



THE LAOTIAN COOK

Traditional recipes from Northern Laos

With voices from the smallholder farmers supported by IFAD and GAFSP-funded projects



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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FOREWORD

by Chef Saeng Douangdara

Being a passionate chef eager to share the wonders of Lao cuisine, I often encounter difficulties in finding comprehensive cookbooks that delve into the intricacies of Lao cooking. However, I have discovered a remarkable resource that caters to both beginners and seasoned cooks alike: IFAD's Laotian cookbook.

This expansive culinary guide not only serves the Lao community, but also enlightens those intrigued by the flavors of Lao cuisine. Drawing from my numerous trips to Laos, I have witnessed the abundance of diverse dishes and vegetables across the country, along with the unique regional specialties that tantalize taste buds exclusively in certain provinces. The book beautifully showcases these regional variations, celebrating the rich diversity of Lao food. For instance, it highlights the exclusive availability of *Nok an tong*, a delicacy found only in Xieng Khouang. During my visit to Xieng Khouang, I had the fortunate opportunity to savor this dish, accompanied by the regional staple, *Khao gai noi*, or small grain sticky rice.

Remaining true to its dedication to exquisite flavors, this book offers suggestions for both novices and experienced cooks. For those new to Lao cuisine, I recommend starting with a dip, or *jaew* — a delightful way to learn the art of balancing flavors to suit your preferences. An excellent choice is the *Jaew mak kheau*, an eggplant dip that is not only healthy but easily accessible. For more seasoned cooks, I urge you to explore the *Or lam*, spicy beef stew recipe. This delectable dish introduces you to unique ingredients such as Lao chilliwood, allowing you to deepen your culinary knowledge and skills.

Lastly, I must emphasize that Laos is a hidden gem within Southeast Asia, boasting a wealth of knowledge, history, and extraordinary cuisine. Thanks to the support provided by IFAD, the people of Laos have flourished, benefiting from improved nutrition and poverty reduction initiatives. The projects implemented by IFAD and its partners play a pivotal role in directly supporting villages through farming assistance and access to essential tools, ultimately contributing to the establishment of a sustainable system. If you share my love for Lao food and desire to witness its continued growth, it is crucial to extend support to the people of Laos, and that is precisely what IFAD aims to achieve.

Chef Saeng Douangdara is a Los Angeles-based chef who promotes Laotian cuisine. He is a member of IFAD's Recipe for Change platform.

ESSENTIAL LAO INGREDIENTS

Flavours in almost every recipe

Lao cuisine is spicy, sour, sweet and smoky, as most things are cooked on a charcoal grill. The Laotian pantry is filled with herbs and a number of flavouring agents, some more easily found overseas, others a bit harder. Thanks to globalization, most of the ingredients in this book can be found in a well-stocked Asian supermarket.

Below are some of the essentials.



GARLIC
ຜັກທຣົມ



CORIANDER
ຜັກຫອມປ້ອນ



SHALLOTS
ຫົວຜັກປ້ອ



SPRING ONIONS
ຫົວຜັກປ້ອ



LIME
ນາວ



BIRD'S EYE CHILLIES
ໝາກເຜັດແດງ

KAFFIR LIME LEAVES
ໃບຂີ້ຫູດ



GALANGAL
ຫົວຂ່າ



PADAEK
ປາແຕກ



FISH SAUCE
ນ້ຳປາ



STICKY RICE POWDER
ເຂົ້າຂົ່



LEMONGRASS
ຫົວສິໄຕ

MAKE YOUR OWN

Ingredients that are hard to buy directly

Some ingredients are harder to find and a little creativity is needed. Galangal can easily be replaced by ginger, spring onions and green onions are interchangeable, any spicy red chilli will usually do, and if you cannot find kaffir lime leaves, lemon zest is an acceptable substitute. Below are some common Laotian ingredients that need some preparation.

STICKY RICE POWDER

Khao khua

Grill uncooked sticky rice on a dry pan without oil, until brown and well toasted, but not burnt.

Let cool.

Grind in a mortar (or food processor) until it becomes a textured powder.

Put through a sieve to get rid of any large pieces.



YANANG LEAF EXTRACT

Bai yanang

You can buy Yanang leaf extract in a can, but if you can find fresh or frozen leaves, here's what to do.

Wash 2 handfuls of bai yanang leaves and soak in 2 cups of water (500ml) for 10 minutes.

Rub the leaves together and squeeze them to make a dark green juice.

Sieve out the leaves and mix in 2 tablespoons of padaek.



CHILLI WOOD

Mai sakahn



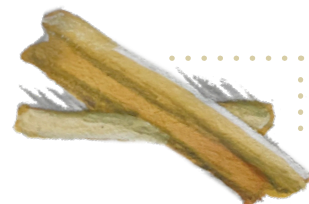
To make a similar flavour to a small piece of chilli wood, place together in a tea infuser or tea strainer:

- 1 teaspoon of whole black peppercorns
- 5 Sichuan peppercorns
- 1 dried red chilli
- 1 celery leaf

and submerge into whatever stew or soup you are making. Remove before serving.

BUFFALO SKIN

Nang khem



You only need 1-2 dried strips for most recipes.

Shave off any remaining hair with a knife. You can also burn off small hairs with fire directly over your stove or use a culinary blow torch (like the ones for cr me br l e).

Boil skin for 1-2 hours until soft and chewy.

It can then be used in soups, to make *jaew*, deep fried, stir fried or baked in the oven to make a jerky.

Alternatively, use pork or beef skin.

PROVINCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

Flavours from different parts of Northern Lao

The Agriculture for Nutrition (AFN) and the Partnerships for Irrigation and Commercialisation of Smallholder Agriculture Project (PICSA) work in six provinces in Northern Lao — Houaphan, Luangprabang, Oudomxai, Phongsaly, Xayabouly and Xieng Khouang. Wild animals, plants and insects play as big a part in local cuisine as farms and homegardens, from water beetles to small bush mammals, river algae and bamboo shoots. Here are just a few highlights from the North.

NOK AN TONG

Xieng Khouang

Made from local swallows, *Nok An Tong* is a popular and unique dish from Xieng Khouang. Migratory birds that fly down from Russia in the summer months are caught and fermented before being fried or cooked in a stew. They are eaten at a meal or as a street food snack.



NOR KHOM

Houaphan and Oudomxay

Bitter bamboo shoots, *Nor Khom*, are unique to these two Northern provinces and are harvested between December and March, rather than the rainy season (May-September) like most species, filling a seasonal supply gap in the market. The shoots are collected while they are still small and underground, before they become more bitter with age. Used in many Asian dishes, *Nor khom* are sold both locally and for export, particularly to China, Thailand and Viet Nam.

OR LAM KA HORK

Phongsaly

Our cookbook features *Or Lam*, a typical beef or buffalo-based stew from Luang Prabang, but in Phongsaly, this stew is also made with dried squirrel meat caught from the forest.

Bushmeat is a common source of protein in rural Laos, and unfortunately some endangered species are also found in the market, including the recently discovered Laotian giant flying squirrel, *Biswamoyopterus laoensis*.

KAIPHEN

Luang Prabang, Oudomxai, Phongsaly

A distinctive snack from the north, Kaiphen is a salty, nutty, spicy treat made from a bright green, stringy riverweed harvested from the rivers of Northern Laos. This algae is harvested, cleaned and seasoned with spices while being dried out on bamboo mats in the sun. They are then cut and bagged and sold in restaurants or as a street snack. See p.84 for the full recipe.



NORTHERN LAOS



PROJECT AREAS

The two projects overlap in two provinces:

Houaphan and Xieng Khuang

AFN is also active in Oudomxai and Phongsaly,
while PICSA is active in Xayabouly and Luangprabang.

The second phase of AFN (AFN 2 | 2023-2030) will still cover
the provinces of Oudomxai, Phongsaly, and Xiengkhouang in the
North, and, in addition, Salavan, Sekong, and Attapeu in the South.

NUTRIENT-DENSE FOOD CROPS

Promoted by the project to enhance nutrition

The projects promote 24 Nutrient-Dense Food Crops to the communities they work with, encouraging them to grow and consume them as much as possible. These are nutrient-rich vegetables, fruits, pulses and nuts that are easily sourced in rural areas and already used by communities to some extent. Below are the ones featured in this book.

GROUNDNUTS ໝາກຖົ່ວດິນ

A good source of folate, iron and Vitamin B1. Two tablespoons of powdered ground nut can provide children under 2 with 15% of their RDA* of B1, 30% of folate and 15% iron.



PUMPKIN ໝາກອົ

Just 1 cup of cooked pumpkin provides 12% RDA of fibre for adults and a suite of essential nutrients such as Vitamin C, Vitamin E, potassium, beta carotene and more.



MORNING GLORY ຜັກບັ້ງ

Rich in Vitamin A and C, 2 to 3 tablespoons of cooked morning glory provide young children with 40% of RDA of Vitamin A, 46% of Vitamin C and 17% of iron.

GREEN PAPAYA ໝາກຮຸ່ງຂຽວ

Papaya contains proteolytic enzymes like papain and chymopapain which have antiviral, antifungal and antibacterial properties.

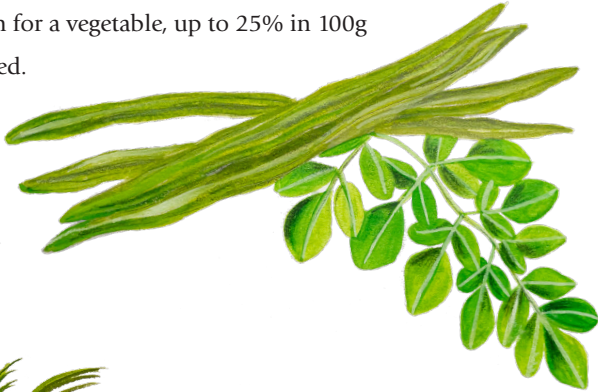


ໃບມັນຫວານ SWEET POTATO LEAVES

Leaves of the sweet potato are actually more rich in micronutrients than the root, providing up to 87% of RDA of Vitamin K when cooked.

MORINGA ໃບອີ່ຮຸ່ມ

Both the leaves and pods are edible, with moringa powder ground from dried pods having potassium levels second only to Shitake mushrooms. The leaves are incredibly high in protein for a vegetable, up to 25% in 100g when dried.



ໃບຜັກກາດ MUSTARD LEAF

High in carotene, just two tablespoons of mustard leaf provides 12% of the RDA of Vitamin A and 50% of Vitamin C for children under 2, as well as other minerals and nutrients such as Vitamin K, Selenium and copper.



BITTER GOURD ມະລະຂີ້ນົກ

Bitter gourd's saponin and terpenoid compounds are responsible for its bitter flavour but also help lower blood sugar levels, making it particularly beneficial to diabetics.



