

Somebody

Feed

Phil

The

Book



Somebody

Feed

Phil

**Untold Stories,
Behind-the-Scenes Photos
and Favorite Recipes**

The

Phil Rosenthal

and Jenn Garbee

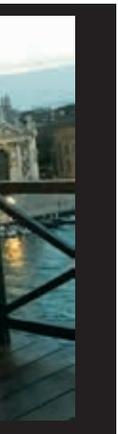
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I hope I've been a good traveling companion.

—BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN



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Foreword

IN FEBRUARY 2019, Phil and I organized by text message a meeting in Los Angeles. I had no doubt he would choose a cool spot, but when I read his last message, saying he was going to take me to an “avant-garde place,” I cringed. I was on a forty-eight-hour trip from Italy to cook over Oscars weekend, and between the jet lag, interviews, and other engagements, I didn’t have much room left for avant-garde.

Phil and I had met years earlier at the Albinelli Market in Modena. As we walked from stall to stall, I understood immediately that this guy was interested in one thing only—Good Food. You can put all kinds of labels on gastronomic movements and styles of cooking, but in my book, food always falls into one of two categories: Good Food or Bad Food. It didn’t matter to Phil if he was eating a sandwich in a bar, a mushroom directly from the vendor’s basket, or a meal at a three-star Michelin restaurant. He wanted to taste it all and to know everything he could about why that bite was better than the last.

When we pulled up to Sumo Dog on Western Avenue, which was attached to a dive bar, a big smile came over my face. The Korean hot dog stand famous for its Asian-flavored hot dogs and collaborations with LA chefs was my kind of avant-garde. Phil ordered everything. We passed hot dogs around, comparing one to another. The conversation was rich with gourmet exclamations like “Ooooooh!” “Oh my God!” “No way!” and “Try this one!” Then Nancy Silverton’s dog came along, with its American-Italian notes: American Wagyu beef, Calabrian sausage, and Caciocavallo cheese. Everyone ate in silence. Too good for words.

A year later I was back in LA for the Oscars again. It would be the last trip I took before the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Unable to travel outside Italy, I became quite nostalgic about that kind of “avant-garde” curbside adventure. The shared hot dogs, the unmasked laughs, and the ease of gathering, which we took for granted at the time. Thank you, Phil, for this lasting memory.

The recipe I’ve shared, Five Ages of Parmigiano Reggiano in Different Temperatures and Textures (page 109), has nothing to do with hot dogs. It has everything to do with the quality of the ingredients and, even more important, the quality of the ideas.

And that’s exactly why *Somebody Feed Phil* is such an addictive television show. Phil never just scratches the surface or simply reports on what he sees and eats. I can testify from various experiences on set that every moment is unscripted, real, and raw. Phil dives in and begins getting to know the guests, the places, and the food through his curiosity



and questions. When Phil shows up, the pressure is on to show him your favorite food angles, big and small, and the secret flavors, ingredients, and customs that make your life delicious. And in return, Phil shows you his favorite hideouts and hot dog stands. The relationships we form around food are some of the most meaningful (just think about our attachment to our mothers), so when you have Good Food and Good Conversation at the table, there is always magic.

Somebody Feed Phil the Book brings to life the dynamic intersection of cultures, people, landscapes, ingredients, and ideas. Phil shares not only his travels and culinary adventures but also the recipes he loves most so that everyone can experience extraordinary places and fabulous people—and delicious food. And that, really, is what the best cookbooks do. They animate places we've visited or read about or dream about traveling to someday; they remind us of people we've met, cooked with, and broken bread with; and they connect us to one another, no matter how great the distance between us.

—MASSIMO BOTTURA

โทรศัพท์สาธารณะ
Public Telephones





Introduction

WELCOME EVERYBODY, to *Somebody Feed Phil the Book*. I'm trying to do two things here: make a great companion book to the series, and give you some of the best recipes from our favorite chefs and places on the show.

Let me make this clear—these are not my recipes. I'm not a chef. I don't have the temperament or talent to make anything from this book. All I care about is whether the recipes here taste as close as possible to what I ate around the world, and they do. But—and this is the message of the book and the show—you should still go to these places and try the originals. One thing I've learned after eating things all over the world: a dish never tastes the same at home as it does when you're traveling. Because it's all connected: the sights, the sounds, the smells, the people you're with, the experience—are all connected to your tongue. So the best thing that could come from this book is that at some point you drop it and call your travel agent.

My favorite part about doing the show has been the people I've met, not just during filming but also those of you who watch it and reach out to me. It's been my calling card to the world and one of the greatest pleasures of my life. It feels like a fantasy, but what I'm telling you is that everything you see me doing is 100 percent real, and you can do it, too. In fact, the name of the show could be *If That Guy Can Do It, Anyone Can*.

How it all started . . .

My parents weren't exactly adventurous people. When my brother, Richard, and I were young, they moved from a small New York City apartment to Rockland County, New York. Moving to the suburbs was



understandably all the adventure they needed after the Holocaust. Rockland was a nice, safe place to raise their family. In our neighborhood, every house was built by the same company and looked exactly the same, other than the color of the paint. (One advantage: when you went to a friend's house, you didn't have to ask where the bathroom was.)

