Divide the meatballs among the serving bowls** and ladle the hot broth overtop until it just covers the noodles, about 1 cup (250 ml) per bowl.

**Top each bowl with about 1 teaspoon (5 ml) fried garlic**, a drizzle of garlic oil, and chopped green onions and/or cilantro to taste. Serve with chili flakes if you like it spicy.

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**Notes:** Choose rice noodles from Thailand, and the size small should be about 1/16 inch (2 mm) wide when dried. I estimate about 2 ounces (60 g) of dried noodles per person, but if you've got big eaters, use 3 ounces (85 g) per person.

Asian supermarkets sell a large variety of meatballs in both the refrigerator and freezer sections. Pork is my favorite, but any kind will work.



### *Homemade Asian-Style Pork Meatballs*

#### **Homemade Meatballs**

Unlike Western-style meatballs, which are quite easy to make, Asian-style meatballs require a bit of time and special technique. So, while they may not be something you want to make on a weeknight, it's a fun project for the weekend or whenever you have some time, and you can freeze them for later. It's something that's best learned via video so that you can see the texture you are looking for and, most importantly, see the squeezing technique used to form the round, smooth meatballs. If you want to make them, check out my YouTube video:



# Braised Chicken Noodle Soup

Guay Tiew Gai Toon | กวยเตี๋ยวไก่ตุ๋น

SERVES 4

**COOKING TIME:** 40 minutes in Instant Pot, 1 hour on the stovetop This dish is inspired by our popular duck noodle soup, in which duck legs are slowly stewed in a dark, rich broth bursting with spices. It's the perfect noodle soup for the fall or winter, when you might want something a little richer than clear broth soups. I like to use chicken instead of duck, which cuts down the braising time from 2 hours to only 45 minutes, and even less if you use a pressure cooker. If you don't want to mess with noodles, this soup is equally satisfying over rice with some veggies. For more tips on noodle soups, see [this page](#).

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8 ounces (225 g) dried rice noodles, size small (see note [this page](#)) 4 to 6 leaves green-leaf lettuce (see [note](#))

2 cups (120 g) bean sprouts

About 1½ tablespoons (22 ml) fried garlic and garlic oil, store-bought or homemade ([this page](#)) 1 green onion and/or 5 to 6 sprigs cilantro, chopped

Roasted chili flakes, store-bought or homemade ([this page](#)) (optional)

## BRAISED CHICKEN SOUP

4 large chicken thighs (1½ pounds/680 g) bone-in, skin-on

½ small onion, chopped

8 inches (20 cm) cinnamon stick

2 pieces star anise

1 teaspoon (5 ml) coriander seeds

$\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon (2 ml) Sichuan peppercorns (optional)  
8 thin slices galangal (optional)  
2 tablespoons (24 g) finely chopped palm sugar, packed  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon (2 ml) ground white pepper  
2 tablespoons (30 ml) soy sauce  
2 tablespoons (30 ml) oyster sauce  
1 tablespoon (15 ml) white or rice vinegar  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  to 1 tablespoon (7 to 15 ml) black or dark soy sauce

**Soak the noodles in room temperature water** until they are completely pliable, about 20 to 30 minutes. If you're short on time, use warm water and they will take less time to soften.

**Optional step: If you're feeling ambitious,** toast the whole dry spices by adding the cinnamon stick, star anise, coriander seeds and Sichuan peppercorns to a dry sauté pan over medium-high heat. Stir constantly until the coriander seeds darken slightly. Pour them onto a plate to cool.

**If you have cheesecloth,** wrap the galangal and all the whole dry spices inside it and tie it closed. You can add this bundle directly to the soup; it will make it easier to remove the spices afterward.

**For the stovetop method:** Place  $4\frac{3}{4}$  cups (1.2 L) water in a large pot and add all the Braised Chicken Soup ingredients. Bring to a simmer over high heat, then turn the heat down to medium-low. Loosely cover the pot and cook for 40 to 45 minutes, until the chicken is fork-tender.

**For the Instant Pot method:** Place 4 cups (1 L) water and all the Braised Chicken Soup ingredients in the Instant Pot and cook on high pressure for 5 minutes. Allow it to naturally release for 10 minutes before releasing the remaining pressure.

**Bring a large pot of water to a boil** for blanching the noodles and bean sprouts. Tear the lettuce leaves into bite-sized pieces and divide them among the serving bowls.

**Once the chicken is done**, remove the spice bag or use a mesh skimmer to skim off the floating spices. You can also skim off any excess fat from the surface, if you wish. Taste and adjust the seasoning with salt or soy sauce as needed. Cover and keep on the lowest heat, or the Keep Warm setting if using an Instant Pot, so it stays hot while you cook the noodles.

