Cambodian Cuisine

“The Cambodian way is to put all the food out on the table at the same time. There is no hierarchy that governs which dish is eaten first. Soups don’t get eaten before the meal, salads don’t get eaten after and meat isn’t the main course.

In addition to the various bowls and platters, Cambodians set out small bowls of fish sauce, soy sauce, salt and pepper, kaffir lime slices and sliced red bird’s eye chilies. Jasmine tea, cold water and fresh rice are constantly offered and replenished (I find that fresh fruit juices, good beer and chilled rose (wine) also make good beverage options.) Forks and spoons are put out on the table, and chopsticks if noodles are going to be served.

The Cambodian style of eating is quite different from the American one. Holding the spoon in the right hand and the fork in the left, a Cambodian diner uses the fork to fill up the spoon, first with some rice and then with some of the stew or stir-fry – whatever dish is being sampled at the moment. Some herbs, relish a squeeze of kaffir lime juice, and a few slices of chilies and fish sauce will be added so that each bite is prepared exactly to taste. If you have never eaten this way before, I heartily recommend it – it’s not only great fun, but also very satisfying.

In Cambodia, the number of dishes at a given meal will depend in part on the occasion and also on how well-off the family is.”

Excerpted from The Elephant Walk Cookbook by Longeteine De Montiero and Nadsa Perry, Houghton Mifflin, 1998. If you would like your own copy it is available at:

http://yhst-47399520089857.stores.yahoo.net/cookbook.html
Cambodian Cuisine Influences
As a former French Colony, Khmer food takes influences from France. The large number of Chinese immigrants has made Chinese foods widely available as well. “In the west of the country, the cuisine is influenced by the food of neighboring Thailand while in the east the flavors of Vietnamese cuisine are more evident. Coastal towns such as Sihanoukville in the southwest are famous for their seafood, cooked in many styles, including Japanese and European. Common ingredients in Khmer cuisine are similar to those found in other Southeast Asian culinary traditions – rice and sticky rice, fish sauce, palm sugar, lime, garlic, chilies, coconut milk, lemon grass, galangal, kaffir lime and shallots.” --

What to Eat in Cambodia - Food and Drinks in Cambodia http://www.visit-mekong.com/cambodia/food.htm#ixzz1HvHjbYq1

Cambodian Recipes
Our thanks to Carolyn Mayers for providing recipes.
Questions? e-mail Carolyn at crmayers@mac.com

Helpful recipes from previous Food for Thoughts: Vietnam, Thailand and Cambodia. Since there are great similarities between these three cuisines, I recommend that if you need more variety than what has been provided here, especially vegetable recipes (eggplant, Cambodian coleslaw, cucumber salad and more) and dessert recipes such as rose petal sorbet, check out these documents – just scroll down a ways to find the recipes within http://www.diningforwomen.org/sites/default/files/documents/love146-2009%20food%20for%20thought.pdf

Regarding ingredients
In larger cities you will may be able to find many of the ingredients listed in the recipes. However, since many of us do not have access to an excellent Asian food store, myself included, I am happy to share a great resource with you. This site is recommended by none other than Mark Bittman, and I highly recommend it for anything you could possibly need at a reasonable price! I purchased the Tom Kha kit (under “starter sets”) and it had just about everything necessary to make a wide assortment of Southeast Asian dishes AND recipes! Enjoy!
http://www.importfood.com/
Recipes
You would not believe all the sticky notes I had stuck all over the cookbook – I wanted to try nearly everything! But I had to restrain myself and I hope you enjoy what I chose for you as much as my husband and I did! As I mentioned above, I used The Elephant Walk Cookbook for all the following recipes, so will not be referencing the source with each recipes as I usually do. I have made a few adaptations, as usual, and I hope you enjoy them. Any questions, comments, criticisms or other input, please e-mail me, Carolyn, at crmayers@mac.com. And don’t forget, there are many other recipes at the links above!

