

MASTER CLASS

In the kitchen with
NUIT REGULAR



Produced by KRISTEN EPPICH | Interview by ALICE LAWLOR
Photography by MICHAEL GRAYDON and NIKOLE HERRIOTT
Prop styling by LAUREN PETROFF and STACEY SMITHERS



THE LESSON:
HOW TO COOK
THAI FOOD AT
HOME

THE MENU:

- PAD KEE MAO
- CHICKEN LAAB SALAD WRAPS
- NORTHERN-STYLE GREEN CURRY WITH STEAMED STICKY RICE
- TOM YUM
- PANDAN LEAF ICED TEA

SINCE ARRIVING FROM PAI, THAILAND, IN 2004, Nuit Regular and her restaurateur husband, Jeff, have made a huge impact on the food scene in Toronto. In a sea of formulaic Thai takeout joints, Nuit was one of the first to make authentic Northern Thai food with quality ingredients, a formula that led to a succession of popular restaurants – Sukhothai, Khao San Road, Sabai Sabai, Pai and Kiin – plus a dedicated following for her regional specialties like Khao Soi. Here, Nuit shares her go-to recipes and best advice for cooking Thai food at home.

ABOVE: Food editor Kristen Eppich gets a hands-on culinary demo from Nuit in the Kiin kitchen. The restaurant's Royal Thai-inspired menu has resulted in a Thai Select certification for authentic cooking.

HOUSE & HOME: Your mum ran two successful food stalls in Thailand. Did you learn Thai cooking from her?

NR: Yes, I think I'm similar to her – she was always finding dishes and thinking, How can I make it the best? When I graduated from nursing school, I had to work far from my hometown of Chiang Mai and the different food there made me feel homesick. I wanted to eat something familiar, so I decided to cook it myself. It brought me such enjoyment and happiness; I think that was what sparked the passion for cooking.

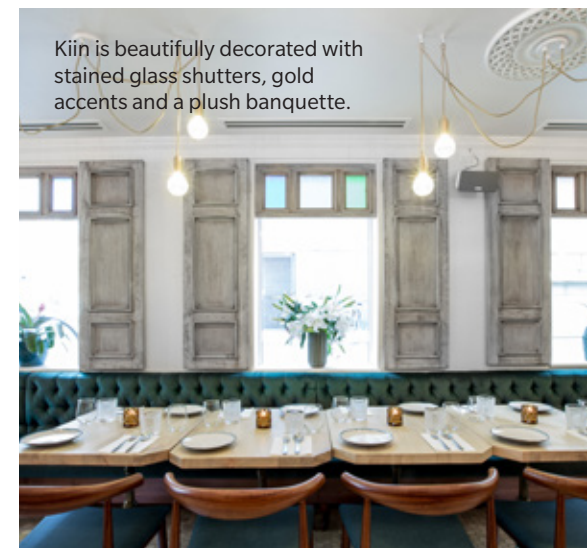
H&H: Cooking Thai food at home can be intimidating. How do we get past that?

NR: People think it's complicated to cook, but it just *sounds* complicated. The ingredients are unfamiliar but, once you know the techniques, it's not difficult. People also think Thai food is always spicy but it's actually easy to customize dishes without losing the flavour.

H&H: What pantry staples should people always have on hand?

NR: First is fish sauce, then oyster sauce. Fish sauce is important for its aroma takeaways and taste. Oyster sauce is used in many things, including stir-fry dishes. Shrimp paste is important, too – it's in between fish sauce and salt and brings umami to a dish. In curry, it softens the taste and makes it more complex. Lastly, kaffir lime leaves (which you can have dried).

Kiin is beautifully decorated with stained glass shutters, gold accents and a plush banquette.



Photography by Reynold Pan



Plate, The Props.



Pandan Leaf Iced Tea, recipe on page 106



Nuit's husband, Jeff Regular. Plate, The Props.



RECIPE, PG. 00

NORTHERN-STYLE GREEN CURRY

CURRIES VARY IN FLAVOUR, DEPENDING ON THEIR REGION OF ORIGIN. THIS IS THE STYLE OF CURRY NUIT GREW UP WITH IN THE CITY OF PAI, IN THE NORTHERN AREA OF MAE HONG SON PROVINCE. IF YOU'RE A FAN OF GREEN CURRY, YOU'LL NEVER NEED TAKEOUT AGAIN.