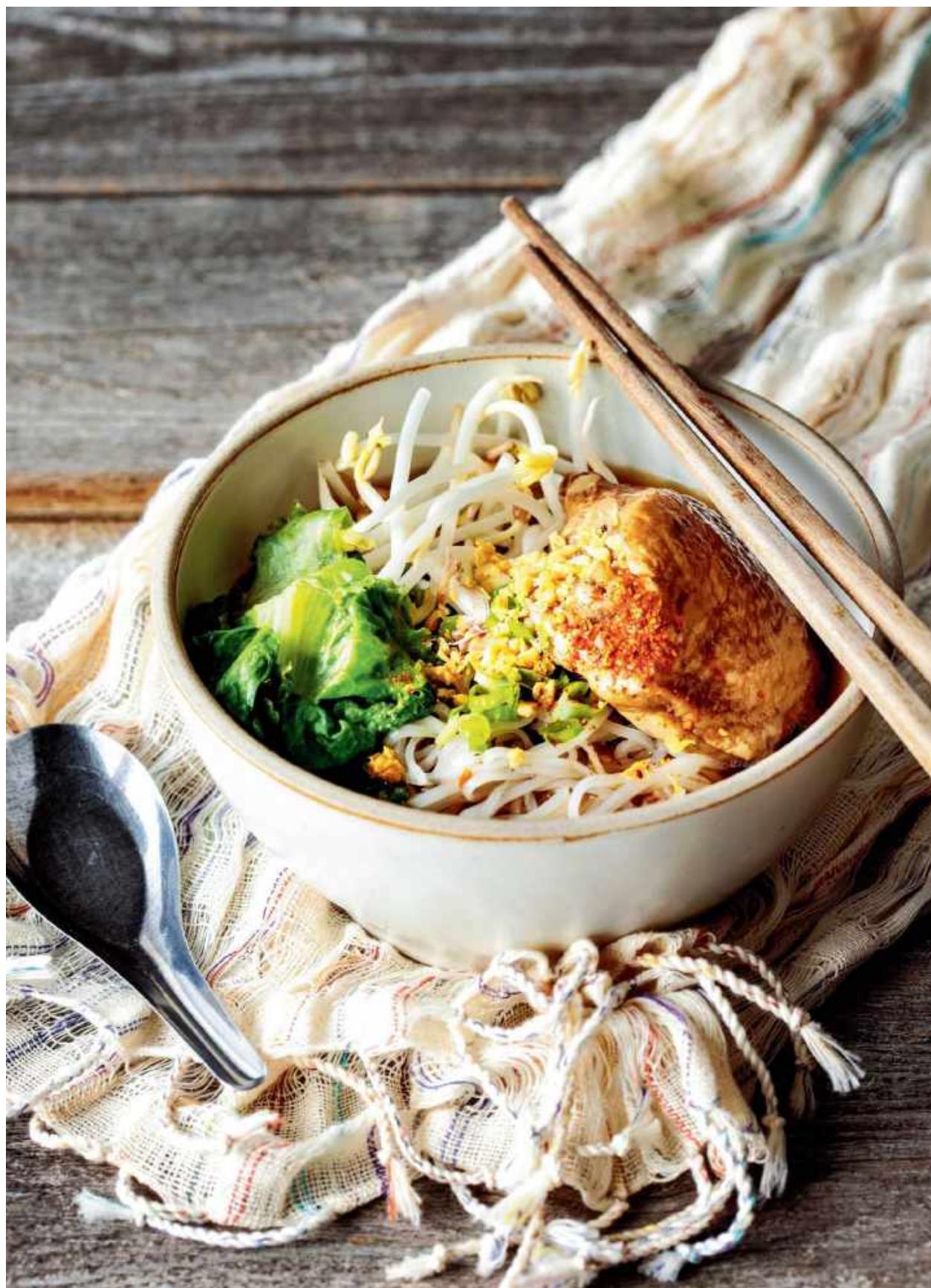
**Place one portion each of the noodles and the bean sprouts** in a noodle strainer or a metal sieve that will fit into the pot. Dunk the strainer into the boiling water and wiggle it around for 5 to 8 seconds. Lift it out, shake off as much water as possible, and plop the noodles and bean sprouts on top of the lettuce in a serving bowl. Repeat with the remaining portions.

**Place a piece of chicken on top of the noodles** and ladle the hot broth overtop until it just covers the noodles, about 1 cup (250 ml) per bowl.

**Top each bowl with about 1 teaspoon (5 ml) fried garlic**, a drizzle of garlic oil, and chopped green onions and/or cilantro to taste. Serve with chili flakes if you like it spicy.

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**Note:** Yes, we put green-leaf lettuce in noodle soups! If this weirds you out, substitute any other leafy green.



# Weeknight Chicken Khao Soi

Khao Soi Gai | ຂ້າວຊອຍໄກ

SERVES 4

COOKING TIME: 50 minutes

The most famous dish of northern Thailand, *khao soi* is a noodle soup unlike any other. Egg noodles in an aromatic coconut curry broth are topped with crispy fried egg noodles. A fully loaded, from-scratch *khao soi* is a lot of work, but fortunately the parts that are tedious aren't crucial. So, when I'm short on time, I make only the most important parts—the noodles and the broth—and it's still very satisfying. The crispy noodles are impressive-looking, but I don't find them necessary taste-wise, so I'm not about to deep-fry something on a weeknight just for looks. The curry paste can also be simplified by modifying store-bought red curry paste.