Delicious meals and travel were not the priorities in our house. Safety and affordability were. But my parents did buy Time Life Books' *The Great Cities* series, twenty-five volumes highlighting incredible places: Athens, Venice, Paris, Istanbul, San Francisco . . . They intended for Richard and me to use them as a geographic encyclopedia, but to me, the pages were filled with magical places that seemed better than where I was living. And we never went to any of them.

But when I was nine, my parents announced we were going to my cousin's bar mitzvah. The great thing was this cousin did not live in New York, but in a far-away place with a mysterious name that sounded like a lost city: Atlanta. I could not have been more excited. I don't remember a single thing about the bar mitzvah. What I do remember is not long after we got there, my cousins took Richard and me to a store that was open from seven in the morning until eleven o'clock at

night. It looked like a store for astronauts, filled with candy and food in wrappers, and a magical machine like some sort of carnival soft-serve ice cream dispenser. You pulled the handle and out came a Coke, only thanks to cutting-edge science it was transformed into the most amazing thing: a sweet, cold slushy food/drink. I thought, "This place is great! I love Atlanta!" I had two Slurpees a day for the three days we were there, and the idea of trying new foods, and celebrating other cultures, was born.

A few years later, another milestone: My parents said we were going to spend a week at an uncle's apartment in Miami Beach. (My dad couldn't say no: the apartment was free.) Miami Beach was okay, but it was hot. We went to the Everglades, where I saw an alligator that just laid there. I could see that at the Bronx Zoo. Fortunately, this was 1972, and as every child knew, a whole new world was upon us: Walt Disney World. It wasn't even finished yet, but Richard and I begged our parents to stop in Orlando on the way home. They kept saying no, improvising rationales that millions of future parents would later use: it's too expensive, it's too far away, the last thing we want to do is wait on line with a whole "world" of screaming kids. But we had a week to wear them down, and we got to go for one whole day. I spent that day running around the Magic Kingdom. It was entirely different from the New York tristate area, different from Atlanta, different from any place I'd ever been. It was thrilling. I was hooked on travel. This is what Disney is for.

The first real city I fell in love with abroad was Florence. I ended up there because of my good friend Rob Weiner. After college, we shared an apartment in Washington Heights in upper Manhattan. Rob is far more cultured than I will ever be and expanded my life by introducing me to a world of art, culture, and travel that people our age could appreciate. I could only contribute one thing: a love of good food. Our birthdays were one week apart, so I thought it would be great if we saved up our money all year to go to a four-star restaurant. The rest of the year we'd live off of tuna

sandwiches, hot dogs, pizza—anything cheap but also delicious (at the time, we were both struggling to get into theater, working at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rob at the front desk and me as a guard, to pay the rent). My parents thought I was out of my mind spending \$100 on a single meal at Le Bernardin or Lutece, or wherever else Mimi Sheraton, the *New York Times* restaurant critic, had deemed worthy of a coveted four stars. They acted like I had a drug habit. Why would you spend money on such a transitory thing? But it was totally worth it to me. It was an entire vacation in one night. Rob and I couldn't each afford dates, so we would split one girl. But I dreamed of going to the source, to the places in Europe these restaurants were inspired by.

Rob heard about a deal DHL was offering in the early eighties. DHL had a courier program: their cargo would fly as a normal passenger's excess baggage, in exchange for which they would get a free round-trip ticket to one of their worldwide destinations. Not only was this totally legal, it was phenomenal. Rob and I ended up on Lufthansa flights a day apart to Frankfurt with two whole weeks until we had to get on the return flights. We immediately took a train to Paris, where Rob had a friend with an apartment we could stay in. I got to see the Eiffel Tower. I ate croissants, baguettes, and snails, and even the roast chicken tasted different from any I'd ever had. I thought Paris was fantastic, but then, we went to Florence because my mom had said it was the most beautiful place she'd ever been. She was right. Florence was somewhere past heaven. It felt like being inside a painting. As much as I was enthralled by the scenery, I fell in love with the people. On the train from Paris, Rob and I met two Italians, Dania and Dario, who were the same age as us. We instantly bonded and stayed up all night doing what young people do best:

drinking and talking. It didn't matter that Dania only spoke a little English and Dario only spoke Italian. When we got to Italy, we visited the bakery that Dania's father ran. He insisted we taste all his specialties, then all their friends from around the neighborhood came by with their specialties. A woman came with a bowl of freshly made pasta, another woman came with chocolates. A few years later, I brought my new girlfriend Monica there (via DHL) to meet them. And then Dania and Dario came to New York to visit us. They all—Dania and Dario, their baby Ginevra, and their parents—stayed in our one-bedroom apartment. Monica and I are still friends with Dania and Dario. That story is the story of not just our series, but my life: how travel and the people you meet change you.

One person's life I wanted to change through travel was my good friend Ray Romano. I asked him where he was going when we were on hiatus after the first season of *Everybody Loves Raymond*. He said, "We always go to the Jersey Shore." I told him that was great, but had he ever been to Europe? "Nah." I asked him why not, and he said, "I'm not really interested in other cultures." I couldn't understand how someone could





This did not become the poster for the show.

to the character that I wrote actually happening to Ray the Person. And watching my friend experience the joys of travel for the first time was as good as doing it myself. I actually remember thinking, “If only I could do this for other people.”

