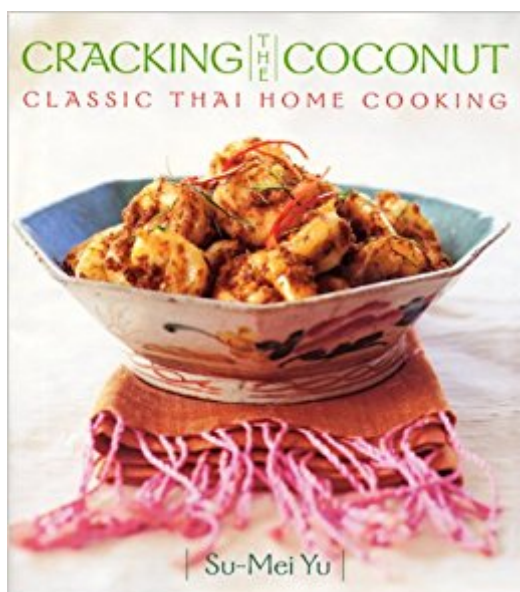


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Cracking The Coconut: Classic Thai Home Cooking



Synopsis

For centuries Thai cooking has been among the world's most highly regarded cuisines and also among the most mysterious. For the first time the tastes, techniques, and traditions of Thai home cooking have been gathered into one extraordinary book: *Cracking the Coconut* by renowned Thai chef, teacher, and writer Su-Mei Yu. More than a simple recipe book, this is a masterful work about the art and history of Thai cooking and the people who have shaped it. But, most important, it's about preparing, eating, and thoroughly enjoying the food of Thailand. By taking readers step by step through shopping, preparing, and serving, *Cracking the Coconut* dispels the notion that Thai cooking is difficult. With Su-Mei's engaging narrative and easy-to-follow recipes, Thai cooking is suddenly accessible to everyone. The wonder of Thai food begins with exquisite contrasts in flavors and textures. Su-Mei carefully explains each ingredient and its importance. Rice is the soul of Thai cooking; coconut is its heart; salt, garlic, cilantro, and peppercorns are its spirit; chile water is the crown jewel; and chiles (prik) and fish sauce (nam pla) are the high notes and accents in the final dish. Su-Mei shows you how, through the simple acts of mincing, pounding, and grinding, spices release their wonderfully fragrant oils and scents as they evolve into pastes. These spice pastes are what adds the intensity and depth of flavor so unique to Thai cooking. And of course, there are very detailed instructions for cracking a coconut. You'll be able to create such evocatively titled dishes as Crying Tiger, Galloping Horse, and A Thief's Salad, which taste as intriguing as they sound. More familiar dishes such as satay with peanut sauce, mee krob, cucumber salad, and pad Thai will easily become family favorites. *Cracking the Coconut* allows cooks of all levels to re-create the beauty and elegance of Thai home cooking in their own kitchens. From silky Steamed Fish Custard in Banana Pouches and Spicy Green Papaya Salad to zesty sauces and accompaniments to desserts that rival those of any cuisine, *Cracking the Coconut* will take you on a culinary journey never before possible.

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Customer Reviews

Americans love Thai food. Among the best cookbooks exploring this rich, tantalizing cuisine is chef-restaurateur Su-Mei Yu's *Cracking the Coconut*. Insisting that there can be no true Thai cooking without homemade "core" preparations (such as various chili pastes), Yu includes precise, accessible recipes for these and other essential ingredients while outlining fundamental techniques in vivid detail. Readers learn the proper hand motions for cracking a coconut, how to wrap ingredients in banana leaves, and how to work a mortar and pestle, the central Thai-kitchen implement. The book's 175 recipes are divided between chapters devoted to essential ingredients or dishes. The chapter on Thai curry ("the signature dish") explores the basics of preparing this exciting fare and includes such delicious recipes as Red Curry with Roasted Pork and Green Banana and Sweet Green Curry with Meatballs. A chapter called "The Secret of Thai Salads" offers recipes for a small repertoire of essential dressings and such tempting recipes as Apricot, Shrimp, and Pork Salad and a salad-feast called, simply, Lamb and Roast Duck. Yu provides cultural notes and cooking lore throughout the book, often drawing from her recipe-hunting travels abroad. It's hard to imagine a better start for anyone wishing to "cook Thai" than this fully illustrated book, which perfectly balances recipes and instruction to make it an innovative standout. --Arthur Boehm