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1-inch piece (8 g) turmeric, or  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon (2 ml) ground turmeric

$\frac{1}{4}$  cup (60 ml) red curry paste, store-bought or homemade ([this page](#)) 1 tablespoon (15 ml) curry powder

1 $\frac{1}{2}$  cups (375 ml) coconut milk, divided

3 cups (750 ml) water

2 black cardamom pods (see [note](#))

4 to 8 chicken drumsticks (see [note](#))

1 $\frac{1}{2}$  tablespoons (18 g) finely chopped palm sugar, packed

1 to 2 tablespoons (15 to 30 ml) soy sauce

12 ounces (340 g) flat wonton noodles (see [note](#))

#### **FOR SERVING (OPTIONAL)**

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup (75 g) chopped pickled mustard greens, rinsed (see [note](#))

$\frac{1}{4}$  cup (35 g) julienned shallots

4 lime wedges

Sautéed chili flakes (see [note](#))

**Pound the turmeric** into a fine paste with a mortar and pestle, then add the red curry paste and curry powder and pound to mix. If using ground turmeric, you can just mix them without pounding.

**Add roughly  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup (60 ml) coconut milk** to a large pot and bring to a boil over medium heat. Add the turmeric-curry paste and stir for 2 to 3 minutes, until the paste is very thick. If the paste is sticking, deglaze with a bit of coconut milk. Add the remaining coconut milk and water, and bring to a boil over high heat.

**While you wait for the broth to boil**, smash the cardamom pods with a mortar and pestle until cracked, then wrap them in a piece of cheesecloth and add to the pot. (If you don't have cheesecloth, you can add them directly to the pot, but make sure they're not cracked so wide that the seeds inside will come out into the soup.) **Once the broth is boiling, add the chicken drumsticks**, sugar, and 1 tablespoon (15 ml) soy sauce. Turn the heat down to medium-low and let simmer until the chicken is fork-tender, about 30 to 40 minutes. Once done, taste and add more soy sauce and sugar as needed.

**While the curry is simmering, bring a large pot of water to a boil**, for cooking the noodles.

**Loosen the noodles and shake off any excess flour.** If you like, you can cut them with scissors once or twice to shorten them and make them easier to separate and eat. Add them to the boiling water and cook for 1 to 2 minutes, until cooked through. Scoop them out with a wire skimmer or drain in a colander, and divide them evenly among the serving bowls. If not serving right away, toss them with some neutral oil to prevent them from sticking together.

**Place the chicken in the serving bowls**, then ladle the broth overtop just until it almost submerges the noodles, about 1 cup (250 ml) per serving. This is a rich broth, so you won't need too much of it. Serve with the accompaniments on the side.

**To eat, top the noodles** with the pickled mustard greens, shallots, and a squeeze of lime, if desired. Add the sautéed chili flakes for more heat.

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**Do-ahead:** *The curry paste can be mixed with the spices (step 1) in bulk and then frozen.*

**Notes:** *Black cardamom can be found at Asian or Indian grocery stores. If you can't find it, use 6 green cardamom pods instead.*

*I usually serve 1 drumstick per person, but you can serve 2 to big eaters.*

*Wonton noodles are a type of fresh egg noodles sold in refrigerated section of Asian grocery stores.*

*Pickled mustard greens come in clear plastic bags at Asian grocery stores. Another tart pickle can also be used.*

*To make sautéed chili flakes, combine chili flakes with just enough neutral oil to make a paste, then sauté over low heat for a few minutes, until dark and smoky.*





# Tossed Rice Vermicelli with Skinless Wontons

Sen Mee Hang | เส้นหมี่แห้ง

SERVES 4

COOKING TIME: 30 minutes

If you're at a noodle soup vendor in Thailand but it's too hot a day for a soup, you can order the dry version. Instead of broth, the noodles are tossed in seasonings, but all the other components remain the same. For home cooking, this is an easy option because you don't have to deal with the broth! Wontons are a popular topping, but for a quick meal I make them "skinless," because who has time to wrap wontons on a Tuesday? But if you've got time, you can definitely wrap them. Top the dish with store-bought Chinese BBQ pork to complete the street look, though it's also perfectly satisfying without. *PS.* Don't let the length of the ingredient list deter you; it's all basic stuff and you probably have most of it already!