So after *Raymond* ended, and several futile attempts to do another sitcom, I decided to pursue my dream. And you know what? Nobody wanted it. “Why are you doing this? Stick to sitcoms” is something I would hear from everyone, including my agents and my parents. But I kept trying for years. I wanted to use everything I learned about how to tell a story in the service of everything I loved in life: Family, Friends, Food, Travel, and Laughs.

Finally, the nice people at PBS saw some clips I had made of some travel videos and liked them, and I got a meeting. Here’s how I pitched the show: I said, “I’m exactly like Anthony Bourdain, if he was afraid of everything.”

After the meeting, I called Richard. I told him that PBS was giving me six episodes on the air where I would try to get you to travel by showing you the best places in the world to eat. He said, “Really? What are they going to call the show? *The Lucky Bastard*?” I told him to quit his job (he was already a TV producer) and come produce this show with me, and we’ll call our production company Lucky Bastards. We got Zero Point Zero (the production company that did Anthony Bourdain’s shows) to join us, and that show became *I’ll Have What Phil’s Having*.

feel that way. Not even Italy? Ray’s family was Italian. I knew instantly it was a story I wanted to tell on *Raymond*, do an episode set in Italy and send his character, Ray Barone, over there, this guy who doesn’t want to travel. He’d come back as Italian as Roberto Benigni, or me, someone who’s been transformed by the magic of travel—the food, the people, the beauty, especially of Italy.

So after lots of convincing, we got Raymond on a plane and filmed the episode in Rome and outside the city in a little town called Anguillara Sabazia on the Lago di Bracciano, the lake there. After shooting one night, Ray and I, along with thirty members of the cast and crew, ate at a huge table in the middle of the piazza in Trastevere, the old Jewish ghetto in Rome. Ray saw a gelato store in the corner of the plaza and said, “We’ll probably get dessert here, but we should get gelato after, right?” As he and I were enjoying our second dessert of the night, he saw a pizza place and said we then had to try that. Then he saw another gelato place and said, “The best combo is coconut and chocolate. Shouldn’t we try that here, too?” I saw what happened



We brought my parents into each episode, and they have always been not just supportive and fantastic but a great source of comic material. You can see their debut in my 2011 documentary about my trip to Russia to try to help them turn our sitcom into *Everybody Loves Kostya*. It's called *Exporting Raymond*. And what you see on those video calls to my folks is really how they are. I realized those calls home are the modern-day equivalent of a postcard from wherever you're traveling. And we realized they're comic geniuses on camera. My mom was a complete natural and absolutely hysterical. (Unlike Dad, she never wanted to be on TV, but later, she did enjoy people recognizing her. I loved that.) Then we had Dad with his jokes. He had done some stand-up here and there when he was younger. He always amazed me, because he did get very nervous going up there, but then he owned the stage. He had accumulated a lot of jokes over the years, but as the series went on, Monica would tell me that Dad

would go to the Internet and look up old Jewish jokes before I called. He wanted to make sure he had the joke right so that it appeared to the audience as if he just happened to remember it. The dynamic of the two of them together, my mom and dad, first on *IHWP* and on our first four seasons of Netflix's *Somebody Feed Phil*, was incredible. They're just as funny in this series, being themselves, as the actors who portrayed versions of them in *Raymond* were on the sitcom. They weren't just the best part of the show, they were one of the best parts of my life. This book, like everything else I'm lucky to do because of them, is dedicated to them, Max and Helen Rosenthal.

It's also dedicated to the rest of my family: Monica, Ben, and Lily, Richard and his family, Monica's family, and my extended family: our crew and production staff, all the chefs and friends we've made, and all of you, who should really be dropping this book just about now.



山崎屋





EPISODE

1

Bangkok

So what's Thailand? Sweet, savory, salty, sour, and spicy, sometimes all brilliantly in one bite. There's very little bitterness.

WHEN YOU'RE WRITING A TELEVISION SHOW, you have to know how you're going to start the whole thing. But this whole show is improvised. When I screw something up, it's in the show. Whoever or whatever made a moment great is part of it. Bangkok was the first place we went for *Somebody Feed Phil*.

Bangkok can be a little daunting at first, starting with the traffic. There are spectacular things everywhere you look. Even the van we had to take everybody around was packed with trinkets and decorations. It

entire show came from here, something I'd never had in my life. More important, some of the most special people I met anywhere were from here. Such kind, wonderful people.

Every great city has a market, a microcosm of daily life.

When we started *Somebody Feed Phil*, it had been two years since *I'll Have What Phil's Having*. The very first scene we shot was the very first scene you see in Bang-

kok, the boat ride through the floating market. Five minutes in, my brother said, "We're back."

Richard will tell you that was one of the hardest scenes for the crew. They had one camera on shore and two in a follow boat behind us. You've got the traffic on the river.

The camera boat had to be as steady as the boat I was in. And we were in this really hot, humid tropical place. Richard will also complain to you that one of the hardest jobs on the show is "keeping Philip comfortable." I tell him that's his most important job.

But here, none of that mattered. How do you not fall in love with this place?

