MUseum Siam
Discovery Museum



50 Items of Thainess

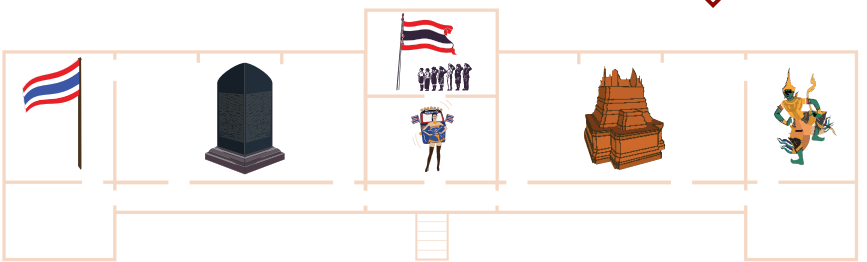
Welcome to

Museum Siam

“Decoding Thai” is a semi-permanent exhibition at Museum Siam. We would like to invite all to come to get a better understanding of “Thainess,” the meanings, characteristics and instances of it being both diverse and complex.

DECODING “THAINESS”

Museum Siam 3rd Floor



ไทยสถาบัน
Thai Institution

ไทยตั้งแต่เกิด
Thai since birth

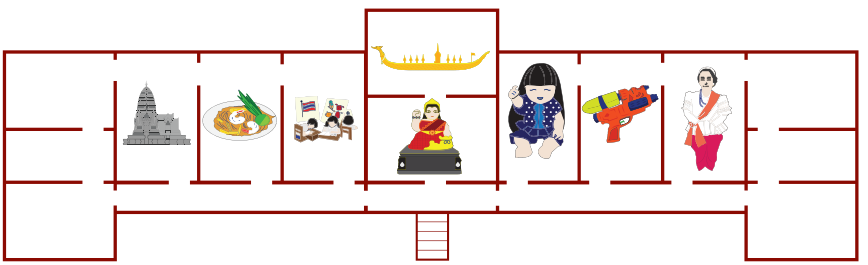
ไทยรึเปล่า
Is this Thai?

ไทยแปลไทย
Defining “Thainess”

ไทยอลังการ
Grandiose Thai

ไทยแค่ไหน
How Thai?

Museum Siam 2nd Floor



ไทยดีโคดร
Decoding “Thainess”

ไทยชิม
Thai Taste

ไทยวิทยา
Thai Studies

ไทย Inter
International Thai

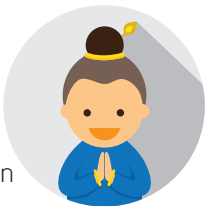
ไทย Only
Thai Only

ไทยเชื่อ
Thai Beliefs

ไทยประเพณี
Thai Culture

ไทยแชะ
Thai Photographs

Timeline of "Thainess"



1646 - 1868

The oldest record found tells that those in Ayudhya called themselves **"Tai"** to distinguish themselves from Yuan (of Lanna), Lao (of Lanchang), Kaek (the Chams), etc. This word continued to be used in the Ratanakosin (Bangkok) Era.



1910 - 1925

Modern Siam had the Thai language and Central Thai customs and culture to represent Thai characteristics in general. These dovetailed with the nationalism of King Vajiravudh that had as its core the institutions of **"Nation, Religion, Monarchy"** that designated Thainess from then on.

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1868 - 1910



During the period of King Chulalongkorn, major reforms were undertaken in response to pressures from Western colonialism. Important among them were administrative centralization and the use of maps to indicate national borders. The idea of the nation-state was adopted to foster oneness. Administrative centralization was accompanied by the inculcation of new cultural traits. It began with the use of Central Thai as the national language and the attendant downgrading of local identities, the introduction of "Raja Patent" uniforms for civil servants and the shift to wearing hair longer for both men and women, for instance.

During this period. The Monarchy resumed importance and the middle classes began to pose questions and to offer opinions more than ever before. These happenings brought changes more diverse than previously when the state was dominant. Attitudes toward **"Thainess"** became more diverse but were yet intermingled with the "Nation, Religion, Monarchy" triolet of the days of the Absolute Monarchy.