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## NOODLES & TOPPINGS

8 ounces (225 g) dry Thai rice vermicelli (see [sidebar](#)) 4 ounces (115 g) yu choy or bok choy, cut in 2-inch (2.5 cm) pieces

Chinese BBQ pork, store-bought, thinly sliced (optional, see [note](#)) Fried garlic ([this page](#))

Chopped cilantro, for garnish

Roasted chili flakes, store-bought or homemade ([this page](#)) (optional)

## NOODLE SEASONING

3 tablespoons (45 ml) garlic oil ([this page](#)) 4 teaspoons (20 ml)  
granulated sugar  
4 teaspoons (20 ml) white vinegar  
1 tablespoon (15 ml) fish sauce  
2 teaspoons (10 ml) soy sauce  
2 teaspoons (10 ml) Thai seasoning sauce  
Ground white pepper, to taste  
½ to 1 teaspoon (2 to 5 ml) black soy sauce (optional)

#### **SKINLESS WONTONS**

6 cilantro stems, chopped  
2 cloves (10 g) garlic  
¼ teaspoon (1 ml) white peppercorns  
12 ounces (340 g) ground pork  
1 tablespoon (15 ml) cornstarch  
1 teaspoon (5 ml) granulated sugar  
1 tablespoon (15 ml) soy sauce  
1 tablespoon (15 ml) oyster sauce

**Soak the noodles in room temperature water** until they are soft and fully pliable, 3 to 5 minutes for Wai Wai brand, and 10 to 15 minutes for Erawan brand. If using Wai Wai, after the noodles are soaked, feel the noodles for any big clumps and pull them off; small clumps are okay. Drain and set aside.

**Bring a large pot of water to a boil** for blanching the yu choy, the wontons, and the noodles.

**Combine all the ingredients** for the noodle seasoning except the black soy sauce in a large mixing bowl. The noodles will eventually end up here, so use a

bowl large enough to hold everything.

**Make the skinless wontons** by pounding the cilantro stems, garlic, and peppercorns into a fine paste with a mortar and pestle. In a mixing bowl, combine the ground pork, cornstarch, sugar, soy sauce, oyster sauce, and pounded garlic mixture. Use gloved or clean hands to mix everything together well.

**Blanch the yu choy** in the boiling water for 30 seconds, or longer if you prefer them tender, then scoop them out with a mesh skimmer and set aside. Bring the water back to a full boil.

**Use a dessert spoon to scoop a bite-sized chunk of pork mixture,** and use another spoon to flick it directly into the boiling water. You can be quick here; they don't need to look neat. Once the last piece goes in, bring the water back to a simmer and let the pork pieces cook for 1 more minute. Scoop out with a slotted spoon or wire skimmer and set aside in a bowl. Bring the water back to a full boil.

**Add the noodles to the boiling water** and cook for 3 seconds if using Wai Wai brand or 15 seconds if using Erawan brand. Scoop the noodles out with a wire skimmer, shake off excess water, and check that they are cooked through. If they're not, return to the pot and stir them around for another 5 seconds or so. Once they're cooked, immediately transfer the noodles to the bowl with the seasoning and toss them thoroughly, making sure the sauce is evenly and fully absorbed.

**Drizzle about  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon (2 ml) black soy sauce** over the noodles, and toss them well, adding more as needed until you have the desired color.

**Divide the noodles among the serving bowls** and top with the skinless wontons, yu choy, Chinese BBQ pork, fried garlic, and chopped cilantro. Sprinkle chili flakes overtop for extra heat. Serve immediately.

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**Do-ahead:** Make the wonton mixture 1 day in advance. The fried garlic and garlic oil can be made up to a few weeks in advance and kept separately in the fridge.

**Note:** You can buy Chinese BBQ pork at most Asian supermarkets with a hot-food section, or from a restaurant. Add as much of it as you like, but 6 to 7 slices are usually plenty in addition to the wontons.

### The Right and the Best Rice Vermicelli

There are a few products on the market labeled “rice vermicelli,” but they are not all the same. Vietnamese versions come in thick, straight sticks that are not right for this dish. Look for a product of Thailand—and they should be thread-thin. Erawan and Wai Wai are the two most common brands, and I highly recommend you get Erawan if you can find it. Wai Wai noodles are a little too thin for this dish, though I do prefer them for stir fries. You can also substitute fresh egg noodles (wonton noodles) like the ones used in Egg Noodles with Shrimp Gravy ([this page](#)), or the small-size rice noodles used in Street-Style Noodle Soup with Pork Meatballs ([this page](#)).



# Minimalist Pad Thai

Pad Thai | ພັດໄທ

SERVES 2

COOKING TIME: 15 minutes

Traditional *pad thai* is quick to make but tedious to prep for. There are a lot of ingredients, some of which aren't pantry staples even for Thai people. But that's because *pad thai* is not a dish meant for home cooking—it's something most people buy. But I wondered, what is the "minimum viable *pad thai*"? How much can I simplify it and still have it taste great and proudly be called *pad thai*? This is it right here. Faster, simpler, but still tastier than takeout. What I have removed are the dried shrimp, pressed tofu, and sweet preserved radish, and I've also provided a quick-soak method for the noodles. Everything that's left I consider important, but the peanuts can go if you can't eat them. You can find the recipe for my original *pad thai* on my website and in my first book, *Hot Thai Kitchen*.

