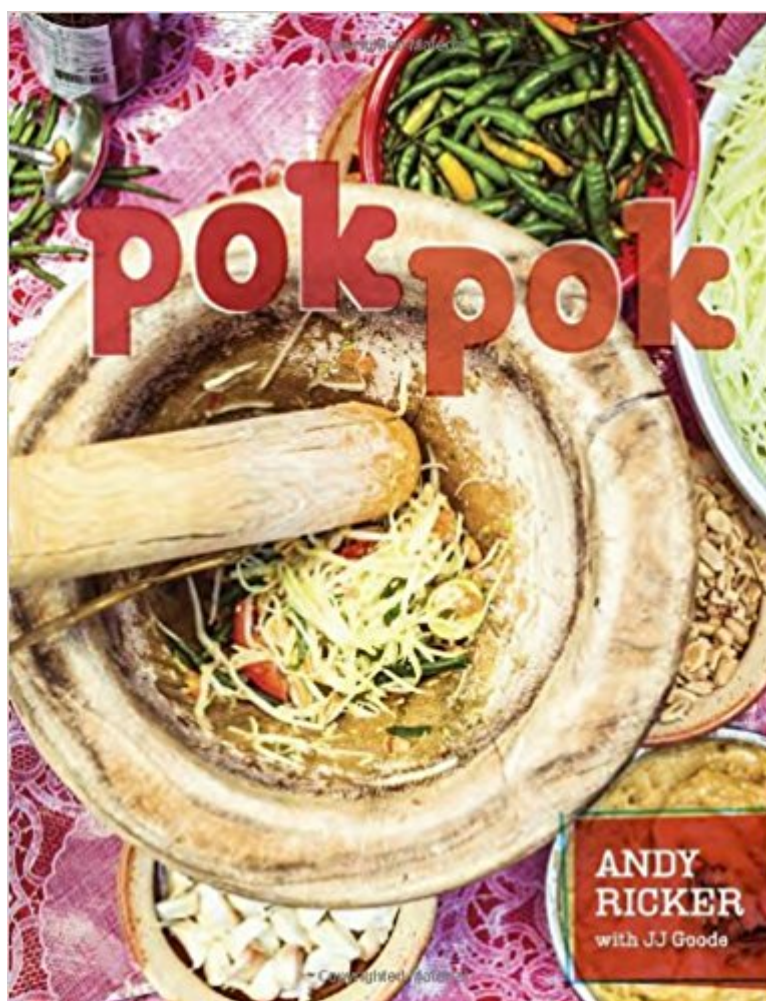


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Pok Pok: Food And Stories From The Streets, Homes, And Roadside Restaurants Of Thailand



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.

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Customer Reviews

Featured Recipes from Pok Pok Download the recipe for Kai Kaphrao Khai Dao (Stir-Fried Chicken with Hot Basil) Download the recipe for Tam Taeng Kwaa (Thai Cucumber Salad) [↗](#) [↗](#)

In his introduction, Ricker makes the modest proclamation that his cooking knowledge is limited when measured against Thailand's vast cuisine. However, this limitation has had no visible effect on his success, given that his eatery, Pok Pok, was recently rated by Bon Appétit as the eighth most important American restaurant. All one really needs to know about Ricker, and this finely detailed cookbook and travelogue, comes at the start of his recipe for fish-sauce wings. Sounding like a gourmand Allen Ginsberg, he writes, "I've spent the better part of the last twenty years roaming around Thailand, cooking and re-cooking strange soups, beseeching street vendors for stir-fry tips, and trying to figure out how to reproduce obscure Thai products with American ingredients." He spills out his acquired knowledge here across 13 chapters and nearly 100 recipes. Lessons learned along the way include the beauty of blandness as exhibited in his flavor-balanced "bland soup" with glass noodles, and waste not, want not, as showcased in recipes for stewed pork knuckles and grilled pork neck. Ricker's prose, as aided by food writer Goode, is captivating, whether he is discussing America's obsession with sateh, or when profiling characters he's encountered in his travels, such as Mr. Lit, his "chicken mentor" and Sunny, his "go-to guy in Chiang Mai."

