Cambodian food is a charming combination of strong and vibrant flavors. Cambodians like to make sure that there is a little of the salty, the sour, the sweet and the bitter in every meal.

Khmer cuisine is gaining interest in many countries, with some people forecasting that it will become the New Thai, i.e. the next cuisine from the Southeast Asia region to enchant the world. It is, in fact, quite similar to Thai food but without the spiciness.

**Influences**
Cambodian cuisine draws from the great civilizations of China and India and is also influenced by neighboring Vietnam and Thailand. There are also traces of French inspiration from the time when Cambodia was part of French Indochina. Baguette or the long French bread, for instance, has come to be Cambodia’s national bread and it is common to find sandwiches made from baguette in Cambodia.

The Chinese left the legacy of stir-frying; while curry dishes that employ dried spices such as star anise, cardamom, cinnamon, nutmeg and fennel were borrowed from the Indians and given a distinctive Cambodian twist with the addition of local ingredients like lemongrass, garlic, kaffir lime leaves, shallots and galangal. When blended together, the resulting paste is called a kroeung and is used widely in Cambodian cooking. Coconut is also a popular ingredient in Cambodian curries.

**Popular Cambodian Cuisine**
Spring rolls made from rice paper are a popular snack in Cambodia where they are usually stuffed with fresh vegetables including carrots, lettuce leaves, bean sprouts and all sorts of herbs like mint leaves, Asian basil, cilantro and spring onions or scallions.

Just as in Thailand and Laos, fermented fish paste, or prahoc in local parlance, is a popular ingredient and adds a unique flavor to Cambodian cooking. The country is rich with both freshwater and saltwater fish, both of which are plentiful in Cambodia with its rich network of waterways and ocean, including the Mekong River, the Tonle Sap Lake and the Gulf of Thailand. It is no wonder then that, just as in Laos, fish forms the main source of protein for the Cambodians.

Rice is the staple diet in Cambodia and as with all the Southeast Asian cuisines, a Cambodian meal is best enjoyed when shared with others.

**Dining Etiquette**
Table manners in Cambodia are fairly formal. If uncertain with the dos and don'ts simply follow what others do. When invited to the dining table wait to be told where to sit as you would not want to upset any hierarchical arrangements. The eldest person is usually seated first. Similarly the eldest person should start eating before others. Do not begin eating until then. Never discuss business in such social settings. Slurping while you eat is considered to be rude, unlike some other Asian countries where it’s considered a compliment to the cook. Take food only when asked or directed to. Use the communal spoon; not using it indicates you are insincere or not part of the group. People of high rank do not expect to have to retrieve their own food (especially at a buffet). They are often seated in a private or special place and served by others to show status and respect. All guests must be served water or
another drink even if they come for only a short visit. Give a drink rather than ask what they want, which is impolite. If asked, they are obligated to choose the least expensive drink. If guests come during a meal they must be invited to eat.

Our special thanks to Karen O’Brien and Transitions Global for contributing recipes and information for our DFW educational material.

Source Materials:
http://southeastasianfood.about.com/od/foodfromcambodia/a/Cambodiaculture.htm
http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/cambodia.html
http://www.satreykhmeronline.com/2008/01/26/rules-for-behavior-how-to-sleep-walk-stand-sit-and-speak/
Cambodian Recipes

“I have tried to compile Cambodian recipes that are tasty and authentic, but don’t use too many ingredients that will be time-consuming and perhaps frustrating to find. I have also noted substitutions for some hard to find ingredients. If you are at all interested in continuing to experiment with recipes from South Asia, including Cambodian, Thai and Vietnamese cooking, I can’t recommend enough that you indulge in purchasing a bottle of Tiparos Fish Sauce. Forget what it smells like (better yet, don’t smell it, just use it!). It adds a distinct and authentic taste to the food of this region that you cannot get any other way, and, blended with other spices, is not fishy smelling and has a pleasant taste.

The recipes from the Cambodian Cooking Class Cookbook were sent to us from the women of July’s sponsored program, Transitions Global. Enjoy!”

–Karen O’Brien

“The recipes are from a cookbook our chefs and chefs in training use and dishes they like from those. They have not personally written any cookbooks.....there are photos of the girls in cooking class. We have 2 full time chefs working now and 4 girls in training at the Shine Career School.”