1957 - 1987



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After the political change from Absolute Monarchy n 1932, Thai society and culture was reformed once again. During the Prime Ministership of Field Marshal Pibulsongkram (1938-1944), the word "Thai" came into prominence. In 1939, the Field Marshal ordered the change in the names of the country (Siam to Thailand), the ethnicity and the nationality (Siamese to Thai). The then government accorded importance to ethnicity and constructed "Thainess' characteristics according o the leader's "Rathaniyom" or State Preferences. The Edicts covered many cultural innovations, or example, the National Anthem, patriotic songs and movies, dress code regulations and he consumption of noodles and "Pad Thai" (Thai-style noodles).

1987 - Present

In line with capitalist economic policy, "Thainess" was and is considered as cultural capital for value-addedness. It became a **"commodity"** for tourism. There thus emerged the phenomenon of projecting "Thainess" in multifarious ways to promote tourism for both foreigners and Thais. It included the blending together in new ways features Thai and not so Thai. Ancient places and traditional practices were presented as expressions of Thainess. Examples included the Temple of Dawn, the Reclining Buddha at Wat Po, the Grand Palace, Songkran festival, Tuk-Tuk motor tricycles, water markets, temple festivals, Thai classical dance, flower garlands and "Phi Ta Khon" mask dance rite.



What is Thainess?



"Thainess" denotes that which represents the identity of Thai people distinguishable from that of other ethnicities.

Thai people are good at selecting ideas and things around them for adaptation and re-creation into new forms. This is so as to be appropriate to their contemporary or popular ways of life.

Thus, Thainess assumes particular, yet diverse, features, but with an extent of uniqueness that distinguishes them from those of other peoples.

What features seen everyday portray "Thainess" that are different?

Authentic Thai

ก ข ฃ ค ฅ ฆ ง จ
ฉ ช ซ ฌ ญ ฎ ฏ ฐ
ฑ ฒ ณ ด ต ถ ท ธ
น บ ป ผ ฝ พ ฟ ภ
ม ย ร ล ว ศ ษ ส
ห ฬ อ ฮ

Thai language

Sukhothai's King Ramkhamhaeng the Great designed Thai script based on the Khmer's that was in turn derived from the Indian Palava language. Thai has 44 consonants, 21 vowels and 4 tonal marks. This latter was innovative. There aren't other scripts in the world.

The Thai flag

Thailand began to use the national flag of three colors for the first time in 1917 during the Reign of King Vajiravudh. It replaced the former elephant flag.



The three colors represent the three important features that Thais should have in mind about Thailand being a nation and about "Thainess."

Red denotes the nation which they should protect with life and limb.
White represents religion which they should preserve and promote to coexist with the nation.
Blue stands for the Monarchy to which they should accord respect and loyalty.

Stand up to respect the national flag



Source: www.thaiflag.org

"The national flag and the national anthem are symbols of Thainess. Stand to attention and pay respects to the national flag with pride in the country's independence and the sacrifices of our Thai ancestors."

Everyday at 8.00 a.m. and 6.00 p.m., we often hear the announcement prior to the national anthem being played as the "Tri-Rong" (tricolor) national flags are respectively hoisted and lowered from flag poles.



Huay or Thai Lottery

"Huay" is a form of gambling Thais took after the Chinese. First betted on in 1832 during King Nangklao Reign was "Huay Ko Kor". after the Thai consonants used on the placards when the prizes were announced. The government levied taxes on them. In 1874 during King Chulalongkorn Reign, the placards were replaced by paper coupons or lotteries with numbers on them after European practice. Nowadays, the government operates the lottery business, with twice monthly issues. Most Thai people still like to bet on "Huay," which is actually illegal, and to buy government lottery tickets.

Cool powder



In Thai summers when the temperature is high and the air humid, perspiration makes one feel physically uncomfortable and prickles even develop on one's skin. So, "Paeng Yen" or cool powder was invented by Dr. Luan Vongvanij and was first sold in 1932. From then on, cool powder became very popular as a way to provide some relief from the heat. Today, it is exported to other countries, such as Japan and China.

Source : www.brandbuffet.in.th



Walking Buddha

Image or statues represent the Lord Buddha (the founder of Buddhism) began to be created in the human form around the 500 B.C. to 500 A.D. After the adoption of Buddhism from India, Thai had created the Buddha image followed the Indian traditional. However, Thai Buddha image in the early day looked like indigenous people, until the Sukhothai period (1238-1438) the craftsman developed the Buddha image in highly idealistic forms emerged. The Sukhothai styles are considered the most beautiful and classic in Thai art forms, especially the new attitudes of walking Buddha or "Pang Leela" is the first creation in art history.