You're on a boat, in a floating market, going from one side to the other, eating these fantastic creations. Disney's got nothing on this ride. The whole experience becomes a multisensory adventure. But it's all part of their majestic daily life. We have zero like this. *This* is why you travel.



was like a souvenir shop exploded inside. Then you've got these areas that are so peaceful and serene, it's absolutely stunning. "The Venice of the East."

The food is like that, too, all these flavors together, and you're having them at the same time. That's not how I usually eat. And still my favorite dish from the



Phil: Dad, you know what you would like here? Soup. I've had at least four or five different kinds of soup, some of the best I've ever had in my life. And Ma, you know what you'd like? The fruit.

Helen: Oh yes.

Phil: Maybe the best fruit in the world. Let me show you something you've never seen. Do you know this?

Helen: Yes.

Phil: Tell me what it is then, Ma.

Helen: It's a fruit, and you open it up.

Phil: You're like a genius.

Helen: Is that a cherimoya?

Phil: No this is called a longan. (opening it) Oh, it squirted me. Look at that. It looks like a crystal or something. (next) That's a pomelo, like a grapefruit only like a basketball.

Max: I'm getting hungry.

Phil: Okay, look at this—you know what that is?

Helen: I have no idea.

Phil: This is one of the best things I ever ate in my life. Look at this. This is called a mangosteen.

Helen: A mango what?

Phil: A mangosteen. It's like a Jewish mango.

Helen: Mango . . . steen.

Phil: The best in the world.

Helen: Oh, that looks delicious.

Phil: It is. I wish I could feed you through the screen. Richard loved them. You haven't mentioned Richard today. Why? Don't you care about Richard?

Helen: Who says we don't care about Richard?

Phil: Not once have you asked me about Richard.

Max: We're very fortunate and lucky to have two nice boys.

Helen: What?

Phil: I don't know if you remember, but whenever I would ask what Dad would like for his birthday, he would say, "All I want is two nice boys."

Helen: And he's still saying that.

Phil: Okay, I say goodbye with a kiss of mango.

Pink Pad Thai

Serves 4

Phil and I enjoyed a version of these noodles fresh from the wok while on a rickety wooden boat floating on the river. It was the best possible setting! The original recipe was supposedly the result of a 1940s cooking contest in an attempt to make noodles (considered solely Chinese at the time) more “Thai” by using Thai seasonings. Of course, a minister’s wife won the contest.

The noodles are pink in color because of the tamarind paste, which is an integral ingredient in Thai food along with fish sauce, fresh limes, and bird’s eye chiles. In this version developed with my cookbook coauthor, Lauren Lulu Taylor, the eggs are cooked with the shrimp, but you can also fry them up whole in a separate pan and put them on top of the noodles just before serving like we had on the boat. Thai-style sriracha, which has pickled garlic, is mellow and a little sweeter than the California-style sriracha common outside of Thailand. If you can’t find it, a brand like Huy Fong works. Use one or up to three bird’s eye chiles, depending on your heat tolerance. —Chawadee Nualkhair (“Chow”)

8 ounces (225g) pad thai or similar dried, thin rice noodles	2 green onions, thinly sliced
2 tablespoons vegetable oil	Thai chile powder (optional)
16 to 18 (12 ounces/340g) large tail-on shrimp, deveined and shells removed	½ cup (75g) roasted unsalted peanuts, finely chopped
4 large eggs, lightly beaten	2 cups (9 ounces/255g) mung bean sprouts
Pad Thai Sauce, recipe follows	1 lime, cut into wedges, for serving

Put the noodles in a large bowl, cover with lukewarm water, and soak until softened, about 30 minutes, then strain.

Heat the oil in a wok or large sauté pan over medium-high heat until very hot, about 30 seconds. Add the shrimp and stir or toss in the wok for a few seconds. Add the eggs,

