



Introduction

This introduction is composed of short essays written by members of ECAAR's leadership team. Each concerns the significance of food in their respective cultures.

1.

My parents were born and raised in Vietnam, but I wasn't. I may experience Vietnamese culture at home, but I find myself surrounded by the American lifestyle outside. As I started this cookbook project with ECAAR, I've come to realize that I'm so immersed in American culture that I can't cook many Vietnamese dishes. As I grow older, however, I've come to learn that cooking can bring many people together and teach me the value of my Vietnamese heritage.

During Lunar New Years, my family and friends gather to make Banh Chung, aka sticky rice cakes. It's a huge tradition in Vietnam and my parents decided to continue the tradition here. For many years I never appreciated or participated in this activity — I would much rather be hanging out with my cousins. Recently, my parents decided it was time I help out. I had so much fun sitting on the floor with my family all around me as we made these rice cakes. We talked, laughed, and told stories while working together. It was then that I found out the origin of Banh Chung.



During the Hong Bang Dynasty, some 3,000-4,000 years ago, there was a king who had 18 sons and was ready to pass on the throne. He held a competition for his sons and told them to bring him a special dish. Most of the princes traveled far and wide to bring something expensive back to their father, while Lang Lieu,



the 18th son who was the poorest of them all couldn't afford to do so. One night, Lang Lieu had a dream of a fairy who helped him create two cakes which he called Banh Chung and Banh Day. When it was time to present the dishes, all the other sons laughed at Lang Lieu for bringing such a simple and strange dish. However, Lang Lieu explained to everyone that Banh Day is made out of glutinous rice and is round to represent the sky. Banh Chung is a rice cake that is stuffed with bean paste and ground meat in the shape of a square to represent the earth. By using simple local ingredients he showed a great respect to their culture and ancestors. His father chose him as the winner and from then on the two cakes have been made for every Lunar New Year.

I hope that the readers of this cookbook will come to appreciate not only the culture they come from but also the culture of others. Each dish comes with a unique story if only you take the time to learn all about it.

<3,
May Tran

2.

It is a tradition in my family that every year on my dad's birthday, we get Filipino food. He was, afterall, born and raised in the Philippines, and he sometimes excitedly tells us about a new place that reviewers claim is authentic. This year's place got the green flag of

authenticity from my dad, and as I ate, I expected new flavors and textures, but most of all, I expected to love everything. Truthfully, I didn't.

My mom says I have Taiwanese taste buds. At extended family gatherings, we always eat American food beside Chinese food — mashed potatoes beside a garlic shrimp platter. My grandfather often comes to our door and drops off 牛肉面 (beef noodle soup), and when we eat out, I find myself gravitating toward popcorn chicken, 小笼包 (soup dumplings), or railroad bento boxes. As far as Filipino cuisine is concerned, I grew up with dishes that cater to the American-and-generally-Asian palate like Jollibee, Magnolia Ice Cream, Ube Pancakes, or halo-halo. When I ate real Filipino food this year, there were pungent, sour, complex flavors; new, different, foreign.

I think this is a common predicament: to people who were born and raised away from their parents' homeland and away from a cultural center, it feels strange to sudden-



(my grandfather's 牛肉面)



(that time my grandfather showed up with several live crabs)



ly connect back there. I don't speak Tagalog, nor do I understand Filipino culture extremely well, and to be honest, I feel assimilated into a non-Filipino world. Nonetheless, my dad tells me stories behind the foods we eat, of times before he immigrated, of his childhood, and of our family. I realize that even if I am not connected to the Philippines and its dishes through flavor, I can still love them because of what they mean to me, and to my family.

I hope that as you, reader, go through this book, you will enjoy learning of the many stories and histories behind foods that have survived in spite of incredible odds. I hope that you can feel the love and celebration behind every dish, and come away from each recipe with a better understanding of our world than you had going in.

Thank you,
Garrett Lee

3.

My name is Cecilia Wang. When I was six, my family moved to the US from China. Despite leaving China, my family always ate Chinese food. Most non-Asians only know Chinese food as hot pot, dim sum, and orange chicken. However, for someone who has lived in Dalian, China, seafood is a commonly seen element. Dalian is known for having a wide range of local seafood, arguably the best in Asia, like shrimp, sea cucumber, sea urchins, and crabs.



