Thank you so much for picking up a copy of our booklet filled with delicious vegan Lao food recipes, as well as information on veganism and the power of your food choices! If you picked this up because you care about animals and want to learn more about how to eat without harming them, or because you know that eating more fruits and vegetables is better for your health and the environment, we are so happy you did!

We are excited to bring you vegan Lao food recipes for many reasons! This project came out of love and inspiration to highlight the delicious cuisines that come from Laos. Lao food is rich in flavors of spice, citrus, fresh ingredients, sweetness, and the perfect amount of saltiness. Most importantly, Lao food is rich in love and community. Traditional dishes are typically meant to be shared and eaten with others. We hope you enjoy these recipes. Whether it’s your first time having a vegan Lao dish or Lao food in general, we welcome you to the beautiful culture and food of Lao people. The popular Lao saying “Ma der, Ma der” means to come over, come together, and enjoy food.

Thank you to everyone who donated recipes and photos, as well as the writers, editors, translators, and our amazing designer who made this booklet possible.

Be sure to keep an eye on www.veganlaofood.com, where we plan to showcase additional vegan Lao recipes in the near future! For even more delicious vegan recipes, check out our websites at www.veganmexicanfood.com, www.veganfilipinofood.com, and www.foodispower.org/recipes-meals/. And if you have any fun vegan recipes, and are interested in being featured on our website, please consider donating some of your own!

Khop jai lai lai,
Sharon Daraphonhdeth

Board Member (2014–2022)
Food Empowerment Project (F.E.P.)
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What is veganism?

Veganism in its most basic sense is about trying to eliminate suffering in the world by not causing harm to animals. Veganism is one way to reduce the suffering of nonhuman animals, and as you read more, it has a big impact on so many areas of our world. The best news is that vegans enjoy a wide range of delicious and nutritionally vibrant plant-based foods and believe that by not consuming anything derived from nonhuman animals or insects, we can reduce some of the suffering in the world. For instance, vegans extend care to other species by avoiding “meat,” eggs, milk, fishes and other aquatic life, and honey. Being vegan also involves expanding our circle of care to other aspects of our life beyond food and thinking about the opportunities for living compassionately in terms of what we wear, what kinds of products we use, and what kinds of entertainment we support. For example, vegans aim to avoid the use of animal-based products like leather, fur, wool, silk, or down, and skin- and body-care products or cosmetics that include animal-based ingredients or have been tested on animals. We’ll additionally opt for enjoying the wide range of entertainment and family activities that don’t exploit animals or keep them in captivity. This means avoiding circuses that use animals, zoos, rodeos, aquaria, and marine parks. While it is impossible to entirely avoid harming other species, vegans aim to reduce and eliminate, as much as possible, their harmful impacts. The remarkable thing about focusing on the power of your food choices is that it’s a form of activism you can engage in several times a day!

Veganism and animals

Many people choose veganism because they care deeply about nonhuman animals and don’t want to participate in the suffering and violence that animals experience for the production of food, clothing, cosmetics, and entertainment. We know that we share this wonderful planet with animals, who have rich inner lives and social bonds with one another, including those who live in oceans and lakes. They experience love, joy, frustration, pain, and a whole range of other emotions. Sadly, animals are exploited in a variety of ways (such as farming, product testing, and entertainment) where they experience bodily violence, psychological torment, and the trauma of repeated separation from their family and friends. For instance, cows in the dairy industry are forcibly impregnated over and over again, go through incredible anguish when their baby calves are taken away from them within a few hours or days of birth, and they are milked intensively until they are deemed “spent” and sent to slaughter long before their natural lifespan is up. Animals suffer tremendously so that humans can consume their bodies in many different forms. We believe a primary reason to go vegan is to show compassion and respect for other species by not causing them harm.
The humane myth

Have you ever seen products labeled as “humanely raised” or “humanely slaughtered”? Some farms that raise animals for food brand their products with these marketing terms. Consumers concerned with the welfare of animals will often choose products labeled with promises of “humaneness,” but these terms can be confusing and misleading. In reality, nearly all animals raised for food are forcibly reproduced (usually through artificial insemination), separated from their young and other family members, and slaughtered in adolescence. It’s important to know what labels mean and how they are used by the industry to mislead consumers. Here are two common examples used by the egg industry: “Cage free” refers to eggs raised by hens who are housed in a building or enclosure without the use of cages. It doesn’t mean they get to live outside or are treated with care and consideration. “Free range” refers to eggs raised by hens who are housed in a building or enclosure with continuous access to outdoors. It’s important to note that the U.S. government does not specify whether hens actually need to spend any time outdoors, just that they have “access,” and, in fact, that access might just be a small opening that leads to a screened-in area where only a limited number of hens can be outdoors. Knowing what labels actually mean can help to dispel the humane myth. If you care about animals and don’t want to cause them harm, stay away from animal products. Knowledge is power! Food is power!

