

Special Report: The Cambodian Food Culture**The Introduction of “The Fermented Fish Paste”
No. 1 in a Series**

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Cambodian food may be an underrated food among other Asian countries. Perhaps, there are many hidden charms within the overlooked dishes of Cambodia. This article will be dedicated to the delicacy of Cambodian traditional food, and its potential to be wildly renounced its uniqueness and magnificence. Talking about Cambodian food, fermented fish paste is one of the core ingredients in many of the dishes. The smell and the pungent taste make it stand out. In Khmer words “**Prahok**” or fermented fish is the core ingredient of most soups and can also be eaten by themselves. It is used to give the Umami that boosts the extra flavor so that the food can be enjoyed thoroughly. Since Cambodia has many different types of fish, fermented fish can also be made from many kinds of fish. The price can vary range on how rare or delicious the fish are. Fermented fish paste production can also be widely found along the local area next to the Tonle Sap or Mekong River. Since, it is not widely available in other countries, almost all of the products are domestic products. As the taste is deeply carved into the Cambodian heart and with a pinch of creativity, there are so many dishes that can be made using fish paste.

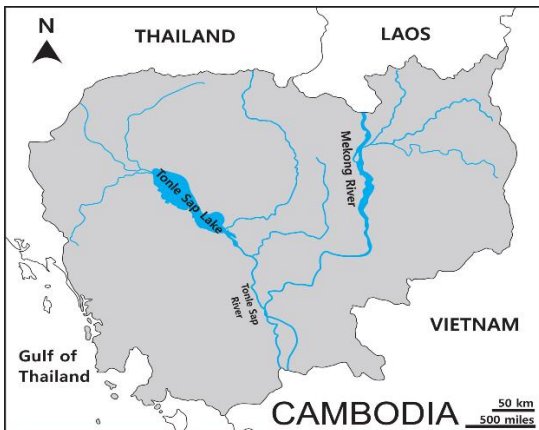


Photo1: Map of Cambodia

With its good geographical condition, Cambodia is prone to rivers and lakes, which means most of the food sources are fish. As time passed by, Cambodians started using their creativity to create many types of dishes from fish. No exception, the fermented fish paste was invented and it has changed the way Cambodian food tastes since then. There's no exact document or research that studies since when it was invented but the recipe has been passed down from generation to generation and is still wildly consumed by modern-day Cambodians. Globally speaking, different countries use different types of seasoning to boost the umami. For instance, Japan uses “Hondashi” for umami, the fermented fish or “Prohok” is the equivalent Of “Hondashi” in Cambodia. Both are made from fish but the techniques and approach is somehow different. The purpose of this article is to spread the potential of Cambodian dishes that were made using fermented fish paste as a seasoning or as a main dish

How to make “fermented fish paste”

Fishes that were freshly caught from rivers, such as the Mekong River and Tonle Sap River mostly small-scale fish scientifically known as small mud carps (*Henicorhynchus Entmema /H. Siamensis*) Their heads are removed and their remaining bodies are cleaned with fresh water until all the slime coat is completely gone. Then, it is soaked in clean water for one day. The following day, the fish are taken out of the soaking water and put in a container that has holes, so then all of the excess water can be extracted by pressing heavy objects on it. Then it is sundried for around 1 day and when it is dried the fish is mixed with salt, the salt and fish mixture is pounded softly so that the fish can absorb the saltiness. The fish are tightly put in a sealed glass container for fermentation. The paste is stored for up to 3 months for its deliciousness and uniqueness.

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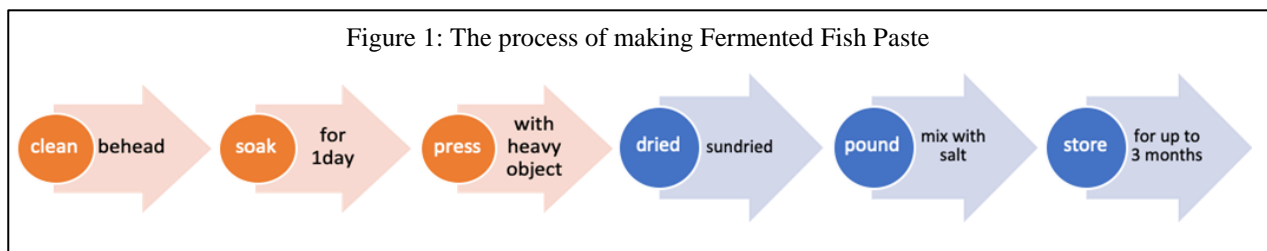
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Photo 2: Small mud Carps fish



Photo 3: Fermented fish paste



Recipes using fermented fish paste

1. Prahok chav/ Raw fermented fish

Ingredients:

- Fermented fish paste (prahok)
- Ferroniella Lucida
- Lemongrass
- Galanga
- Garlic
- Shallot
- Red chili
- Sugar
- MSG



Photo 5: Ferroniella Lucida

How to make:

All the ingredients (Fermented fish paste, Ferroniella Lucida, lemongrass, Galanga, Garlic, shallot, and chili) are all being minced together until they become one paste. The saltiness in the fermented fish is mixed with the sourness of the Ferroniella Lucida.

Sugar and MSG are then added to balance out all the flavors. This dish is normally eaten with a variety of

vegetables and a dipping paste. With a bowl of hot steamed white rice, Cambodians can happily enjoy this low-cost meal.

2. Somlor Mju trokoun/

Morning Glory Sour Soup Ingredients:

- Morning Glory
- Fresh water Fish
- Fermented fish paste
- Tamarind
- Green herb
- Salt

How to make:

Boiled water in a pot, after boiling put the fermented fish in, and strain the paste in a strainer making sure that there are no fish bones in the broth. Fish that have been cleaned and cut will be put into the broth. Then, close the lid and let it simmer until the fish is cooked. Then the tamarind is also put in the broth for a hint of sourness since the soup is called a “Sour Soup”. The Morning Glory is then added along with a little bit of salt. Green herbs are added as a last-touch garnish. The food then can be served hot to eat along with rice.

In conclusion, the above information is about the introduction and recipes of how Cambodian fermented fish “Prahok” is used in a dish. Along with how it is made. Though this article is short, as a writer I hope that readers can enjoy reading and understanding what is so different about Cambodian dishes.