For a spicier dish, try red curry paste instead of green

Green bowl, bowl with rice, The Props.

RECIPE, PG. 00

PAD KEE MAO

THIS DISH HAS THE NICKNAME "DRUNKEN NOODLES" BECAUSE IT'S A FAVOURITE AFTER-THE-BAR LATE-NIGHT SNACK IN THAILAND. THE COMBINATION OF SOY, SUGAR AND OYSTER SAUCE MAKES A PERFECT, CRAVE-WORTHY SAUCE. THIS VERSION IS VEGETARIAN, BUT IT'S ALSO DELICIOUS WITH SLICED BEEF, CHICKEN OR SHRIMP.



RECIPE, PG. 00

CHICKEN LAAB SALAD WRAPS

WE ASKED CHEF NUIT WHAT DISH SHE WOULD RECOMMEND SOMEONE MAKE WHO HAD NEVER COOKED THAI FOOD BEFORE — AND THIS WAS IT. SIMPLE AND DELICIOUS, THE TOASTED RICE POWDER ADDS TEXTURE AND A HINT OF NUTTINESS.

SEE SHOPPING LIST

RECIPE, PG. 00

TOM YUM

THE KEY TO A GOOD TOM YUM SOUP IS USING THE FRESHEST INGREDIENTS POSSIBLE AND FINDING THE PERFECT BALANCE OF SWEET, SOUR AND SALTY. A MIXTURE OF SUGAR, LIME JUICE AND FISH SAUCE IS ADDED TO TASTE ONCE THE SOUP IS TAKEN OFF THE HEAT.

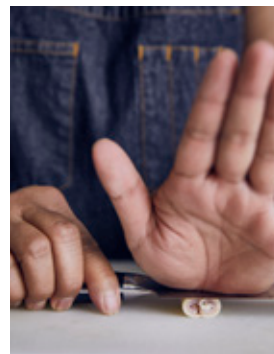
HOW TO: BRUISE LEMONGRASS



1. Peel away dry outer layers of lemongrass and discard.



2. Slice off the tough, bottom portion (1 to 1½") and discard. Slice into 2" pieces.



3. Lay knife flat on the lemongrass and bruise, pressing down with the palm of your hand. Crushing will release its oils.

INGREDIENT SPOTLIGHT: THAI COOKING

A VISUAL GLOSSARY
OF WHAT TO BUY.
FOR MORE DETAILS,
SEE PAGE TKT.



Glass plates, brass spoon, The Props.

MASTER CLASS: IN THE KITCHEN WITH NUIT REGULAR

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 105

H&H: *What about kitchen tools?*

NR: A mortar and pestle will bring you closer to the culture when you cook with it. It releases the oil and aromatics better when you make curry paste, and you can also use it to smash garlic and make garlic chips.

H&H: *If you're not making your own paste, is there a specific brand that you'd recommend buying?*

NR: There isn't one in particular but don't buy an expensive one — just adjust your seasoning at the end. If you find that the green curry paste you bought is too strong or too salty, then add less salt or fish sauce at the end. Some brands are saltier: the way to fix that is to add a little bit more coconut milk, a few more vegetables or extra meat.

H&H: *What would you say to someone thinking about cooking Thai for a dinner party?*

NR: Go for it! The curry can be made ahead and, actually, overnight curry is the best. You can make the tom yum broth ahead, too, and add in vegetables later and seasoning at the end (with fish sauce and lime juice to brighten the flavour). Just the Laab and noodles need to be made fresh. Once you cook Thai and achieve it for the first time, it will make you so proud.

H&H: *What's next for you?*

NR: I want to learn how to cook other foods but still have my roots in Thai food. When I cook spaghetti for my kids, they said, Mom, it doesn't taste like spaghetti, it tastes like Thai food! But that is *my* spaghetti! That's how I like it. My daughter loves to bake, and I'm not familiar with baking because we didn't have a baking oven in Thailand, so she's going to teach me. There are so many ideas that pop up that I want to try. Food is a form of art; you always try to make it different in each generation. **H&H**