



Recipes, Cuisine, and Customs of Burma/Myanmar December 2012

Cuisine

Make a delicious Burmese Dish to feel close to the girls you are supporting!

Burma has diverse and deep culinary traditions. At the crossroads between South and Southeast Asia, you find the tangy spices of some Indian curries alongside the sweet and spicy flavors often associated with Thai food. Across Burma/Myanmar, daily meals may look very different depending on one's ethnicity, economic status and geography. But almost all will have at least one meal that features rice everyday, if not two. You will also find a variety of noodle dishes that accompany pork, chicken, fish and vegetable curries. Meat tends to be more expensive and so for the determined girls in the program meat is a luxury. The girls generally eat (often cooking for their families) sautéed or pickled vegetables with fish paste and BIG, huge helpings of rice.

Because Burma/Myanmar also has diverse geographical features, favorable seasonal conditions and is naturally endowed with fertile soil and water resources, it boasts an abundant supply of food in a great variety all year around. Dishes may be prepared in a variety of ways, but the most common method is to cook meat or fish in oil, seasoned with pounded onion, garlic, ginger, turmeric, chili and spices, and simmer until all or most of the water evaporates. The essential and most popular condiment is a kind of relish made from preserved fish or prawn, served with chili powder.

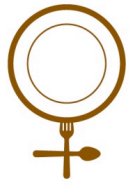
Often Burmese and other ethnic food can be complicated and take many hours to prepare. Pots of boiling stews sit on top of the fire all day in the villages and towns and salads include so many ingredients that must be diced, chopped and sliced. *Girl Determined* has included a few great recipes with slightly shorter preparation times. In addition to Burmese style curries, rice and noodles, people all over the country eat Indian samosas and roti as a quick and cheap snack. So, if you know how to prepare those, they are perfect for sharing. Myanmar people enjoy rice as their main food and it comprises about 75% of the diet. Rice is served with meat or fish, soup, salad and vegetables all cooked in their own ways, and some relishes to complement the meal.

During meals, all the dishes are laid out on the dining table and served together so that diners can make their own choices and combinations. Most traditional snacks, which are rich in variety and taste, are generally made with rice. Mohinga, or rice noodle served with fish soup, is the favorite Myanmar dish mostly enjoyed at breakfast or on special occasions. Laphet (or pickled tea leaves) with a dash of oil and served with sesame seeds, fried garlic and roasted peanuts, is another popular snack typical of Myanmar.

http://www.myanmar.com/lifestyle/traditional_foods.html

Material also provided by *Girl Determined*.

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Recipes

Vegetarian Mohingar

Recipe from *has*ba* by Tin Cho Chaw, provided by Girl Determined

Serves 4, preparation time 55 minutes.

This recipe is made for vegetarians or for consumption during the nine-day vegetarian festival, which is celebrated each year on the first day of the ninth lunar month of the Chinese calendar, usually late September or early October. The unusual combination of purple yam and peanuts make the soup hearty and taste very similar to the traditional fish noodle soup.

Ingredients

2 medium onions, quartered
3 garlic cloves
2 cm fresh ginger (~ ¼ inch)
6 Tbs. peanut oil
½ teaspoon ground turmeric
½ teaspoon paprika
4 Tbs. ground rice, roasted*
1.5 litres vegetables stock/water (~ 50 oz. or 1 quart 18 oz.)
75g raw peanuts, shelled (~ 2.65 oz.)
10 shallots, peeled
250g purple yam, peeled & cubed (~8.8 oz.)
Peanut oil to deep fry
2 Tbs. light soy sauce
Plenty of black pepper

Eat with:

500g rice noodles, cooked (~1 lb.)
Fresh coriander, chopped
Lemon or lime, quartered
Dried chili flakes
Crispy onion or gourd fritters



Method

Using a pestle and mortar, pound the onion, garlic and ginger into a coarse paste. Heat the oil in a large saucepan and fry the onion paste for 5-10 min. until softened. Stir in ground turmeric and paprika.