–Athena Pond, Founder and Director of After Care, Transitions Global
Fried Vegetarian Spring Rolls

2 cups taro root (shredded)
2 cups carrot (shredded)
25 spring roll shells (rice paper spring rolls)
1 T peanuts
1 egg, beaten
3 cups cooking oil
Salt, sugar and pepper to taste

Dipping sauce:
4 cloves garlic
1 shallot
1 fresh red pepper
1 fresh hot chili
2 T fish sauce (Tiparos Brand Fish Sauce can often be found in the Asian section of the grocery store)
2 T sugar
1 T salt
2 T lemon juice
1 T crushed peanuts
½ bowl of water

Put the shredded taro root in a large mixing bowl and add salt. Use your palms to squeeze out all liquid. After that mix the taro with carrot and add peanuts. Season with sugar and pepper to taste and set aside.
Lay a spring roll sheet flat on a cutting board or plate and fill a third of the shell with the vegetable mixture.
Wrap the spring roll shell, roll it tight and seal the end with the beaten egg.
Heat 6 cups of vegetable oil on a high temperature in a wok or large and deep skillet. When the oil is hot, turn the temperature to medium and carefully drop each spring roll down one at a time. Turn the spring rolls frequently until golden brown. Remove and drain on paper towel.

Sweet and Sour Sauce for the Egg Rolls:
Crush the garlic in a stone mortar. Add sugar, salt, hot chilies and red pepper. Stir well and put in the water. Add fish sauce and lemon juice and mix well. Serve the sauce in small bowls with chopped peanuts and julienne sliced shallot on top.

From the Cambodian Cooking Class Cookbook, www.cambodia-cooking-class.com
Beef in Khmer Sauce

Sizzling sliced beef with sweet and tangy vinaigrette sauce over crisp lettuce, tomato and cucumber is absolutely delicious. This authentic Khmer recipe takes some time to prepare but very little time to cook.

½ pound sirloin beef, thinly sliced
½ tsp soy sauce
½ tsp fish sauce
½ tsp sugar
¼ tsp salt
¼ tsp black pepper
4 cloves minced garlic
3 T cooking oil

Sauce:
¼ cup water
1 T white vinegar
1 T sugar
½ tsp cornstarch
¼ tsp salt

Vegetables:
¼ head iceberg lettuce
1 sliced cucumber
2 thinly sliced tomatoes
1 sliced onion

In a large bowl, mix sliced beef with soy sauce, fish sauce, sugar, salt and pepper. Set aside. In a small bowl, mix water with vinegar, sugar, salt and cornstarch, for the sauce. Set aside. On a large platter, arrange lettuce leaves and put cucumber, tomato and half of the sliced onion on top. Set aside. Heat a skillet or wok on a high temperature. Pour cooking oil on the hot skillet and immediately add garlic, marinated beef and remaining onion. Stir and cook the beef to your liking. Pour vinaigrette sauce over and stir until sauce thickens. Pour the hot beef on top of the vegetables. Serve hot with rice, and a sauce of finely ground pepper, soy sauce, salt and some lime juice, to taste.

From the Cambodian Cooking Class Cookbook, www.cambodia-cooking-class.com
Pomelo and Shrimp Salad

1 pomelo, or pink grapefruit peeled and segmented (see note below)
1 T oil
½ lb. large fresh shrimp, peeled and deveined
1 cucumber, peeled, halved, deseeded and finely sliced
1 green bell pepper cut into thin strips
1 small bunch mint leaves
1 small bunch Thai basil leaves
2 stalks lemon grass, ted inner part of the bottom third only, sliced finely (you can substitute a bit of ginger ground finely in a mortar and mixed with lemon zest)
2 cups bean sprouts
Juice of 1 lime
2 T fish sauce (Tiparos Brand Fish Sauce can often be found in the Asian section of the grocery store)
1 tsp sugar

Break the fruit segments into rough pieces. Heat the oil in a skillet over medium heat and fry the shrimp until golden. Combine the pomelo, cooked shrimp, vegetables and herbs in a bowl and mix together. Combine the limejuice, fish sauce and sugar in a small bowl and mix until the sugar is dissolved. Pour the limejuice mixture over the salad, toss and serve.

