

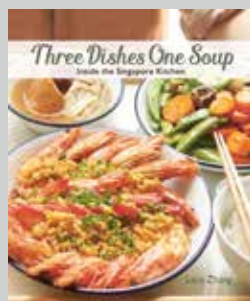
LACE ZHANG

is the author of the award-winning *Three Dishes One Soup: Inside the Singapore Kitchen*. She was first led into the kitchen by a passion for baking, which she discovered during her days at Singapore Management University. This opened the floodgates to what would become a lifelong obsession with eating, cooking, and writing and learning about food.

When Lace is not in the kitchen working on recipes, cranking up her overused commercial oven at home (yes, you read that right), she can be found reading about food, writing love letters to food, shopping for groceries or gazing lovingly at the displays in bakeries.

Her work has been featured in *Wine & Dine*, *Female*, *Women's Weekly* and the *Sunday Times*. Stay in touch with Lace at www.lacezhang.com and www.instagram.com/aroundthediningtable.

Also by Lace Zhang



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Cuisine



GET READY TO AMP UP YOUR CREATIVITY IN THE KITCHEN

Stuffed with tons of approachable and easy-to-follow recipes, *Around the Dining Table: An Asian-Inspired Modern Feast* is what every home cook wants and needs. Think:

Asian Slaw with Tamarind-Lime Dressing

Wok-Charred Sprouts, Thai Style

Seared Snapper in Hot and Sour Broth

Beef Noodles with Black Garlic and Black Bean Gravy

Tom Yum Spaghetti

Sticky Plum Pudding with Black Sugar Toffee Sauce

...and many other fresh ideas! You'll have fun in your kitchen and also learn to stretch a few essentials in the Asian pantry across a range of dishes. Be inspired to explore and create more mouth-watering meals with ease in your home kitchen.