Veganism and the environment

In addition to being compassionate for animals, veganism is also better for the environment. Both large- and small-scale farms that raise animals have profoundly negative consequences on our air, water, and soil quality. Farmed animals contaminate surrounding waterways, killing off huge areas of aquatic life and creating marine dead zones. Air and water contamination poses a major problem as a result of manure disposal, chemical usage, and disposal practices, especially since there are typically no waste treatment facilities for farms. These forms of pollution disproportionately affect communities of Black, Indigenous, and Brown communities, as animal farms and related industries are frequently found in or near these communities. As a result, people living nearby experience a range of health issues (e.g., cancers, respiratory disease, and skin ailments), which is called environmental racism. Animal agriculture is also highly resource-intensive, demanding extreme levels of water use, land clearing, and deforestation (in the U.S. and around the world). Following a vegan lifestyle isn’t free from environmental impact, but choosing veganism dramatically lowers your carbon footprint and keeps you from contributing to the worst forms of environmental degradation and injustice.

Vegan nutrition and community health

Many people of all socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds are increasingly choosing veganism for its positive impacts on their individual and community health. With time, there has been an increased understanding that foods high in processed and animal-based ingredients are implicated in many of the major diseases and causes of mortality, including heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and some cancers. Whole food, plant-based diets are growing in popularity not only for their ability to meet the nutritional needs of humans at all stages of life but also as a way to prevent some of these diet-related diseases. Black, Indigenous, Brown, and low-income communities, especially, experience high rates of diet-related disease due to lack of access to healthy foods, and we know this access should be a right, not a privilege! This is one reason why it’s an area we work on.
Colonization of the diet

Many pre-colonial Latinx and Indigenous eating practices didn’t include regular or much consumption of animal-based ingredients. The European colonization of North and South America—through settler colonialism and chattel slavery—enforced on colonized communities new diets that were heavy in animal-based ingredients, while traditional Latinx and Indigenous foods were routinely disparaged by colonizers and made to seem inferior. These colonial diets have carried forward to shape present-day norms around eating. Farmed animals were also an important part of settler colonialism—early on, cows and horses were used to occupy the lands of Indigenous peoples and native animal species. Ranching, in particular, was used to justify the mass genocide of human communities and also drove some animals, such as bison, to near-extinction. Supporting contemporary ranching and farming by eating “meat,” dairy, and eggs actively sustains settler colonialism mentality, and it’s resulting in continuing injustices for people, animals, and the environment. The way that early colonization shaped the diets of colonized communities dramatically altered cultural practices of traditional eating and has led to many communities of color struggling with colonial-diet-related diseases. We know that eating a vegan diet can be a powerful way to challenge the colonization of the diet and take pride in the foods we eat.

Lactose normal

The majority of people of color (roughly 50 million people in the United States) do not possess the enzyme required to break down dairy foods. Most often referred to as lactose intolerance (a term that implies there is something wrong with those who don’t digest the milk of another species), F.E.P. coined the term “lactose normal” to reject the tendency to frame those who do not digest lactose as abnormal. Making high-lactose foods the norm has long been a form of dietary colonization, both in the past as colonial diets were introduced and forcibly replaced non-colonial food traditions, and in the present with the continued non-availability of lactose-free (i.e., nondairy alternatives) foods, especially in Black, Indigenous, and Brown communities. Having access to nondairy foods is an important step in decolonizing the diet and realizing that the consumption of animal-based foods is not natural.

Slaughterhouse and factory farm workers

As if there weren’t enough reasons already to go vegan (for the animals, for the environment, for human health), the plight of those working in animal agriculture adds another compelling reason to not support animal consumption. The human laborers employed by slaughterhouses and factory farms are a highly exploited group, comprised primarily of people of Black, Indigenous, and Brown descent; immigrants (both documented and undocumented); and people with felony convictions who, because of discriminatory hiring practices, have trouble finding work elsewhere. Nearly all slaughterhouse and factory farm workers have low incomes and take work in these spaces because they have few or no other options. This work is some of the most dangerous in society, and the speed with which workers have to perform their jobs causes repetitive stress injuries, accidents (sometimes fatal), and psychological harm. Choosing a vegan lifestyle is therefore one way to avoid supporting this particular form of exploitative labor.
Eating on a budget