Pour in the ground rice then water, stirring until the ground rice is incorporated. Add peanuts and shallots; bring to a boil. Let the soup simmer while you prepare the yam.

Pour enough oil in a small saucepan to deep-fry, about a third of the way. Fry the yam in batches until lightly golden all over. This will prevent the yam becoming mushy in the soup. Drain on kitchen paper.

Continue to simmer the soup until the peanuts are very soft but still hold their shape. Add the soy sauce, fried yam and black pepper. Check for seasoning before serving.

***To grind rice:** put approximately ¼ c of rice in a coffee grinder and grind until powder is formed. **Note:** use a separate coffee grinder from one you use to make coffee as the coffee flavor will be picked up by the rice.

To roast rice: put in pan over heat until lightly brown. Watch carefully.

Tofu and Eggplant Salad

Recipe provided by Girl Determined

This is a quick and easy salad. This one is for vegetarians but you can add a spoonful of pounded dried shrimps and season with fish sauce. Perhaps a handful of chopped roasted peanuts or sesame seeds would add a nice addition for next time.

Ingredients

1 eggplant
130g firm tofu, cut into cubes or sticks (~ 4.5 oz.)
1 small green chili, diced
Small handful of coriander, chopped
½ lemon, juiced
2 garlic cloves, sliced
Peanut oil to fry garlic and tofu
Salt for seasoning



Method

For that intense smoky flavor, pierce the eggplant with a knife to stop it bursting unexpectedly during cooking, then using a tong place over a naked flame to char until the insides are soft and squishy. Alternatively place on an oven tray under a hot grill for 15-25 minutes, turning occasionally.

Next heat enough oil to deep-fry the tofu. Fry them in batches until golden brown and drain on kitchen towel. In a separate saucepan, fry the garlic in some oil until golden and reserve oil for dressing.

When the eggplant is cooked, cut in half and roughly chop. I like to keep the skin on but you can peel it if you wish. Mix with lemon juice, fried tofu, coriander, crispy garlic and chili. Toss with a Tbs. of garlic oil and season with salt.

Burmese Tomato Salad

It does not get much better than this! Light, fresh, different, delicious, and easy to prepare tomato salad is enjoyed across the country during lunch and dinner.

Recipe provided by Girl Determined

Serves 4, preparation time 15-25 minutes.

Ingredients

- 4 tomatoes, de-seeded and sliced
- 1 Tbs. turmeric and garlic oil
- 1 small onion, sliced very thin and rinsed in cold water (or a shallot)
- 1 Tbs. sesame seeds, toasted
- 1/2 cup cabbage, shredded very finely (optional)
- 1 lime juiced
- 1/2 cup peanuts, chopped
- 1 bunch coriander (cilantro) roughly chopped
- salt or fish sauce to taste

Method

Prepare all the ingredients and toss them together with your clean hands at the last moment possible before serving. Fresh green chilies can also be added for those who love spiciness.

This salad makes a nice base for many other salads. I have successfully added avocados, chicken, blanched broccoli and green beans. More or less cabbage can be added depending on your needs. A very nutritious salad with the sesame seeds and peanuts providing extra protein and fat added -- absolutely delicious! Green tomatoes can be substituted for ripe ones for a Shan-style salad.



Myanmar Style Long Bean Salad

Prepared by Karen O'Brien, DFW Member

Serves 2 – 4

Ingredients

1/2 lb. long beans cut thinly lengthwise on the bias into 2" pieces
1 1/2 cups peanut oil
2 shallots, very thinly sliced
2 Tbs. finely chopped roasted peanuts
4 1/2 tsp. fish sauce
1 Tbs. fresh lime juice
2 tsp. sugar
Salt

Method

Bring a pot of salted water to a boil. Add long beans, cook until crisp-tender, about 1 minute. Drain long beans; rinse under cold running water; set aside.