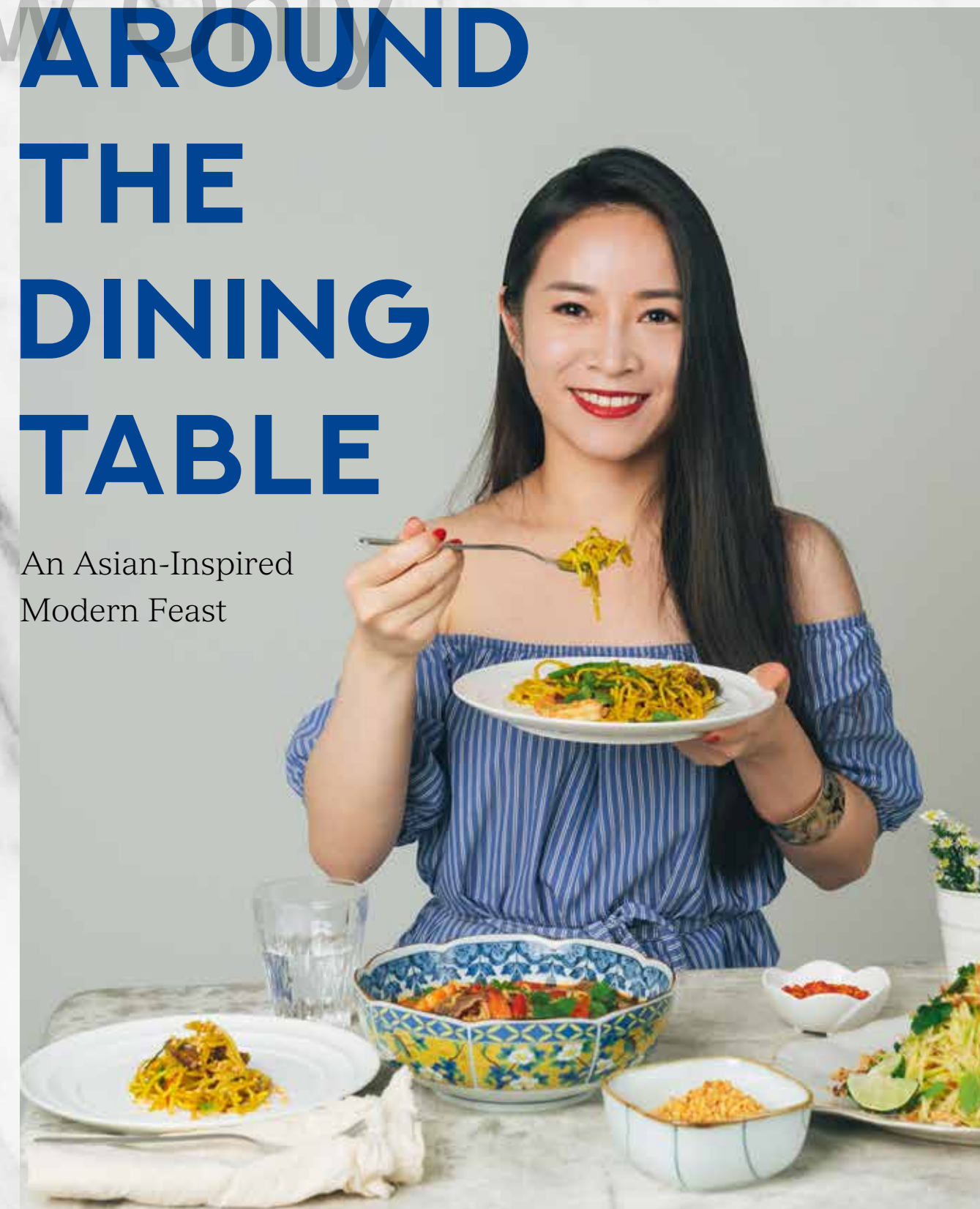
LACE ZHANG

AROUND THE DINING TABLE

Marshall Cavendish
Cuisine

AROUND THE DINING TABLE

An Asian-Inspired
Modern Feast



LACE ZHANG



“The pleasures of the table belong to all times and ages, to every country and every day; they go hand in hand with all our other pleasures, outlast them, and remain to console us for their loss.”

— JEAN ANTHELME BRILLAT-SAVARIN

For Review Only

Editor: Lo Yi Min
Designer: Lynn Chin
All photographs by Lace Zhang, except cover image and those on pages 3 and 6 by Matthias Chong; image on page 135 by Caecilia, and image on page 152 by Zoe Pei
Food styling for page 67 by Bryan Lim, and pages 105 and 148 by Sandra Sim

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An imprint of Marshall Cavendish International



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National Library Board, Singapore Cataloguing in Publication Data

Name(s): Zhang, Lace.
Title: Around the dining table : an Asian-inspired modern feast / Lace Zhang.
Description: Singapore : Marshall Cavendish Cuisine, [2020]
Identifier(s): OCN 1141440059 | ISBN 978-981-48-6894-5 (paperback)
Subject(s): LCSH: Cooking, Asian
Classification: DDC 641.595--dc23

Printed in Singapore



*To my parents,
Dennis and Rhanda*

For Review Only

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book is made possible only because of the generous support and contributions from so many amazing, giving people that I am lucky enough to have around me.

Joanne and Cuong, thanks for taking the time and effort to host me at the Red Boat Factory on Phu Quoc Island. I am so blessed to have been allowed a sneak peek into the production process, and to have roamed around the breezy island and be treated to many homemade meals and inspiring stories right where the magic happens. Cuong, you are a superhero for bringing Red Boat into existence and taking us to the best food spots in Vietnam. Unforgettable.

Joanne, Karina and Lai Shi Fu, thanks for taking me around Hong Kong and allowing me to *masak-masak* in Shi Fu's kitchen right in the busy Central district of bustling HK. I'm grateful for the memories and the exchange of stories, which involved the patient translation of Shi Fu's words so that I could understand and partake in the conversation.