We know it’s not always easy for everyone to go vegan, as many people aren’t paid a living wage or may lack access to healthy foods. We advocate supporting living-wage efforts to help everyone afford healthy foods. For people who have the ability to live on a budget, these are some tips to help you eat vegan with limited funds. Buying foods in bulk, where bulk food buying is a possibility, is often cheaper than buying the pre-packaged option. Buying dried beans instead of canned, for instance, and dry grains in larger quantities, is usually more cost effective. Community buying can be a great option for purchasing food in larger, discounted quantities, both because it makes it more affordable and because communities can create networks to share the burden of accessing foods that may require some travel to reach. Working out a collaborative buying agreement with others in your community could involve different community members going to different stores to save time, or it could involve buying (online or in-person) a large quantity of grains or dried legumes to be shared. It is unfortunate that farmers’ markets are often held at times when many working people cannot attend and they aren’t always promoted in various languages, but many are increasingly accepting Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits/EBT, and some even have programs that provide accompanying discounts or ways to increase the impact of each dollar spent to offset the costs of farmers’ market purchasing. At a more structural level, more diverse forms of activism oriented around access to healthy foods are needed, where people can grow their own food and businesses like worker-owned cooperatives can flourish, where the money and successes can stay in the community and help that community to thrive.

A more ethical veganism

Just because it’s vegan doesn’t mean that it’s cruelty free! There are many other areas of violence and exploitation to take into consideration in a vegan lifestyle. Grave injustices occur in the treatment of human farm workers and laborers involved in the production of produce and other foods that vegans regularly eat. We know that learning about these issues can help to ensure eating a diet that reflects a commitment to nonviolence, justice, and compassion so we can eat with our ethics.

U.S. farm workers and slavery

Have you ever thought about the people behind the scenes when it comes to the food on your plate? The plight of farm workers (including children) who labor to grow and harvest produce is a core issue in making a more just food system. Farm workers labor under highly exploitative conditions in the United States and around the world to bring produce to market. They earn below-poverty-level wages for their work, are exposed to extreme heat, are forced to live in substandard housing (while many experience homelessness), are subjected to physical and sexual abuse, and are routinely exposed to agricultural chemicals. Farm workers in the United States have an average life expectancy of only 49 years as a result of these conditions. Within the United States, slavery in agriculture is ongoing and involves confinement, forced labor with no pay, psychological abuse, and human trafficking. Recent examples of the latter include workers from Mexico and Guatemala enslaved on citrus farms in Florida and the Carolinas; migrant farm workers on tomato farms in Immokalee, Florida; and Haitian farm workers on pea and bean farms in southern Florida. When possible, choosing organic produce is one way to reduce harm for farm workers since it eliminates or reduces toxic exposure to pesticides and herbicides. Another powerful way to make a difference is to honor boycotts called by farm workers themselves to stand in solidarity with worker-led labor movements. Connect with F.E.P. through our website and social media to learn more about other ways of fighting for farm workers’ rights.

Child labor and slavery in the chocolate industry

Do you like chocolate? Chocolate is one of those things some people say they simply can’t live without, and luckily there are plenty of chocolate products that are vegan. But cocoa production is a complicated and often highly exploitative endeavor for the humans who work harvesting and processing it. Approximately 70% of cocoa produced globally comes from Western Africa (primarily Ghana and the Ivory Coast), where cocoa farms engage in widespread human trafficking, the worst forms
of child labor, and slavery. In recent years, evidence has also surfaced of both child labor and slavery on cocoa farms in Brazil. Cocoa workers there face many of the same abuses as those on the cocoa farms of Western Africa. To help consumers make informed choices to avoid purchasing chocolate products sourced from areas where child labor and slavery are the most prevalent, F.E.P. engages in ongoing research on sourcing practices for companies that sell vegan chocolate. Be sure to check out our list of companies (and/or our free F.E.P. Chocolate List app) that we do and do not feel comfortable recommending based on their sourcing and labor practices.

An ongoing ethical journey: Food is power!

We know that becoming vegan is an ongoing process of learning and reflecting on how we can live more ethically and compassionately. This involves staying informed and considering the effects of our dietary choices on the animals, humans, and environment around us, and we’re aware that there are always more opportunities for greater ethical consideration. Bananas—the most commonly consumed fruit in the United States—are most often grown and distributed under conditions of extreme injustice involving violent labor practices, corporate ownership and consolidation, environmental devastation, and colonialism, sexism, and racism. Much coffee production involves child labor, slavery, environmental destruction, and the exploitation of nonhuman animals. Wine production involves the widespread use of farm workers employed precariously and seasonally, and wine often uses animal-based filtration systems in its production. Palm oil, an ingredient in many processed foods, is implicated in the massive destruction of land and forests that are home to Indigenous communities and nonhuman animal species like orangutans.

