

FOOD & DRINK

Khmer cuisine is similar to that of its Southeast Asian neighbors. It shares many similarities with Thai cuisine, Vietnamese cuisine and Chinese cuisine. Cambodian cuisine derives its flavor from spices and aromatic herbs, with little use of fat and meats. This cuisine is a combination of complex, vibrant flavors and a delicate balance between saltiness, sweetness, sourness and bitterness.

Things to try in Cambodia:

AMOK (STEAMED COCONUT FISH IN BANANA LEAVES)



In the Khmer diet, rice and freshwater fish play big roles because of the abundance of both. Amok is national dish, made from fish, coconut milk and curry paste. All the ingredients are mixed together and put in banana leaf cups with coconut cream on top, then steamed. Another common form is amok chok – snails with curry steamed in their shells. Best served with a plate of hot rice.

PRAHOK KTIS



One of the unique ingredients that give Cambodian cuisines their fabulous typical flavour is a pungent fermented fish paste known as pra-hok. This fish paste gives the complex pork-and-coconut-milk curry a uniquely salty and savory flavor. Prahok Ktis is usually served with fresh vegetables (green mango, eggplant, and cucumber) for dipping, the addition of tamarind sauce adds a bit of sweetness and some acid to balance it out.

KHMER RED CURRY



Less spicy than the curries of neighboring Thailand, Khmer red curry is similarly coconut-milk-based but without the overpowering chili. The dish features beef, chicken or fish, eggplant, green beans, potatoes, fresh coconut milk, lemongrass and kroeung paste and is usually served with bread -- a remnant of the French influence on Cambodia cuisine. This delicious dish is usually served at special occasions in Cambodia such as weddings, family gatherings and religious holidays like Pchum Ben, or Ancestor's Day, where Cambodians make the dish to share with monks in honor of the departed.

LORT CHA



This dish is usually served from street carts to motorbike or tuk-tuk drivers craving a late night snack. The spicy stir-fried noodles are cut short in length to match the texture of the bean sprouts and cooked with greens, green onions, and a scrambled or fried egg. Finally, all of the ingredients are tossed with a generous portion of chili and soy sauce before being plated.

KAMPOT PEPPER CRAB



The southern province of Kampot, right on the coastline, is known for two things: fresh seafood and peppercorn farms. These two ingredients unite in this rustic dish of fresh crab stir-fried with plentiful green peppercorns. The pepper imbues the sweet crab meat with a lingering floral flavor, but be sure to eat a few of the peppercorns whole for a spicy kick.

BEEF SARAMAN CURRY



Made with spices including coriander and cardamom, this braised beef dish reflects Indian influence and is beloved throughout Cambodia. In fact, it's typically served at big celebrations, particularly weddings. The key ingredients, besides the meltingly tender beef, are coconut milk and whole peanuts.

NOM BANH CHOK (KHMER NOODLES)



Nom banh chok is a beloved Cambodian dish, so much so that in English it's called simply "Khmer noodles". Nom banh chok is a typical breakfast food, and you'll find it sold in the mornings by women carrying it on baskets hanging from a pole balanced on their shoulders. The dish consists of noodles laboriously pounded out of rice, topped with a fish-based green curry gravy made from lemongrass, turmeric root and kaffir lime. Fresh mint leaves, bean sprouts, green beans, banana flower, cucumbers and other greens are heaped on top.

BAI SACH CHROUK (GRILLED PORK AND BROKEN RICE)



As part of the street food culture, it is available everywhere especially in busy neighborhoods. Served early mornings on street corners all over Cambodia, bai sach chrouk, or pork and rice, is one of the simplest and most delicious dishes the country has to offer. Thinly sliced pork is slow grilled over warm coals to bring out its natural sweetness. Sometimes the pork will be marinated in coconut milk or garlic. The grilled pork is served over a hearty portion of broken rice, with a helping of freshly pickled cucumbers and daikon radish with plenty of ginger. On the side, you'll often be given a bowl of chicken broth topped with scallions and fried onions.

CAMBODIAN DESSERT



Cambodian desserts are quite famous all over Asia, and they are starting to become popular overseas as well. ***Egg-based desserts spiced up with different seasonings and flavors*** (vanilla, cinnamon) make the delight of any Cambodian meal. Whether it is rice pudding or banana cakes, the Cambodian chefs will definitely have a tasty desert for any sort of meal.

TROPICAL FRUIT



Cambodia's climate, especially around mid-year, ensures that ***plenty of colorful, tasty fruits*** flow into the market. Jackfruit, mangoes, bananas, pineapple, dragon fruit and watermelon are all plentiful in Cambodian.