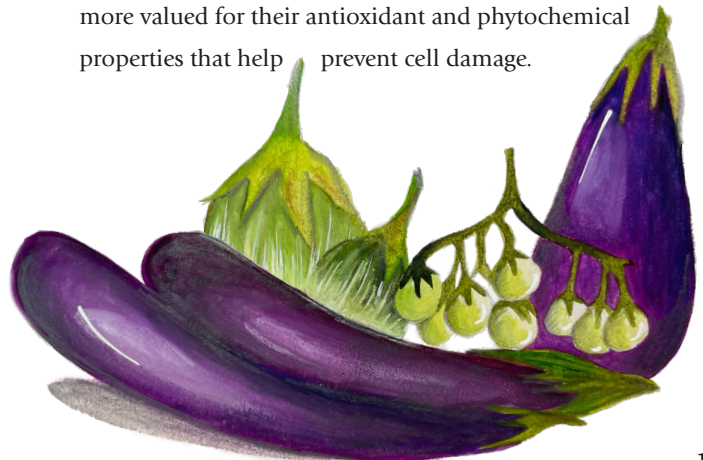
ໃບກະຖິນ ACACIA LEAVES

Young, tender leaves are an excellent source of Vitamin C and protein, making them a good choice for young children and pregnant women. They also have a milder smell than mature leaves.



EGGPLANT ໝາກເຂືອຍາວ (ມ້ອງ)

Purple eggplants are the highest in nutrients, but they are more valued for their antioxidant and phytochemical properties that help prevent cell damage.



A TYPICAL LAOTIAN MEAL

Meals in Laos are served family style — everyone shares the food placed on the table or more traditionally, on a flat and round raised basket. Almost all meals consist of the following basic components, reflected by the chapters in this book:

- Rice and/or Noodles
- Dipping Sauce, or *Jaew*
- Soup
- Meat or Fish
- Vegetables

RICE

Rice, particularly sticky rice, is generally part of every meal, and is easy for labourers to bring to the field.

SOUP

Soups are often made with some meat and are full of local herbs and vegetables. It is a good way to pick and mix in nutritious ingredients.

MEAT OR FISH

Whether grilled on charcoal, mixed as a salad (*laab*) or used for soup, meat or fish are a common part of meals, even for poorer families, who still depend on hunting or fishing.

VEGETABLES

It is common to have some sort of vegetable, like stir fried morning glory or at the very least, a plate of raw vegetables to cool the palate and dip in *jaew*.

JAEW

No Laotian meal is complete without a spicy dipping sauce. *Jaew* usually consists of a base ingredient (such as tomato), mixed with garlic, chillies, sugar, lime, salt, fish sauce and herbs.



RICE

Khao ខ្មៅ



STICKY RICE

Khao Niao ເຂົ້າໜຽວ

RICE

2 cups glutinous rice*

Water

PRE-SOAKING

Add the sticky rice to a bowl.

Fill it with water so that the water level is at least 3 inches above the rice.

Soak for 6 to 24 hours.

Soak it longer if you want your rice to be softer.

COOKING

Drain the water, and line a heat-proof curved plate or bamboo steamer with steamer liner or parchment paper.

Evenly arrange the soaked rice onto your plate or steamer.

Fill a saucepan with water and place a metal rack on the base.

Place your bamboo steamer or plate on the rack.

Cover and steam for 30-45 minutes.

TIP

If cooking a lot of rice, it is better to steam in separate batches.

You can check the rice and increase steaming time if needed.

After cooked, keep covered until serving to prevent drying out.



CULTURAL HIGHLIGHT

Sticky rice is symbol of national identify to Laotians, who eat over 150 kg per capita a year. Besides daily consumption, it is used to make Buddhist figurines, tossed in the air after communal prayers, and rubbed onto the sick to banish bad spirits. It keeps for longer and fills bellies longer than regular rice, making it the perfect bring-along food for farmers and monks.



CHICKEN NOODLE SOUP

Khao Piak Sen ເຂົ້າປຽກເສັ້ນໄກ

FRIED GARLIC & SHALLOT

1 cup vegetable oil
24 cloves garlic, sliced thinly
3 medium shallots, sliced thinly

CHICKEN BROTH

1 medium onion cut into quarters
3 knobs of ginger, sliced thickly
3 tbsp garlic and shallot oil
6 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
Bunch of coriander stems, minced
One 1.3 to 1.8kg whole chicken
2 tbsp soy sauce
2 tbsp fish sauce
1 tsp sugar

NOODLE

220g white rice flour
220g tapioca flour
415ml boiling water

GARNISH

2 scallions, sliced thinly
2 fresh bird's eye chillies
5 sprigs of morning glory
Lime wedges
Fried garlic and shallots
Coriander leaves and tender stems

FRIED GARLIC AND SHALLOT

Line a plate with paper towels and set a fine-mesh metal strainer over a heatproof bowl.

In a frying pan, heat oil over medium heat until simmering.

Add sliced garlic and fry, swirling and stirring frequently, until golden brown all over, approximately 4 minutes.

Pour garlic and oil into strainer and drain.

Spread out garlic onto plate with paper towels, and allow to cool.

Repeat the same with the sliced shallots.

Cook the shallots in the oil, stirring constantly, until they turn a pale golden brown.

Save the garlic-shallot oil for the broth.

CHICKEN BROTH

Chop all of the onion and ginger.

In a large Dutch oven or soup pot, heat garlic-shallot oil over medium heat until simmering.

Add chopped onion, ginger, lemongrass, sliced garlic and coriander stems.

Continue to cook, stirring, until onions are softened.

Add chicken to pot and fill with enough cold water to cover.

Add salt, soy sauce, fish sauce and sugar.

Bring to a simmer, then lower heat and maintain a gentle simmer.

Cover and cook for 2 hours, lifting lid occasionally to skim any foam that accumulates over the broth.

NOODLES

While the broth simmers, make the noodles.

Mix 200g of each of the flours together (leave 20g of each aside) on medium-low speed and drizzle in boiling water.

Pause occasionally to scrape down the sides with a spatula, until a moist dough ball forms.

Whisk together remaining flours and sprinkle onto a work surface.

Knead dough by hand until all of the flour has been fully incorporated.



NUTRITIONAL TIP

Serve noodles with a leafy green like morning glory or moringa leaves to add more Vitamin A, Vitamin C and iron to your diet.

Roll dough into a thick log and cut into 8 equal portions.

Roll each portion one at a time into a small ball, then roll with a rolling pin until roughly 1/8 inch (0.3cm) thick.

Cover the others with a wet kitchen towel to prevent drying.

Using a sharp knife, slice dough into noodles roughly 1/4 inch (0.5 cm) wide. Dust a large plate with rice flour and transfer noodles.

Keep noodles covered with a damp towel as you repeat with remaining dough.

GARNISH

When broth is done, remove chicken and cut into shreds.

Add noodles to boiling broth and stir gently (to prevent breaking) until they float to the surface, about 1 to 2 minutes.

Transfer noodles to soup bowls for serving.

Add shredded chicken to each bowl, ladle in broth.

Serve hot and garnish each bowl with scallions, chillies, morning glory, lime, fried garlic, shallots and coriander leaves and stems.

TIP

Noodles can be made and frozen up to one month prior to use.





FRIED RICE

Khao Phat ខ្នើរាវីត

RICE

2 cups Jasmine rice
1 tsp ginger, minced
2 garlic cloves, minced
1 shallot, finely sliced
1 tbsp fish sauce
1/2 tsp white pepper
2 tsp light brown sugar
1 egg
Salt, to taste

SALAD DRESSING

2 tbsp fish sauce
2 tbsp sugar
2 tbsp lime juice
1 tbsp rice vinegar
1 garlic clove, minced
1 coriander stem, minced
1 Thai chilli, finely sliced
1/3 cup boiling water

OTHER INGREDIENTS

1/3 cup mint leaves, chopped
1/3 cup fresh coriander, chopped
1/3 cup Thai Basil, chopped
1/4 cup roasted peanuts
2 fresh shallots, thinly sliced
2 tbsp fried shallots
2 spring onions, sliced
3 Thai chillies, finely sliced

RICE

Fried rice is typically done with leftover rice from the day before so that it's less sticky and the grains are separate when fried.

If you don't have any, cook rice several hours before and keep in the fridge to get a similar effect.

Heat up a large pan or wok and add some oil.

Add in the garlic, shallot, ginger and cook until slightly brown.

Add in the rice, tossing and mixing.

Sprinkle in the pepper, sugar, salt and fish sauce.

Create a hole in the centre of the rice, crack in the egg and allow it to cook for a few seconds, mixing slightly so that you get a mix of white and yellow.

Stir all together and remove from heat. Set aside.

THE DRESSING

Combine all the ingredients (except water), then pour in the hot, boiled water and whisk.

Leave to cool completely.

ASSEMBLE

In a large salad bowl, mix rice with all the other ingredients.

Pour over a little dressing and mix well.

TIP

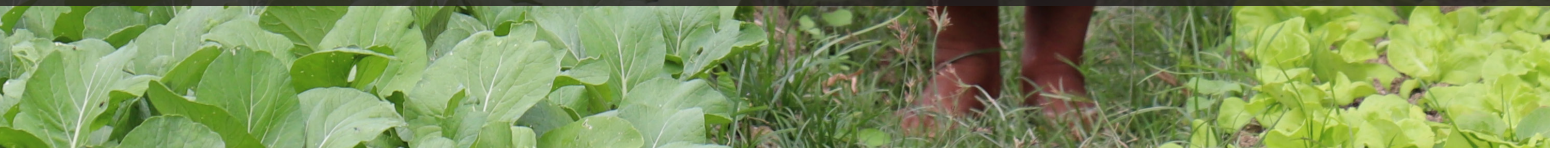
Many people add diced vegetables to give more flavour and texture to their fried rice.

Common additions include carrots and long beans.



“

I cannot express enough how grateful I am to the project. It has been a true game-changer for me and my family. With fresh vegetables and herbs growing right in our garden and the supplementary meat, we have a range of diverse, nutritious food every day. You see I can only smile!"



BOUNCHAN SOMPACHAN

Xieng Khouang Province

Mrs Bounchan was introduced to the AFN project in 2018. She attended the Farmer Nutrition School course one year later, and was awarded a garden grant of 1 million Laotian kip (approximately 120 USD).

With that, she started a home garden with two vegetable seed beds. As she was very active, AFN asked her to be part of the Participatory Action Research model activity and she was provided 200 catfish fingerlings, 280 tadpoles and 10 different type of vegetable seeds.

She now grows various seasonal vegetables in seven seed beds throughout the year, and sells at the nearby district market. To increase her income, Bounchan focuses only on vegetables that are in high demand so that she can sell more and fetch a good price.