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## SAUCE

3 tablespoons + 1 teaspoon (40 g) finely chopped palm sugar, packed

3 tablespoons (45 ml) water

4 tablespoons (60 ml) tamarind paste, store-bought or homemade ([this page](#))  
2 tablespoons (30 ml) fish sauce

## PAD THAI

4 ounces (115 g) dried rice noodles, medium size, rehydrated (see [note](#))  
3 to 4 tablespoons (45 to 60 ml) neutral oil

8 to 10 medium to large shrimp, about 21/25 count, peeled, deveined and patted dry

5 cloves (25 g) garlic, chopped

½ cup (40 g) thinly sliced shallots

2 large eggs

2½ cups (150 g) bean sprouts

8–10 stalks garlic chives, cut in 2-inch (5 cm) pieces (see [note](#)) ¼ cup (35 g) unsalted roasted peanuts, coarsely chopped, divided

½ lime, cut in wedges

Roasted chili flakes, store-bought or homemade ([this page](#)) (optional) **FOR THE SAUCE**

**Melt the sugar in a small pot** over medium-high heat. Once melted, let it cook for a bit longer, until the color becomes a deeper caramel but not quite dark brown. Once this color is achieved, immediately add the water; it will splatter aggressively and the sugar will harden. Turn the heat down to medium and swirl it around until most of the sugar is dissolved.

**Turn off the heat** and stir in the tamarind paste and fish sauce. Don't worry about a few stubborn chunks of sugar; they'll have dissolved by the time you need the sauce.

#### **FOR THE PAD THAI**

**Using scissors, cut the soaked noodles roughly in half** so it's easier to mix them with the veggies. Place all your prepped ingredients by the stove, ready to go.

**Place a wok or large nonstick skillet on high heat** and pour in just enough oil to coat the bottom. Once the oil is very hot, lay the shrimp down in one layer and let them sear without moving them until at least halfway cooked, about 2 minutes. Flip and cook on the other side until they are done. Turn off the heat and transfer the shrimp to a bowl, leaving all the oil and any juices behind.

**Add a bit more oil to the pan if needed** so that you have about 3 tablespoons (45 ml). Having enough oil is important to make sure that the noodles don't clump together.

**Add the garlic and shallots**, and turn the heat to medium. Stir until the shallots are translucent, about 2 minutes.

**Turn the heat up to the hottest** it can go, and add the noodles and sauce. Toss together until most of the sauce has been absorbed. At this point it will look like there aren't nearly enough noodles, but don't panic, the dish will bulk up with the veggies and proteins.

**Push the noodles to one side of the pan** to create space for the eggs, then break the eggs into the pan. Scramble slightly just to break the yolks, then move the noodles on top of the eggs and let the eggs continue to cook for another 30 to 45 seconds, until they are mostly cooked. Flip the noodles and then toss to break up the eggs.

**Give the noodles a quick taste to** check their doneness. If they're too chewy, add a splash of water and keep tossing for 1 minute or so to allow the water to absorb.

**Add the shrimp back to the pan**, along with any juices, and toss to mix. Turn off the heat and add the bean sprouts, garlic chives, and half of the peanuts. Use tongs to mix just until everything is evenly distributed. Plate immediately—you want the bean sprouts to be as fresh as possible, so don't let them linger in the hot pan unnecessarily.

**Top with the remaining peanuts** and serve with wedges of lime. Add some roasted chili flakes for heat, if desired.

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**Do-ahead:** Make the sauce in advance; it can be kept in the fridge indefinitely. Soak the noodles in advance, drain, and refrigerate for up to 3 days.

**Notes:** For quick-soak noodles, submerge them in hot off-the-boil water for 3 minutes, then immediately drain and rinse under cold water. If you have time, soak the noodles for 1 hour in room temperature water and then drain; you can do this in advance and keep them in an airtight container in the fridge for up to 3 days. This timing is for medium-size Erawan-brand rice noodles; you may need to adjust if using a different brand.

Garlic chives are a key flavor in *pad thai* and they're available at most Asian grocery stores. If you can't find the dark-green ones, look for yellow ones. In a pinch, 2 to 3 green onions will work instead, but chop them smaller, as they are stronger-tasting.

### Avoiding Soggy Noodles

Most recipes in my book serve four, but for *pad thai* I recommend you stir-fry the noodles in batches of two servings. Crowding the pan, especially with a low-BTU home stove, can result in soggy noodles because steam gets trapped under all the food and your noodles end up simmering in liquid longer than they should. If you've got a powerful stove and a large wok, you may be able to get away with a larger batch, so use your judgment here. You can also try reducing the amount of water in the sauce, or omitting it altogether, if you feel like you might be crowding the pan.



