

Burmese Recipes

Traditionally, Burmese food is eaten at a low, round table, and diners sit on the floor. Finger bowls and tea towels to wash hands are generally provided at the beginning of the meal, as the food is eaten using fingers. Unlike western meals, a Burmese meal is not divided into starters and main courses, but all the dishes are put on the table so that diners can share and try everything that is served. This is then followed by seasonal fruits or dessert.

A typical Burmese meal includes rice, a curry dish (Sepyan), salad (A-Thoke) and soup (Hin-Yawe). These recipes are therefore divided into a choice of the above specialties. Or you can keep it simple and just cook Moh Hin Gha, one of Burma's most popular dishes.

Moh Hin Gha - Rice Vermicelli with Fish Soup

Serves 6- 8

Method:

- If using fresh fish, wash and scale the fillets and simmer for 5 minutes in just enough water to cover. Reserve the stock.
- Put onions, lemongrass, garlic, ginger, turmeric and chilli powder in container of electric blender and blend to a puree.
- Heat the oil in a large saucepan and fry the blended ingredients and chillies, add in pureed mixture.
- When it is golden brown and beginning to stick to the pan, add the fish stock or water (about 1.5 litres), and prepared banana heart or shallots.
- Bring to the boil, turn heat low and simmer until banana heart slices or shallots are tender.
- Add fish sauce to mixture.
- Mix the chickpea flour smoothly with a little cold water and add to pan. Keep stirring as it comes to the boil.
- Simmer for 5 minutes, and add the fish.
- Stir as it comes to simmering point. Season to taste, add salt if necessary.
- Cook noodles in boiling salted water until tender, drain well and serve in a large bowl.
- The noodles are served first and soup ladled over the top.

Moh Hin Gha is traditionally served with a variety of garnishes, including:

Chopped coriander leaves or parsley

Lemon or lime

Chilli flakes

Hard boiled eggs, quartered



Ingredients

- 500g (1lb) fillets of fish. Catfish is traditionally used, but mackerel or sardines are also used (tinned is fine)
- 4 medium onions, roughly chopped
- 6 cloves garlic, peeled
- 2 teaspoons finely chopped fresh ginger
- 1 teaspoon ground turmeric
- ½ teaspoon chilli powder
- 4 tablespoons peanut oil
- 2 chillies, seeded and chopped (optional)
- 2-3 lemongrass stalks, chopped
- Banana heart or 8 small shallots, peeled and left whole
- 1 tablespoon fish sauce
- 3 tablespoons chick pea flour or rice flour
- Salt to taste
- 500g (1lb) rice vermicelli or egg noodles

Curries

Mixed Vegetable Curry – Thi Sone Hin

Serves 4

This curry is a very popular dish in Burma and is quick and simple to prepare, around 15-30 minutes cooking time.

Method:

- Using a big wok or pot, heat the oil and add the onion and garlic over medium heat until the aromas are released (usually around 5 minutes).
- Add and sauté the potatoes over medium heat for approximately 1 minute.
- Add and sauté the pumpkin, aubergine, carrot, curry powder, turmeric powder and sweet paprika over medium heat for 1 minute.
- Add the fish sauce, tamarind paste and water to cover the vegetables (approx 1.5 litres), let it boil over medium heat until the potatoes are almost soft (usually around 20 minutes).
- Finally add the tomatoes and the long beans, cover the wok/pot and let it cook for 10 minutes on medium heat.
- Add salt to taste.

Serve with steamed rice.

Fried Aubergines – Khayanthi Nhut

This is a very particular dish as it combines the sweet taste of aubergines with the spiciness of chilli.

Method:

- Wash and slice the aubergine into four quarters, lengthwise.
- Using a wok, heat the oil and stir-fry, over medium heat, the garlic and the onion.
- Add and fry the tomatoes until they get mushy, usually around 5 minutes.
- Add and sauté the aubergines, the halved chillies, turmeric powder and sweet paprika.
- Cook for 10 or more minutes until the aubergines become soft and turn them occasionally to get equal heat. Remember not to turn them too often.

Additional Tip:

- Dried shrimp can be added with the garlic and onion.