(sea cucumbers)



A story my family often tells me is that since Dalian is so close to Japan, many Japanese people would fly to China just for a bite of the local sea urchin. My favorite dish from my hometown, Dalian, is sea urchin rice. Although it originated from Japan, the local sea urchin has a unique flavor to it. The sea urchin mixed rice melts in the mouth with a sweet and creamy, but not fishy taste.

My Dad grew up in Ningxia, China. Ningxia is known for the various ways they make lambs and for having some of the sweetest

tasting fruits. Whenever I visit Ningxia, I see fruit stands everywhere. At Ningxia, I ate the sweetest and juiciest watermelon I have tasted. The lamb dishes would vary from steamed lamb, stir-fry lamb, bbq lamb, and even lamb intestine soup. The meat would always be soft and flavorful, and seasoning would never take away from the taste of the meat.



In America, I have seen how food has the power to connect people. An Asian could love boba and burgers; a white person could love sushi and Samosas; an Italian could love pasta and tacos. No matter how different people can be, there is always a shared love for food.

Best,
Cecilia Wang

4.

Hello glorious reader! I'm thrilled that you have chosen to read our cookbook. In this book are many delicious Chinese recipes, many of which I have grown up eating and cannot wait for you to try. However, while Chinese food is



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酸辣土豆丝 Shredded Potato



A recipe by James Young, Christian Ha, Garrett Lee, Anthony Wang, Nicholas Chang, Armon Taherzadeh, Andrew Liu, Harry Tan

About the Dish

酸辣土豆丝 (*suanla tudou si*), otherwise known as “hot and sour shredded potato,” is a versatile Sichuanese potato dish which can be eaten either as an appetizer or a full meal. The potatoes are precisely shredded, yielding a unique texture not used very often in many Western palates. Typical seasonings create a 酸辣 (“hot and sour”) flavor, but like many Chinese dishes, everyone has their favorite combination of spices. Some of the more popular seasonings include dried peppers and sichuan peppercorns. Everyone has different tastes, but most of the time, the dish is only lightly spicy, making it an accessible dish to even those with lower spice tolerances.¹

In many Chinese households, the speed at which one can julienne the potatoes is a source of pride. The dish is very popular in China despite its relative obscurity in Western areas. It emphasizes purity and simplicity through its use of few ingredients and flavors.

Storage + Tips

It should be noted that if the potatoes aren’t finished in one sitting, they can last for around a week in an airtight container as long as they’re refrigerated. They are also often eaten cold, meaning that prep time when eating it as leftovers is

fairly quick. They’re often eaten alongside spicy dishes, such as Mapo Tofu, to balance out the overwhelming flavors.

In order to prepare this dish, you’ll need a wok, some spices (sugar, pepper, salt, ginger, chillies, garlic, etc.), black and white vinegar, and some potatoes.

When making this dish, there are plenty of small tricks to make it taste better, such as using the seasoning during the later parts of the stir-fry on the rim of the wok to allow the sugars to caramelize and have a sweeter flavor. It’s also best to make sure to prevent overcrowding in the wok, which can make cooking the dish difficult. It should take around 30-60 minutes depending on the serving size and the speed at which the potatoes are cut (which can be slow depending on proficiency with knives). As a note, even if the first time is slow, the process gets faster with practice. The actual cooking and other prep is fairly quick and easy.



(some adorable potatoes waiting to be cooked)

About the Ingredients

Fried shredded potatoes is a simple dish with light flavors. While the ingredient list may initially seem dauntingly long, in reality, most of them are different aromatics that can be added or subtracted at your discretion. If, for instance, you dislike ginger and/or there is no easy access to it, skipping it would not seriously impact the profile of the dish. The only central ingredients are potatoes, salt, oil, and vinegars.

1. Potato Variants

Waxy potatoes are a variant of potatoes that contain more sugar and moisture but less starch than most other potatoes. The most common recipes they're used for are potato salads, casseroles, and soups. Look for red or yellow potatoes.

