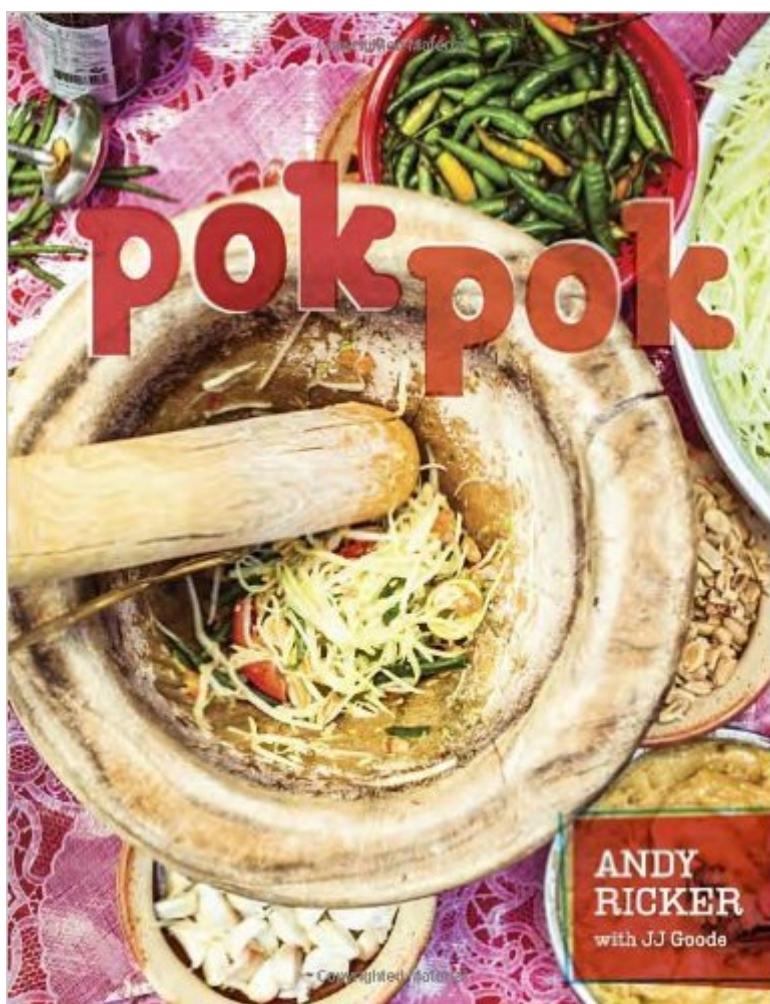


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Pok Pok: Food And Stories From The Streets, Homes, And Roadside Restaurants Of Thailand



Synopsis

A guide to bold, authentic Thai cooking from Andy Ricker, the chef and owner of the wildly popular and widely lauded Pok Pok restaurants. After decades spent traveling throughout Thailand, Andy Ricker wanted to bring the country's famed food stateside. In 2005 he opened Pok Pok, so named for the sound a wooden pestle makes when it strikes a clay mortar, in an old shack in a residential neighborhood of Portland, Oregon. Ricker has since gone on to open six more wildly popular Pok Pok restaurants, and today he is considered one of the leading American voices on Thai cooking. In this much-anticipated debut cookbook, Ricker shares seventy of the most popular recipes from Thailand and his Pok Pok restaurants, ranging from Khao Soi Kai (Northern Thai curry noodle soup with chicken) to Som Tam Thai (Central Thai "style" papaya salad) to Pok Pok's now-classic (and obsessed-over) Fish-Sauce Wings. But Pok Pok is more than just a collection of favorite recipes: it is also a master course in Thai cooking from one of the most passionate and knowledgeable authorities on the subject. Clearly written, impeccably tested recipes teach you how to source ingredients; master fundamental Thai cooking techniques and skills; understand flavor profiles that are unique to Southeast Asian cuisine; and combine various dishes to create show-stopping, well-balanced meals for family and friends. Filled with thoughtful, colorful essays about Ricker's travels and experiences, Pok Pok is not only a definitive resource for home cooks, but also a celebration of the rich history, vibrant culture, and unparalleled deliciousness of Thai food.

