



Cambodian Grilled Pork with Pickled Vegetables (Bai Sach Chrouk)

Serves 4

I've used country-style boneless pork ribs for this dish, but pork shoulder will work as well. The ribs come in manageable pieces, you'll have to further cut them into half-inch slices. If you use a whole chunk of pork shoulder or butt, you'll cut the meat into half-inch slices, but you may have to further cut them lengthwise if the slices are too wide.

For a vegetarian version of this dish I would imagine you could substitute tofu for the pork and it would be delicious. Just cut the tofu into sticks, marinate, and bake in the oven, turning over once, until the tofu caramelizes and starts to sizzle.

I like to use a short grain white rice for serving with this dish, as it sticks together well and makes the whole thing easy to eat.

Ingredients

For the Pork

1 cup coconut milk

3 cloves garlic, crushed

3 tbsp. palm sugar (the equivalent of one disc, melted), or brown sugar

3 tbsp. soy sauce

2 tbsp. fish sauce

Juice of 1 lime

Freshly ground black pepper

1 lb. boneless country style pork ribs, or boneless pork shoulder, thinly sliced, about ½" thick

Cilantro leaves for garnish

Directions

Combine all the marinade ingredients in a bowl and add the pork strips. Marinate for one hour, or as long as overnight.

Remove the meat from the marinade and save it. Grill the pork in a grill pan on top of the stove, or broil it, turning once until you can see grill marks and it looks like the meat is beginning to caramelize.

Bring the marinade to a boil and boil for at least a minute to make the reduction safe to eat, add a splash of water if it is boiling away too fast.

Cut the meat into thin strips and serve with rice and pickled vegetables. Pour the sauce over the meat and garnish with cilantro leaves.

For the Pickled Vegetables

½ cup rice vinegar

¼ cup sugar

1 tbsp. salt

splash of fish sauce

2 mini Persian cucumbers, about 5 oz.

1 chunk daikon radish, about 4 oz., or substitute regular radishes

1 medium carrot

3 garlic cloves, smashed

1 birds eye chile, sliced fine

1 red fresno chile, sliced fine

Directions

Into a small saucepan add vinegar, sugar, salt, and fish sauce, bring to a simmer, or until the sugar is dissolved, let the vinegar cool. Slice the cucumbers, radish, and carrot into julienne strips. Combine the vegetables, garlic and chiles in a bowl. Pour marinade over. Place the vegetables in a jar to marinate for at least 30 minutes, or overnight.

Recipe adapted from: Cambodian Cooking, by Joannès Rivière

Photo credit: Megan McElroy

Cambodia



Culture

Cambodia is the smallest country in southeastern Asia. It borders Thailand, Vietnam and Laos and has a population of about 14 million. The term Khmer refers to the Cambodian people, culture and language. Cambodia was a French protectorate from 1863 to 1953.

The indigenous Cambodian religion is Buddhism. Hinduism, Islam and spirit worship are also practiced. Cambodians value tradition and have richly developed arts and crafts. They consider the Cambodian classic and highly stylized dance as an art form. They practice Khmer martial arts, which are over 1,000 years old. Many use holistic forms of naturopathic medicine.

Cambodia is one of the poorest countries in Asia and many people live on less than \$1.20 per day. Thirty-seven percent of children suffer from chronic malnutrition. The effects of the disastrous Khmer Rouge control of the country, with decades of genocide and war, still plague the country and can be seen in the continued lack of education and skills in many areas.

The country is bordered by mountains inland and by the Gulf of Thailand on the southern coast. It has a fertile central basin and there are many lakes and rivers.

Cuisine

Rice agriculture produces the country's main food staple. The Cambodian verb "sii bay" means "to eat," but literally translates to "to eat rice." Fish, both fresh and dried, provides 70 percent of the protein intake. Fresh fish is often served grilled with various sauces. The fermented fish sauce "Prahok" has a strong odor and is the essential flavoring for many Cambodian dishes.

The culinary style has been influenced by close neighboring countries, including Thailand, Vietnam and Laos.

Breakfast often consists of rice porridge or noodles. Lunch and dinners will feature spiced broth with meat or fish. These soups include hot and sour fish soup and fish soup with coconut and pineapple. Complex stir-fries of chicken and beef or pork and highly seasoned curries are also popular. Multiple elaborate dishes are served for festivals.

Desserts are often fresh tropical fruits: coconut, banana, mangos, pineapple and the strong smelling durian. Some consider the aroma of this fruit to be so offensive that it is banned in

many public places due to the lingering odor. Still, it remains a popular treat for the sweet flesh found inside the thorn covered exterior.

Tea is the most popular drink, although coffee is also popular. Ankor beer is national favorite and wine is made from sugar palm or rice. Buddhists and Muslims typically refrain from alcohol.

Street food is a major industry and offers a huge variety of snacks and dishes. Fried noodles, beetles, snakes and sticky rice can be found.

Etiquette

Meals are served communal style with multiple dishes set in the middle of the table to share. Food is served as the dishes are cooked rather than in any set courses. Adult males and guests eat first followed by others according to status. The food preparers typically eat last. It is considered poor etiquette to finish everything on the plate. It is also bad manners to leave chopsticks sticking up out of your bowl.

Photo: [bv14092](#) A Market Vendor - Sihanoukville, Cambodia, from Flickr, [Creative Commons License Attribution 2.0 Generic](#)

Sources:

every culture.com

foodbycountry.com

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