Muay Thai or Thai Boxing

Thai boxing is a traditional martial art of Thai people dates back to Ayudhya period. It involves the use of various parts of the body: the knuckles, the elbows, the lower arms, the feet, the shins, the knees, the palms of the hands, the soles of the feet and also the torso. A unique feature is the dance ritual to pay respects to boxing teachers of old. Nowadays, "Muay Thai" is very popular, even in the international community.



Flower Garlands



In daily life, Thai people use flower garlands as symbols of respect and devotion, of welcome, and of greeting. The making of flower garlands is one type of Thai handicraft that requires delicate care in execution, affection to detail and high skill acquired through practice. Otherwise, the flowers would not be well arranged in composition and color nor retain freshness.



Ngob:

An ingenious Thai hat

From times past, Thai people have been wearing "Ngob" as headwear to protect them from both sun and rain. "Ngob" is made from natural materials. Its frame is constructed out of woven bamboo into a nest for the head, through which air could pass. Above it all round is the shading made of Talipot palm leaves (Corypha lecomtei). Light colored and with a glossy surface, these leaves reflect heat rays well. "Ngob" is thus a handmade Thai product that demonstrates indigeneous knowledge about heat prevention and ventilation.



Paeng-Rum Nam-Ob:

Aromatic talcum powder in water

The making of aroma and scent for use on body is a Thai wisdom dating from ancient times. The formulae originated from the female members of the Royal Court. Best known is the "Paeng-Rum Nam-Ob" to put on the body to make the skin scented and the wearer feel refreshed when hot. "Paeng-Rum" is made from fine white clay called "Dinso Pong" mixed with liquid extracts of scent from fresh flowers. The mixture is then funneled to make small cone-shaped droplets which, when dried, are smoked with aromatic candles. They are then used as talcum for the face. In turn, the "Nam-Ob" or scented water is made from jasmine water smoked with frankincense. It is mixed with "Paeng-Rum" powder and is often used for sprinkling Buddha's images or to pour on the palms of elders during Songkran festival (traditional Thai New Year) in April.

Thai Beliefs

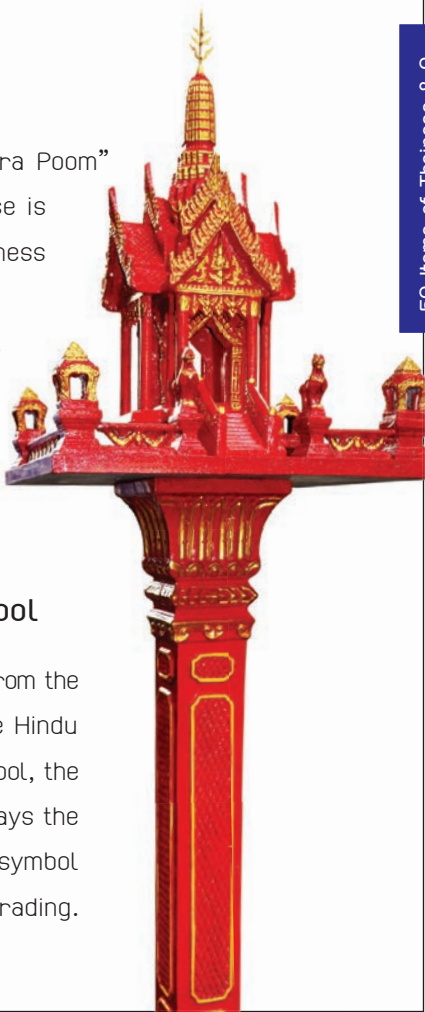


Buddhist amulets

Thai people believe that "Phra Pim" or votive tablet and medals depicting revered monks, would protect those wearing them on their neck chains safe from danger and bring them fame and fortune. This is a departure from the original intention of making such objects, to distribute the Buddhist religion.

San Phra Poom or Spirit houses

Thai people are influenced by the Brahmanic belief in "Phra Poom" (Bhumi), the deity guarding the land on which one's house is located. The god's duty was to ensure the safety, happiness and trouble-free lives for the householders. So, the houseowners would put on a single tall stilt a structure, called "San" and invite the deity to come and reside in it. They would then constantly make offerings of respect to the deity.