PORK NOODLE SOUP

Khao Soi ເຂົ້າຊອຍ

BROTH

1 kg pork bone
1 inch piece of ginger
3 fresh coriander stalks
1 medium onion
1 full garlic
2 tsp salt

PORK SAUCE

1 tbsp vegetable oil
1 tsp dried chilli powder
2 tomatoes, diced
1 cup ground pork
2 tbsp fermented soybean paste
Black pepper and salt, to taste

NOODLES

500g rice noodles

GARNISH

2 tbsp dried chili powder
350g bean sprouts
1/2 cup fresh coriander, chopped
1 spring onion, chopped
Lime, to taste
Fish sauce, to taste

BROTH

Boil bones in a large pot for 10 minutes — the water should cover the bones.
Add ginger, coriander, onion, garlic and salt.
Let the broth simmer for 1 hour, covered with a lid.

PORK SAUCE

Heat vegetable oil in a pan and saute red curry for 1-2 minutes.
Add the tomatoes and cook until soft and broken.
Add the pork, soybean paste, chilli, black pepper, and salt.
Stir well and reduce to low heat.
Simmer for 10 minutes.

ASSEMBLE

Cook the noodles in a separate pot of boiling water.
Drain and place into individual soup bowls.
Ladle broth over cooked noodles, add 1/2 cup of pork sauce to each bowl.

GARNISH

Top with spring onions, chilli powder, coriander, bean sprouts, lime, and fish sauce as desired.

RICE PORRIDGE

Khao Piak Khao Sai Kai ເຂົ້າປຽກເຂົ້າໃສ່ໄກ

PORRIDGE

- 6 chicken thighs
- 1 chicken breast
- 6 fresh coriander stems, no leaves
- 1 onion, charred
- 6 slices ginger
- 4 chicken bullion
- 2 tbsp soy sauce
- 1 cup Jasmine rice

GARNISH

- 1 coriander stem, chopped
- 1 spring onion, chopped
- 1 tbsp of fried shallots
- Soy sauce, to taste
- Fish sauce, to taste
- Lime, to taste
- Pepper, to taste

BROTH

Bring water to boil in a pot (about 1 L).

Meanwhile, char the onion on the stove (without skin). Don't let it catch fire.

Once the water is boiling, add coriander, onion, ginger, chicken bullion and chicken into the boiling water.

Lower fire to medium heat.

After 30 minutes, remove the chicken and allow to cool in the fridge.

When cool, shred chicken by hand and set aside.

Place rice into the broth, partially cover with a lid.

Stir occasionally so that rice does not stick to the bottom..

Cook for about 45 minutes until achieving your desired consistency.

Place the porridge into the bowl.

Top with the shredded chicken and other garnishes.

NUTRITIONAL TIP

Add a sprinkle of groundnuts (*Mak thua din*) to boost this dish with folate and iron. Folate is important for healthy cell growth and especially beneficial for pregnant women.





“

I love when it's time for our mid-day meal at school! It's where we all sit together and eat with my friends and laugh a lot. The food is yummy, the cook uses vegetables from our school garden."



DIPS

Jaew แจ่ว

SPICY TOMATO DIP

Jaew Mak Len ແຈ່ວໝາກເລັ່ນ

SAUCE

- 3 medium tomatoes
- 2 small shallots, unpeeled
- 4-7 red bird's eye chillies, whole
- 4 garlic cloves, unpeeled
- 3 spring onions, divided into strips
- 1 1/2 tbsp fish sauce
- 1/4 cup fresh coriander, chopped
- A pinch of salt

CHAR GRILL

- Arrange the tomatoes, shallots, chillies, unpeeled garlic cloves and two strips of the spring onions onto a pan.
- Cook on a charcoal grill or in the oven, turning occasionally so that the ingredients are charred on all sides (but not burnt).
- Set aside to cool.

MIX INTO A DIP

- Use a large mortar and pestle to mash charred ingredients into a paste.
- Start with the garlic, peel the cloves and mash.
- Then chop the chillies (remove stems and seeds for less heat).
- Peel the shallots and chop with the spring onions.
- Add all to the mortar and pestle and mash together.

- Roughly chop the tomatoes and add to the rest of the ingredients to form a textured sauce (do not over mash).
- Mix in fish sauce, coriander and salt.

GARNISH

- Slice the remaining spring onion and coriander and sprinkle over to serve.

TIPS

- The garlic, onions, shallots and chillies will become charred faster than the tomatoes, so remove as soon as they are done.

- You can use a food processor instead of a mortar and pestle, but blend on a low setting to keep sauce more textured.



CULTURAL HIGHLIGHT

Jaew is an essential part of any Laotian meal and is paired with all kinds of dishes. *Jaew Som* is its most basic form, made with garlic, chillies, sugar, limes, salt, fish sauce and fresh coriander, then variations are created with a featured ingredient such as eggplant, galangal, prickly ash, dry fish, mushrooms, beef bile, you name it.







SMOKED EGGPLANT DIP

Jaew Mak Kheau ແຈ້ວໝາກເຂືອ

SAUCE

- 1 small purple eggplant or 2-3 small Asian ones
- 1 fresh red bird's eye chillies, whole
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 2-3 garlic cloves, unpeeled
- 1 shallot
- 1/2 cup fresh coriander, chopped
- 1 spring onion, chopped

CHAR GRILL

- Pierce eggplants and chilli a few times with a knife or fork.
- Put eggplants, chilli, and garlic on a grill or in the oven to char, turning occasionally so that all sides darken.
- Remove from heat and let cool.

MIX INTO A DIP

- Peel the garlic and chop the chilli.
- Put in a mortar and pestle, add salt and pepper and mash in a grainy paste.
- Cut the eggplant in half, remove the pulp with a spoon and add to the mortar.
- Add chopped coriander and mash all together.
- Mix in fish sauce and spring onions.
- Save a few chopped spring onion pieces for garnish.

TIP

- To char the ingredients, you can also hold them directly over the flame of a stove until the skin burns and darken. In Laos, they do this over charcoal to get that unique smoky flavour.



NUTRITION HIGHLIGHT

Eggplants are high in potassium, ranging from 50 to 250 mg in different varieties. They are also a great source of antioxidants, which help prevent disease, improve eye health and reduce inflammation.



SPICY MUSHROOM DIP

Jaew Het ແຈ້ວເຫັດ

SAUCE

- 450g of white mushrooms
- 5-8 red bird's eye chillies, whole*
- 2 tbsp fish sauce
- 3 cloves of garlic, unpeeled
- 3 shallots, unpeeled
- 1/4 cup fresh coriander, chopped
- 1 spring onion, divided into strips
- 1 spring onion, chopped

REGIONAL SPECIALTY

Jaew Het is a specialty of Luang Prabang Province.



CHAR GRILL

Place mushrooms, chillies, garlic, shallots and 1 spring onion onto a grill or in the oven to char, turning occasionally so that they char evenly.

Remove from heat and let cool.

MIX INTO A DIP

Peel the garlic and shallots, and chop the spring onions and chilli (remove seeds for less heat).

Combine into a mortar and pestle with salt, and pound all together to make a paste.

Add the mushrooms and mash until it becomes a textured sauce.

Mix in fish sauce and the fresh spring onion and coriander.

Save a few chopped spring onion pieces for garnish.

TIP

The mushrooms will release juices as they roast, so be sure to have a tray underneath to catch it.





“

It has made a remarkable difference in my life. I now have my own income stream of 18-20 million kip per year which I can use to pay my children's school fees and contribute to household expenses. I have seen a change in people's attitude towards me.*

PHOUVIENG BOUNTHALANGSY

Xieng Khouang Province

Mrs Phouvieng became a member of her village's garlic production group through the AFN project in 2019.

While she used to grow garlic before the project, her yield was only adequate for household consumption, harvesting about 40-50 kg per year, mainly due to lack of technical know-how.

Since receiving a group grant in May 2019, Mrs. Phouvieng has expanded her area of garlic cultivation to 0.2 hectares, on which she is able to harvest 1000-1200 kg a year.

Out of that, she sells about 700-800 kg to a middle man who sells at the market, and she dries 200-300 kg which she sells at a premium. The rest she uses as seedlings for the next season and for household consumption.

She earns anywhere between 18-20 million LAK per year from this activity. She uses the money in buying household assets, sending her kids to school, contributing in household expenses.



*Approximately 1000-1200 USD

CATTLE SKIN CHILLI

Jaew Bong ແຈ້ວບອງ

SAUCE

- 2 tbsp palm sugar
- 2 tbsp fish sauce
- 1/2 tbsp of salt
- 1/2 cup of cooked, sliced beef skin
- 2 cups dried red chili peppers
- 5 shallots, unpeeled
- 5 cloves garlic, unpeeled
- 1 1/2 tbsp dried galangal powder

REGIONAL SPECIALTY

Jaew Bong is a specialty of Luang Prabang Province.



CHAR GRILL

Roast garlic, shallots, chillies and galangal on a grill or in the oven until cooked through, the chillies until aromatic.

Remove from heat and let cool.

MIX INTO A DIP

Pound the chillies in a mortar and pestle until well ground.

Peel the garlic and shallots, and add along with the galangal to the mortar. Mash until well combined.

Add palm sugar, tamarind, fish sauce and salt, mash

Mash until it becomes a paste.

Cut the beef skin into thin shreds.

Place into a sauce bowl, add in the paste and mix well.

Preserve in an airtight container for up to 1 month (or up to 3 months in the fridge) — this *jaew* is usually kept for a week or more before eating to let the flavours sink in.

TIP

You can use any kind of meat jerky to make this sauce.

In Laos, it is traditional made with buffalo or cow skin, that is dried and boiled beforehand. You could use pork skin as an alternative.

Some people add dried shrimp to give a more fishy flavour.



VEGETABLE DIP

Jaew Nam Phak ແລ່ວນ້ຳຜັກ

SAUCE

2 tbsp of red or green chillies
2 tbsp nam phak
3 cloves garlic, unpeeled
2 spring onions, unpeeled
1 stalk coriander, chopped (save 2 leaves for garnish)
1 tsp fish sauce
Salt, to taste

NAM PHAK

3-5 stalks of leafy vegetables
(with leaves intact)

REGIONAL SPECIALTY

Jaew Nam Phuk is a specialty of Oudomxay Province.



NAM PHAK

Boil a mix of green leafy vegetables of your choice — some common ones include morning glory, mustard leaf, sweet potato leaves etc.

Chop into a fine mince and pound in a mortar to make a textured paste.

Place in a wide, semi-flat bowl and steam — you want to catch any juices that ooze out of the paste.

Steam for 10-15 min.

Remove from heat and set aside.

CHAR GRILL

Roast garlic, spring onions and chillies on a grill or in the oven until cooked through, the chillies until aromatic.

Remove from heat and let cool.

MIX INTO A DIP

Pound the chilies in a mortar then peel garlic and add along with onion.

Continue to mash until well combined.

Add nam phak, salt and fish sauce, mashing together until well combined.

Finally, mix in chopped coriander.

Garnish with coriander leaves and place in a small bowl to serve.

Preserve in an airtight container in the fridge for up to a week.

TIP

You can make *Nam Phak* in advance and store in a glass jar for up to 3 months (even longer if in the fridge). The longer you keep it, the more flavourful it becomes — this will affect the taste of your *jaew*.