Book Information

Hardcover: 304 pages

Publisher: Ten Speed Press; First Edition edition (October 29, 2013)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1607742888

ISBN-13: 978-1607742883

Product Dimensions: 8.2 x 1.1 x 10.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.8 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars See all reviews (178 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #17,140 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #2 in Books > Cookbooks, Food & Wine > Asian Cooking > Thai #4 in Books > Cookbooks, Food & Wine > Asian Cooking > Wok Cookery #32 in Books > Cookbooks, Food & Wine > Cooking Education & Reference > Essays

Customer Reviews

Having eaten at Pok Pok and having cooked more than my own share of Thai food I can say that this book is one of the most thorough (and time intensive) cookbooks on Thai food out there. The Northern Thai recipes contained in this book are delicious and filled with complex flavors that go way beyond the standard pad Thai and lime chili spiked larb you'll find at your local Thai place. As long as you are aware of what you are getting into with this book you will enjoy it. Just know that there are very few dishes in here you can whip up on a weeknight without extensive pre-planning. You are not going to be swinging by your local market to find pig blood, galangal, or hot basil. The one star knock I gave the book is really less about the difficulty of the recipes and more about the needlessly jumbled layout. Graphically, the book has the same ramshackle hole-in-the-wall feel that most of the Pok Pok restaurants seem to have... bright colors, multiple typefaces, numerous wordy asides peppered all over the page. I get the charm of this graphical style, but it's certainly not helping us follow complex, multi-step recipes here. Nor is the constant referencing condiments, etc on other pages. A cleaner design with numbered step by step instructions would have gone a long way towards making these recipes feel more attainable. Don't let that stop you from getting the book though if you are a lover of Thai food because there really are few other books out there that go this deep. Even if you use it more as a reference and less as a day to day cookbook it's contains a lot of fascinating information. But even as an experienced cook of Southeast Asian foods I find this book daunting. It's one I'll save for a rainy day when I have plenty of time to run around town gathering all my ingredients and a lazy afternoon to spend in the kitchen.

This is probably the most detailed cookbook I've ever read. The directions for each recipe are ridiculously thorough, down to the ingredient list (for example: "1 (14 gram) piece peeled fresh or frozen (not defrosted) galangal, thinly sliced against the grain." Each recipe also has a flavor profile section that tells you what flavors to expect, and what other dishes in the book pairs with it. Besides the recipes, there are tons of pictures, some of which serve as guides to help you identify ingredients (the herb gallery on pg 16-17 for example). The only problem I might come across is how to get my hands on some of the ingredients locally (the book does offer suggestions on which websites to source the goods). Overall, really good book, definitely worth my money. edit (01/09/14): To date I have made the Stir-fried water spinach, Stir-fried brussels sprouts, Whole roasted chicken, Salty-sweet mango coconut rice, and Pad see ew. Let me tell you how they went: Stir-fried water spinach: Didn't have a scale on the first try, big mistake, used too little spinach, too salty. Problem solved when I bought a kitchen scale for the second try and got the portions right, tasted delicious. Stir-fried brussels sprouts: Mis-read the measurements the first time and used too much

fish sauce, ended up stinky. Followed the book to the teeth from the second try on-ward, delicious results. Whole roasted chicken: used a 1.75lb hen instead of two 1.25lb chicken because that's the only small chicken I can find at the grocery store, decided to cut all the ingredients to 70% of the amount listed in the book since that's how my chicken's mass compares to the ones in the recipe. Did not adjust cooking time due to my inexperience, the result was chewy and under-cooked, and the flavors were off. Totally my own fault. Will try again with the proper sized birds and report back. Salty-sweet mango coconut rice: Couldn't find mangoes, just made the rice and sauce. Cooked the rice with the sweet rice setting on my zojirushi instead of the steamer called for in the cook, and the result was fine (just remember to turn it off approx 5 minutes before it finishes cooking). I know it says in the recipe but I need to remind you guys again that this recipe makes A LOT of rice. I cut the recipe in half thinking it'll be a good portion for me and my hungry roommate, I was wrong. I should have cut it down to 25% to feed two people. Besides my stupid portion control the dish was super delicious....would have been even better if I could find some Ataulfo Mangoes but such is life...Pad see ew: This recipe I've cooked 6 times. I have to disagree with Andy's choice of pork sirloin in the recipe. I tried it a few times and it was way too hard and dry, no matter how I under-cook it (within reason). I found country-style ribs to be much more tender and suitable for this dish. Also, please tenderize your meat with baking soda and water, just trust me on this. Another thing is that in order to prevent the chow fun noodles from sticking to each other, you probably have to use way more oil than the recipe calls for. Hot pan and hot stoves are important, but so is a lot of oil. Avoid stainless steel pans like all-clad for cooking pad see ew because everything will stick to the pan and you will cry and your noodles will shrivel up and go to noodle heaven. Use a big non-stick pan. edit2 (09/30/14): Since my last update I have mostly stuck to the tried and true water spinach and coconut mango rice, but I did make two new dishes. One is the Pork shank stewed with five spice, and I have to say, even though I followed the recipe to a T, the flavors were pretty mild. I expected Chinese five spice braised meats flavors, instead I got sweet meats that were kinda one dimensional. Meh, not motivated to try it again as it was a pain in the rear to cook. The other dish I tried was the stir-fried brussel sprouts. The recipe is almost the same as the water spinach one, but the flavors just weren't as good for some reason, probably due to the lack of sugar and bean paste. On a side note, Pok Pok NY Just got a michelin star today! Woooooooooooooo. edit3 (01/14/2015): Made the Thai fried rice with pork and the chicken kra pow (holy basil with ground chicken). The fried rice was super easy, and the flavor was surprisingly good for a bowl of fried rice. I'm used to eating home style Chinese fried rice cooked by my family so this is a pretty welcome change. As for the kra pow, I replaced the chicken with ground pork, and it was super tasty. I like Andy's version