One of the inspiring things about going vegan is how it can be an ongoing journey of growth, new knowledge, and continued ethical reflection that makes space for understanding how we are connected and accountable to others. Food Empowerment Project is here to help you on your journey by providing information on our website, making recommendations, and constantly working to share resources for how we can all live more ethically through the power of our food choices!
Appetizers
Laab Lettuce Wraps

By: Tina Phoumalvahn

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<th>Serves</th>
<th>Prep Time</th>
<th>Cook Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>3–4</td>
<td>30 Mins</td>
<td>20 Mins</td>
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Laab, pronounced “larb,” is considered the unofficial national dish of Laos. It is known for its mix of protein, lime juice, mix of fresh herbs, and spice. This delicious version of laab is served with lettuce and made with tofu and mushrooms.

Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon toasted rice powder
- 2 tablespoons vegan fish sauce
- Juice of 4 or more limes
- 8 ounces mushrooms, sliced white button chopped finely.
- 1 (14oz) package extra-firm tofu
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin oil olive
- 2 small shallots, finely diced
- 2 spring onions (white part only), finely sliced
- 3–4 Thai chilis, finely sliced
- 1 bunch mint leaves, chopped
- 1 bunch cilantro, chopped
- 1 bunch perilla leaves
- Sliced cucumbers, halved and longwise
- Dried whole-roasted red chili peppers
- 1 head of lettuce or cooked steamed rice or sticky rice

Instructions

Step 1
Drain and press tofu for at least 30 minutes. You can press it by wrapping a clean kitchen towel cloth around the tofu block and placing a cutting board on top. I also place a frying pan on top of the cutting board. This should help squeeze excess moisture from the tofu. Then crumble it with your hands, or you can throw it in the food processor.

Step 2
Heat up 2 tablespoons of oil in a wok. Once hot, add the ground mushrooms and brown for 5 minutes.

Step 3
Add in tofu, mix, and cook for 7–10 minutes. Squeeze a lime in the mix and stir fry for a few minutes until browned in places.

Step 4
Add in shallots, spring onions (white part only) and fresh Thai chilis (depending on the level of spiciness you desire), and stir-fry for another minute or so.

Step 5
Once you take the wok off the heat, mix in 2 tablespoons of vegan fish sauce and limes according to your preference. Also add 1–2 tablespoons of toasted rice powder and the rest of the chopped herbs.*

* Make sure to leave some on the side if making wraps

Step 6
Serve with cooked rice or with wraps. For wraps, you can spoon the laab into fresh lettuce leaves with extra herbs, the green part of the sliced onions, perilla leaves, and cucumbers, and top it off with roasted red peppers! Enjoy!
Entrees
Khua Seen
(Protein Stir Fry)
By: Sharon Daraphonhdeth

Khua seen is a protein stir fry made with tomatoes and broccoli. The flavors of the tomatoes mixed with the sauce, onions, and garlic make this a super yummy comfort dish. Like most Lao dishes, this is best served with sticky rice or steamed rice.

Ingredients
- 1/2 head of broccoli, sliced
- 1 small onion, sliced in half moons
- 5–6 garlic cloves, minced
- 9–11 cherry tomatoes, cut in half
- 1 can/package of seitan or vegan “beef,” sliced in thin pieces
- 1–2 green onions, sliced in 1-inch chunks
- 2–4 tablespoons vegan oyster sauce
- 2–3 teaspoons soy sauce or soup seasoning sauce or liquid aminos
- 1–2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- Dash of black pepper
- Chili flakes (optional)

Instructions

**Step 1**
Heat the oil in a medium-large pan on medium heat.

**Step 2**
Once hot, add the onions and garlic and sauté until slightly browned, about 4–6 minutes.

**Step 3**
Add seitan or vegan “beef” to the pan and mix thoroughly until protein is browned.

**Step 4**
Add tomatoes to the pan. Cook until tomatoes are no longer whole and juices are spilling out. Add a splash of water to create a sauce and to help unstick the veggies and protein.

**Step 5**
Add vegan oyster sauce and soy sauce and mix. Cook for another 3–5 minutes. Add more water if you would like it to be more saucy.

**Step 6**
Add broccoli to the pan and mix. Cook until broccoli is green and slightly soft (about 4–6 minutes).

**Step 7**
Season with black pepper and chili flakes. Serve with rice.
Lao Omelette
By: Sharon Daraphonhdeth

Photo by: Kylie Hope

Lao omelettes can be served any time of day! This fluffy omelette packed with cooked shallots, dill, green onions, and tomatoes is great with sticky rice and a sweet and spicy dipping sauce. It also pairs well alongside papaya salad.