FERMENTED FISH CHILLI

Jaew Pa Baum ແຈ້ວປາບ້າ

SAUCE

2 tbsp of dried red chilli peppers
1 tbsp padaek
3 cloves garlic, unpeeled
½ tbsp Sichuan peppercorns
Salt, to taste
Sugar, to taste

REGIONAL SPECIALTY

Jaew Pa Baum is a specialty of Houaphan Province.



GRILL

Roast garlic on a grill or in the oven until cooked.
Roast Sichuan peppercorns and chillies in a dry pan (no oil) until aromatic.

MIX INTO A DIP

Pound the chillies and peppercorns together in a mortar until well ground.
Peel and add in the garlic. Mash until well combined.
Add padaek and mash until well combined.
Add a sprinkle of salt and sugar, adjusting as desired.

Place into a small bowl to serve.

Preserve in an airtight container for up to 1 month (or up to 6 months if kept in the fridge).

TIP

This recipe is traditionally made with a local river fish from Houaphan known as *Pa Baum*, hence the name.

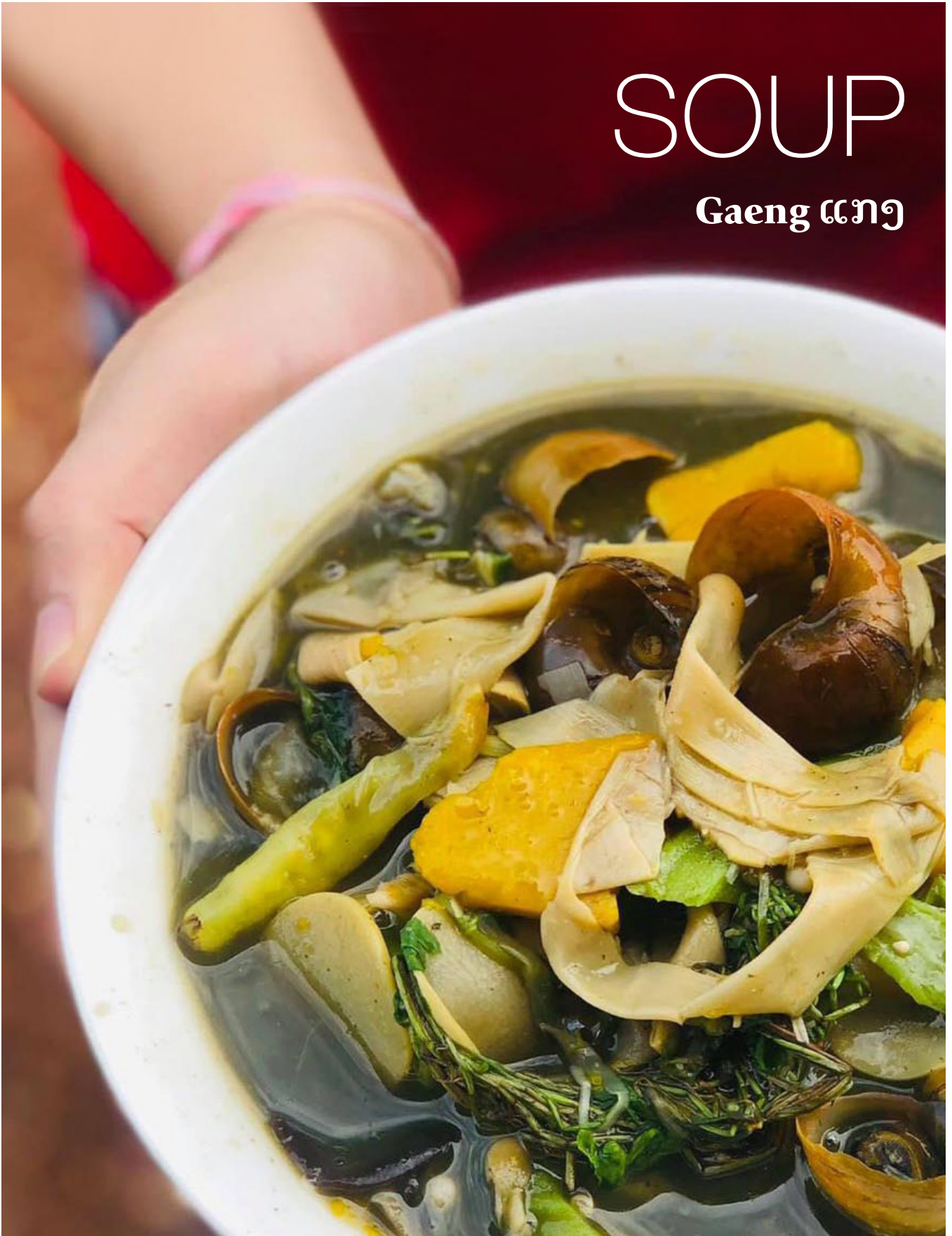


“

Fish is in high demand here. The AFN project has helped me enjoy my retirement by continuing to earn good income. Within 6 months, I was able to reinvest what I sold into more fingerlings and I'm ready to try raising frogs too!"

SOUP

Gaeng ແກງ



FISH CURRY VERMICELLI

Khao Poon Nam Seen ខ្នើប្បូនណាំឌីន

BROTH

1kg beef shank with bone
10 slices galangal
2 fresh coriander roots
4 kaffir leaves
2 tbsp salt
1 can bamboo shoots, sliced
10-12 pork blood cubes
1 tsp sugar

CHILI PASTE

12 dried red chillies
6 shallots
10 cloves garlic
2 tbsp shrimp paste
1 tsp paprika

VEGETABLES

1 bunch long beans, chopped
1 cabbage, shredded
1 carrot, shredded
2 young mustard leaf stalks
4 limes, sliced into wedges
400g bean sprouts
1 bunch fresh mint
Fresh coriander leaves from above

NOODLES

500g rice vermicelli noodles

REGIONAL SPECIALTY

Khao Poon Nam Seen is a specialty of Xayabouly Province.



BROTH

Fill a heavy bottom pot with water (big enough to fit all ingredients).
Add coriander, galangal, kaffir leaves and salt.
Bring to a boil.

Add in the beef shank.

Simmer for about 2-3 hours or until meat falls off the bone.

Skim off any foam that floats to the surface.

Remove meat from water when it is tender or falls off the bone.

Set aside.

BAMBOO & NOODLES

While the broth is cooking, boil the bamboo in another pot for 15 minutes. Remove the bamboo, drain and set aside.

Keep the water boiling.

Prepare a bowl of ice water.

Add vermicelli to the pot, cook for 2-3 minutes until soft.

Remove from water and place in ice water to prevent overcooking and sticking.

Drain well and set aside.

CHILLI PASTE

Soak the chilli pods in water until soft. Drain and chop.

In a food processor, blend the chillies, shallots and garlic into a paste.

Put 1 cup aside for the soup. Store the rest in the fridge for later use.

BEEF MIXTURE

In a mortar and pestle, mash half of the beef with the shrimp paste.

Add paprika and the above cup of chilli paste.


Sauté together in a frying pan.





NUTRITIONAL TIP

Just 2 tablespoons of mustard leaf provide 12% of the Recommended Daily Allowance of Vitamin A and 50% of Vitamin C for children under 2 years of age. The leaves, seeds and stem of the plant are all edible and frequently used in Asian and African cooking.



ASSEMBLE

Add beef mixture to the broth and mix well.
Add bamboo and remaining meat to the pot.
Sprinkle in some sugar.

Place vermicelli noodles, cabbage, carrots and beans into soup bowls.
Add broth and soup contents with a ladle until noodles are covered.
Garnish with bean sprouts, mint, coriander and lime to taste.

TIP

All vegetables are generally served raw, but you can cook the beans and mustard greens if you prefer. Other common vegetables include banana flowers, cucumbers and purple cabbage.

Use a pressure cooker if you have one to reduce the time required for making the broth. One hour is usually sufficient.

Boiled blood cake cubes are a common addition to Laotian noodles soups. A good substitute that may be easier to find is black pudding, or you can do without.

You can use this same recipe with fish instead of beef. If so, coconut milk is often added in the assembly stage.

FISH STEW

Or Pa ເອາຍປາ

SOUP

500 g of white fish, cut in pieces
4 round eggplants, quartered
1 bunch leafy greens of choice
6-7 green beans
3 red bird's eye chillies
2 shallots, minced
3 cloves garlic, minced
2 stalks lemongrass, chopped
3 slices galangal, chopped
1/2 cup fresh dill, chopped
3 spring onions, chopped
1/2 cup coriander, chopped
1 tbsp padaek
2 tsp salt

KHAO BEAU

1/2 cup dry sticky rice, soaked

KHAO BEAU

Rinse and soak sticky rice in warm water for 1 hour.

Drain and pound in a mortar and pestle until it becomes a gooey-like texture.
Set aside.

SOUP

Add oil into a pot.

Roast chillies, garlic, shallot, lemongrass and galangal until brown.

Add in the fish, lightly searing the sides.

Fill the pot with water, enough to cover the fish and the ingredients to come.

Add salt and bring to a boil.

Add in padaek, eggplants, leafy greens, beans and khao beau.

Cook for 15 mins or until all vegetables are well cooked.

Add fresh dill and spring onion. Stir in gently.

Serve in individual bowls and sprinkle with coriander for garnish.

NUTRITION HIGHLIGHT

Moringa leaves are a tasty and nutritional addition to this dish. Just 50g can provide 80% Vitamin C, 30% calcium, 50% iron and 50% protein of daily recommended intake for children under 5.





BAMBOO SHOOT SOUP

Gaeng Nor Mai ແກງໝໍ້ໄມ້

YANANG EXTRACT

2 handfuls of bai yanang leaves
2 tbsp padaek

PASTE

3 red bird's eye chillies
5 cloves garlic
2 shallots
3 stalks lemongrass, chopped

STEW

2 tbsp cooking oil
900g bamboo shoots, sliced
450g catfish, cut into chunks
3 medium tomatoes, quartered
3 kaffir lime leaves
1 tbsp salt
3 spring onions, chopped

REGIONAL SPECIALTY

Gaeng Nor Mai is a specialty of Houaphan Province.



YANANG EXTRACT

See p.9 for instructions on how to make.

PASTE

In a mortar, mash chillies, garlic, shallots and lemongrass into a paste.

STEW

Boil 1L of water to have on hold until ready for use.

In a separate pot, add some oil and the paste.

Keep on low fire and stir until it becomes aromatic.

Add in the catfish, and stir for a few minutes.

Then add in the yanang juice and pour in boiling water until the pot is full.

Bring to boil and add salt.

Rinse the bamboo shoots in warm water.

Add to pot and mix in gently, taking care not to break up the fish.

Turn fire down to medium low and simmer for 15 minutes.

Add in tomatoes and spring onions. Simmer for another 5 minutes.

Add in the remaining yanang leaves.

Serve with rice (sticky or other).

TIP

Yanang leaves are what makes this soup sour. If you cannot find fresh or frozen leaves, replace with 400ml can of Yanang Leaves Extract.