Owner of San Diego's Saffron Restaurant, Yu takes her Thai cooking seriously: she expects readers to pound curry pastes by hand in a mortar and pestle (a process that takes about 30 minutes) and don't even think about using canned coconut milk unless absolutely necessary. In compensation for all this work, Yu provides flawless and authentic recipes full of the fresh flavors of Thailand, such as Grilled Mackerel Salad with pickled garlic, coconut and peanuts and Beef and Pumpkin Stew with kabocha squash and cilantro. Recipes are organized loosely according to main ingredients, and in one chapter simply because they represent "The Thai Philosophy of Food," which consists of juxtaposing contrasting tastes. A chapter on fiery curries includes Red Curry with Roasted Pork and Green Banana and Sour-Orange Curry with Tender Vegetables. Aside from the work of grinding the curry paste, these can be assembled relatively quickly. Another chapter

focuses on "The Big Four Seasonings," or salt, garlic, coriander root and peppercorns, and provides a recipe for a paste of the four that can be used in everything from fish batter and deep-frying batter to meatloaf. Noodle dishes are both hot (several types of Pad Thai) and cold (Cool Noodles with Jungle-Style Sauce). Thai salads are original and refreshing: Pomelo and Shrimp Salad and Banana Blossoms with Chicken Salad. Yu also writes beautifully of her own experiences cooking and eating in Thailand. For Thai novices and for those who are seeking to delve more deeply into this sophisticated and often surprising cuisine, this book is a must-have. Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Thai cookbooks abound, but this is the best one on my shelf. It's the one I reach for consistently and the one that has the best, most usable everyday instructions. I've cooked professionally, and trained in Thailand, and still love this book for it's clear, concise directions and delicious recipes. It's straightforward and accessible for beginners, and chock full of recipes that work for us old hands. I've not had a single recipe failure out of this book, and just adore the presentation and the openness of the writing. Many thanks for such a wonderful book! Khop khun krab!

I recently had the fantastic opportunity to attend a cooking class held by Su-Mei at her restaurant in San Diego. Cracking the Coconut shares her culture, her wisdom, and her home style recipes for the average cook. Check out her Asian Grilling and Elements of Life cookbooks to further this journey.

This is a wonderful book on a number of levels. The author has cooked in the US for many years and so does not require impossible ingredients or use foods with strange names without explaining. The recipes are relatively simple - they do not have 37 ingredients. The recipes appear authentic - she goes back to Thailand every year and has friends and relatives there. Every recipe has extensive stories and background to go with it. The graphics are subtle and wonderful. Too bad the designer Ralph Fowler gets only a mention. But do not be mistaken this is not just another pretty/useless coffee table cookbook. This is a cookbook to sit down and read cover to cover, but also one to use extensively in the kitchen. No previous experience required.

Great Thai cooking recipes, and thank you so much..

Su-Mei Yu's book is extraordinary. It differs from other Thai cookbooks in that she gives you "all" of

the secrets that make Thai food sensational. I have tried cooking from at least 20 different Thai cook books and nothing can compare to her recipes. Having dined at Saffron, her Thai restaurant in San Diego, I can testify to her wonderful culinary expertise. I am glad to see that she has included many of my favorites. Her recipes are a little more complex than others, however, I can guarantee wonderful results. I dare you to give her recipes a try!

YUM!

I found it a bit daunting as far as finding the exotic ingredients and creating the specialty dishes. Guess I was hoping it would be easier!

disappointing

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