# Quick Hainanese Chicken Rice

Kao Mun Gai | ข้าวมันไก่

SERVES 4

COOKING TIME: 45 minutes

**SPECIAL TOOLS:** A heavy-bottomed pot or rice cooker big enough so that the chicken pieces can be laid in one layer.

*Kao mun gai* is my answer to both “What would be your last meal on Earth?” and “If you could only eat one dish for the rest of your life, what would it be?” I have sentimental attachment to it because my grandmother is from Hainan, and this is her signature dish that she makes for me every time I see her. Making *kao mun gai* the traditional way is a small project—you poach a whole chicken and then make the rice with the resulting broth. This method simplifies it into a weeknight-friendly meal without compromising the flavor. The rice becomes even more flavorful because it absorbs the chicken juices as they cook together. The only thing I actually don’t like about it is that it takes away the labor of love that is part of the traditional process, but this weeknight-friendly recipe does make me appreciate my grandma’s version even more.

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1½ cups (375 ml) uncooked jasmine rice

3 pieces (1 pound/450 g) bone-in, skin-on chicken thighs (see [note](#)) 1  
large (8 ounce/225 g) chicken breast, boneless, skin optional

1 teaspoon (5 ml) table salt, divided

1 teaspoon (5 ml) neutral oil

4 cloves (20 g) garlic, chopped

2 tablespoons (15 g) chopped ginger

1½ cups (40 ml) unsalted chicken stock (see [note](#)) English cucumber slices, for serving

#### DIPPING SAUCE

2 cloves (10 g) garlic

1 to 2 Thai chilies, or to taste

1½ tablespoons (10 g) chopped ginger

3 tablespoons (45 ml) fermented soybean paste

1 tablespoon (15 ml) granulated sugar

2 teaspoons (10 ml) soy sauce

1 to 2 teaspoons (5 to 10 ml) black soy sauce

1 teaspoon (5 ml) white vinegar

3 to 4 sprigs cilantro, chopped (optional)

**Rinse the rice a few times**, until the water runs clear, then drain well in a sieve.

**Trim excess fat off the chicken thighs** and reserve. If the chicken breast is large, cut it on a diagonal, splitting it along the thick half of the breast, to make two equal pieces. Sprinkle ½ teaspoon (2 ml) salt over the chicken pieces and rub it in.

**In a wok, combine the oil and chicken fat trimmings**, and turn the heat to medium-low. Sauté the chicken fat until the chicken bits are browned and the fat is rendered, about 4 minutes. You need about 2 tablespoons (30 ml) rendered fat, so if there is too much, remove some. If there isn't enough, add a little more oil to supplement. Remove the chicken bits, leaving the fat behind.

**Add the garlic and ginger** to the pan and turn the heat up to medium. Stir for about 2 minutes, until the garlic starts to turn golden.

**Add the rice and the remaining salt**, then turn the heat up to high. Toss for about 2 minutes, until the rice is hot throughout and dry.

**Transfer the rice to a rice cooker** or heavy-bottomed pot. Stir in the stock and place the chicken pieces in one layer on top of the rice.

**If using a rice cooker**, just click the “Cook” button and let it do its thing.

**If using a pot**, with the heat still on high, watch until you see the first sign of bubbling, then turn the heat down to low, cover with a tight-fitting lid, and cook for 20 to 25 minutes, until both the chicken and rice are done.

**While you wait for the chicken rice to cook, make the dipping sauce.** Using a mortar and pestle, pound the garlic, chilies, and ginger into a rough paste. Add all the remaining dipping sauce ingredients except the cilantro, and stir until the sugar is dissolved. Stir in the chopped cilantro just before serving.

**Once the chicken is cooked, remove it from the rice cooker or pot** and let it rest for at least 5 minutes before slicing. The rice right under the chicken might look a little mushy; this is normal and fine. Fluff the rice with a spatula, gently folding the bottom up to the top, and the mushy layer will mix in and disappear.

**You can serve the chicken in whole pieces** and have people cut it themselves, or you can slice the meat into thin pieces and place them on top of the rice in the traditional way. Serve with the dipping sauce, fresh cucumber slices, and, if you wish, a bowl of chicken broth.

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**Notes:** You can mix and match dark and white meat depending on what people prefer, but you will need some chicken fat for the rice, so have at least two thighs, or buy whole bone-in, skin-on breasts, which should have some fat at the edges you can trim off.

For an authentic flavor, I highly recommend using homemade Asian-style stock ([this page](#)). Also, if you have extra stock, it's traditional to serve a

*small bowl of simply seasoned chicken broth on the side to help wash down the rice, since this is a dry dish.*

### **Preventing Rice from Sticking to the Pot**

You might wonder why I don't sauté the rice right in the pot that I'm using to cook it and make one less dirty dish. You could do that, but in my experience, this causes more rice to get stuck on the bottom. I'm not entirely sure why, but without fail, this has been the case. My theory is that an invisible amount of loose starch from the freshly washed rice gets cooked onto the bottom of the pot and makes it more grippy. But when you add rice that has already been sautéed, the excess starch is left behind. This doesn't apply to a nonstick pot, obviously, so if you're using one of those, feel free to do everything in the same pot.