Heat oil in a small pot over medium heat until temperature reaches 325° on a deep-fry thermometer. Add shallots and fry, stirring, until golden, 3-4 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer shallots to a paper towel-lined plate. Reserve the frying oil.

In a medium bowl, toss together the long beans, peanuts, fish sauce, lime juice, sugar, and 1 Tbs. of the frying oil (reserve remaining oil for another use). Season the salad with salt to taste. Sprinkle shallots on top of the salad just before serving.



<http://www.saveur.com/article/Recipes/Myanmar-Style-Long-Bean-Salad>

Burmese Shrimp Salad

Prepared by Karen O'Brien, DFW Member

Ingredients

2 garlic cloves, chopped
1/4 cup peanut oil
2 small tomatoes, quartered lengthwise, seeded, and cut into 1/4-inch-thick strips
1/3 cup thinly sliced shallot
1/2 teaspoon minced seeded fresh green Thai or Serrano chile, or to taste
1/4 cup Asian fish sauce
1/4 cup fresh lime juice
4 qt water
1 Tbs. salt
2 (1/4-inch-thick) slices fresh ginger, crushed with flat side of a knife
1 1/2 lb large shrimp (24 to 30), shelled and deveined
1/3 cup salted roasted peanuts, finely chopped
Garnish: fresh cilantro leaves and lime wedges



Method

Cook garlic in oil in a small heavy saucepan over moderate heat, stirring occasionally, until golden, about 2 minutes. Pour oil through a sieve into a large heatproof bowl and discard garlic. Cool oil, then toss with tomatoes, shallot, chile, fish sauce, and lime juice.

Bring water, salt, and ginger to a boil in a large pot, then boil shrimp until just cooked through, 1 to 2 minutes. Drain in a colander and discard ginger. Add shrimp to tomatoes, then add peanuts. Toss to combine and season with salt. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Read More <http://www.epicurious.com/recipes/food/views/Shrimp-Salad-106896#ixzz21TnilMNU>

Burmese Ginger Salad

Prepared by Karen O'Brien, DFW Member

Serves 4

Ingredients

1 thumb ginger, peeled and sliced in tiny matchsticks

1/4 cup lemon or lime juice

3 cups finely shredded Napa cabbage

2 Tbs. chickpea flour, toasted in a dry skillet (I used a chickpea/fava blend I found at Whole Foods)

For frying:

1/2 cup dried chickpeas, soaked overnight in water, or canned chickpeas, drained

1/2 cup dried lentils, soaked overnight in water, or canned lentils, drained

3 cloves garlic, slivered

1/4 cup sesame seeds

1/3 cup peanut oil

Method

Soak the ginger in lemon or lime juice, and soak the dried chickpeas and lentils in water overnight. Be sure that ginger is sliced super thin and fine.

The next morning, squeeze out the ginger. Fry the chickpeas and lentils in peanut oil until golden brown, about five minutes. Add the garlic slivers and cook until golden brown (about 1 minute). Finally, toss on the sesame seeds and fry for just 1 minute. If you'd like things more or less crispy, adjust the cooking time.

Begin shredding the cabbage. I only needed 1/3 of a small Napa cabbage for this salad. If you have some chickpea flour, toast it in a dry skillet. It'll turn chestnut brown after a few minutes; stir continually to keep the flour from burning.

Assembly

Next, add the cabbage, the fried lentil mixture (be sure to scrape in all that good peanut oil), and toasted chickpea flour to a large bowl. Splash on a good douse of fish sauce.

Traditionally, you would toss this salad with your hands, which is a really great way to be sure it gets mixed thoroughly. Garnish with green onion, crushed peanuts, lemon and lime slices (which your guests should liberally squeeze all over their salad), and cilantro. Or, for a fun dinner experience, let everyone garnish their own salads with whatever they'd like.

<http://globaltableadventure.com/2012/05/31/recipe-burmese-ginger-salad-gin-thoke/>

NOTE: You can find chickpea/garbanzo bean flour at your natural grocery store, near the specialty flours. Although you might not find pure chickpea flour, you can also use a blend of chickpea/garbanzo and fava bean flour.