This soup can also be made as a vegetarian dish, without the fish.

You can also add other vegetables to this soup. Some common ingredients include wood ear mushroom, acacia leaves and pumpkin.



“

The project's support and guidance have transformed my farming journey. The provision of a greenhouse and assistance with garlic and green onion cultivation has helped me to sustain year-round production and frequent income."

KEOPASEURTH

Luang Prabang Province

Mr Keopaseurth has been head of a vegetable production group since 2021, working with 20 other households to produce garlic, onions and other vegetables on 20 hectares of land spread around different areas of the community.

The PICSA project supported him with technical know-how, including furrow irrigation techniques, and provided a grant to set up a greenhouse that allows him to maintain production all year round.

As garlic prices have been fluctuating, Mr Keopaseurth decided to focus on growing green onions, and the group managed to sell a total of 2,800 kg of green onions, earning 73 million kips (approx. 4000 USD) in April 2023.

With just 2 hectares of land, Mr Keopaseurth's production of green onions made up almost 10% of the group's total, earning him around 420 USD from selling to a trader directly from his farm gate.



SPICY BEEF STEW

Or Lam ອາະຫຼາມ

STEW

500g beef, cut into small chunks
150g beef rind
500g roast pork crackling, chopped
5 pieces Lao Chilliwood*, remove outer bark, break into pieces and soak in water

HERBS & VEGETABLES

10 green beans, 1-inch pieces
6 Thai round eggplants, quartered
2 cups wood ear mushroom, chopped
1 cup oyster mushroom, chopped
2 tbsp padaek
2 tbsp fish sauce
1 cup dill, chopped
1 cup lemon basil leaves
3 spring onions, chopped
1 tsp salt

PASTE

1 stalk lemongrass
3 shallots, chopped
3 cloves garlic, chopped
4 bird's eye chillies, chopped

KHAO BEAU

1/3 cup dry sticky rice, soaked

REGIONAL SPECIALTY

Or Lam is a specialty of Luang Prabang Province.



KHAO BEAU

Rinse and soak sticky rice in warm water for 1 hour.
Drain and pound in a mortar and pestle until it becomes a gooey-like texture.
Set aside.

BEEF RIND

Rinse the beef rind and pat dry.
If there is hair on the skin, burn off directly with your stove fire.
Boil a pot of water, with salt, and cook for 10-15 minutes until soft.
Drain and soak in cold water. Cut into small pieces. Set aside.

PASTE

Peel the outer layer of the lemongrass and tie into a knot. Set aside.
In a mortar and pestle, crush the garlic, shallots, chillies and the inner soft part of the lemongrass until it becomes a paste.
Add the khao beau and mix well.

STEW

Add oil to a pot and sauté the paste until aromatic.
Add the beef, turning the pieces so that all sides are a light brown colour.
Fill the pot with water and bring to boil.

Add the chilliwood and lemongrass knot. Simmer for 20 minutes.

Add the padaek, fish sauce, eggplants, green beans, mushrooms and pork crackling.
Simmer for 5 minutes.

Add salt, mix in half of the dill, spring onions and lemon basil leaves.
Use the rest as garnish.

*Also called Sakahn (*Piper ribesoides*)





SOUR PUMPKIN SOUP

Gaeng Mak Eu ແກງໝາກອຶ

SOUP

- 1/2 chicken, chopped into pieces
- 2 cups pumpkin, cut into cubes
- 1 cup straw mushrooms
- 5 kaffir lime leaves
- 3 limes, juiced
- 3 tbsp fish sauce
- 1 tsp salt

PASTE

- 4 red bird's eye chillies, chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, peeled
- 2 stalks lemongrass, chopped
- 3 slices galangal

GARNISH

- 3 spring onions, chopped
- 3 stalks fresh coriander, chopped

PASTE

In a mortar and pestle, mash together chillies, galangal, garlic and lemongrass until it becomes a paste.

SOUP

Add oil to a medium-sized pot and sauté paste until aromatic.

Add in chicken pieces, turning occasionally until all sides are lightly browned.

Fill the pot with water and bring to boil.

Skim off any froth that foams onto the surface.

Lower heat and simmer for 5 minutes.

Add in pumpkin, mushrooms and kaffir lime leaves.

Continue to simmer for 1 hour, until chicken and pumpkin are well cooked.

Add in lime juice, fish sauce and salt.

Adjust according to taste.

Remove from the heat and transfer to serving bowls.

Garnish with spring onions and coriander.

NUTRITION HIGHLIGHT

Besides their rich, sweet flavour, pumpkins are packed with Vitamin A, Vitamin C and Vitamin E, lutein and zeaxanthin — all of which help strengthen eyesight, boost immunity and promote healthy aging. Pumpkins are an excellent low calorie, nutritious food to add to your diet.



BUFFALO & TARO SOUP

Or Bone Sai Nung ເອາະບອນໃສ່ໜັງ

SOUP

500g taro, chopped
200g dried buffalo skin
4 tomatoes
100g sour bamboo shoots (can)

HERBS & FLAVOURS

3 cloves garlic, unpeeled
5 fresh red or green chillies
3 spring onions
2 stalks lemongrass
5 slices galangal
2 tbsp padaek or fish sauce

REGIONAL SPECIALTY

Or Bone Sai Nung is a specialty of Phongsaly Province.



BUFFALO SKIN

To prepare buffalo skin, sear over a flame until it looks charred. Then scrape with a large knife and rinse. Repeat until the skin has a white colour. Cut into small 2cm pieces. Set aside.

PASTE

Roast garlic, spring onion and chillies on a grill or in the oven until cooked. Put into a mortar and mash into a paste.

SOUP

Wash and chop the taro into 4cm pieces. Boil a large pot of water (1.5L) and add in buffalo skin. Cook until tender.

Once buffalo skin is soft, add in all other ingredients. Cook for 20 minutes, or until taro is cooked — it should be tender like a potato but firm enough to hold its shape.

TIP

The soup is popular in Northern Laos and some parts of the south. Some people add pig feet, others basil leaves, and in Luang Prabang they always add chilliwood.

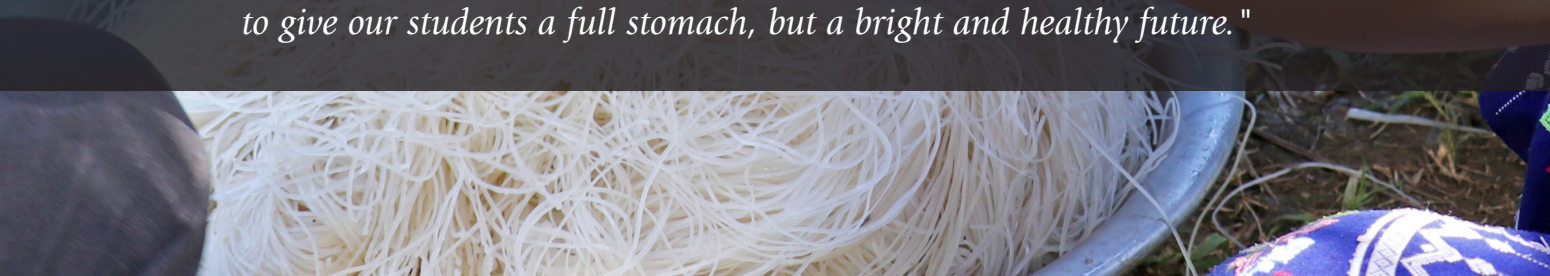
Buffalo skin has quite a unique flavour and texture, but you could try this recipe with pork or beef rind.





“

As we gather together preparing each bowl of noodle soup with care, we nourish not only hungry stomachs but also young dreams. As teachers, we not only want to give our students a full stomach, but a bright and healthy future."





MEAT / FISH

Seen / Pa ឌឹម / ហា

STEAMED FISH IN BANANA LEAF

Mok Pa ໝົກປາ

FISH

200 g white fish diced
1 cup vegetable oil

PASTE

1/3 cup dry sticky rice, soaked
3 shallots, peeled
1 clove garlic, peeled
1 red bird's eye chilli
1 stalk lemongrass, chopped
1cm galangal, chopped
2 kaffir lime leaves, sliced
1/2 cup dill, chopped
1 handful Thai basil leaves, chopped
1 spring onion, chopped
1 tbsp water
1 tbsp padaek (or fish sauce)
A pinch of salt

BANANA PARCELS

8 banana leaf rectangles, 20x25 cm
8 skewers or long toothpicks

STICKY RICE

Rinse and soak sticky rice in warm water for 1 hour.
Drain and pound in a mortar and pestle until it becomes a gooey-like texture.
Set aside.

PASTE

In a mortar, pound sticky rice powder, shallots, garlic, chilli, lemongrass and salt until it forms a paste.
Add in kaffir lime leaves, dill, basil and spring onions and continue to mash until leaves are well mashed.
Add in water and fish sauce, mix until combined.

FISH

Place fish in a bowl and mix with paste.
Let marinade for 10 minutes.

WRAPPING WITH BANANA LEAVES

Soften banana leaves by holding over an open flame until it becomes a shiny bright green colour and releases moisture. This only takes several seconds.

Lay out two pieces of banana leaf per fish parcel.
Place the leaves in opposite directions — one with veins vertical, one with veins horizontal.

Add fish to the center of the banana leaf and fold up one of the sides.
Pinch the top, fold in one side, wrap the triangular edge around the parcel.
Repeat with the other side.

Secure the top with a skewer or toothpick.
Add extra strips of banana leaf to strengthen if needed.

STEAM

Prepare steamer (ensure water is boiling prior to putting in fish).
Place parcels into steamer for 30 minutes. Serve with rice.



NUTRITION HIGHLIGHT

Bananas are excellent for your gut health and easy to introduce fruit and starch into young children's diets. High in potassium, it is an excellent energy boost at the beginning of the day.



TIP

It is not recommended to use frozen banana leaves. Another option is to stuff green bell peppers, which can also be eaten as part of the dish.

TURN THIS SKILL INTO A LAO BANANA STICKY RICE DESSERT

Khao Tom Mud

Soak 250g of glutinous rice overnight.

Cook rice in coconut milk with a one cup of sugar, a pinch of salt and some oil.

Once cooled, spread rice onto a banana leaf.

Add a slice of banana on top and cover with more rice so that it is sandwiched, as if you were making sushi.

Fold your banana leaf parcel and repeat as desired — this amount of rice can make 10-12 little parcels.

Steam for 30 minutes.

Serve hot.

BBQ GRILLED CHICKEN

Ping Kai ປິ່ງໄກ່

MARINADE

- 6 chicken thighs or 12 wings
- 2 stalks lemongrass, finely chopped
- 6 garlic cloves, minced
- 1/2 cup fresh coriander, chopped
- 2 tbsp oyster sauce
- 2 tbsp fish sauce
- 1 tbsp soy sauce
- 1 tbsp sugar
- 1 tsp ground black pepper

OTHER

- 125 ml vegetable oil
- 3 lime, cut into wedges to serve

DIPPING SAUCE

Accompany with tomato dip, p.28

MARINADE

Cut down the sides of the bone to loosen the meat, without removing bones. This will allow the marinade to sink in.