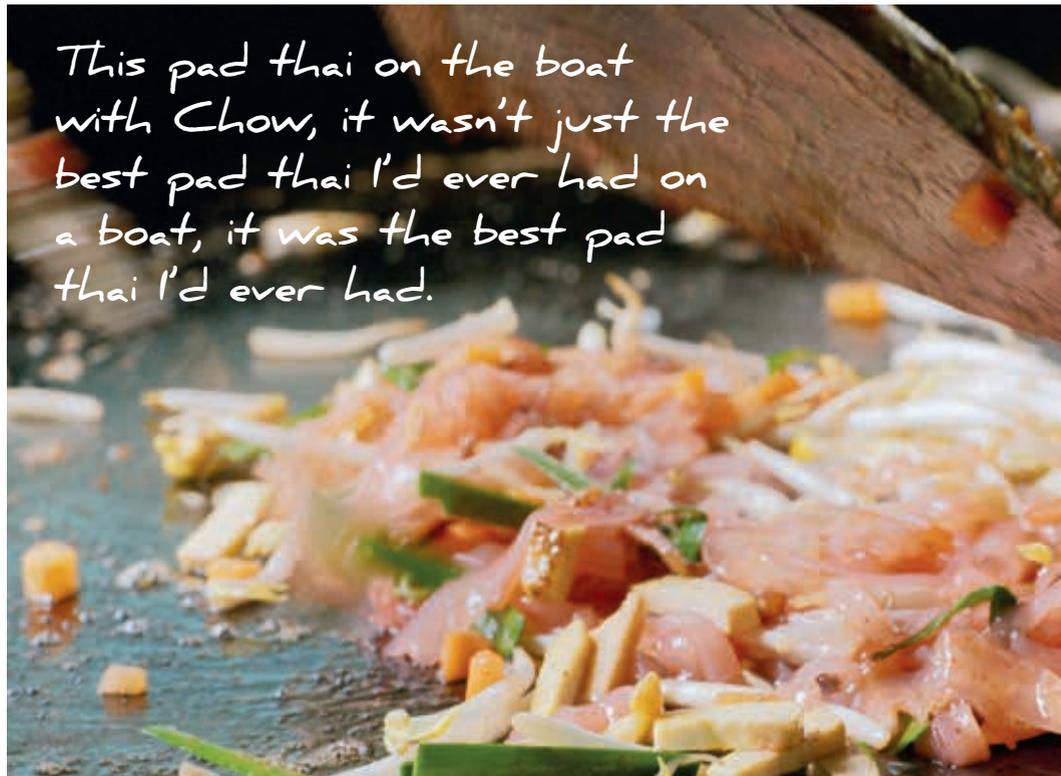


strained rice noodles, and about a quarter of the Pad Thai Sauce and cook, stirring constantly, until the noodles soak up the sauce, about 15 seconds. (If using a sauté pan, use tongs to help lift up the noodles and redistribute them in the sauce.) Continue adding the sauce in three more batches, letting the noodles soak up the sauce after each addition. If the noodles are still firm, add 2 to 3 tablespoons of water and stir until the noodles have softened.

Add the green onions, mix well, then divide the noodles and shrimp among four serving bowls. Sprinkle the chile powder, if using, to taste over the pad thai, scatter the peanuts and arrange the mung bean sprouts on top, and serve with the lime wedges.



This pad thai on the boat with Chow, it wasn't just the best pad thai I'd ever had on a boat, it was the best pad thai I'd ever had.



Pad Thai Sauce

Makes about 2 cups (480ml)

2 tablespoons tamarind pulp

½ cup (120ml) Thai sriracha, preferably Sriraja Panich or Shark

3 to 4 tablespoons palm sugar or loosely packed light or dark brown sugar

2 tablespoons good-quality fish sauce, such as Red Boat

2 teaspoons distilled white vinegar

2 garlic cloves, roughly chopped

2 whole Thai-style pickled garlic cloves, roughly chopped, plus ½ cup (120ml) pickled garlic brine

2 Thai bird's eye or other small hot chiles, seeds removed

Rehydrate the tamarind pulp in ¼ cup (60ml) of hot water, set aside for 5 minutes, then smash the pulp with a spoon or between your fingers until softened. (Discard any hard

seeds.) Put the tamarind pulp and any excess water, sriracha, palm or brown sugar, fish sauce, vinegar, fresh and pickled garlic cloves, pickled garlic brine, and chiles in a blender and blend until smooth.

Transfer the sauce to a medium saucepan, add 2 cups (480ml) of water, bring to a low boil, and cook, stirring occasionally, until thickened and reduced by about a third, about 15 minutes. Use the sauce immediately or cover and refrigerate for up to 3 days.

Tips

- Tamarind pulp is pure dried tamarind, often sold in blocks and available at most Asian and Indian markets (avoid tamarind paste, which typically contains sweeteners).
- Unlike more widely available European-style cured garlic (cured in oil) or Korean pickled garlic (cured in soy sauce), Thai-style pickled garlic, available at most Asian markets, is pickled in a sweet vinegar brine.



Maybe my favorite things to discover are the different street foods of the world.

There's a simple reason why every culture has it: It's cheap and quick and delicious. The original fast food.

I'd never experienced anything like the street food markets in Bangkok. The stalls have every kind of food group imaginable, even those with antennae. Just getting soup in a bag was an experience. Anyone can put soup in a cup.

Bangkok is not easy to get to know. It's very big, it's very confused, it's very hot. Then at night, you go out and bang! It's a pleasure garden. The city turns into an extraordinarily enjoyable spectacle.

—Lawrence Osborne

I have to confess something: I don't watch cooking shows.

It's because I love magic, and once you know how the trick is done, it's a little less magical. It's like explaining a joke.

But I've never been as excited about the process of cooking anything as I was when we were filming at Jay Fai's place. It was dynamic. And watching her, it was like the sleight of hand was happening right in front of me. I felt like she and I had a real connection.

And just look at this woman. She looks like Snoopy with those goggles, going to fight the Red Baron. She's manhandling these two giant woks that are over tremendous fires. She's the coolest person I've ever seen. How does she keep the shape of the eggs while she's

turning them? How do they stay together? And then you eat the crab omelet, and it's one of the best things you've ever eaten. It's practically a football filled with crab, and not just any crab. The freshest, most delicious crab anywhere. If you want to try making it like Jay Fai, watch the show. Let me know how it goes.

A meal like this is only good if you can share it.

Gaggan Anand is a true artist. His restaurant was voted best in Asia four years in a row.

Richard had sent a photo of our fixer in Thailand, Aunchalee Burkhart, who goes by "Nok," back to our family while we were at the Golden Mount Temple at Wat Saket. He captioned it "best fixer yet, Nok." A fixer is somebody local who helps us with all the logistics, connects us to everyone local, and Nok was amazing. When I found out it was her birthday, and that she'd never been to a place like Gaggan, I wanted her to experience it. And I wanted you to experience it through her eyes.