better than Leela's from the Simple Thai Food cookbook. It just tastes better, ya know? Also made the mango coconut rice a couple more times, and let me tell ya, the mango carries the dish. Those green-red Tommy Atkins mangoes from the supermarket are not gonna cut it (trust me, I tried). You need proper Ataulfos, or even Alphoncos, and you gotta wait for the right season. Have cravings for this dish in the winter? Sucks to be you. Wait for late March like everybody else.
edit4(06/13/2015)
Since my last update, I've made the Burmese Pork Curry (Kaeng Hung Leh), Chicken Chowfun (Kuaytiew Kua Gai), both versions of the Papaya salad, Khun Op Wun Sen, and the Khao Soi Kai. Burmese Pork Curry - pretty decent, but mine was too watery because I forgot to take off the lid to let the sauce condense. Also the amount of ginger called for might be a bit much, adjust to your tastes. Kuaytiew Kua Gai - The key to this one is have a hot wok and keep the portion small so you don't overcrowd the wok. I tried to cook a double batch and the eggs didn't have room to cook on the wok so they stuck to the noodles....it was not at all pretty but it was tasty AF. Both of the Papaya Salads are good, I switch between them depends on my mood. A few things: 1. small dried shrimp is kinda expensive, \$6 for a packet. 2. the crab paste called for by the Isan papaya salad is really hard to find, thank god it's optional. The salted crab is slightly easier, although it might look intimidating in the jar. They are small crabs, so don't go in expecting to use a normal sized crab. 3. The plaara fish sauce called for by the Isan salad is thick and mud like, smells even worst, but don't be afraid to use it. The Khun Op Wun Sen was great, but again the amount of ginger was a bit much imo. Also when you color the noodles, just use the amount specified in the book, don't listen to the part where it says "color it dark" because it will be way salty. The Khao Soi took a bit. The tumeric/curry combo stains like no tomorrow. The puya chilies I had were leathery so they were impossible to pound into powder like andy suggested. I say you should boil them and then pound/food process them. Also I think the amount of sugar is a bit much, 2 to 2.5oz should suffice compared to the 3 called for in the book. (I was using the malleable kind of palm sugar). Also, you might want to replace some of that coconut milk with water because I found the broth way too thick, no matter if I put in the coconut cream at the end or not. I would say replace one or two cups of the coconut milk with water (that's used to rinse the coconut milk cans to extract the most out of them)
Edit 5: March 2016. Haven't cooked out of this book recently, so I made Jin Hoom Neua. I don't know where I screwed up but the soup was not very tasty. The Kaeng Jeut Wun Sen was however very homey and tasty and difficult to f up.(Just use store bought Chinese pork balls)

Rarely do I get this excited for a cookbook. I ate at Pok Pok on a recent trip to Portland and instantly fell in love. This book really does make Thai cooking achievable to an at home cook; maybe not an

at home cook in rural areas with a variety of obscure ingredients, but a lovely read. I've made 4 recipes from this book and followed them to the exact measurements given and they were a success. Every detail was tested in this book, down to how long you need to muddle the ingredients. If there is one cookbook you should buy, even if you don't make anything from it, it is this book.

Pok pok is a must have for anyone seriously into Thai cuisine, or even for any of those who are interested in finding out what it's about beyond the Americanized Pad Thai or Drunken Noodles. The bright and realistic photography immediately captured my eye, and trust me if you are a food photography lover this book does not disappoint. Andy Ricker gives insight into the ingredients and cooking instruments used in Thailand and what they mean to Thai cuisine. He also does a great job of trying to make the ingredients in the recipes relatively easy to find (you still might have to go to an asian market for some).The book is also packed with every aspect of the dishes: making the oils, sauces, stocks, condiments, etc. etc. I give Ricker my full approval. Not only has he given up secrets to some truly delicious dishes but he does so in a way that challenges you as a cook and gives you not much other option then to start from scratch and do it the right way.

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