In a large bowl, combine all the marinade ingredients.

Mix well with the chicken, then cover and refrigerate overnight (min. 3 hours).

COOK

Heat a grill to very hot.

Drizzle the chicken with a little oil and add the pieces onto grate, skin down.

Discard excess marinade.

Cook each side for 5-6 minutes, or until the chicken is cooked through. Remove from heat and rest for a few minutes before serving.

Serve with dipping sauce and lime wedges.

CULTURAL TIP

Seen dat, or seared meat, is barbequed on a traditional Lao metal pan set in the middle of the table for communal sharing. Pre-marinated meats are typically dunked into a jaew just before being grilled and eaten with sticky rice.



PORK SALAD

Laab Moo ລາບໝູ

PORK

450g Ground Pork
1 tbsp sticky rice powder
1 lime, juiced
1 tbsp padaek
1 tsp salt
Sprinkle of sugar (optional)

HERBS

3 spring onions, finely chopped
3 shallots, chopped
2 red bird's eye chillies, sliced
1/2 cup Thai basil, chopped
1/2 fresh coriander, chopped
1 cup fresh mint, chopped

STICKY RICE POWDER

Grill uncooked sticky rice on a dry pan until brown. Let cool.
Grind in a mortar (or food processor) until it becomes a powder.
Put through a sieve to get rid of any large pieces.

PORK

Add oil to a pan, stir fry pork until brown.
Add in the sticky rice, padaek, sugar, salt and lime.
Stirry fry for another minute and remove from heat.

ASSEMBLE

In a large bowl, combine pork with onions and shallots. Mix well.
Top off with all the leaves —basil, coriander, mint.
Sprinkle in chilli.
Mix and serve immediately.

TIP

Everyone's laab is a little different. Adjust taste to your preference by using more or less chilli (you can also use chilli powder), lime, fish sauce or sugar.

CULTURAL HIGHLIGHT

Laab is believed to be a lucky dish and is eaten at all types of celebrations, such as weddings and the first day of the new year. When inviting a guest over for dinner, it is common to say "*Ma ao sok ao laab*", meaning "Come get good luck and *laab*".







“

The project has not only helped me earn good income, but the goats have become a vital source of nutritious milk and meat for our family, enriching our meals and having a positive impact on our health and well-being.”

KHAMPHENG VONGPHENGKHAM

Xieng Khouang Province

Mr. Khampeng is head of the goat raising group started through the AFN project. Now boasting 15 member households, the group applied for a grant that helped them buy goats, shed-building material and vaccines to help keep the animals healthy.

"I've always been interested in raising goats but didn't really have the motivation to get started. They are easier to manage than other livestock such as pigs, so I wanted to be a join the activity at once.", he shared.

Khampeng originally received 6 goats from the project and has since bought 3 more from his profit. The demand for mutton in his area is high so he runs a quick rotation; he currently has 30 goats that he will sell to traders directly from his farm gate.

Khampeng also keeps a flock of mother goats to make sure there's enough milk to nurse the newborn kids.





LAO SAUSAGE

Sai Oua ໄສ່ອົ່ວ

MEAT

900g ground pork
450g fatty pork belly, minced
100g pork snout

SPICES

1 cups shallot, minced
1/4 cup lemongrass, minced
1/4 cup galangal, minced
1/2 fresh coriander, chopped
1/2 cup spring onion, chopped
6 garlic cloves, minced
2 tbsp kaffir leaves, finely chopped
2 red bird's eye chilli, chopped
2 tbsp oyster sauce
1 tbsp fish sauce
1 tsp sugar
2 tsp salt

SAUSAGE CASING

1.8m edible sausage casing
1 sausage stuffer or machine

STUFFING

Rinse the sausage casing with warm water and soak in water for 90 mins.

Boil the pork snout for 30 minutes. Drain and mince.

Mix together with ground pork and pork belly and put in freezer to cool.

In a food processor, finely chop each of the spice ingredients separately.

Mix all spices together in a bowl. Add in the meat.

Mix until it becomes sticky.

Place in freezer to set.

CASING

Run water through the inside of the casing.

Place casing onto the stuffing funnel, leaving about 8cm at the end for tying the knot when done.

Add meat stuffing to the top and push through the machine into the casing.

Hold the casing as it fills up.

Use a skewer or toothpick to pierce the casing if you get any air bubbles.

Tie both ends of the casing once it is filled.

Twist the sausage to create links if desired.

COOK

BBQ on a grill or cook in the oven for 20-30 min at 200°C.

TIP

500g of meat will usually stuff around 65-70cm of casing, but sausage casings are generally sold at around 500-700cm in length. You can cut and store unused casings in the freezer for up to 2 years.

FISH SALAD

Laab Pa လာပာ

FISH

450g white fish
1 stalk lemon grass, cut into four
5-6 kaffir lime leaves

DRESSING

2 tbsp sticky rice powder
1 lime, juiced
1 tbsp padaek
2 tsp salt

HERBS

3 spring onions, finely chopped
1 stalk lemongrass, finely chopped
1 clove garlic, minced
2 red bird's eye chillies, sliced
1/2 cup Thai basil, chopped
1/2 fresh coriander, chopped
1 cup, fresh mint, chopped

STICKY RICE POWDER

Grill uncooked sticky rice on a dry pan until brown. Let cool.
Grind in a mortar (or food processor) until it becomes a powder.
Put through a sieve to get rid of any large pieces.

FISH

Slice fish into small pieces.
Fill a pan with water just enough to cover fish.
Add in lemongrass and lime leaves, bring to a simmer.
Add in fish, cool until it breaks apart easily.
Turn off heat, drain fish and save 2 cups of fish broth.

DRESSING

Add sticky rice powder, lime, padaek and salt to the broth.
Set aside.

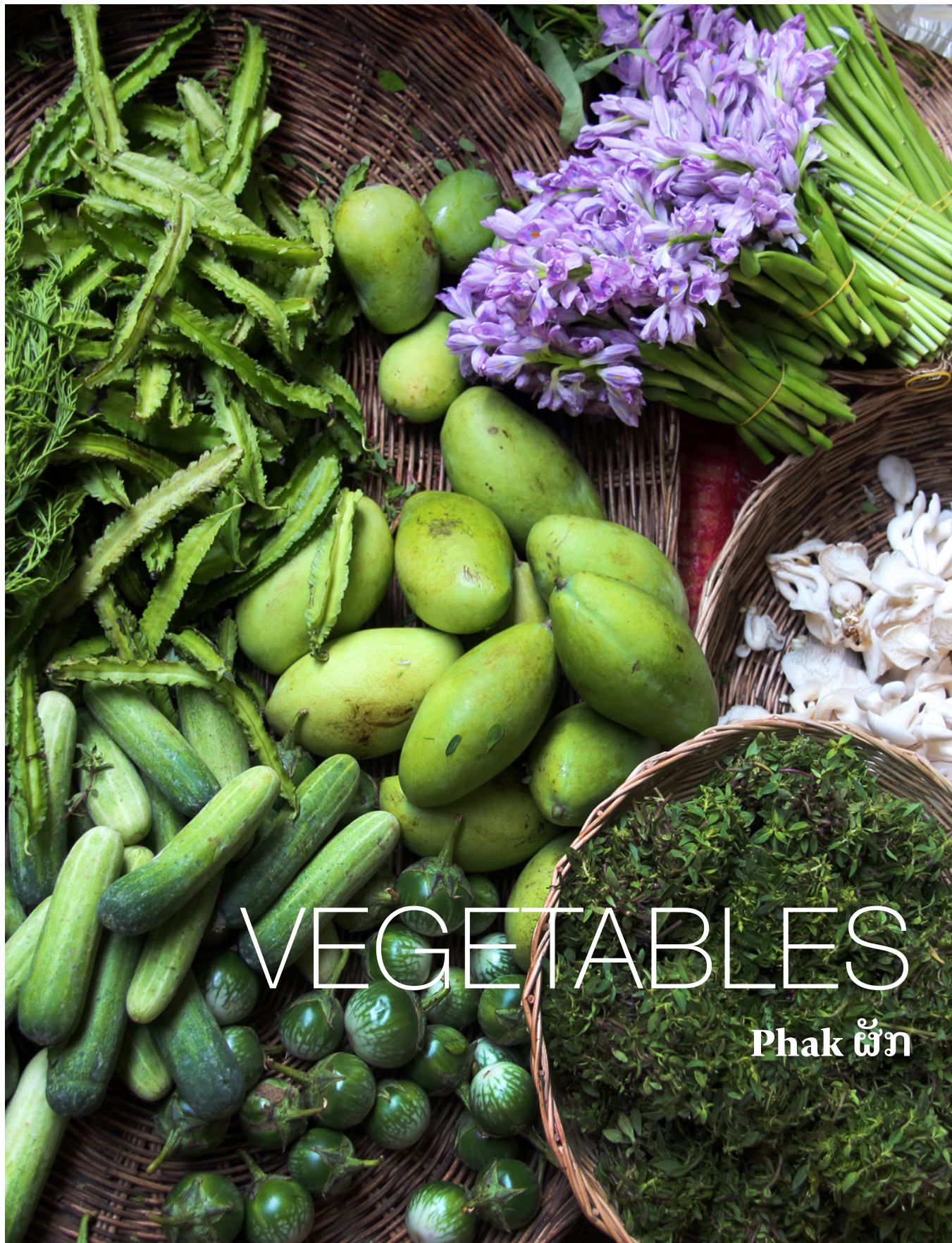
ASSEMBLE

Make sure fish is cool before you start.
In a large bowl, combine fish, lemon grass, spring onions and garlic.
Add in dressing slowly, use less if it feels too wet.
Mix well.

Top off with all the leaves —basil, coriander, mint.
Sprinkle in chilli.
Mix and serve immediately.

TIP

You can store sticky rice powder in a glass jar in the fridge for up to 3 months.



VEGETABLES

Phak ផ្លែក

PAPAYA SALAD

Tam Mak Hoong ຕຳໝາກຫຼ່ຽງ

SALAD

3 cups unripe papaya, shredded
1 cup long beans, 3cm long pieces
2 small Thai eggplants, sliced
10-12 cherry tomatoes, halved

SPICES

3 red bird's eye chilli
1 clove garlic
1 tsp shrimp paste
1 tsp crab paste
1 tbsp padaek
2 tbsp tamarind paste
4 tsp sugar
1 lime, juiced
Pinch of salt

PAPAYA

Peel the papaya, wash and pat dry with a towel.
Shred the papaya either with a peeler, or use a knife to slice julienne style into thin, long shreds.

DRESSING

In a mortar, mash together chillies, garlic and salt.
Add the shrimp and crab paste and mix all together.
Add the padaek, tamarind and sugar. Pound further.