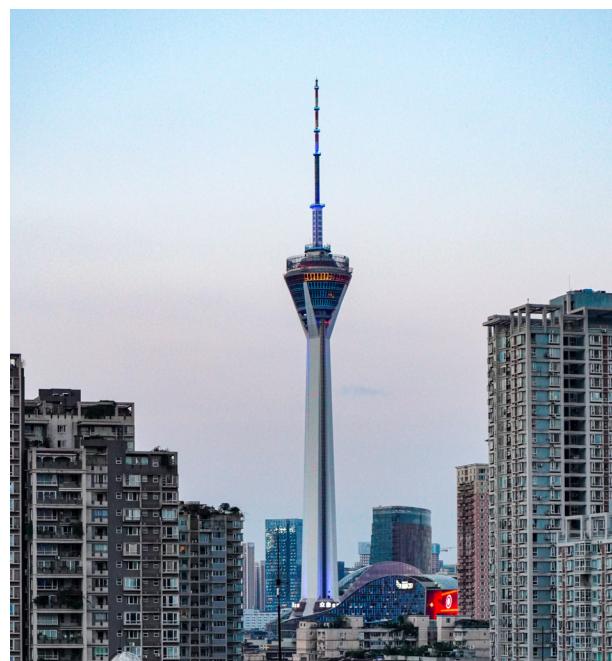
2. Vinegars

There are two variants of vinegar within our recipe. Black vinegar is commonly used in Chinese recipes on colder foods and it adds acidity as well as a sweetness to the dish. White vinegar is mostly used to make marinades and sauces. It can also be used to tenderize certain foods, ranging

from vegetables to seafoods and other meats.

3. Making it Spicy

Sichuan peppercorn, otherwise known as Chinese Prickly Ash, adds 麻辣, mala, or numbing spice.² Chinese chilies are a small yet spicy pepper that a lot of dishes in Central America and East Asia use. Similar to the Sichuan peppers, they add a flavor to a lot of dishes that can be greatly numbing or spicy to some.



(Chengdu, the city known for Sichuan cuisine and pandas)

Did you know?

There are some variants of shredded potato popular enough to be considered dishes in their own right. One example is the 焖炒土豆丝, Qiāng cháo tǔdòu sī ("blanch-fried shredded pota-

toes"). 焖炒土豆丝 is seasoned slightly less, and things such as peppers and vinegar are taken out of the recipe entirely.³

Notes on Procedure



These are the potatoes in the shredded stage, the step that arguably takes the most time and should therefore be done at the very beginning. While the potatoes are soaking in the vinegar water liquid, the other prep (i.e. cutting the peppers, smashing the ginger, etc.) can be finished.



Because of the strong taste of the aromatics that are added in, they aren't directly put into the dish, but rather used to flavor the oil that mixes with the potatoes.

Pro chef tip: fires are cool, but they can be dangerous if they happen in your kitchen! To ensure proper safety, always have the lid nearby.

If anything inside the wok catches on fire, do not panic: quickly suffocate it by putting the lid on top, then turn off the stove.

Do not pour water on top! It could make the flames bigger.



酸辣土豆丝 Shredded Potato



酸辣土豆丝 (Shredded Potato)

Prep Time: 20 min*

Cook Time: 7 min

Servings: 2

1 large waxy potato (around 10 oz), peeled
1 tsp white vinegar
1 tsp black vinegar
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp light soy sauce
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp sugar
 $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp white pepper
 $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp kosher salt, adjust to taste
2 $\frac{1}{2}$ Tbsp neutral oil
4 dried Chinese chillies
2 Tbsp minced garlic
1 Tbsp crushed ginger
1.5 tsp dried Sichuan peppercorns
1 scallion, chopped into 2 inch segments
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup thinly sliced bell pepper

1.

Slice the bottom off of the potato so it sits flat. Cut into planks slightly less than 1/8 in. thick. Stack a few planks and cut lengthwise into several "shreds" of potato. Once you have "shredded" the potato, put all of the pieces into a bowl of cold water and add the white vinegar. Let sit for at least 10 minutes. Once ready, drain and set aside

2.

In a small bowl, mix together black vinegar, soy sauce, sugar, white pepper, and

salt until the sugar is dissolved. Set aside.

3.

In the wok, heat the neutral oil over medium high heat. Crush two of the Chinese chillies to allow seeds to spill out and add those, the other two Chinese chillies, garlic, ginger, Sichuan peppercorns, and scallion to the oil. Cook for 30 seconds, until fragrant. Tilt the wok and use a skimmer or sieve to remove the ingredients in the oil, leaving just the oil behind.

4.