Ingredients

- 4–6 cherry tomatoes, cut in half
- 1 small shallot, diced
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 sprigs of green onion, sliced
- ¼ cup loosely packed fresh dill, sliced
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 2 tablespoons vegan egg
- ⅛ cup ice cold water
- ⅛ tablespoon soy sauce or soup seasoning sauce or liquid aminos
- 1 tablespoon vegan fish sauce
- Black pepper

Instructions

Step 1
In a small mixing bowl, mix the vegan egg product with soy sauce and vegan fish sauce and mix. Add the green onions, dill, and black pepper and mix. Set aside.

Step 2
Heat oil in a medium-sized pan on medium-high heat until hot. Add the shallots and cook until translucent. Add garlic and cook for another 20–30 seconds until brown.

Step 3
Add tomatoes and cook for 2–3 minutes, until tomatoes are cooked.

Step 4
Pour in the omelette mix to form a circle over the sauteed vegetables. Change heat to low-medium. Allow to cook for 3–4 minutes or until firm.

Step 5
Flip over and cook for another 3–4 minutes. Flip to see if brown; if not, let it cook for another 1–2 minutes or until brown (if the other side needs to be cooked longer, flip and cook for a few more minutes).

Step 6
Remove from the pan and serve with sticky or steamed rice.
Salads
Laab
Recipe by: Vong Manoroth

Serves 2–3
Prep Time 20–30 Mins
Cook Time 10–20 Mins

Laab is a traditional dish of Laos, and depending on what village or province the dish is from, ingredients can vary. The word “laab” means LUCKY in Lao, so people always make this dish for any special occasion in order to bring and also spread good luck.

Now let’s talk about this vegan laab. I just want to look at Lao food from a different angle, and with some help from my family, I visited three grocery stores. I came up with this recipe, and to be honest, I was surprised at how good it tasted. Try it yourself and enjoy!

Ingredients

1 whole green cauliflower
3 heads shiitake mushroom
1 pack brown beech mushrooms
2–3 whole fresh limes (to your liking)
½ tablespoon shallot, diced
20–25 mint leaves
1 tablespoon lemongrass, minced
½ tablespoon garlic, minced
½ tablespoon galanga, minced
½ cup cilantro, roughly chopped
3 tablespoons coconut oil
¼ cup toasted rice powder
2 teaspoons sea salt
1 teaspoon soy sauce
Thai bird chili (to your liking)
Dried chili flakes (to your liking)
3 endive (optional)

Instructions

Step 1
Cut the cauliflower into small pieces or flat pieces so they are easily seared.

Step 2
Heat a pan on high heat until the pan is really hot and then put the cauliflower in the pan. Add coconut oil a little at a time until you see smoke and the cauliflower begins to brown. Keep flipping until you get the color that you like. (I like mine DARK!)

Step 3
Cool the cauliflower down and rough chop into smaller pieces. It is okay for the pieces to be uneven as it adds texture.

Step 4
Cut off the stems of the brown beech mushrooms; cut the shiitake mushrooms into small strips; mince your garlic, galanga, and lemongrass; dice your shallot; and rough chop your cilantro.

Step 5
Squeeze the lime juice, using one lime at a time, adding until it is to your liking.

Step 6
Serve it in a bowl with a serving spoon or you can add lettuce on the side so your friends and family can make their own lettuce wrap. You can also use endive for the crunch and the color it brings to the dish.

Combining Ingredients:

Step 1
Start by mixing the mushrooms, the cauliflower, the toasted rice powder, diced shallots, lemongrass, and garlic.

Step 2
Add ¼ tablespoon of the galanga and continue adding small amounts to your liking.

Step 3
Add the soy sauce last while you mix the ingredients together.

Step 4
Squeeze the lime juice, using one lime at a time, adding until it is to your liking.

Step 5
Add the chili if you like it spicy.

Step 6
Serve it in a bowl with a serving spoon or you can add lettuce on the side so your friends and family can make their own lettuce wrap. You can also use endive for the crunch and the color it brings to the dish.
Thum Mak Hoong
(Papaya Salad)

By: Tina Phoumalvahn

Serves 3  Prep Time 30 Mins  Cook Time 5 Mins

One of the most popular dishes of Laos, papaya salad (also known in Laos as “thum muk hoong”) is known for its elegant combination of salty flavors, chiles, lime juice, and fresh unripe papaya.

Ingredients

1 small papaya, peeled and shredded
2 large whole carrots, peeled and julienned
1 cup green cabbage, shredded
3 Thai eggplants w/ stems cut off and quartered
15 cherry tomatoes, halved
1 garlic clove
2 Thai chili peppers (or more if you like it spicy)
½ teaspoon MSG (optional)
1 tablespoon coconut sugar
Juice from 2 limes
3–4 tablespoons vegan fish sauce
Crushed peanuts (optional)

Instructions

Step 1
Add garlic, Thai chili peppers, coconut sugar, and MSG (optional) to a large mortar and smash until it’s a fine paste.