Slab Mouan Kroeung (Spiced Chicken Wings)
Cambodian chicken wings!!! YUM! These are easy and delicious, and not spicy. If you like your wings spicy, add a fresh hot pepper, hot sauce (I recommend Tabasco Chipotle – hot and has a nice smoky flavor) or some cayenne. The recipe offered deep-frying as an option for these and if you are comfortable with that, feel free to cook 10-12 minutes in 350 degree oil. Otherwise, grill, as they would do in Cambodia, or broil.
NOTE: Allow time for these to marinate at least 4 hours. 
Serves 6 as an appetizer

Paste
3T sliced lemongrass (always only use the inner, more tender part)
5 cloves garlic, coarsely chopped
1 medium shallot, coarsely chopped
1T galangal (there is no substitute – if you can’t find it, skip it), peeled and coarsely chopped
½ t paprika
¼ t turmeric
¼ c smooth peanut butter, any kind
2T fish sauce
3T sugar
½ t salt
¼ - ½ c hot water
1 thai chili pepper or jalapeno, or hot sauce or cayenne, optional for heat
2 – 2 ½ lb. chicken wings

Puree all paste ingredients together thoroughly, using Cuisinart or blender. Place chicken wings in large plastic Ziploc bag and add paste. Close bag securely and smooch the paste around the chicken to distribute well. Place in a bowl (just to be safe against leaks) in the refrigerator and marinate at least 4 hours or up to 10 hours.
Preheat grill or broiler. If using broiler cook about 4 - 5 inches from heat and watch carefully as the sugar in the marinade will make the wings burn easily. Broil (or grill over indirect, medium heat) for about 20 minutes, turning several times to facilitate even cooking. Serve hot.

NOTE: If you are grilling these, I recommend spraying the wings with non-stick spray before putting them on the grill. The paste is pretty low in fat and this will help them not stick quite as badly as they might otherwise.
**Leah Cha (Sauteed Mussels with Basil)**

This recipe is a snap, about 15 minutes from start to finish once you have washed the shellfish, and can be made with either clams or mussels. It is traditionally made with FRESH water clams in Cambodia. If you make it with clams be sure to reduce the salt to ¼ teaspoon since clams in the US are from salt water and are inherently saltier than mussels to start with. If you have any pesto (basil and garlic only – no cheese) in the freezer, you can use that instead of the fresh basil leaves if you can’t find them. We served this over cooked rice stick noodles so we could use the juice produced by the cooking – a great combination as the noodles soak up the flavor really well!

Serves 4

2T vegetable oil  
4 cloves garlic, chopped  
4 dozen mussels or good sized clams (2-inch), scrubbed and clams soaked in fresh water for an hour and drained  
2t sugar  
¾ t salt for mussels, ¼ t for clams  
2c loosely packed fresh basil leaves  
1t seeded chopped bird’s eye (Thai) chilies, or ½ t red pepper flakes  
¾ sweet red pepper, julienned  
2 scallions, cut in half the long way, then sliced into 1-inch pieces  
Lime wedges for garnish

Heat the oil over medium-high oil in a large wok. Add the garlic and stir for a second. Add mussels or clams and sprinkle sugar and salt over them. Stir well. Cover pan and cook for about 5 minutes for mussels, a bit longer for clams, shaking the pan periodically and/or giving it a stir once or twice. When most of the shells are open, stir in the red pepper, chili pepper, basil and scallions and stir/toss until well combined. Cook 1 more minute or until all (or almost all – discard any that do not open) shells are open at least a bit. Serve immediately with limes to squeeze onto the shellfish.

**Mouan K’chop (Chicken Stir-fry with Ginger, Onions and Scallions)**

Superb! If you don’t try any other dish, try this one!!! Very gingery but not hot.