Palad Khik or Phallic symbol

The belief in "Palad Khik" derives from the practice of devotion to Shiva, the Hindu god represented by a phallic symbol, the symbol of plenty. However, nowadays the belief in paying respects to the phallic symbol has transmuted to one for fame and fortune, including in trading.



Talisman tattoos

Talisman tattoo is a belief dating from the Sukhothai period and is derived from the Khmer. Khmer and Pali script are etched to the skin surface. The drawings are popular of animals with fierce, gallant and powerful figures such as leaping tigers, Singha lions, swans and dragons, for instance. Thai people believe the talisman tattoos in two respects, done for fame and fortune and for protection from evil or harm.

Source:
www.ajannookanpai.com



Guardian goddess of cars

Thai people have long believed that all types of vehicles usually have guardian spirits like the guardian goddess of boats or “Mae Ya Nang Rua” that the owner should pay respect for the protection of a safe driving. This belief obviously notices when the car driver buys a flower garland from roadside vendors to hang by the rear view mirror or a brand new car with red license plated has flower bouquet on the bonnets.

Is this Thai?



The Gown

Gown without front buttoning made of white mesh fabric or Thai called "Deva gown" has been worn for special functions in Thai ceremonies. The gown was adopted from Persian since late of Ayudhaya period and became a uniform worn up to the present day such as the ritual gown of Phraya Raekna, a high-ranking official who conducts the Royal Ploughing Ceremony; the ritual gown of the Brahman priest; the traditional academic gown; the white ordination gown of the Buddhist monk.



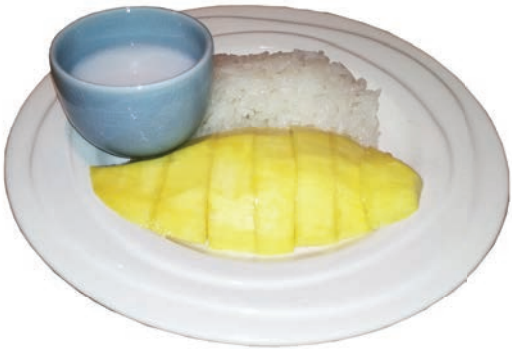
Jong Krabane

Jong Krabane is a way of using one piece of cloth worn to cover the lower body that derives from the Indian's dhoti to Thai via Khmer. 3 meters long and 1 meter wide of cloth is bound round the torso at waist with its wound up as tail tucked up to the waist from behind. Present, "Jong Krabane" is usually worn at traditional ceremonies such as the weddings and traditional festivals.

Tuk Tuk

"Tuk Tuk" is a kind of auto rickshaw that formerly imported from Japan for use in transporting goods not too bulky. Around 1960, it was transformed into passenger vehicle to replace the three wheels rickshaw that was prohibited in Bangkok. In time "Tuk Tuk" became very popular among foreign tourists and thus considered "a unique tourist attraction of Thailand".





Mango and sticky rice

During the summer, a Thai dessert that is most popular is surely mango and sticky rice. The steamed fragrant sticky rice thoroughly blended with coconut milk, slightly sweetened and topped by lightly salted coconut cream goes so well with the perfectly ripe yellow hue mangoes and is considered refreshing. It is a recommended Thai dessert on the list to taste among foreigners.





Kanom Tokyo: Japanese snack in Thai style

The dough with a sweet filling for a snack was created from Japan and was first introduced to Thailand during late of 1960c to early 1970c. In the time it became very popular but later the original recipe was adapted to Thai's favour with more thin and crunchy texture and variety fillings both savory and sweet. It is considered unique to Thailand.

Energy drinks

From 1977 onwards, energy drinks came to be known in Thailand as they made their ways to the refrigerators of corner shops. Being inexpensive, they were widely drunk by those who need spurts of energy or who wanted to stay awake. Now, certain Thai brands are well known abroad.