Note: To peel a pomelo, cut the rind into seven equal sections by slicing through it vertically with a sharp knife, being careful not to cut into the inner segments. Starting from the top of the cut, carefully peel away the rind to expose the segments. You will now have a citrus-like pomelo fully exposed like a peeled grapefruit. Remove the citrus membrane and separate the segments.

From Cambodian Cooking, by Joannes Riviere. Periplus Publications. Purchasing this cookbook (available through Amazon) helps the organization Act for Cambodia, which works with street children.
Marinated Beef Salad with Lemongrass

This is a delicious and refreshing salad that is worth a trip to the Asian market for the “prahok”. However, still good if you want to forego the prahok...

½ pound very fresh sirloin steak, cut into thin strips
1 T oil
1 small cucumber
A handful of green beans, cut into 1-inch pieces
1 small bunch of cilantro leaves
1 small bunch of mint leaves
5 kaffir lime leaves finely sliced (No kaffir lime leaves available? You can use a bit of grated lime zest, a dash of lime juice and a few bay leaves instead)
3 T coarsely chopped roasted peanuts

Marinade for the Beef Salad:
1 tsp fish paste (prahok). Unfortunately there’s no real substitute for this, although anchovy paste is fairly close...or you could use fish sauce...Prahok can be found in Asian food stores catering to South Asians...
2 cloves of garlic, peeled and chopped
2 inches of fresh ginger root, peeled and chopped
1 stalks of lemongrass, tender inner part of the bottom third, chopped (you can substitute a bit of ginger ground finely in a mortar and mixed with lemon zest)
1 small onion, chopped fine
Juice of three limes
1 T sugar
Pinch of salt

To make the marinade, pound the fish paste in a mortar and add the garlic, ginger, lemongrass and onion; pound until combined. Add the lime juice, sugar and salt and mix well.
Marinate the beef in a shallow dish or zip-lock bag in this mixture in the refrigerator for one hour. Remove the meat from the marinade and set aside, reserving the marinade. Strain the marinade over a saucepan and gently simmer until it is reduced to the consistency of syrup.
To serve the salad, combine the beef, vegetables and herbs in a bowl and mix well. Drizzle the reduced marinade over the top and toss to coat. Garnish with peanuts and serve immediately.
Note: You’re thinking to yourself—you forgot to cook the meat, but the meat should be “cooked” by the marinade. If however you still want to cook the meat, go a head and either grill, broil or pan fry the meat quickly.

From *Cambodian Cooking*, by Joannes Riviere. Periplus Publications. Purchasing this cookbook (available through Amazon), helps the organization *Act for Cambodia*, which works with street children.

Chicken with Dried Chilies and Cashews

*Here’s a very simple Cambodia recipe that doesn’t require exotic ingredients, cooks up quickly and is very tasty. Oyster sauce is available in the Asia food section of most standard grocery store. You can substitute roasted cashews for raw ones; just soak them in water for a brief time to remove the salt.*

5 dried red chili peppers
1 T oil
1 cup raw cashews
2 boneless, skinless chicken breasts sliced into thin strips
3 cloves of garlic, peeled and chopped
2 inches of fresh ginger root, peeled and chopped
1 green bell pepper, sliced into thin strips
1 slender, purple Asian eggplant, sliced
4 T oyster sauce
2 T soy sauce
1 small bunch of cilantro leaves

Soak the dried chilies in warm water for 20 minutes. Drain them and pat them dry with paper towels. Remove the seeds and cut them into strips.

Heat the oil in a wok or skillet and sauté the sliced chilies and the cashew nuts until the nuts are golden. Add the chicken, garlic and ginger and fry until the chicken starts to brown. Add the bell pepper and eggplant and cook for two minutes. Add the oyster sauce and the soy sauce. Simmer until the sauce reduces slightly; serve garnished with coriander leaves.

From *Cambodian Cooking*, by Joannes Riviere. Periplus Publications. Purchasing this cookbook (available through Amazon) helps the organization *Act for Cambodia*, which works with street children.
Beef Skewers
Here’s another quick and simple Cambodian recipe that is tasty and doesn’t require purchasing exotic ingredients...