Serves 4 - 6

¼ c vegetable oil  
2 lbs. boneless chicken thighs, cut into about 8 pieces each (I used skinless, but it’s your choice)  
1 medium onion, halved and cut into thin slices  
½ c fresh ginger, peeled and cut into julienne (about 2 oz.)  
4 large cloves garlic, minced  
3 scallions, halved lengthwise then sliced into 1-inch pieces  
1T hoisin sauce (available in the international foods section of your supermarket)  
2t mushroom soy sauce (or 1½ t regular soy sauce)
1t fish sauce  
2T water (approx.)  
Fresh cilantro or parsley for garnish (optional)

Heat the oil in a large skillet or wok over medium-high heat. Add the chicken and cook in batches to facilitate browning. Fry until opaque and lightly browned, turning a couple of times, for about 5 minutes. Set the chicken aside, and remove all but about 3 tablespoons of oil from the pan. Turn heat to medium, add the onion and cook, stirring occasionally, for about 6 minutes. Add the ginger, garlic and scallions and cook one minute. Return the chicken to the pan, along with the hoisin sauce, soy sauce, fish sauce and water and stir well. Cook until the chicken is heated through, about 2–3 minutes. Garnish with cilantro or parsley, if you are using it, and serve hot with jasmine rice.

Cha Traop Dot (Eggplant and Pork Stir-fry)

Just a bit more involved than the preceding recipes and definitely worth the effort! This has a lovely, almost creamy texture from the pureed eggplant. The original recipe called for using ½ shrimp and ½ ground pork. Since I am allergic to shrimp I used just pork, and the author states you can also use chicken for the shrimp if you like, in which case I would cut tenders into very small pieces and add with the pork. I also added a pinch of smoked salt since in Cambodia the eggplants would be charred over a flame and I wanted to capture that smoke essence that baking won’t provide.

NOTE: I recommend the naturally, humanely raised pork offered by US Wellness meats at:  
http://www.grasslandbeef.com/StoreFront.bok
Serves 6

3 large eggplant (3 – 4 lbs.)  
3T vegetable oil  
5 cloves garlic, minced  
1 – 1¼ lbs. ground pork (OR ¾ lb. pork and either ¾ lb. chicken, finely chopped or ground, or shrimp, deveined and finely chopped)  
¼ c fish sauce  
1 ½ - 2T sugar  
¼ – ½ t fresh ground black pepper  
3 scallions, thinly sliced  
1 Thai bird’s eye or other chili, seeded and thinly sliced (optional)  
Pinch of smoked salt (optional but adds a nice smoky flavor)  
2T – ¼ c full fat coconut milk (optional and highly recommended)

Preheat oven to 350. Prick many holes in the eggplants (to allow moisture to escape) with a fork and place on a baking sheet. Bake eggplant for 45 minutes or until soft. Allow to cool for a few minutes until you can handle them, and then peel the skin off the eggplants, placing the flesh in a colander and letting it sit for about ½ hour for any excess water to drip off. Place eggplant flesh in food processor and puree. Set aside.

Heat the oil in a large skillet or wok over medium-high heat. Add the garlic, pork and chicken or shrimp if you are using them, and cook for 2 – 3 minutes, stirring to break up any lumps and to help the meats cook evenly. Add the fish sauce, sugar and ground pepper and stir well to distribute. Add the eggplant and continue cooking until it is all warmed through and the meats are cooked, about 3 more minutes.
Add scallions, optional smoked salt and chilis, stir well and cook one more minute. Serve hot with jasmine rice.

The following recipes are provided by Lisa LaMontagne of the Inn at Onancock, who conducted a January cooking class highlighting Cambodian food for the Onancock, VA Chapter. 

http://www.diningforwomen.org/node/872

Emerald Soup
Somlah marakot
adapted from The Elephant Walk Cookbook
Yield: 4 servings

1 Teaspoon Lemongrass, finely chopped
1 Lime Juice
5 Cloves Garlic -- finely chopped
1 Large Shallot -- finely chopped
2 Teaspoons Galangal -- finely chopped
½ tsp chili paste
2/3 Cup Water

2 Pounds Chicken -- chopped
3 Large Poblano Peppers -- seeded, small dice
3 Large Cubanelle Peppers -- seeded, small dice
1/4 Cup Olive Oil
3 Cups Coconut Milk
3 Tablespoons Fish Sauce
1 1/2 Tablespoons Sugar
2 Teaspoons Salt
1 Teaspoon Shrimp Paste
1 Cup Chicken Broth
1 Cup Peas
Basil Leaves -- sliced for garnish
Chiles -- sliced for garnish, optional

Blend in blender, lemon grass, lime juice, garlic, shallot, galangal, and water about 2 minutes and set aside. Set aside. Heat oil in large pot, add 1/2 cup of coconut milk, simmer until oil separates from the milk. Add the spice paste and simmer for 5 minutes. Add fish sauce, sugar, salt, shrimp paste and chicken. Cook for 10 minutes. Add broth and remaining coconut milk. Return to a simmer, add peppers and peas and cook, partially covered, for another 15 minutes. Garnish with basil and chilis. Serve with rice.