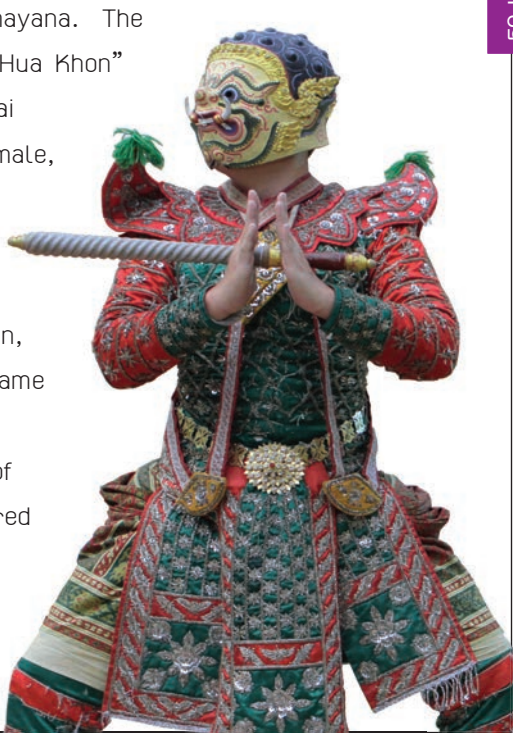
Various Thai flavored instant noodle



A quick meal of instant noodle is Japanese invention. However, Thai instant noodles with more than 20 different flavored are unique of Thai inventions. For example, they are “Tom Yum Kung” (hot and sour herbal shrimp soup), “Gaeng Khiao Wan” (green curry), “Yen Ta Fo” (pink noodle soup), “Tom Khlong” (spicy lemongrass soup) and so on.

Khon

Khon or Thai mask dance is a traditional performing art. Only episodes from the Ramayana epic are performed. This is a derivation, dating from the late Ayudhya Period, of the Indian Ramayana. The actors wear masks or headdresses known as “Hua Khon” and dance to the beats of the accompanying Thai classical music. In the past, the cast was all male, royal guards and officials, since khon was considered a performing art of high quality that should only be performed at royal ceremonies. From the Reign of King Mongkut on, Khon suffered a decline as lakhon or plays became more popular. By the time of King Prajadhipok, the economic depression meant the disbanding of royal theatre department. After that it is restored and supported under the royal patronage of Sirikit, the queen of King Bhumibol Adulyadej.





Source: National Archives of Thailand

“Raja Patent” uniform

The uniform for Thai male was recreated by the idea of King Chulalongkorn in 1872, was to mix and match the traditional Thai jong krabane with the stand-up collared and buttoned up the white jacket of the European colonial officials. They were worn with knee-length white socks and leather shoes. It was formal uniform for Thai civil servants until the year 1932. After that the “Raja Patent” is only worn on special occasions and at ceremonies such as weddings and traditional Thai events.

Songkran shirts

Every year, during the Songkran festival (13-15 April) Thai people have worn a colorful shirt with a floral printed to join the water splashing. This shirt style is not original Thai; it had recreated by tailoring Hawaiian shirt with the flowering pattern in Thai style. It is assumed that flower pattern shirt became popular form the time when Jenpob Jobkrabuanwan, a Thai folk song DJ who always worn flower pattern shirt given an award of Best dress in Thai style in 2001. Nowadays, such shirt becomes trendy for Songkran festival so it commonly refers as “Songkran shirt” and designs were developed for use in each province.



How Thai?



Thai national constumes

Prior 1960 there is not a typical national costume; therefore H.M. Queen Sirikit (the queen of King Bhumibol Adulyadej) made officially recreate the formal contemporary for Thai woman dress by redesigning from original costume in the past. There are eight styles of "Thai Dress of Royal Endorsement" which later become Thai National dresses for women.



Royally bestowed shirt

In 1980 General Prem Tinsulanonda (former Prime Minister of Thailand 1980-1988) beseeched H.M. Queen Sirikit for a pattern of H.M. King Bhumibol Adulyadej's shirt to be developed for a standard of Thai formal lounge suits for men. This royal shirt style called "Royally Bestowed Shirt" was originally adapted from the older Raja Patent by tailoring with Thai textile. There are two kinds of shirt for short-sleeve and for long-sleeve.



The “Wai”

Every Thai has been trained to “Wai” from an early age. The hand posture is used to express various forms of greeting according to contexts, ordinarily to say hello, goodbye, sorry but also to show respect and humility. The level at which the placed together palms are raised with reference to one’s chest and face is indicative of the extent of respect or otherwise. The practice derives from the Indian sub-continent along with the spread of Buddhism to Thailand. It is the norm for less senior persons to “Wai” ones more senior in age, to pay respects.