Dressing: Fish sauce
Garnish: cilantro,
crushed peanuts, green onion,
lime slices, lemon slices,
red pepper flakes

Burmese Chili Chicken

Prepared by Karen O'Brien, DFW Member

Serves 4

Ingredients

1 lb. skinless, boneless chicken thighs cut into 1"-thick strips
3 Tbs. canola oil
1 1/2 tsp. cornstarch
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
1 onion, cut into 3/4" pieces
2 tsp. sweet paprika
1 tsp. ground cumin
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 - 1" piece ginger, peeled and minced
2 bell peppers (1 green, 1 red), cored and cut into 1" pieces
2 Tbs. fish sauce
1 large Anaheim or poblano chili, cut diagonally into 1/4"-thick slices
1 medium zucchini, halved lengthwise and cut diagonally into 1/4"-thick slices
1/2 tsp. chili powder
4 cups cooked rice, for serving



Method

Combine chicken, 1 Tbs. oil, 1 tsp. cornstarch, salt and pepper in a bowl; let marinate for 15 minutes. Heat a 14" wok over high heat. Add 1 Tbs. oil. Add onions; cook until softened, 1–2 minutes. Push onions to side; add remaining oil with chicken, arranging it in a single layer. Cook, without stirring, for 1 minute. Continue cooking, tossing vigorously, until chicken is opaque, about 30 seconds. Add paprika, cumin, garlic, and ginger; cook, tossing constantly, for 30 seconds. Add peppers; cook, stirring constantly, until they begin to soften, 2–3 minutes. Stir in fish sauce and cook until almost all the liquid has evaporated, about 1 minute. Add chilies and zucchini; cook for 30 seconds.

Stir together remaining cornstarch and 1/3 cup cold water in a bowl; pour around edge of wok. Cook until chicken is cooked and sauce has thickened, 1–2 minutes. Stir in chili powder; season with salt and pepper. Serve with rice.

<http://www.saveur.com/article/Recipes/Burmese-Chile-Chicken>

Burmese Coconut Chicken Noodle Soup

Prepared by Karen O'Brien, DFW Member

Serves 4

Ingredients

1 - 2 lbs. boneless, skinless thighs
 Vegetable oil
 1 Tbs. hot paprika, or to taste
 1 Tbs. grated ginger
 1 Tbs. grated garlic
 1 large shallot, sliced
 1/2 cup chickpea flour
 1 quart chicken stock
 Fish sauce, to taste (I used 3 Tbs.)
 1 can coconut milk (I used light)
 1 lbs. spaghetti (wheat noodles)



Garnish with:

2 hardboiled eggs, sliced
 Cilantro, torn
 Green onion, sliced
 Lime & lemon wedges
 Fish sauce
 Chili sauce

Method

First fry the chicken in hot oil. This can take ten minutes per side to get a good sear.

Meanwhile, grate the ginger, garlic and slice the onion. Once the chicken is brown on both sides, sprinkle on the paprika, ginger, and garlic. Cook for a minute, until fragrant. Then add the shallot and cook a few minutes to soften. The shallot will add sweet goodness to the curry and balances the heat from the hot paprika. Sprinkle on the chickpea flour and, to prevent lumps, stir. This will ensure that everything is coated and all the flour is moistened. The chickpea flour will thicken the curry and add a slightly earthy background flavor.

Now for the liquids. Pour on stock, coconut milk, and fish sauce – instead of salt (I used quite a bit since my chicken stock is low sodium). Simmer 30 minutes, breaking the chicken into smaller pieces with a wooden spoon. If the sauce gets too thick, thin it out with stock or water. If it seems a bit thin, make a slurry with some more chickpea flour and stir it in.

Meanwhile, cook the noodles and hardboiled eggs. Slice up a rainbow of garnishes. Serve the noodles in one bowl, the curry in a second bowl, and the toppings on a platter, and let your guests assemble their own soup bowls to taste.