Step 2
Add tomatoes and smash carefully to release juices. Be careful to not get it in your eyes. Once all the tomatoes are smashed, add papaya, carrots, and cabbage. Pound with a pestle and mix everything together with a spoon.

Step 3
Add juices from limes and vegan fish sauce. Keep on pounding and mixing for a minute.

Step 4
Add eggplants and crushed peanuts. Mix together one more time and taste to modify the salad to your liking.
Soups/Stews
Khao Piak Khao

Recipe by: Harris Phomsouvandara

Photo by: Kylie Hope

A great warm soup filled with delicious vegetables and comforting rice. Perfect for a cold day! (This makes a huge pot to feed the community! If you need to cut down on the recipe, cut down by half.)

Ingredients

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<th>Serves</th>
<th>Prep Time</th>
<th>Cook Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>10 (2 cups)</td>
<td>15 Mins</td>
<td>1 Hour</td>
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- 4 slices of ginger
- 1 lemongrass stalk
- 1 cup vegan fish sauce
- 2 cups carrots, chopped
- 2 cups celery, chopped
- 12 cups jasmine rice, cooked
- 1 cup mushrooms
- Vegetable oil, to fry
- Garlic, minced
- Water for broth

Condiment Recommendations

- Fried garlic
- Chili peppers
- Lime wedges
- Cilantro or green onion
- Sriracha
- Chili oil

Instructions

**Step 1**
Add ginger and lemongrass to a large pot with water filled about halfway.

**Step 2**
Bring the water to a boil and then add vegan fish sauce.

**Step 3**
Add chopped carrots and celery and bring back to a boil on high for 15 minutes.

**Step 4**
Add 12 cups of jasmine rice, stirring the pot occasionally to keep the rice from burning on the bottom. The starch from the rice will help thicken the broth.

**Step 5**
After 15 minutes, the broth will thicken. Continue to stir occasionally.

**Step 6**
Add the mushrooms.

**Step 7**
Make garlic oil by frying minced garlic with vegetable oil.

**Step 8**
Pour the garlic oil into the soup, and then the soup is ready! Add your favorite condiments too.
Khao Poon
(Curry Soup)

By: Sarah Daraphonhdeth

Ingredients
(For the broth)
- 8 cups water
- 6 cups vegetable broth
- 3 tablespoons canola oil
- 2 one-inch slices galangal
- 3 tablespoons galangal, minced
- 1 stalk of lemongrass, smashed
- 2 stalks of lemongrass, minced
- 3 shallots, minced
- 6 garlic cloves, minced
- 4 oz vegan red curry paste
- 1 can bamboo shoots (optional)
- 2 (14 oz) cans coconut milk
- 1 pack firm tofu, crumbled
- 1 pack rice vermicelli noodles

For the Garnish
(optional and to your own liking)
- Banana blossom, thinly sliced
- Cabbage, shredded
- Green onions, sliced
- Cilantro, chopped
- Chinese green beans, sliced
- Bean sprouts
- Limes, cut into wedges

Instructions

Step 1
In a large pot, bring water, vegetable broth, smashed lemongrass, slices of galangal, and 3 lime leaves to boil. Let simmer on medium-low heat for 30 minutes. Set to the side.

Step 2
Heat oil in a large pot for 30 seconds on medium-high heat. Add minced galangal, minced lemongrass, minced shallots, and minced garlic and let cook for 1 minute or until fragrant.

Step 3
Stir in curry paste until well mixed. Add bamboo shoots (optional).

Step 4
Add crumbled tofu and let cook for 2 min, stirring gently (we don’t want the tofu to mash).

Step 5
Stir in coconut milk.

Step 6
Add strained reserved broth and bring to a boil. Let simmer on medium-low heat for 30 minutes and season to taste.

Step 7
While broth is simmering, follow rice vermicelli noodle package instructions to cook noodles. Strain and rinse in cold water after noodles have cooked and set aside.

Step 8
When broth is finished and seasoned to your liking, place a handful of noodles into a large bowl and cover with broth. Garnish to your liking.
Lao-Style Pho
By: Sharon Daraphonhdeth

Serves 4–6
Prep Time 10 Mins
Cook Time 2.5 Hours

A popular dish of Vietnamese cuisine, Lao people have created their own traditional version of pho. Lao pho is mainly known for its addition of sugar and the generous amount of toppings and condiments such as lime juice, chili peppers in oil, fried garlic, and fresh herbs.