1 tsp. ground black pepper
1 stalk lemongrass, tender inner part of bottom third only, chopped (you can substitute a bit of ginger ground finely in a mortar and mixed with lemon zest)
3 cloves of garlic, peeled and chopped
2 shallots, peeled and chopped
4 T soy sauce
2 T brown sugar
1 lb. beef sirloin, but into 2 inch pieces
bamboo skewers, soaked in water

To make the marinade, combine the ground pepper, lemongrass, garlic and shallots in a mortar and pound into a fine paste. Add the soy sauce and sugar and mix well.
Skewer the beef and marinade it for 1 hour in a shallow dish. Grill the kebabs or broil them in the oven for 5-6 minutes on each side, basting them with the leftover marinade.

From *Cambodian Cooking*, by Joannes Riviere. Periplus Publications. Purchasing this cookbook (available through Amazon) helps the organization Act for Cambodia, which works with street children.

Grilled Eggplants and Pork

2 slender, purple Asian eggplants
½ pound ground pork
3 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped
2 small red shallots, peeled and chopped
2 stalks of lemongrass, tender inner part of the bottom third only, sliced (you can substitute a bit of ginger ground finely in a mortar and mixed with lemon zest)
2 T fish sauce (Tiparos Brand Fish Sauce can often be found in the Asian section of the grocery store)
1 tsp brown sugar
1 bunch cilantro leaves
Grill the eggplants under the broiler until the skin is black and the flesh is soft. Cut them in half length-wise scrape the flesh out with a spoon and chop it roughly.
Heat a wok or skillet and stir-fry the pork, garlic, shallots and lemongrass until golden. Add the eggplant flesh and cook for 2 minutes. Add the fish sauce and the sugar and mix well. Serve garnished with the cilantro leaves.

From *Cambodian Cooking*, by Joannes Riviere. Periplus Publications. Purchasing this cookbook (available through Amazon) helps the organization *Act for Cambodia*, which works with street children.

**Coconut and Banana Tapioca**

6 small bananas  
½ cup tapioca  
2 cups water  
¼ palm sugar  
1 cup coconut milk  
½ tsp salt  
It’s best to use only half ripe bananas for this dessert

Boil the water then add the tapioca and cook over a medium-low heat. Stir frequently otherwise the tapioca will stick to the bottom of the pan and burn.  
Cook for 10 minutes until the tapioca is swollen and transparent. Then add the coconut milk, salt and sugar, stir well, allow the mix to boil, and then add the bananas.  
There are many ways to prepare the bananas for this dessert. Either cut length-wise—like in a banana spilt, or in small pieces, cutting in half first and then length-wise. Whichever way you cut it, cook for about 10 minutes or until the banana is soft, but not mushy.

From the *Cambodian Cooking Class Cookbook*, www.cambodia-cooking-class.com
Coconut Waffles
You can serve the waffles with a simple coconut syrup/dressing.

2 eggs
1 ½ cup rice flour
½ cup coconut milk
½ cup brown sugar
Pinch of salt

Don’t substitute regular flour for the rice flour—the waffles will loose their delightful crunchiness!

Preheat and lightly grease a waffle iron.
Break the eggs and separate whites from yolks. Combine the rice flour, coconut milk, sugar and egg yolks and mix until combined. Whisk the egg whites with salt until stiff peaks form and gently fold into the waffle mixture.
Cook until golden brown.

From *Cambodian Cooking*, by Joannes Riviere. Periplus Publications. Purchasing this cookbook (available through Amazon) helps the organization *Act for Cambodia*, which works with street children.

Coconut Dressing
This Coconut dressing is delicious and very popular among Cambodians. Cambodians use coconut sauce with many recipes, from desserts to main dish. It is one of the Khmer wonderful and unique sauces.

1 large 13.5 oz. can of coconut milk
½ T sugar
1 T cornstarch
¼ tsp salt

Mix all ingredients in a small saucepan. Cook in low heat till sauce thickening.

From [http://asiarecipe.com/camdesserts.html#Tik](http://asiarecipe.com/camdesserts.html#Tik)