ASSEMBLE

Add the tomatoes to the mortar and gently smash to make a sauce.
Add in lime juice.
Finally, add papaya, beans and eggplants.
Pound these in the mortar until they are slightly bruised.
Toss until mixed well.

TIP

Always taste the salad before serving to make sure that you have a nice balance of sour and spice.

NUTRITION HIGHLIGHT

Aside from being a great source of vitamins, papaya contains proteolytic enzymes like papain and chymopapain which have antiviral, antifungal and antibacterial properties.
Green, unripe papaya is also known to help decrease inflammation.







STIR FRIED GREENS

Khua Phak ខ្ចីដំរា

GREENS

- 150g morning glory
- 5 cloves garlic
- 2 red bird's eye chillies
- 1 tbsp oyster sauce
- 1 tbsp fermented soybean paste
- ½ tbsp soy sauce
- 1 tsp sugar

MORNING GLORY

Thoroughly wash the morning glory and drain well.
Cut the stems into 5cm pieces. Leave the leaves whole.
Set aside.

SAUCE AND BASE

In a mortar, pound together garlic and chillies until well mixed. Set aside.

In a separate bowl, mix together oyster sauce, soya sauce, bean paste and sugar.
Set aside.

COOK

In a wok or large frying pan, add oil and put on high heat.
When hot, add in garlic and chilli mix.

Add in the morning glory stems first as they cook faster.

After a minute, add in the leaves.

Then add in all the sauce and stir fry, keeping on high heat until the spinach is wilted.
Sprinkle in water if it seems too dry.

Once done, remove from heat and serve immediately.

TIP

While this dish is most commonly made with morning glory (*Khua Phak Bong*), you can swap with any leafy green of your choice.

NUTRITION HIGHLIGHT

Just 2 to 3 tablespoons of morning glory can provide children under 2 years old with the following Recommended Daily Allowances:

- 40% of Vitamin A
- 46% of Vitamin C
- 17% of Iron



STEAMED VEG SALAD

Xoup Phak ຊຸບຜັກ

SALAD

200g morning glory
200g malabar spinach
200g Enoki mushrooms
200g king oyster mushrooms
200g wood ear mushrooms

DRESSING

5 cloves garlic, chopped
3 shallots, chopped
3 red bird's eye chillies
2 stalks lemongrass, chopped
6 slices galangal
1 tbsp grated ginger
3 tbsp padaek or fish sauce

GARNISH

1/2 cup roasted sesame seeds
1/2 cup fresh coriander, chopped
3 spring onions, chopped

VEGETABLE AND MUSHROOM PREP

Thoroughly clean all vegetables, cutting off base and separating into pieces.
Pull apart vegetable stalks so that you have individual leaves or stems.

Wash and cut off base of enoki and oyster mushrooms.

Pull enoki mushrooms apart into individual stems.

If not already hydrated, boil wood ear mushrooms for 1-2 minutes to expand.

Drain and cut into bite-sized pieces. Set aside.

STEAM

Use a steamer, or make your own by filling the bottom of a large pot or wok with about 4-5cm of water, and place in a rack for your steaming bowl — you want a relatively large, flat bowl to increase surface area.

Bring water to a boil, then add in vegetables and cover.

Steam for about 20 minutes. Set aside.

Steam enoki and oyster mushrooms separately.

Set aside.

DRESSING

Roast garlic, galangal, shallots and chillies in a pan until lightly charred.

Add to a mortar and mash together until it becomes a paste.

Add in padaek and mix well.

Add 1/2 cup boiling water and grated ginger.

Mix and set aside.

ASSEMBLE

Put all vegetables and mushrooms into a large mixing bowl. Mix well.

Add in dressing and mix together.

Add in sticky rice powder, sesame seeds, spring onions and coriander.

Toss until well mixed and serve.

TIP

You can use any mix of vegetables or mushrooms of your choice to create desired

NUTRITION HIGHLIGHT

Malabar spinach has three times more Vitamin C than regular spinach and 1.5 times more Vitamin A than kale. Just half a cup of cooked spinach can provide 30% of Recommended Daily Allowance of Vitamin A, 30% of Vitamin C and 5% of iron for children under 1.



flavour and texture. Other common ingredients are long green beans, mustard greens, bak choy and shitake mushrooms.

Don't be shy to mix the salad with clean hands (or while wearing gloves) so that all the flavours sink in.



“

Cucumbers are one of my most harvested crops. I'm so proud that the project has helped us double our vegetable production and reach new markets. I'm now planning to buy another motorbike with the extra income so that my husband doesn't have to always drop me off at the market!"

MUK PHILAVONG

Luang Prabang Province

Mrs. Muk became a part of the PICSA project in 2022 by becoming a member of her village's vegetable production group.

While she used to grow vegetables for her village market before, she only had a plot of about 0.5 hectares.

Since PICSA's intervention, Muk now cultivates tomatoes, cabbages and cucumbers on 1.4 hectares of land, selling to the provincial market 3 times a week, and to vendors who buy directly from farm gate.

As a whole, the vegetable production group of 20 households doubled their production from 15.5 hectares to 30 hectares of vegetables.



VEGETABLE HERB SOUP

Gaeng Phak ແກງຜັກ

VEGETABLES

500g leafy vegetables, chopped

HERBS & FLAVOURS

5 thick slices ginger
1 stalk lemongrass
5 red or green chillies, chopped
3 spring onions, chopped
3 cloves garlic, minced
3 Thai basil leaves, whole
2 tbsp fish sauce
Salt, to taste

PASTE

In a mortar, mash together garlic, chillies, ginger and lemongrass until it becomes a paste.

SOUP

Add oil to a medium-sized pot and sauté the paste until aromatic. Fill the pot with water and bring to boil. When boiling, add in all vegetables for 5-10 minutes or until well cooked. Lower heat to a simmer, then add in fish sauce and a sprinkle of salt.

Garnish with spring onion and basil leaves before serving.

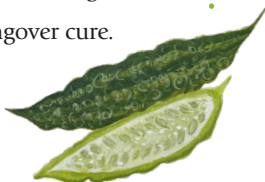
TIP

Everyone has their own preference for vegetables, and the soup will taste different depending on what you use. Some common vegetables include morning glory, moringa leaves, pumpkin, bak choy, tomatoes and bitter gourd.

Many people will add their own touch of flavours such as dried fish, tofu, wild herbs and black pepper.

NUTRITION HIGHLIGHT

Bitter gourd is particularly beneficial to those with or at risk of diabetes, helping to reduce blood sugar for both Type I and Type II diabetes. It is also known to boost liver enzymes, making it an excellent hangover cure.







“

The Farmer Nutrition Schools have given me simple ideas for how to add more nutrition into our meals with what we have growing in the garden or get nearby. We've started growing different vegetables and it has made my family and children healthier.

BONUS

Pised ប៉ិសេត





COCONUT CAKES

Khaonom Krok ຂະໜົມຄຶກ

INNER BATTER

500ml coconut milk

375g rice flour

125g castor sugar

Coconut oil, for brushing

A pinch of salt

OUTER BATTER

450ml coconut milk

1/2 cup cooked jasmine rice

1 cup rice flour

3 tbs sugar

1/2 cup sparkling water

A pinch of salt

INNER BATTER

In a large bowl, mix together coconut milk, rice flour and sugar.

Add 500ml water and a pinch of salt, whisk until completely smooth.

Set aside, preferably in fridge.

OUTER BATTER

In a blender, mix coconut milk, rice, flour, sugar and salt until smooth.

Add in sparkling water and mix briefly.

The batter should pour out easily and smoothly, without any lumps.

COOK

Heat a *Khaonom krok* pan over medium heat.

When hot, brush each circle with oil.

Make sure the pan is piping hot before pouring in the batter, so that the cakes come out easily.

Pour outer batter first, into each mould, leaving about a half a centimeter at the top, then quickly use a teaspoon to spoon the inner batter into the centre of each cake.

Close the lid and cook for 5 minutes, or until the cakes have a light brown crisp on the outside. Don't overcook, you want the inside to remain soft.

Use an oiled teaspoon to remove the cakes and put on serving plate.

Repeat with the remaining batter. Serve hot.

TIP

You can use a Dutch Poffertjes pan, a Japanese takoyaki pan or a Chinese egg waffle pan — anything made of cast iron for making waffles is fine.

Any vegetable oil will do. Coconut oil gives extra flavour, but ghee (clarified butter) actually works best for non-stick greasing.

If adding toppings, sprinkle them in the last 2 minutes of cooking. Common toppings include sweet corn, spring onions and shredded coconut. You can also add shredded coconut to the outer batter.

SESAME RIVERWEED

Kaiphen ໄຄແຜ່ນ

RIVERWEED

Dried riverweed sheets, 21 x 30cm

SEASONING PER SHEET

1 cup tamarind water

1 small galangal, juiced

1 cup toasted sesame seeds

15 cherry tomatoes, chopped

1/2 onion, minced

10 cloves garlic, minced

If you're not travelling to Laos between November and April, you will probably not be able to find *Kai* (*Cladophora sp.*), but perhaps there is another algae nearby you could try this recipe with.

HARVEST

Pull algae "hairs" off rocks and rinse in water by hand to remove dirt.

Once it's clear, place in basket and separate soft algae from harder textures.

The harder weeds need to be beat with a large rock or stick to tenderize and remove all debris, while the softer weeds need to be hung in the shade to drain off excess water.

Fresh *kai* is stored as a ball in a basket and covered with a towel.

It can be kept for 2-3 days in a dark place.

DRYING

Cut clean *kai* into small 5cm pieces and place onto wooden mesh boards, similar to those used for screen printing.

Dip into a bucket of water to make it easier to spread evenly onto the mesh.

Place on a rack to dry.

FLAVOURING

Once riverweed is relatively dry and intact, place onto a mat.

Mix tamarind water with galangal and sprinkle onto riverweed sheets.

Sprinkle on tomatoes, onions, garlic and sesame seeds to flavour.

FRYING

Dried riverweed sheets can be eaten as is, or made into a fried snack.

Cut the dry sheets into 7 x 14 cm pieces.

Fold each piece in half and secure with a toothpick.

Heat oil in a frying pan. When the oil is hot, add several pieces.

Immediately flip each one, frying each side for only a few seconds.

Remove from heat and let cool on paper towels to soak up excess oil.

Eat as a snack or side dish.

CULTURAL HIGHLIGHT

Kai is predominantly harvested by women and an important source of income for them. Unfortunately, the increasing number of dams along the Mekong river has made it harder to harvest, due to higher water levels and the weeds sensitivity to chemical changes. Many women now only collect from smaller tributaries where the water is clearer and flow more predictable.









SISOVATH PHANDANOUVONG

Agriculture for Nutrition Project (AFN)

National Project Coordinator

Could you tell us why Lao PDR needs the AFN project?