Menu
• Emerald Soup
• Grilled Beef with Wild Betle Leaves
• Ginger Pork With Peanuts
• Tomato Cucumber Relish
• Naan
• Coconut Pound Cake
Grilled Beef with Wild Betel Leaves
*Sach ko wit slirt s’phu ang*

**NOTE:** Wild betel leaves may be substituted with grape leaves.

**Ingredients**
- 1 lb Ground beef (or beef and pork mixture)
- 2 Cloves garlic, minced
- ½ Cup chopped yellow onion
- ½ Teaspoon fish sauce
- 1 Tablespoon soy sauce
- ½ Teaspoon salt
- 1 Tablespoon palm sugar, or light brown sugar
- ½ Teaspoon five spice powder
- 1 Tablespoon sesame or peanut oil
- 1 tsp. black pepper
- 2 Dozen large wild betel leaves or grape leaves

**Method:**
In a large bowl, mix ground meat with garlic, onion, fish sauce, soy sauce, salt, sugar, five spice powder, oil and black pepper. Mix well and set it aside. Clean each wild betel leaf thoroughly then let it soak in cold water, so that when you grill it will prevents rapid burn to the leaves. Place a wild betel leaf on a cutting board and put some marinated meat on the larger top part of the leaf. Roll the leaf over the meat like egg roll, but don’t have to folds both sides of leaf, continue till done. Cook beef rolls on hot grill till it golden brown or to your liking. Serve hot with sweet fish sauce

**Sweet Fish Sauce (optional)**

**Ingredients :**
- ¼ Cup hot water
- ¼ Cup sugar
- 1/3 Cup fresh lime juice, approx 2 lime (fresh only)
- 1/3 Cup fish sauce
- 3 Chopped hot chili pepper or to your taste (option)
- 1/3 Cup roasted peanut, crushed (option)

**Method :**
In a small bowl, mix hot water with sugar until sugar dissolved. Add lime juice, fish sauce and hot chili pepper together, mix well and set aside to cool. Top with crushed roasted peanuts before serving.

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**Ginger Pork With Peanuts**
*Meang lao*

**Yield:** 6-8 servings

**Ingredients:**
2 tablespoons vegetable oil
5 large garlic cloves, thinly sliced
4 large shallots, thinly sliced
1/2 lb ground pork
3 tablespoons tamarind juice
6 tablespoons sugar
1 1/2 teaspoons salt
3 tablespoons peeled finely chopped gingerroot
1/2 cup peanuts, roasted and coarsely ground
1 bunch spinach, leaves (or lettuce leaves) (optional)
fresh cilantro stem, and
sliced red bell pepper, for garnish (if not using the spinach)

Method:
Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat and sauté the garlic and shallots until crisp and brown but not burned, about 30 seconds. Remove with a slotted spoon and set aside.

In the same pan, brown the pork, breaking it apart as it cooks, about 3 minutes. Stir in the tamarind juice, sugar and salt. Stir in the fried garlic and shallots and the ginger. Lower the heat to medium and cook for 3 minutes more, or until the liquid has almost evaporated. Stir in the peanuts. Remove from the heat and set aside.

If you want to make little packets, dip the spinach leaves in boiling water to blanch and lay out on a towel to drain. Place a teaspoonful of the pork mixture in the center of each leaf, and fold over both sides of the leaf and then fold the top and bottom over. Arrange seam side down on a platter. If you decide to forgo the packets, put the pork mixture in a serving bowl and garnish with cilantro and red peppers. Serve warm or at room temperature with rice.