Put wok on high heat. Add the drained potatoes and bell pepper and toss, covering all potatoes with oil. Cook for a little under 2 minutes.

5.

Working quickly, add vinegar mixture and toss for about 20 seconds. The outside of the potatoes should be slightly soft, but the inside should be crisp. Check for seasoning and transfer to a plate.

6.

Serve immediately or refrigerate and serve when completely cold.

Storage Suggestions:

Lasts for around a week refrigerated in an airtight container. Can be eaten cold.

*Variable depending on knife skills.

Ube Jam (ube halaya)

A recipe by Garrett Lee, Nicholas Chang, Armon Taherzadeh, Christian Ha, Andrew Liu, James Young, Anthony Wang, & Harry Tan



Ube halaya, or ube jam, is a Filipino dessert whose primary ingredient is an ube, a type of purple yam. It is extremely versatile, and we recommend spreading it on toasted bread, mixing it into ice cream, or experimenting to your heart's content!

What Even is Ube?

Ube is a purple yam native to Southeast Asia, with deep cultural roots in the Philippines. The color comes from a group of antioxidants known as Anthocyanins, found in grapes, purple lettuce, blackberries, and other foods with heavy red, purple, blue, or black pigments, which seem to lower blood pressure, reduce risk of heart and neurological disease, and slow cancer growth, according to the Cleveland Clinic.¹ We do not recommend relying on ube halaya to reap those benefits, though — the recipe adds a lot of sugar.

In the Philippines, the purple of an ube matches a local palette of vibrant foods, like the bright oranges, yellows, and greens of a mango, or the rich emerald greens of a pandan leaf; these colors draw audiences in. In recent years, social media has celebrated and, at times, tokenized ube, with several companies — Southeast Asian-owned and not — capitalizing on it.² Profiting on overpriced and minimally ube-flavored items while not recognizing ube's cultural significance beyond stating that it is Filipino, companies and restaurants appropriate an ingredient from the Philippines, a region that has been invaded, occupied, pillaged, and appropriated by foreign powers for hundreds of years.

Cultural Significance

The Philippines contains hundreds of ethnic groups, each of which has its own culture and each of which has been affected by foreign

imperialism in its own way. It is difficult to pinpoint a single Filipino culture, much less a concise cultural significance of ube. Some Filipinos see the preparation of ube as a labor of love, usually for a special occasion since it can be quite intensive.² Others, like the people of Bohol, produce ube as a staple food source,³ its resilience as a "savior crop" celebrated in yearly festivals.⁴ Ube can connect Filipino Americans to their ancestral homelands and bring back childhood memories of familial love.

Ube halaya was not always made with condensed, evaporated, and coconut milks as it is in this recipe. Originally, carabao, or kalabaw, milk was used, and the halaya was far less sweet.² During the American occupation of the Philippines, other "milks" were substituted in to suit the American palate and for ease of preparation. Ube halaya also made its way into the ensaymada, a brioche bread based on the Spanish *ensaimada*.² Both cases exemplify the influence foreign powers have had on the Philippines, and how the Filipino people have managed to make that influence into something unique.

There are many, many different recipes for ube halaya. Each family has their own, as does each company that sells it, and each recipe blog on the internet. This is our preferred recipe, which is slightly less sweet than others you may encounter and does not include cheese. You can adjust the recipe to your liking by adding, subtracting, and substituting, just as Filipino families have done for centuries.

Telling Ube Apart

There are more than 600 varieties of yams, according to the Library of Congress.⁵ It is easy to mistake ube as an Okinawan sweet potato, a taro, a purple sweet potato, or a red yam. Do not make this mistake! Here is our (hopefully) helpful guide on finding ube — and not one of its 600 cousins:

1. Ube is typically purple and sometimes white on the inside.

This single factor will eliminate the majority of the yams you can find at any grocery store. However, ube is not the only purple or white yam, so keep reading.

2. Ube has bark-like, brown or brownish-purple skin.

The outside of an ube looks like a deformed tree trunk. The skin should look bark-like, dirty, and almost flaky. Sometimes, some purple will show through the skin, but most ube looks completely brown.

3. Check the freezer aisle!

In the United States, most Asian grocery stores will not carry fresh ube. Some, like Uwajimaya in Seattle, will label other yams that are not ube as "purple yams." If you cannot find fresh ube, check the freezer aisle at your local Asian grocer: they usually sell frozen grated ube, often labeled "Grated Purple Yam (Ube)."