# Quick-Salted Fish Fried Rice

Kao Pad Kana Pla Kem | ข้าวผัดกะชนะปลาเค็ม

SERVES 4

**COOKING TIME:** 10 minutes, plus 20 minutes salting To me, salted fish fried rice is the poster child of Thai rustic solo meals—something you get at the food court during a lunch break. It's so basic, yet the salty, chewy fish makes this fried rice extremely satisfying and incredibly hard to stop eating. In Thailand, we typically buy salted king mackerel for this, but it's easy to make using any firm fish. I prefer making it myself because I make it less salty so I can use more fish. I love using salmon, as it makes the final dish so colorful. Dicing the fish before salting means you need only 20 minutes—so no planning required.

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7 ounces (200 g) salmon, diced in  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch (1.2 cm) pieces

1 teaspoon (5 ml) table salt

3 to 4 tablespoons (45 to 60 ml) neutral oil

6 cloves (30 g) garlic, chopped

4 large eggs

5 to 6 stalks (100 g) Chinese broccoli (*gai lan*), stems thinly sliced, leaves coarsely chopped

4  $\frac{1}{2}$  cups (700 g) cooked jasmine rice, (see [sidebar](#))

4 teaspoons (20 ml) fish sauce

1 tablespoon (15 ml) granulated sugar

1 teaspoon (5 ml) ground white pepper

10 sprigs cilantro, chopped (optional)

Lime wedges, for serving

**Mix the salmon with the salt and let it sit for 20 minutes**, or longer longer if you want extra-salty fish. Rinse off the excess salt with cold water and pat the fish dry.

**Place a wok over medium-high heat** and add the oil. Once hot, add the salmon pieces and fry without moving them until the underside is browned. Toss the salmon so most of the pieces flip, then flip those pieces that didn't. Let the second side sear until well browned.

**Once the two sides are browned**, keep them cooking, stirring frequently for another 1 to 2 minutes, until you get really firm, well-browned pieces—yes, you want these a bit overcooked. As you cook, break the pieces with your spatula to get more rustic-looking bits. Turn off the heat and remove the salmon from the pan, leaving all the oil behind. If you're cooking the fried rice in two batches (see [sidebar](#)), pour out half of the oil and reserve it for your second batch.

**Add more oil to the wok if the pan looks dry**, and turn the heat to medium. Add the garlic and sauté until it starts to turn golden.

**Add the eggs**, break the yolks, let them set about halfway, then quickly scramble them. Add the Chinese broccoli and toss briefly just to get everything mixed together.

**Turn the heat up to high, then add the rice**, fish sauce, sugar, and pepper. Toss to mix well, breaking up any lumps of rice with your spatula.

**Toss in the salmon**, then let the rice sit without stirring for 10 to 15 seconds so that it can toast and develop some browning and flavor. Toss again to mix, and repeat this toasting step a few more times. Turn off the heat, then taste and adjust the seasoning.

**Plate the rice, top with the cilantro**, and serve with wedges of lime. Be sure to squeeze the lime over the rice and mix it up before eating.

### **A Few Tips for the Perfect Fried Rice**

Old, cold rice for fried rice is great, but you don't need it. If cooking fresh rice, wash the rice at least three times, until the water runs clear, then use a little bit less water to cook it than you normally would (I do a one-to-one ratio for jasmine rice). If you have time, spread the rice out onto a plate to let it dry out before cooking. I also recommend weighing the cooked rice for accuracy, but if measuring by cup, press the rice in just enough so there aren't any big gaps, but do not pack it tightly. Finally, if you don't have a large wok, I recommend cooking in two batches to maximize rice toasting, though you can cook all the protein at once.



# Chinese Sausage Fried Rice

Kao Pad Goonchiang | ຂ້າວຝົດກຸນເຊື່ອປະ

SERVES 4

COOKING TIME: 5 minutes

This is a childhood favorite of many Asian kids, including us in Thailand. Chinese sausages are sweet, salty, umami cured sausages that can be made with chicken, pork, and/or liver, but the classic is pork. A little goes a long way, since these sausages are intensely flavored, which makes them great for a budget meal. The sausages last a long time in the fridge, so they're handy to keep for a quick dinner. One note: even though they may look like pepperoni sticks, they cannot be eaten raw, so don't be snacking on them while you prep!