**Tomato Cucumber Relish**
*Chrout trosot pingpot*

Ingredients:
2 Tablespoons white vinegar
1 Tablespoon sugar
¼ Teaspoon salt
¼ Cup of chopped sweet yellow onion (option)
1 Large cucumber, peeled, quartered, seeded and cut small chunks
1 Medium tomato, cut to bite sizes

Method:
In a small bowl mix vinegar with sugar and salt until sugar dissolves, add onion, stir well and set aside. Put cucumber and tomato in a large bowl, pour prepared vinaigrette sauce over, mix well before serving. Serve with grilled meat or grilled fish.
Naan

500 grams maida flour (use a hard flour like the Italian 00 “doppio zero” or any other pasta flour)
250ml milk (the original said 300ml but this was too much – it’ll depend on the flour so have extra around)
2 teaspoons dried yeast (or 15 grams of fresh)
1/2 teaspoon baking powder
large pinch of salt
1 egg, beaten
2 tablespoons of oil or ghee (plus extra to brush on the cooked bread if liked)
200ml of thick, natural yogurt

Sift the flour, baking powder and salt and make a well in the centre. Warm the milk to blood temperature and mix half of it with the yeast and let it bubble and proof. Beat the egg with the oil and yogurt. Dump the egg/yogurt mix and the milk/yeast mix into the flour and stir until it forms a dough. If the dough is dry, add more milk and knead until it is silky and smooth (about 5 minutes). Put it into an oiled bowl, cover it with a damp cloth and leave it in a warm place until it doubles in size. The original recipe said that this would take several hours but – this being Australia– mine was ready in about an hour (we are having a warm day, so your mileage may vary). When it’s ready, punch it down, give it a quick knead and divvy it up into 10 portions.

Heat a frying pan (a lid is preferable but not required) over a low-medium heat. Roll out your dough with plenty of flour until it is very thin (almost like a pancake) and put it directly into the warm, unoiled frying pan. Cover and cook for a few minutes at a low heat. Check to see that it isn’t burning. The dough should have bubbles appearing in the top and the bottom should have deep golden spots across it. Slide it around the pan so it cooks evenly. When ready, flip it over and let the top cook until it, too, has deep golden spots. You should aim for a dark gold to deep toast color. Try not to let it get black. Keeping a lid on the pan will make the dough puff a little more but don’t stress over it – this is a flatbread after all.

When it’s done, flip it out and start again. If you want, brush the naan with ghee or oil.

**TOP TIP:** For garlic naan, flavor the brushing oil rather than the dough– the flavor is better and you won’t get the bitter flavor of burned garlic when you cook.

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Coconut Pound Cake

_Num Tirk Dong_

Yield: 1 loaf
Ingredients:
4 Eggs
2 Cups all purpose flour
½ Cup melted butter
½ Cup coconut milk
¼ Cup fresh or frozen unsweetened, shredded coconut
1½ Cup sugar
2 Tablespoons pure vanilla extract
¼ Teaspoon baking powder
¼ Teaspoon salt

Method:
Preheat oven at 325 degrees. In a mixing bowl, blend butter and sugar together. Add egg, one at a time, with butter sugar. Mix well. Add vanilla, baking powder, salt and coconut milk. Blend all purpose flour and shredded coconut. Grease loaf pan with oil and sprinkle some flour at the bottom of cake pan. Pour the cake batter in to the cake pan. Bake for 1 hour. Remove from the oven. Wait until cake cools before removing it from the pan. Serve with sliced mangoes and coconut sauce.

Coconut sauce
Tirk doung

Ingredients:
2 Cups fresh coconut milk or 1 large canned coconut milk
½ Tablespoon sugar
1 Tablespoon cornstarch
¼ Teaspoon salt

Method:
In a small sauce-pan, mix all ingredients together and simmering till sauce thicken. Serve on coconut pound cake with sliced mango.

Sources
khmerresorts.co.cc
The Elephant Walk Cookbook
http://www.traveletiquette.co.uk/etiquette-in-cambodia.html
What to Eat in Cambodia - Food and Drinks in Cambodia http://www.visit-mekong.com/cambodia/food.htm#lxzz1HvHjbYq1