Ingredients

- 4 tablespoons oil
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 3 chopped cloves garlic
- 3 medium potatoes, peeled & cut into chunks
- 1 large aubergine, cut into chunks
- 2 small carrots, cut into chunks
- 450/680g pumpkin, cut into chunks
- 2½ tablespoons curry powder
- ½ teaspoon turmeric powder
- 1½ teaspoon sweet paprika
- 1 teaspoon tamarind paste
- 4 teaspoons fish sauce
- Handful of green beans, cut in half



Ingredients

- 2-3 medium size aubergines
- 2 or more fresh halved chillies (optional)
- 1 onion finely sliced
- 2 chopped cloves garlic
- 2½ tablespoons oil
- ½ teaspoon turmeric powder
- ½ teaspoon sweet paprika

Prawn Curry – Prawn Sepyan

Serves 4

Method:

- Prepare the prawns: wash, chop off whiskers and remove the head and the black vein.
- Marinate the prawns in the fish sauce and salt.
- In a blender combine the garlic, ginger, onion and chillies, blending until smooth.
- Heat the oil and add the above mixture, cook over medium heat until it becomes fragrant and the onion is transparent (usually around 8-10 minutes).
- Add the tomatoes and cook over medium heat for around 5 minutes.
- Add the turmeric powder and the sweet paprika, stirring quickly, and add ½ cup of water.
- Cook for 1 minute and mix, if the sauce is already too thick add another ½ cup of water and repeat the procedure.
- Add the prawns, cover and cook over high heat until they become pink (around 3 minutes).
- Stir, reduce the heat to low and cook for other 5 minutes until the sauce becomes thicker, leaving only the tomato gravy behind.
- Add fresh coriander and serve with steamed or coconut rice.



Ingredients

- 1kg (2lbs) prawns
- 2 medium tomatoes, cut into small pieces
- 2 or 3 chillies
- 1 large onion, chopped finely
- 5 cloves garlic
- 1 small piece fresh ginger, or 1 teaspoon of ginger powder (optional)
- 1 teaspoon fish sauce
- ½ teaspoon sweet paprika
- ½ teaspoon turmeric powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 5 tablespoons oil
- Coriander

Pork Curry With Tamarind – Watha Majeedi Sepyan

Serves 4

Pork curry with tamarind is probably the most common meat curry in Burma. Pork is the most popular meat in country.

Method:

- The first step is to marinate the meat:
- First, soak the tamarind in ½ cup of warm water for around 30 minutes. Remove tamarind pulp – squeezing as much water out of it as you can. Discard tamarind pulp. This will be the tamarind water.
- Using a blender, blend the fish sauce, ginger, garlic, onion and chillies.
- Mix the above puree with the tamarind water, sweet paprika, turmeric powder and a little salt. Add the chopped meat and let it stand for around 15 minutes. This will marinate the meat.



Ingredients

- 450g of pork belly or pork loin/shoulder – chopped into 3/4-inch cubes.
- 1 tablespoon of dried tamarind
- 2 medium sized onions, chopped
- 2 sticks lemongrass
- 4 cloves garlic, crushed
- 2-3 fresh chopped chillies
- 4 teaspoons fish sauce
- ½ teaspoon turmeric powder
- 1 teaspoon sweet paprika
- 1 small piece grated fresh ginger

- In a heavy sauce pan add the oil, the meat and the lemongrass and let it cook on medium heat until it gets brown on all sides (usually around 9 minutes).
- Add 2 cups of water, cover and lower the heat and let it simmer for another 30 minutes or more (depending on the tenderness of the meat).
- If needed add water but remember that the sauce should be quite thick.
- When the meat has reached the desired tenderness, lower the heat, add 2 tablespoons (or more depending on the sour taste desired) of tamarind water and stir.

Additional Tips:

- For this recipe, the use of 3-layered pork would be best. The pieces of meat should be cut in such a way that each piece retains all three layers. The fatty part of the pork gives a richer taste and a more creamy consistency to the dish.
- If a more sour taste is desired, you can also add sour bamboo shoots.
- The dish is ideally served with steamed rice.

Rice

Steamed Rice

Method:

- Soak 2 cups of jasmine rice or any other long-grain in a pot with enough water to cover it, for approximately 15 minutes.
- Wash and drain the rice.
- Add 7-8 cups of water (depending on the amount of rice, as it has to cover it), and let it boil for approx. 15 minutes.
- Drain the rice.
- Return the rice to the pot and cover it with a lid.
- Simmer it again on very low heat for 3-4 more minutes until it reaches the perfect consistency.

Coconut Rice

Serves 4

- In a large pot with a tightfitting lid, heat the oil over medium heat.
- Add the onion and stir and cook until soft and translucent, about 3 to 4 minutes.
- Add the rice and stir to coat evenly with oil.
- Stir the coconut milk and pour it into the pot, followed by the water, salt, and sugar.
- Bring the mixture to a boil. Stir and reduce the heat to low.
- Cover and cook for approx 35 minutes or until the water is absorbed and the rice is tender.
- Turn off the heat and let the rice rest on the stove, covered, for 5-10 minutes.
- When ready to serve, remove the lid and fluff the rice with a fork or chopsticks.
- Garnish with fried shallots.