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5 ounces (150 g) Chinese sausage, cut in  $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch (6 mm) thick slices (see [note](#)) 2 tablespoons (30 ml) neutral oil

$\frac{2}{3}$  cup (90 g) small-diced yellow onion

$\frac{2}{3}$  cup (90 g) small-diced carrot

6 cloves (30 g) garlic, chopped

1.8 ounces (50 g) Chinese broccoli (*gai lan*), stems cut in thin rounds, leaves in  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch (1.2 cm) thick ribbons 4 large eggs

4 cups (600 g) cooked jasmine rice (see sidebar on [this page](#)) 2 tablespoons (30 ml) soy sauce

4 teaspoons (20 ml) fish sauce

2 teaspoons (10 ml) granulated sugar

$\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon (2 ml) ground white pepper, or to taste

Chopped cilantro or green onions, for garnish (optional)

**FOR SERVING**

English cucumber slices

Lime wedges

**Spread the sausage slices in a dry wok** in a single layer. Turn the heat to medium and let them cook without stirring until they start to brown on the underside and a little bit of fat is rendered. Once browned, stir for 30 seconds or so, until cooked through. Do not cook them for too long or you will render out too much fat and cause the sausage to become too salty. Turn off the heat and remove the sausage from the pan, leaving any rendered fat behind.

**Add oil to coat the bottom of the pan** and turn the heat to medium. Add the onions and carrots and sauté for about 2 minutes, until the onions are translucent.

**Add the garlic and cook for another 30 seconds,** until the garlic starts to turn golden, then add the Chinese broccoli and toss just until wilted.

**Push the veggies to one side to create space for the eggs,** and move the wok so the veggies are sitting a bit off the element. If the pan is dry, add a bit more oil, then add the eggs, break the yolks, and let them set about halfway. Scramble the eggs briefly, then add the rice on top of the eggs, and return the sausages to the pan. Toss everything briefly to mix.

**Drizzle the soy sauce and fish sauce overtop,** then sprinkle with the sugar and pepper. Toss until all the rice is evenly coated with the sauce.

**Let the rice sit without stirring for 10 to 15 seconds** to allow it to toast slightly, then toss and let it toast again. Do this three times or until the rice is dry and some of the grains have browned.

**Remove from the heat and plate.** Top with chopped cilantro or green onions, and serve with fresh cucumber slices and lime wedges. I like to squeeze the lime over the rice to cut the richness. Enjoy!

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**Note:** *In my experience, good Chinese sausages tend to have a simpler ingredient list with few or no additives. Some brands are saltier than others, so if you find one that's too salty, try a different one next time.*



# Leftover Anything Fried Rice

Kao Pad Kong Leua | ข้าวผัดของเหลือ

SERVES 2

COOKING TIME: 5 minutes

Fried rice is for Thai people what pizza is for North Americans: a standard base that you can then top with just about anything, making it the ideal dish for using up leftover bits of meat and veg. But unlike pizza, fried rice is easy and fast to make! A basic fried rice recipe such as this one is a good tool to have in your back pocket, and it will work with any protein, even strongly flavored ones. We don't usually add veggies to our basic fried rice, but to serve it Thai style, you've got to have fresh cucumber slices, a lime wedge, and some *prik nam pla* on the side!

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2 tablespoons (30 ml) neutral oil

6 cloves (30 g) garlic, chopped

2 large eggs

2½ cups (375 g) cooked jasmine rice (see sidebar on [this page](#)) 1  
tablespoon (15 ml) soy sauce, preferably Thai (use a bit less if your  
leftovers are salty)

2 teaspoons (10 ml) fish sauce

1 teaspoon (5 ml) granulated sugar

¼ teaspoon (1 ml) ground white pepper

4.6 ounces (130 g) leftover protein, shredded or chopped

1 green onion and/or 4 to 6 sprigs cilantro, chopped

#### FOR SERVING

English cucumber slices

Lime wedges

*Prik nam pla* (Fish Sauce & Chilies Condiment, [this page](#)) **Place a wok on medium heat and add the oil and garlic.** Once the garlic bubbles, stir for 1 to 2 minutes, until the smallest pieces start to turn golden.

**Add the eggs, scramble slightly,** then let them set about halfway before stirring to break up the pieces.

**Turn the heat up to high, then add the rice,** soy sauce, fish sauce, sugar, and pepper; toss to distribute the sauce evenly.

**Add the protein and toss to mix,** then let the rice sit without stirring for 10 to 15 seconds so that it can toast and develop some browning and flavor. Toss to mix and repeat this toasting step a few more times. Turn off the heat, then taste and adjust the seasoning.

**Toss in the green onions and/or cilantro to taste,** then plate and garnish with more fresh herbs, if desired. Serve with cucumber slices, lime wedges, and some *prik nam pla*, if you wish.

#### Use Those Drippings

I first used this recipe with leftover supermarket rotisserie chicken, and if you've ever had rotisserie chicken, you'll know that at the bottom of the container lie delicious chicken juices. And the same might be true with whatever leftover meats you have—drippings or juices sitting at the bottom of the plate. This is liquid gold that should absolutely go into your fried rice. However, be mindful of how salty the liquid is, and cut down on the soy sauce or fish sauce accordingly. Also, don't add more than 2 to 3 tablespoons (30 to 45 ml) liquid for this recipe, so as to not make it too wet.