Watching that scene, you can see Gaggan's vision of the five senses—sweet, spicy, salty, sour, and the surprise—all right there in her beautiful facial expressions. And when it was over, she uttered the kindest words I've ever heard. "I'm so glad I get to sit here and enjoy this special meal with you ... instead of Richard."

Ha ha, Richard.

Everyone goes to Chiang Mai, Northern Thailand's largest city, because it's so beautiful and serene.

That temple, Wat Suan Dok, is out of a movie. But what I really wanted to do was to spend time with the monks.

We don't think of monks as being real people, and then you get to know one. They spend all day, every day, stuck in the same place, with the same people. They probably can't wait for meditation time. I love that Boonchai gets annoyed sometimes with his fellow monks.

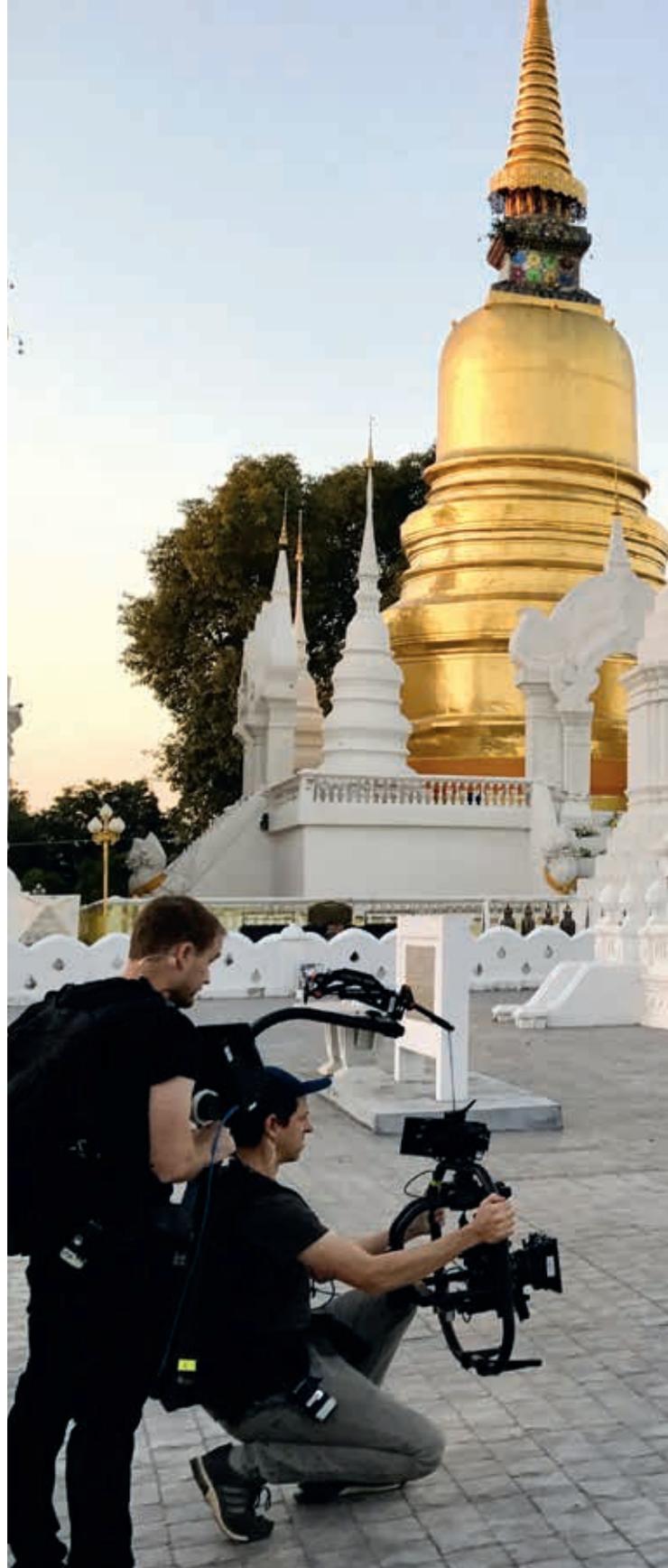
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If I had to pick a single dish from the series that was a true discovery, this would be it. That khao soi that chef Ian Kittichai took me to try at his favorite place was one of the best things I have ever eaten. It was so good, I said a bad word on the show. And this, one of the most delicious things in the world, costs \$1. You can't find these places if you don't ask somebody local, and if the local is a chef, even better.

I think I ate more in that scene than I ever ate anywhere else in the entire series. The number one question I get is how do I eat so much and not weigh four hundred pounds? Well, you know how they film a dog food commercial? They don't let the dog eat until the commercial. That's me. I'm the dog. I want to be excited when the food comes, and they say being hungry is the best appetizer. Also, I usually just take a few bites of what we feature and then pass it on to either my brother or the rest of the crew. This way, I can taste a lot more things, and my pants thank me.

But when the owner at this nice little shack, Praktik, wanted me to taste the chicken *and* the beef version of his khao soi, I threw all my rules out the window. I was gonna finish both bowls. Everyone had to get their own.

If I implore you to make or try one dish from this book, it's this one.