Photo by: Kylie Hope

Ingredients
(For the broth)
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 5–6 star anise
- ½ teaspoon dried cloves
- ¼ teaspoon coriander seeds
- 1 onion, halved
- 1–2 shallots, halved
- 2–3 garlic cloves
- 2–3 tablespoons vegetable bouillon seasoning mix
- 2 tablespoons soy sauce
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- Water

(For Soup)
- Rice noodles

Toppings
(optional—recommended to pick and choose what you prefer; the more the merrier)
- Fried garlic
- Cilantro, chopped
- Green onions, chopped
- Mint leaves
- Basil leaves
- Bean sprouts
- Hoisin sauce
- Sriracha
- Chili in oil
- Lime juice
- Fried tofu

Instructions

Step 1
Dry roast the cinnamon stick, star anise, dried cloves, coriander seeds, onion, shallots, and garlic on low heat for 10–15 minutes in a medium-sized pot, mixing frequently. Try not to let anything burn.

Step 2
Fill up the pot with water, leaving a few inches at the top. Once the water boils, add the vegetable seasoning mix and stir. Bring down to a simmer and let simmer for at least 2 hours (the longer the better). Broth will reduce heavily, but add more water when it does.

Step 3
While the broth is simmering, prepare the toppings for your soup.

Step 4
After the broth has simmered for at least 2 hours, add the soy sauce and sugar. Let boil for another 15–20 minutes. Add more soy sauce and water if needed. Once done, cover and let sit while you prepare the noodles.

Step 5
Cook rice noodles per instructions and drain.

Step 6
Add rice noodles to a large bowl and pour pho broth over the noodles. Add your toppings and enjoy!
Spices/Sauces/Seasoning
Toasted Rice Powder

By: Vong Manoroth

Toasted rice powder is a special ingredient in many authentic Lao recipes such as laab. Use this recipe for your Lao-inspired dishes!

**Instructions**

**Step 1**
Roast the raw white rice on low heat and keep flipping or stirring until the rice turns brown.

**Step 2**
Grind it with a coffee grinder or a Lao-style mortar (kok) and pestle (sark).

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Vegan Fish Sauce

Recipe by: Tina Phoumalvahn

An essential ingredient to many Lao dishes. Enjoy this version made with shiitake mushrooms and kombu seaweed.

**Ingredients**

- 4 cups water
- ¼ cup tamari
- ¼ ounce dried shiitake mushrooms
- 4×8 inch sheet dried kombu (seaweed)
- 4 garlic cloves, sliced
- 2 ½ tablespoons salt
- 1 grilled (charred) onion
- Splash rice vinegar

**Instructions**

**Step 1**
Bring all ingredients to a simmer in a medium pot, uncovered, over medium heat. Simmer until reduced by half. You should have about 2 cups of liquid. If you have time, let this steep overnight, or up to 24 hours, covered on the counter.

**Step 2**
Strain and pour into a jar. If liquid is less than 2 cups, add water to make it 2 cups. You can also store it for up to two weeks at room temperature.
Dessert
Khao Tom Mud

By: Ilene Rouamvongsor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serves</th>
<th>Prep Time</th>
<th>Cook Time</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10–12</td>
<td>1–1.5 Hours</td>
<td>45–55 Mins</td>
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My name is Ilene Rouamvongsor, and I am a second-generation Laotian American. I’m submitting a recipe for khao tom mud, which is baby banana in sweet coconut milk sticky rice wrapped up in banana leaves and steamed until fully cooked. There is a savory version and sweet version. Both are nostalgic for me, but the sweet version caters to a vegan diet!

Ingredients

- 2 cups raw sticky rice (rinse twice, then soak overnight or for at least 3 hrs)
- ¾ cup and 2 tablespoons granulated sugar
- 2 (14oz) cans full-fat coconut milk
- Ripe baby bananas
- 10–12 banana leaves or pandan leaves
- Salt
- Bamboo strips for wrapping

Instructions

Step 1
Cut banana leaves into 6×8 inches and 8×9 inches. Clean banana leaves with water and give a quick wipe, enough so that the leaves won’t stick together when prepping. Gently handle the leaves when you clean them as they do tear easily.

Step 2
Drain your soaked sticky rice and rinse it a couple of times until the water runs almost clear, and then set aside in a bowl.