Notes on Ingredients



1. All of the different types of milk: You may have noticed that this recipe contains three different types of "milk." It is important that all three are included in ube halaya to ensure correct consistency and flavor. Coconut milk adds a distinct coconut flavor, evaporated milk helps maintain water content and contributes to halaya's creaminess, and sweetened condensed milk provides both a unique flavor and needed sweetness. We recommend making the recipe as-is at least once before adjusting volumes of each milk, or substituting ingredients.

2. On ube flavoring: Ube flavoring is an optional ingredient, but we recommend adding it to boost flavor and color. Indeed, if you dislike artificial flavoring and coloring, feel free to omit it and your ube halaya will be delicious nonetheless. However, it is worth mentioning that most of the ube products found at grocery stores are actually artificially flavored and colored — fresh ube tastes a lot blander than ube flavoring does. Nonetheless, ube flavoring alone lacks the earthiness and complexity of real ube. Added to ube halaya, you can achieve the best of both worlds. Ube flavoring can be found online at Amazon and Walmart, or in select Asian grocery stores. For our recipe tests, we used the Butterfly brand. For the Butterfly brand in particular, be careful when pouring — it comes out really fast.



3. On lemon juice: During testing, we were concerned that the lemon flavor would come through. However, even when we added quite a lot more lemon than the recipe calls for, it was unnoticeable (although there was a brighter overall flavor). In one test, we also experimented with calamansi juice, which is a filipino citrus hybrid. With the same amount, the flavor came through slightly, but not unpleasantly. We think it is worth experimenting with various citruses to find which flavor you like the best.

4. Cheese? Many recipes on the internet call for cheese in ube halaya. We decided to omit the ingredient in our recipe, but you should consider trying it! Processed American cheeses and cheddar cheese melted into the halaya are the most popular, adding creaminess, texture, and salty-sweet flavors.



5. Toppings: Ube halaya is sometimes seen as less of a jam and more of a pudding. Many families eat their halaya straight or with just a sprinkling of toppings. Common toppings include latik, which is coconut cream residue, toasted desiccated coconut, macapuno string, which is the product of a common genetic aberration within coconuts, or shredded cheese.



Ube Jam (*ube halaya*)

Prep Time	Cook Time	Total Time
10 min	30 min	40 min

400 grams Ube (fresh or frozen)
2/3 cup coconut milk
1/2 cup evaporated milk
1/3 cup condensed milk
1/3 cup sugar
4 Tbsp butter
1 Tbsp lemon juice*
1 tsp vanilla extract
1/8 tsp salt
(optional) 1/2-1 tsp ube flavoring, to taste*

1.

If using fresh ube, boil whole or in large chunks for around 30-40 minutes, or until tender (you should be able to pierce the inner flesh easily with a fork). Peel and chop into 1-2-inch chunks (it does not have to be perfect). If using frozen ube, thaw. You do not need to initially cook the frozen ube, and most frozen ube is pre-grated.

2.

Add prepared ube to a medium heavy-bottomed pot. Add coconut milk, evaporated milk, condensed milk, and sugar, and use an immersion blender to blend until very smooth. Alternatively, use a masher (which will yield a less smooth jam), or add everything to a food processor and blend. If the ube is not totally thawed, heat over low

heat until thawed before blending.

3.

Over medium-low heat, simmer the mixture for around 30 minutes, stirring constantly to prevent burning. The mixture should thicken and have a lava-like viscosity. It will thicken even more as it cools.

4.

Once thickened, stir in butter, lemon juice, vanilla extract, salt, and ube extract (if using) until well combined. Take off the heat.

5.

Pour or ladle the hot halaya into heat-proof jars and close with lids. It is recommended to let the halaya cool in the refrigerator before using.

Lasts for 1-2 weeks refrigerated in a jar, and for up to 6 months frozen in a freezer bag.

* Lemon juice is mainly to maintain the ube color over time and add a bit of freshness and lightness. The lemon flavor will not come through in use.

* Ube flavoring is extremely concentrated and made artificially. Real ube is a lot milder than artificial ube, so ube halaya often tastes more like coconut or sweet potato. Ube flavoring will boost the ube color and flavor.