Laos has been experiencing rapid development, it has become a land-linked country rather than a land-locked country! But there are still many parts of the country where the population lives in relative poverty, with many children facing malnutrition issues such as stunting. The AFN project was specifically designed to overcome these issues by raising incomes for smallholder farmers and decreasing malnutrition rates through nutrition-based behaviour change activities. Northern Laos was specifically chosen as poverty and malnutrition are especially persistent.

And what are some of the key activities of AFN?

The project looked at nutrition-sensitive planning processes on all levels. Agriculture Production Groups were linked to markets through Public Private Community Partnerships, and households were given small garden grants to plant nutrient-dense crops for home consumption. Social behaviour change activities (particularly with women) were conducted through Farmer Nutrition Schools that taught dietary diversity, nutritious foods, how to grow them and new techniques of cooking nutritious meals for their households.

We also supported small infrastructure schemes in areas such as irrigation, drinking water and roads to improve market access. Capacity building was carried out at all levels, from national to provincial, to district, up to the village and community level. This whole-village approach assured that all people in the villages had the opportunity to benefit from project activities.

What challenges were faced by the Farmer Nutrition Schools?

Nutrition is a multi-dimensional issue and changing behaviour is a long-term investment. The project is working with over 25 different ethnic groups, many of whom have their own languages, with limited educational background and varied cultural habits. This makes working with them complicated but very interesting. Accessibility for our project staff to reach our beneficiaries during the rainy season was also challenging, as the project was working with some of the remotest villages. However, with the support of a wide range of stakeholders and the commitment of our project staff, we were able to bring measurable change to the livelihoods and nutritional status of our beneficiaries.



What has made the biggest difference to farmers?

It is difficult to say as the project was designed in a way that the combined results of all interventions would result in positive change. Farmers and their families really appreciated the agriculture training sessions on new techniques and the group grants to improve their production systems, this significantly increased their incomes. The women who participated in the nutrition activities did not only improve their own health, but that of their children and other household members. It also empowered them to take more decisions in the household. Finally, the infrastructure schemes directly benefitted a large number of farmers and will continue to do so for many years.

What are some of your favourite foods from Northern Lao?

Fish soup with vegetables, *Soop Phak* — a cooked vegetable salad, sour bamboo soup, stir-fried frogs and Lao-style omelet.

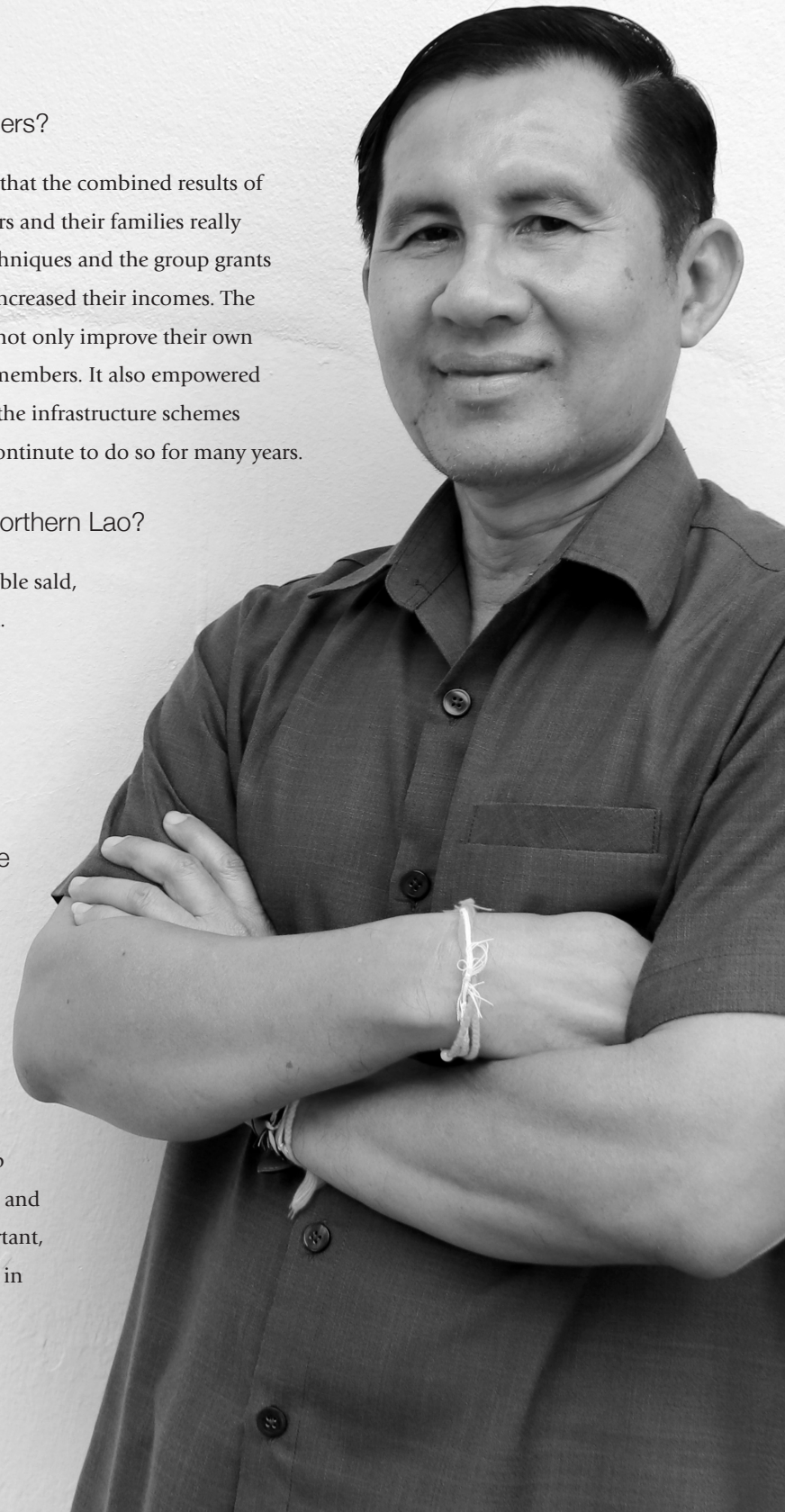
And any nutrition-dense crops that you like?

Pumpkin, Cauliflower, Bitter gourd, cucumber, bitter bamboo....many!

Any final takeaway that you would like to share with our readers?

The Agriculture for Nutrition project has positively affected over 30,000 households in Northern Lao. Working simultaneously on both agriculture and nutrition has proven to be a good strategy.

However, our work is not yet finished. Smallholder farmers in Laos are still vulnerable, and we need to keep working to make them more resilient to climate change and economic changes. Capacity building is the most important, followed by grants that allow the necessary investments in nutrition-related activities.



KHANSAWANH SISOPHA

Partnerships for Irrigation and Commercialisation of Smallholder Agriculture Project (PICSA)

National Project Coordinator



Could you tell us why Lao PDR needs the PICSA project?

Actually this project is connected to the Lao Government's poverty reduction strategy and the National Plan of Action on Nutrition. The concept is simple — when farmers have good food and good health, they are more productive and can earn more budget to do anything.

And what are some of the key activities of PICSA?

The PICSA project has three outputs: the first is capacity building for rural women to set up water user groups; the second is looking at value chains that support agriculture, we link enterprises to producers; the third part is nutrition, and that focuses on home and school gardening.

We select villages based on the national strategy and run Farmer Nutrition Schools — these teach gardening, nutrition information and organize cooking demos. We also provide tools and make sure there is water supply for gardening and so on.

What challenges did Farmer Nutrition Schools face?

The first part was easy. The schools and communities were very involved and excited.

The next step was more challenging — how to get production more than self consumption, so that they could sell produce and re-invest in the gardens. We help link them to buyers. Some villages have signed contracts with enterprises through our multi-stakeholder platform. Some want quantity, some want quality. The contracts are mostly with farmer producer groups of 20-30 people. If the garden is in a school, then the head of school is responsible, and the profits also go back to the school.

What has made the biggest difference to farmers?

The project started in 2010, but with COVID, we were only able to resume activities in 2022. The farmers are happy to increase their production and income so that they can expand their land for growing crops, some have also increased the variety of crops they grow. I have observed that they are also consuming a larger variety of vegetables, but we'll have to do a proper assessment after the dry season.

What are some of your favourite foods from Northern Lao?

Recipes in the Northern part of Lao are quite specific. Each province has its own type of food. For me it is quite interesting. For example, in Luang Prabang, *Or Lam* is quite famous, and *Laab* is also a very interesting local food. In Xieng Khouang province, I personally like, *Nok An Tong*. I don't know if foreigners can eat it, it smells very strong, but it's delicious! It's a small bird, they live for 2 weeks or one month. It's a traditional food and everyone eats it in their home.

And any nutrition-dense crops that you like?

I like any type of beans, green beans, soya beans. You can boil, fry, put a little salt, even like a snack.

Any final takeaway that you would like to share with our readers?

The project would like for everyone to be aware of nutrition, not only in the rural areas, but also in towns and the city. If everyone knows how to balance their diet, it will good for everyone. Even me!



PROJECT TEAM



ELHADJI ADAMA TOURÉ

Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP)

Adama is the Lead Agricultural Economist and Program Manager for GAFSP. He joined the World Bank Group in 2000 and has since led major World Bank-supported reforms, analytical works, and operations which contributed to advancing agriculture productivity and competitiveness agenda in Africa and other World Bank regions. Prior to joining the World Bank, he spent 10 years working with the Senegal River Valley Irrigation Development Agency (SAED).

"GAFSP is committed to SDG2 of eliminating hunger and all forms of malnutrition, and nutrition remains a key theme in GAFSP-supported projects. While child undernutrition rates have improved in Lao PDR, still about 1 in 3 children under five are stunted. The GAFSP-supported Agriculture for Nutrition (AFN) Programme aims to reduce extreme poverty and malnutrition in 400 of the poorest communities in northern Lao, including through nutrition-sensitive agriculture production, home gardens, and farmer nutrition schools. These farmer nutrition schools included cooking sessions to showcase recipes which use nutrient-dense locally grown ingredients. This cookbook is a wonderful testament of the achievement and the aspirations of the AFN programme, one which points to improving nutrition across the country, and particularly in the places most in need."



AMBROSIO BARROS

International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

Ambrosio is Head of the Mekong Multi-Country Office and Country Director for Viet Nam, Lao PDR, Myanmar & Thailand. After joining IFAD in 2010, he has led IFAD's portfolios in various countries including the Democratic Republic of Congo, Cape Verde, Mozambique, Haiti, Malawi and Zambia.

"The food we eat has tremendous impact on people and planet – it influences everything from how and what food is grown, to how it gets to markets and eventually to our plates. Our goal is to ensure that rural Laotians – and indeed rural people around the world – can create delicious, low cost, culturally-appropriate meals that nourish them and their families, ushering in a world without hunger as envisaged by the Sustainable Development Goals. We hope that this cookbook will help create an appetite for sustainable cooking – and for Laotian food."

AFN TEAM



PICSA TEAM



MEKONG MULTI-COUNTRY OFFICE









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