Step 3
For the next step, I find that using a wide pot works best for even cooking. Pour the coconut milk into a pot and add 2–3 pandan leaves (tied into a knot) and a pinch of salt. Cook on medium heat. Let that come to a boil and then slowly pour in all of the rice, a few scoops at a time, making sure to constantly stir every few seconds as you go. You do not want to stir vigorously as you do not want to break the rice. The rice should absorb the coconut milk, and it will become glossy and thick. At this point, add the sugar and stir until the sugar has been cooked into the rice thoroughly. You can turn down the heat a notch if it’s starting to smoke. Once the sugar has been cooked into the rice, turn the heat off and allow it to cool for a few minutes.

Step 4
Peel your bananas and cut them into halves. Align the 6×8 cut banana leaves on top and in the middle of the 8×9 leaves with the shiny sides up. Once the rice has cooled to room temperature, spoon a tablespoon onto the middle of the smaller leaf, place one halved banana on top, and then spoon another tablespoon on top to cover the banana. (You may find that it is roughly a tablespoon, give or take. Just practice with the first few and see what measurement fits inside best.) Fold the two opposite corners together, roll until tight, and then fold the top and bottom into the same side. Repeat until the rice is gone.
Step 5
You want to take two finished rolls and place the folded sides together. Take the two bamboo strips, and with the first one, wrap around one end of the rolls. Once you meet the two ends of the strips together, simply twist them a few times and tuck in between the two khao tom mud rolls. Take the second string and do the same on the opposite end. There should be about an inch of room between the bamboo strips and the end of the rolls.

Step 6
I use a traditional Lao steamer with a bamboo basket and curved metal pot to steam, but you can use any means to steam. Place khao tom mud rolls into your steamer and steam with water boiling in the pot on high for 45 minutes to an hour.

Step 7
Wait a few minutes after taking them out of the steamer as they are extremely hot! Untie the bamboo and unfold to reveal a beautifully steamed sweet treat. Eat with a spoon or fork, or even better, just go in with your bare hands!

Notes
• You can use kitchen twine or tear off long strips from the banana leaves in place of the bamboo strips.
• If you find that the banana leaves are stiff to fold, you can quickly run them across an open flame to make them more pliable.

Thank you for reading. I hope this momentarily submerges you into this traditional Lao/Southeast Asian dessert!

Get involved
Food Empowerment Project
Food Empowerment Project is a vegan food justice organization and 501(c)(3) nonprofit that seeks to create a more just and sustainable world by recognizing the power of one’s food choices. We encourage healthy food choices that reflect a more compassionate society by spotlighting the abuse of animals on farms; the depletion of natural resources; unfair working conditions for produce workers; and the unavailability of healthy foods in communities of Black, Indigenous, Brown, and low-income areas.

By making informed choices, we can prevent injustices against animals, people, and the environment. We also work to discourage negligent corporations from pushing unhealthy foods into low-income areas and empower people to make healthier choices by growing their own fruits and vegetables. In all of our work, F.E.P. seeks specifically to empower those with the fewest resources.

For more information on the power of your food choices, getting involved in food justice issues, or volunteering with us, just get in touch by emailing info@foodispower.org!
Acknowledgements

Food Empowerment Project extends our deepest gratitude to:

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- The Lao vegans who gave feedback on this booklet and shared in our excitement in bringing this project to fruition.

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- Phoenix Keoma for continued support and advocacy for the project
- Sharon’s mother, Kay Daraphonhdeth, “for letting me watch and cook with her when I was younger, blessing me with the cooking passion I have now”
- The Lao community of Escondido, California, for teaching about the importance of community and coming together for food and liberation
- Most of all, to our ancestors and living elders, who have given us so much and continue to help us become the fierce, resilient, and proud people we are today.

Glossary

**Khao Piak Khao** - A soup filled with vegetables and rice. Its direct translation is “wet rice noodle.”

**Khao Poon (Kapoon)** - A sweet, salty, and spicy red curry and coconut soup broth is served with rice vermicelli noodles.

**Khao Tom Mud (Khao thoum)** - A sticky rice dessert with banana.

**Khop jai lai lai** - “Thank you very much.”

**Khua Seen** - A protein stir fry made with tomatoes and broccoli.

**Kombu (Konbu)** - The Japanese word for dried sea kelp, or seaweed.

**Laab (Larb/Laap)** - A mix of protein, lime juice, mix of fresh herbs, and spice. The word ‘laab’ means “lucky” in Lao.

**Ma der, Ma der** - Commonly used to say “come over, come together, and enjoy food.”

**Pandan** - A fragrant plant commonly used in South and Southeast Asian cuisines.

**Sabaidee** - Commonly used as “How are you?” or “What’s up?” its direct translation is “well comfortable.”

**Tamari** - A Japanese sauce, similar to soy sauce, made from fermented soybeans.

**Thum Mak Hoong (Thum muk hoong)** - A combination of salty flavors, chiles, lime juice, and fresh unripe papaya.