Khao Soi

Serves 6

Khao soi is a very popular dish in Northern Thailand. I took Phil to one of my favorite shops, Khao Soi Loong Prakrit Gard Gorm (“Uncle Prakrit’s Khao Soi at Gard Gorm Market”) in Chiang Mai. I was happy he enjoyed the khao soi there as much as the locals do. When I asked Prakrit, the owner and cook, to come to say hello, Phil offered a hug to him. In general, we Thais do not hug very much, so everyone was a little surprised when Prakrit gave Phil a hug back. It was a sweet moment.

This version is inspired by Prakrit’s. The amounts of noodles, chicken, and coconut milk are starting points; adjust them depending on how you like yours. Please do use boxed UHT (ultra-high temperature treated) coconut milk, which is pure coconut milk heated to a high temperature to naturally preserve the milk; it makes for a much better texture and flavor than canned coconut milk. This is true for all Thai dishes when fresh coconut milk is not available. Pickled mustard greens and Thai chili oil are typically available at Thai and Chinese markets. You can double the amount of curry paste and store the extra in the freezer for another meal.—Ian Kittichai

20 ounces (560g) dried lo mein or other thin egg noodles

2 tablespoons vegetable oil, divided, plus more for frying the noodles

Curry Paste, recipe follows

1½ to 2 pounds (680 to 900g) bone-in chicken thighs

8 cups (64 ounces/about 2L) UHT coconut milk, such as Aroy-D

2 tablespoons coconut sugar or lightly packed light or dark brown sugar

4 to 5 tablespoons good-quality fish sauce, such as Red Boat

2 teaspoons liquid seasoning sauce, such as Maggi, or soy sauce

½ teaspoon fine sea salt

2 medium shallots, finely chopped

1 small bunch fresh cilantro, leaves only, roughly chopped

2 limes, sliced into wedges

Pickled mustard greens, for serving (optional)

Thai chili oil (optional)

Cook the noodles according to the package instructions, strain, and rinse under cold water to cool. Transfer the noodles to a large bowl. Add 1 tablespoon of the oil and toss the noodles until well coated in oil. Cover the bowl with a kitchen towel to keep them from drying out.

Heat the remaining 1 tablespoon of oil in a large Dutch oven or stockpot over medium-low heat. Add the Curry Paste and cook, stirring often, until fragrant, about 5 minutes. Add the chicken thighs and stir until well coated in the Curry Paste, then stir in the coconut milk, coconut or brown sugar, and ½ cup (120ml) of water. Bring the coconut milk mixture to a boil, reduce to a simmer, and cook, stirring occasionally, until the chicken meat begins to separate from the bone and the coconut milk has taken on the rich colors of the Curry Paste, 35 to 45 minutes. Use a spoon to skim off some of the fat that has risen to the top of the stew, if desired (or leave the fat for a more richly flavored stew), and add the fish sauce, liquid seasoning or soy sauce, and salt. Transfer the chicken thighs to a bowl and keep the stew warm over low heat.

Meanwhile, to make the fried noodle topping, line a sheet pan with paper towels and transfer about a third of the cooked noodles to plate. In a large frying pan, heat about 2 inches (5cm) of vegetable oil over medium-high heat until very hot. Add a handful of the noodles to the pot in a single layer, fry until golden brown on the bottom, about 2 minutes, and use tongs flip the noodles (they may stick together like a pancake). Fry the opposite side until golden brown, 1 to 2 minutes, and transfer the noodles to the sheet pan. Use a spider or small strainer with a handle to scoop out any remaining noodles from the oil, and fry the remaining noodles on the plate the same way.

Shred the chicken meat (discard the bones) and return the meat to the stew with the reserved boiled noodles to rewarm for a few minutes and adjust the flavor and consistency of the soup with a little coconut milk or water, if needed.

Alternatively, keep the soup warm on the stovetop for up to 1 hour and stir in the noodles a few minutes before serving.

Divide the broth, chicken, and boiled noodles among six serving bowls. Scatter the shallots and cilantro over the khao soi, lay a handful of fried noodles on each, and serve with the lime wedges, pickled mustard greens and Thai chili oil, if using, on the side.

Curry Paste

Makes about 2 cups (480g)

8 medium (2 ounces/55g) dried Anaheim (California) chile peppers

½ cup (80g) peeled and roughly chopped ginger (about three 4-inch/10cm pieces)

½ cup (80g) peeled and roughly chopped turmeric (about three 4-inch/10cm pieces)

1 cup (220g) roughly chopped shallots (3 to 4 medium)

2 garlic cloves

Zest of ½ lime

½ small bunch fresh cilantro, preferably with roots attached (or 1 bunch cilantro, both leaves and stems), roughly chopped

1½ tablespoons Thai shrimp paste

3 tablespoons whole coriander seeds

1½ teaspoons curry powder

1 teaspoon coarse sea salt

Soak the chiles in cold water for 30 minutes, strain, and remove the stems and seeds.

Put the chiles, ginger, turmeric, shallots, garlic, lime zest, cilantro, shrimp paste, coriander seeds, curry powder, and salt in a blender. Add ⅓ cup (80ml) of water and blend until smooth. (Do this in batches if needed.) Use the curry paste immediately, cover, and refrigerate for up to 5 days, or freeze for up to 1 month.

