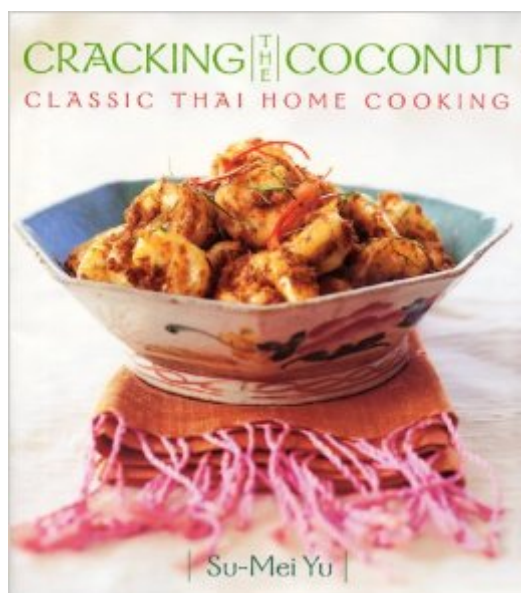


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Cracking The Coconut: Classic Thai Home Cooking



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 padd 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

After looking at maybe 20 Thai cookbooks and buying a few others, I now wish that I bought this one first. The author grew up in Thailand, and clearly did extensive culinary research in the preparation for the book. In addition to the recipes, she offers some rather specific techniques as well as background on ingredients. In this sense, it is similar in concept to Rick Bayless' cookbooks on Mexican cooking. While I can't claim an extensive experience in Thai cooking and culture to comment on its authenticity, the ingredients and techniques are identical to those I learned at cooking school in Thailand, and the results taste familiar as well. I agree with some of the comments above as to the need to some of the somewhat labor intensive preparation of curry pastes she advises. I have made them from scratch (not really that hard, if you have done it a few times and have a strong arm for the mortar and pestle) and used prepared ones, and, while I think the homemade ones are better (more subtle, more complex, more "fresh"), I usually use them only for special occasions. And after the homemade ones have sat in the fridge for a while, the difference is less distinct. But I appreciate a cookbook that at least encourages you to try to make your own paste! I also agree that the homemade coconut milk exercise is not worth the trouble. The coconuts I can get here in Michigan are just not consistently that good, and I can't tell the difference in the finished product. Still, I was glad that I had a chance to try making it at least once. Yes, the author does offer substitutions, such as miso for shrimp paste, but she also makes it clear that these are substitutions and describes the rationale for them.

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