Ingredients

2 tablespoons oil
 ½ chopped onion
 200g jasmine rice or any other long-grain rice, washed
 ½ can coconut milk
 200ml water, or as necessary
 1 teaspoon salt
 1 teaspoon sugar
 Fried shallots for garnish

Soups

Spicy Lentil Soup – Paenilay Hin

In Burmese cuisine many different lentils are used as a replacement to fish or meat. Traditionally people living in the countryside tend to boil them on wood fuel for a long time, and then add some green Burmese herbs to add flavour.

Method:

- Wash and boil the lentils (with little water) until they are soft.
- Add the vegetable cube and let it boil over low heat.
- Soak the tamarind until it is well dissolved.
- In an oily pan stir fry the onion, once it becomes brown add the chillies until crunchy and drain.
- Add a bit more of the remaining oil and the curry powder, frying it over low heat.
- Pour the fried chillies and onions to the lentils soup and add 1 spoon of tamarind. Let it boil for another 5 more minutes.

Ingredients

5 tablespoons dried split-pea lentils
1 large onion, finely sliced
1 cube vegetable stock
1 tablespoon tamarind paste or 1 large chopped tomato
6 large dried chillies (18 if small)
1½ tablespoons curry powder
3 tablespoons oil

Additional Tip:

- The dish should be served with chillies floating in each bowl.

Vermicelli Soup – Kyasan Chat

Serves 4

This soup is a very common dish in Burma, as it is very tasty and also very cheap.

Method:

- In warm water soak the cloud ear fungus for 15 minutes.
- Wash the soaked fungus with little salt, drain them and cut them in small slices.
- Fry the tofu or beancurd
- Pound the garlic and fry it in oil for ½ minutes approximately.
- Add 1½ pints of water and when it boils add the shallots, vermicelli, fungus, tofu, fish sauce and salt. Let it simmer for 7 minutes.
- In a pan, fry the peppercorns for 2 minutes and add them to the soup.
- Let the soup boil for 3 more minutes and if necessary add more fish sauce.
- Serve topped with chopped coriander.

Ingredients

10 pieces of Chinese cloud ear fungus, or mushrooms
Tofu or beancurd
50 grams of vermicelli (1 pack) soaked in water for ½ hour
4 cloves of garlic
8 small shallots, peeled and whole
1 tablespoon fish sauce
1 small tablespoon black peppercorns
1 tablespoon oil
½ teaspoon salt
Coriander

Additional Tips:

- Hard-boiled quails eggs can also be added.
- If vegetarian, replace the fish sauce with additional salt.

Salad

Grilled Aubergine Salad – Khayanthi Meephug Thoke

Method:

- Heat the oven to 250°
- Once the oven has reached the temperature, add the aubergines and turn them until all their skin becomes wrinkled and scorched.
- Remove the aubergine from the oven and peel the skin.
- Chop up the aubergine by holding the stem on a plate (discard the stem and some of the aromatic juice produced).
- Finally add the fried onions, or finely chopped raw onion, fried garlic, pounded peanuts and salt and mix gently.

Ingredients

- 1 large or 2 small aubergines
- 1 tablespoon peanuts, roasted and pounded
- 1 tablespoon fried onion
- 1 small teaspoon fried garlic

Dessert

Semolina Cake - Sanwinmakin

Serves 10-12

This is a delicious dessert, thanks to the amazing taste created when the dry-fried semolina seeds mixed with coconut and sugar. A very delicate and original taste.

Method:

- Pour the semolina on to a baking sheet or frying pan and roast over moderate heat or under the grill for 5-10 minutes. Stir frequently until the semolina has turned golden brown. Remove from the heat and pour into a large saucepan.
- Mix in the remaining ingredients, except the poppy seeds. Use a whisk to remove any lumps. Over a moderate heat bring the mixture to the boil, stirring continuously. Soon you will notice the mixture beginning to thicken and at the first sign of bubbles appearing, turn down the heat to the lowest setting.
- You need to stir continuously throughout the cooking process. As the mixture becomes thicker, it can be hard work. Continue to simmer very gently for 8-10 minutes until the mixture starts to clump together and comes away from the sides of the pan easily.
- Pour the mixture into a cake tin or an oven-proof dish, approximately 22cm in diameter, which has been greased with oil. Smooth over the surface with the back of a spoon so it is level. Sprinkle the poppy seeds and place under a hot grill for 8-10 minutes until the top is golden and some cracks appear on the surface. Serve at room temperature.

Ingredients

- 350g semolina
- 350g sugar
- 1 can coconut milk (400ml)
- 2 tablespoons poppy seeds
- 2 large eggs (beaten)
- 600ml water
- 125ml oil (peanut oil if possible)
- 1 teaspoon salt

Additional Tip:

- If you prefer a sweeter taste, you can add raisins.



Published by Burma Campaign UK
28 Charles Square, London N1 6HT

www.burmacampaign.org.uk
info@burmacampaign.org.uk tel: 020 7324 4710