Tips

- You can make the curry paste ahead and refrigerate or even freeze it for a quick weeknight dish; the fried noodles can also be made ahead.
- UHT coconut milk (a shelf-stable milk) is available at most Asian markets and online in various size boxes (do not substitute refrigerated coconut milk, a beverage diluted with water and flavorings).
- Prepared pickled mustard greens are also available at most Asian markets.



- Thai prik chee fah (spur) chiles, a moderately spicy chile, can be difficult to find; here, more readily available dried Anaheim (California) chiles are used.
- Cilantro with roots attached are often available at Asian markets; the roots have a more peppery flavor than the top stems and leaves (the stems can be substituted).

Everyone loves a happy ending.

The Elephant Nature Park is a retirement home for elephants that weren't treated well in the logging or tourism business. I was only on an elephant once, and that was when I was six years old. When you went to the Bronx Zoo in the 1960s, the animals were in this very primitive display, cage after cage. Lions, tigers, elephants, other animals. It wasn't a nice place for those animals to be. Kids would ride a camel and an elephant, then go home.

Here, you immediately get the sense these giant animals are happy. I love that scene right after they



take a bath and then go roll around in mud. It feels like they're having fun being a little naughty, rolling around in the mud right after their bath. (I later learned the mud is like sunscreen for the elephants.)

Sometimes when you're filming, you get lucky. I would say the luckiest moment of Richard's life as a producer was when I was almost crushed to death by two elephants, and upon backing out from between them, the elephant on the left whacked me on the head with his tail. It just happened to be perfectly framed for the camera.

There are moments in your life when you can't believe where you are.

I saw some of the happiest, sweetest, gentlest faces I've ever seen in Thailand. If you visit this place, you will get to witness that, too. Why is everyone smiling? Go, and you'll find out. The people here can make you believe that all things in life are possible.



EPISODE

2

Saigon

Vietnam is a country with a rich cultural history and beauty, incredible food, and a great future. It's a country defined by the spirit of its people.



HAVE TO ADMIT, BEFORE GOING TO VIETNAM,

I had some preconceptions. And I rattled them off at the beginning of the episode: *Apocalypse Now*, *The Deer Hunter*, *Coming Home*, *Full Metal Jacket*, *Casualties of War*, *Platoon*. That had been my education.

But every person I know who had been to Vietnam said it was their favorite place they'd ever been. How do I reconcile that? The only way to change your preconceptions is to learn new conceptions. And the best way I could do that with Vietnam was to go there.

Then you get to the beautiful city of Saigon, and the first thing you notice walking down the street is not only are people making eye contact with you.

They're all smiling at you.

When people share something that's important to them, you make a connection.

We do a lot of research before we head out somewhere. Where we might go and, of course, what I'll be eating. I knew Saigon had some of the best street food in the world. Bánh mì and phở (pronounced "fuh") are probably Vietnam's two most famous exports. I'd had both many times before; LA has some of the best Asian food in the world. But eating something in the place it's from is a whole different experience. You're standing at a food cart that somebody literally hooked onto their motorbike a couple hours before. They made this food for you and brought it here.

One thing I didn't know about was bò lá lốt. That one we got at Quán Ăn Cô Liêng was great. The restaurant had been there twenty years. In Vietnam, that's a really long time. People have had to adapt. They've had to be resilient. It's an understatement to say that war changes a place.

To locals, it is important to call Saigon by its proper name, not Hồ Chí Minh City. Hồ Chí Minh City is just a formal name we must use to fill out forms. The name is only spoken by foreigners and Vietnamese who are

not from Saigon. Many people here felt as if they lost their country the day South Vietnam was lost to the communist North in the Vietnam War. Their home had been called Sài Gòn for hundreds of years. Saigonese are extremely proud of their city and its history; calling Saigon by another name is like losing that city's identity, its culture, its way of life. —Nikky Tran

As I always say, the bread is half the sandwich. Gotta have good bread.

People here appreciate that. My kind of people. A bánh mì isn't on a basic roll like the ones you get here. The roll has a really good crust. You know when you eat it that it is their excellent version of a French baguette. You see that French colonial influence everywhere.

The food writer Calvin Godfrey took me to his favorite bánh mì stand across the street from a phở place, Phở Bò Phú Gia. (You should go there.) When Calvin moved back to the States, his wife, Nhàn, re-created it here. Calvin has tasted so many bánh mì, he knows who makes the best.

A bánh mì in Saigon is a simple snack, omnipresent and cheap as cheap can be. Street vendors may adorn each crispy baguette humbly. A bánh mì may contain a triangle of Laughing Cow cheese or a fried egg, a slab of pork liver pâté, a tin of sardines in tomato sauce, or the very lowest of lunch meat chả lụa (think: New Jersey pork roll). A squirt of Maggi, a sprig of cilantro, a few cucumber batons, and well-placed pickles render these sandwiches impossibly greater than the sum of their parts. They are life affirming and sustaining, and invite all fillings. Lately, since we moved back, I've added cold meatloaf, smoked char siu, and a semi-dry, semi-fermented sweet bologna from Central Pennsylvania. And yet, I insist on observing my wife, Nhàn's, four pillars of bánh mì excellence. —Calvin Godfrey