Motorcycle taxis

Bangkok is one of the big cities with traffic snarls. The use of motorcycle taxis thus provides an alternative means of transport for those who need to race with time in the rush hours. Easily hailed, motorcycle taxis became popular both in Bangkok and the major provincial towns.



Thai Only

Fat Nang Kwak



A talisman popular among vendors is the “Nang Kwak” or beckoning lady, believed since later Sukhothai Era to have been a deity with powers to bring good fortune. She is thus represented by a doll of a lady in traditional Thai costume, sitting flat, legs neatly tucked to one side, and the right arm raised to beckon. The posture is believed to engender fame and fortune. The belief in “Nang Kwak” has in time undergone shifts in meaning, for instance, the doll has been made to appear fat so as to indicate plenty and wealth.

Merchandise vans

Modern Thai nuclear family units not wanting to store foodstuffs use the direct sale vans, mobile shops that roam the winding lanes of the city. The “Rod Poompuang” or “Rod Kab Kao” enable purchase of foodstuffs, fruit and vegetables, condiments and other goods at the doorsteps.





Source: facebook/ adaymagazine/

Bus ticket dispenser

The "Kap Kap" sound that accompanies the tinkle of coins heard on Thai buses is unique. It is said to have become familiar since about 1957 when the cylindrical ticket dispenser containing long rolls of paper tickets, some 500 to 1,000 each roll, came into use. The ticket collector would tear the tickets out to give to passengers who had paid the fare.

Crepes with 20 different fillings

Crepes were of course invented by the French but it was the Japanese who made them with sweet fillings. Some 20 years ago, Thai emulated the Japanese but invented new recipes so that the crepes became thinner and more crispy than the Japanese ones. The toppings or fillings also took on variety and comprise both sweet and savory ones. Examples are ham, sausage, mock crab meat, banana, chocolate, "Nam Prik Pao" (chili paste), dried shredded pork, for instance, they can be combined according to customers' choice. Some 20 types are possible. Crepes have thus become a popular Thai style snack, nationwide.





Side dish to go with fruit

Thailand is a country with many kinds of fruit available all year round. However, in former times, Thais like to eat fruit with a side dish during the summer. This was done to add flavor to make eating fruit more enjoyable as well as to feel refreshed. Even though certain fruit is already sweet, side dishes were invented, such as, "Pla Haeng Tangmo" (lightly sugared dried fish with water melon) and sour unripe mango with a sticky concoction of caramel and fish sauce, chili and salt with pineapple and Chinese plum powder with guava.



Fish sauce with chili

Most Thai prefer tasty and chili hot food. A Thai dining table thus usually has a bowl of fish sauce with chilli in it. The aroma of fish sauce entices appetite in most Thais and chili adds flavor to any dish. The main ingredients are chopped "Prik Kee Noo" (the very hot little green chili), fish sauce and lime juice. Some may add garlic or chopped red onion.



Condiment receptacle with a handle

Since Thais like to add some condiments to their food for taste, "Puang Krueng Prung" became a regular feature on the table at noodle shops. It is a top-handled receptacle with jars of chili vinegar, fish sauce, sugar and ground chili. Noodles as a Chinese culinary culture came with the immigrants from China to Thailand ever since the late of Ayudhya Period. However, eating noodles in Thai society likely became widely popular since 1957.



Thai student uniform

From 1935 on, the government has issued regulations that required students at all levels of education to wear uniforms. Students at public and private universities wear uniforms slightly different from those worn by schoolchildren. Thailand is one of four countries in the world to require tertiary level students to wear uniforms.

Source: www.nomjitt.co.th

Thai Taste



Tom Yum Kung

The colorful and hot and sour herbal "Tom Yum Kung" is foremost among Thai dishes well known to foreigners. It is actually a late 1950s and early 1960s Central Thai adaptation that became a national dish promoted for tourism purposes and now known all over the world.



Nam Prik

This is a generic term for any kind of dip made with chili as an ingredient. The chronicles of the French diplomat, La Loubère, about the Kingdom of Siam told that Thais ate chili dip as the main dish as the hotness of chili made for appetite. Today, Thais still like to eat "Nam Prik" with fresh or parboiled vegetables and steamed rice. There are now some 30 recipes and "Nam Prik" is also available in sealed containers so as to last and to be taken abroad.