<http://globaltableadventure.com/2012/06/03/recipe-burmese-coconut-chicken-noodle-soup-ohn-no-khao-swe/>

Fried Pork Strands

Prepared by Karen O'Brien, DFW Member

Ingredients

1 lb. pork loin cut in 1½" pieces
1 Tbs. fish sauce
½ Tbs. salt
1 Tbs. ginger, pounded
1½ cup water
2 Tbs. onion, pounded
1 Tbs. garlic, pounded
½ Tbs. vinegar
1 Tbs. chili powder
½ Tbs. turmeric powder
1 Tbs. sugar
1/3 cup oil



Method

Marinate pork in a pot with fish sauce, salt, ginger for 15 minutes. Add water and boil till pork is tender and water evaporates. Place pork on a separate plate and let cool. Pound the pork slightly and break up into strands. Squeeze water of onion and garlic onto pork strands. Add vinegar. Heat oil. Add onion and garlic and stir till golden. Add chili, turmeric and pork. Stir on slow fire till pork is crispy. Add sugar and stir lightly till sugar melts and is absorbed. Taste and adjust for salt and sugar.

Serve as a delicious dish to accompany rice.

Fish Curry

Prepared by Karen O'Brien, DFW Member

Ingredients

3 1/2 lbs. filleted fish
Dash of salt
1/2 tsp. turmeric powder
1 Tbs. chili powder
2 Tbs. fish sauce
1 tsp. pounded/crushed garlic
2 Tbs. pounded/diced and smashed onion
1 inch ginger root
1/2 cup tamarind liquor (yes, there is such a thing ~ you can substitute some cooking sherry with or without tamarind pulp in it, but it won't be exactly the same, of course...)
5 oz. oil
1/4 cup snipped coriander leaves
Water to cover fillet



Method

Marinate the fillet of fish with salt, turmeric, chili powder and fish sauce. Put marinated fish together with garlic, onion, ginger, tamarind liquor and oil in cooking pot with sufficient water to cover all. Bring to boil and continue for 15 minutes. Sprinkle the coriander leaves and remove from stove. Serves a dozen people.



Avocado Ice Cream

Prepared by Karen O'Brien, DFW Member

Serves 2 generously, preparation time is 5 minutes

The literal translation for avocado in Burmese is butter fruit. Avocados always remind me of a treat we used to eat in Burma and one that I particularly enjoy, an avocado shake. It was simply made with a ripe avocado, milk, a little condensed milk and sugar, resulting in a rich frothy drink. I have adapted this recipe into an ice cream, which can be served as a dessert or a treat any time of day.

Ingredients

1 large avocado, very ripe

1/3 cup caster sugar* (you can substitute regular table sugar; the ice cream will just be slightly "grainier")

1 Tbs. milk

½ cup double cream or heavy cream

Method

Scoop the flesh of the avocado into a blender; add the milk and sugar then blend until smooth. Stir the cream into the mixture then pour into an ice cream maker, churn and freeze.

If you don't have an ice cream maker, pour the cream into a mixing bowl and whip until it forms soft peaks. Fold the avocado mixture into the cream and pour into a shallow plastic container. Freeze for 3-4 hours, stirring occasionally.

*Castor sugar, a very fine grain, British sugar used in baking, may not be easy to track down, but it is easy to make. In fact, it's really nothing more than granulated sugar that has been ground to a super-fine consistency.

Here's how to make your own Castor Sugar in seconds

Ingredients

Granulated sugar

Method

- *Place granulated sugar in a food processor or blender.*
- *Pulse until it reaches a super-fine, but not powdery consistency.*
- *Allow the sugar to settle for a few minutes. Then, use in place of the castor sugar called for in your recipe.*

Tips: *Sugar may etch your blender pitcher, particularly if it's made of plastic. If this is a concern, use a coffee grinder or spice grinder instead.*

Our special thanks to Karen O'Brien, along with Girl Determined,
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