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 its contains a lot of fascinating information. But even as an experienced cook of Southeast Asian foods I find this book daunting. its 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 the best cookbook I own. It doesn't get any better. The recipes are so precise that it's impossible to screw them up, and everything I've made so far has been authentic tasting and DELICIOUS. I bought this immediately after returning from a vacation in Thailand because I wanted to make northern Thai dishes like khao soi that weren't featured in the Thai cookbook that I already owned. I took a couple of cooking classes while in Thailand, so I was already familiar with some of the ingredients and preparation techniques, so I don't find anything difficult about the recipes, but then again, most of them are pretty simple anyway. The only difficult part is finding the right ingredients, but if you don't have asian markets in your area, the book includes a list of websites where you can buy them. Another important aspect of this book is that it lists recipe ingredients by weight, and not by quantity or volume. A lot of ingredients in Thailand are very different than they are here. For example, garlic cloves and shallots in Thailand are about half the size that they are here, so its crucial that they are listed by weight in the recipes. The only complaint I have is that the kindle version is a little clunky and the formatting didn't translate well. I'd recommend getting the hard cover. Other than that I love it. One last thing...make sure to buy a stone mortar and pestle with this book. You'll need it. The Libertyware GMP6 Granite 6" Mortar & Pestle Set that I got on works great and is plenty big for all of the curry pastes in the cookbook. Enjoy!!!

My husband used to travel regularly to Portland Oregon, where he became a devotee of the Pok Pok restaurant. So when the cookbook was first announced, I immediately pre-ordered a copy... way back in 2013. However, I didn't actually cook a recipe from it until this week. Huh? How could I possibly do that, and still give the cookbook 5 stars? Easy: Think of it as food journalism and picture-book food porn, and it's still awesome. I compare it to cookbooks like those from Heston Blumenthal; it doesn't bother me that this is a "reading" cookbook rather than one that's going to earn food stains. Pok Pok is about doing Thai cooking *authentically*. While the U.S. has embraced Thai cuisine enthusiastically, I learned, we don't have access to all the same ingredients as people do in Thailand. Nor do we have (or take) the time to prepare everything from scratch, especially when that means creating two or three ingredients that are each time-consuming processes. (I

learned this first-hand in the 80s, when the closest Thai restaurant was 250 miles away. If I wanted to use a half cup of coconut milk in the peanut sauce for chicken sate, I had to start out by making the coconut milk... beginning with a whole coconut.)But if you want to do it _right_, you have access to the right markets, and you desire to learn about Thai culture as well as gain a collection of Thai recipes, this book is truly great. The author goes into lots of detail about Thai dishes that we sort of take for granted, here. In the U.S., larb (or laap) is a main-dish salad of minced pork (sometimes chicken) seasoned with fish sauce, chili flakes, lime juice, and fresh herbs (usually mint). Here, we get nine pages of explanation, photos, and recipe how-to. And the ingredients are apt to be a challenge for most of us; beyond the mundane pork loin, cumin seeds, cilantro and so on it calls for sawtooth herb, puya chiles, Sichuan peppercorns, pork small intestine, pork skin, pork liver, fresh or frozen galangal, lemongrass, and raw pork blood. I think I can get most or all of those (there's a good meat shop here in town that butchers its own hogs), but it'd take a concerted effort to gather all of them -- even before we get to the preparation. Somehow I've never bothered. Not EVERYthing is a big hairy deal. For example, the recipe I (finally) made is Isaan Steak Salad. You marinate flank steak in a mixture of thin soy sauce, black pepper, and lemongrass, grill it, and serve it with salad of shallots, mint, cilantro, and toasted-sticky rice powder (I omitted that), and a dressing of lime juice, fish sauce, beef stock, sugar, lemongrass, and a tablespoon of toasted-chili powder. I left out the chili powder too, because making it (1/3 cup of it) means stir-frying an ounce of dried Mexican puya chiles for 20 minutes. My husband remembers that powder as wonderful and unique -- but it just wasn't going to happen. Still, given my access to an Asian market, I could lay my hands on all the other ingredients, and it made a mighty fine weeknight dinner. End result: When I look through this cookbook, I'm apt to drool... and to say, "Honey, when are we getting back to Portland?"

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