Pad Thai

One dish that appeared during the nationalist period of Field Marshall Pibulsongkram was "Pad Thai". Chinese wok-fried noodle was altered into a new authentic Thai dish by adding ingredients and flavors that suited Thai tastes. "Pad Thai" was listed at No.5 on the list of World's 50 most delicious foods readers poll compiled by CNN Go in 2011.



Som Tam

"Som Tam" or shredded and pounded unripe papaya spicy salad is assumed to have become known in Thai society since the 1930s when the government encouraged the growing of papayas. By 1935, a recipe for "Som Tam" appeared for the first time. "Som tam" is among the most popular dishes all over the country and is renowned throughout the world. It is a dish that can be had easily at any time and is today available, in more than 50 forms.



Grilled pork and sticky rice

This is a Thai fast food that is filling, delicious, inexpensive as well as easily found. It is the street food that has become popular all over the country. This is assumed to have been made possible when carts formerly used for transporting goods were from around 1957 redesigned to suit street food vending.



Pad Kra Pao with rice

This is the first among the five most popular single plate dishes in Central Thailand. It is a top menu of roadside or food canteen all over the country. While it is basically chopped meat wok-fried with holy basil and chili, it is a delicious and authentic Thai dish, second only in popularity to "Som Tam". It has also become known among foreign visitors.



Kanom Krok: Coconut rice pan cake

This is a traditional Thai snack assumed to date from the Ayudhya Period. Batter made by mixing together flour, sugar and coconut milk is then poured into the pan hole. When nearly cooked, chopped spring onion is added. Nowadays, other toppings have been created, such as egg, sweet corn, yam, dried shredded pork, etc.

Kanom Kai Hong: Fried glutinous rice balls



This sweet snack was originally known as "Kanom Kai Hia" and created by a consort of King Buddhayodfa to serve him in place of the "Kai Hia" or the eggs of the monitor lizard that he liked but were rarely found. The kanom is made of a mixture of sticky rice flour and rice flour made into a dough and shaped like an egg. The filling is made of soy bean. It is then covered with slightly crunchy caramel. The name was changed to "Kanom Kai Hong" during King Mongkut Reign.

Kanom Buang: Thai cripspy pancakes



Kanom Buang is a crepe-like snack that was mentioned in King Chulalongkorn volume about 12 annual Royal Ceremonies, one for each month. It was the one for the first lunar month. They are made from a batter flour and soy beans with a spread made out of eggs and sugar. They come with two fillings. The sweet one with caramelized coconut, "Foi Tong" sweet egg yolk serpentine and dried plum. The savory one is filled with desiccated coconut fried with dried shrimps, kaffir lime leaves and chopped spring onions. This is called "Kanom Buang Song Krueng" or fully attired "Kanom Buang."

Massaman curry



Massaman curry is one of the most known in royal Thai cuisine. This is an account of its name having appeared in the Royal Barge sonnet which King Buddha Loetla Nabhalai authored. Culinary experts hypothesized that this curry made with a number of spices came to Ayudhya when Sheik Ahmad, a Persian merchant (ancestor of the Bunnag family), became a high official at the Royal Court. Later, Thailand's first cookbook composed by Lady Plian Pasakornwong entered a recipe for Massaman in her book. This made the curry gain widespread popularity. Today, Massaman curry has been recognized as one of the most delicious dishes in the world.



Green curry

This is a curry that Thai people love because of its agreeable taste and aroma. It also contains all the categories of nutrients. This curry can be made in a short time and can be eaten together with "Kanom Chin" (fermented rice noodles) on rice on a single plate.

Thai Culture



Royal Barges

Royal Barges comprise one Thai uniqueness and is praised internationally. This is an account of their aesthetic beauty and high quality craftsmanship. They serve as physical evidence of a tradition that dates from the time of Ayudhya.

“Phi Ta Khon”

Phi Ta Khon procession is a recreational activity organized annually in the “Bun Luang” on “Bun Phra Wet” festival of Dan Sai in Loei Province. The religious ceremony is related to the Buddhist Jataka tale about Maha Vessantara, a previous incarnation of the Lord Buddha. Nowadays, the performers dress as spirits or ghosts wearing large masks with fearful and horrid expressions. They walk along in a street procession and tourists find them fascinating.



๕๐ เรื่องแบบไทยๆ

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