Sandra (@SandraSim on IG): super thankful you let me shoot at your beautifully lush, self-designed apartment — not once, not twice, but three times — and feeding us all at the shoot with your home-cooked meals, including that insanely fat omelette filled with hand-picked crabmeat. Your HK baked pork chop rice is easily one of the best things ever! Thank you for contributing the recipe, and for sharing your expertise and gorgeous cutlery collection in styling your dish, the tom yum spaghetti and coconut panna cotta.

Caecilia (@singaporeliciouz on IG), Sam and Tish Boyle, thank you for being game to contribute your treasured recipes to this book when I asked! You are such amazing chefs in the kitchen and this book is made even more delicious because of you guys.

Bryan Lim (@bryxnlm on IG), my professional photographer friend, for meticulously styling the pork belly braised in coconut water. Matthias (@mttychng on IG), for shooting the book cover and the shots of me inside this book! Pierre, for listening to me rant on and on about this book and for coming down to the book cover shoot to help out. Without your presence, I wouldn't have known to relax my tense fingers.

Ian, for constantly expanding my horizons.

The team at Marshall Cavendish, thank you all for pulling this book together!

The online community @aroundthediningtable, through which I've been able to meet and interact with so many like-minded, food-obsessed people and fellow home cooks! When I first started this account, never would I have envisioned making so many new friends through it, and the exchange of information, stories and ideas that would ensue. Thanks for letting me talk about snacks, food, recipes and books non-stop without anyone getting seriously bored and wishing I'd shut up. Or if anyone did, I'm blissfully unaware.

Finally, to my mum and dad, thanks for supporting me on this cookbook journey since the start; for helping me get groceries when I was too busy, being my number one recipe taste testers and putting up with the disproportionately large amount of food and photography props in our house.

For Review Only

A FEW WORDS

Since the release of my first book, *Three Dishes One Soup: Inside the Singapore Kitchen*, about two years ago, it's been heart-warming to receive so much support, encouragement and lovely messages! Along the way, I've realised that a lot of the feedback centres on how the recipes are approachable and easy to follow. That they come peppered with little tricks to amp up and max out the flavour without the cook feeling like they've really gone the extra mile. (Hey, the sanity of the cook matters!) A win-win, isn't it? It is in this spirit that I bring forth this new baby, a book full of modern, Asian-inspired recipes for home cooks to play around and experiment with.

I'm unapologetic about taking a more relaxed approach in the kitchen. If your butcher can hack that chicken for you into pieces, or if you'd like to sneak in a shortcut or two — go for it! After all, isn't the act of just cooking — anything — for someone and feeding them an act of love in itself? When we were young, we had all our meals taken care of and planned for. Now that we've grown up and moved out — some of us have even started our own families — we find the roles reversed. We have to figure out our daily meals or what to feed our families on a regular basis. As I mentioned in the introduction of my first book, a home cooked meal like this is the ultimate luxury.

There are a couple of recipes here like the superior stock or fish congee that take a bit more time on the burner — I'll admit that I don't cook them weekly. But if you've got half a day to spare, let me assure you, the rewards reaped are great. What's even better is that they don't require much action on your part; they just need to be left to simmer on the stove and you can get on with whatever else requires your attention at home. Plus, a large pot of stock can be portioned, frozen and refurbished into many more meals. An investment made for your delicious and convenient future!

This book is largely inspired by the Asian pantry where ingredients abound, with many dishes given a fun, modern twist. #NoRules. This is reflective of the current state of our increasingly digital and global world, where the home cook now has access to a global pantry stockpile. We also get inspiration from the world wide web daily and can access the creativity of someone miles away in a single click. Isn't this exchange of ideas amazing?

Here, for our modern Asian feast, we use smoky fish sauce to marinate our steaks (page 60), add a square of umami-laden kombu to some congee we're making (page 88), and combine some shavings of parmesan cheese and a squeeze of lime over Chinese waxed sausages and scallops (page 42). And for something sweet, we use some Asian preserved plums in a sticky pudding-esque cake (page 138). That's the fun of having a global pantry, isn't it? We get to flex our creative juices, experiment in the kitchen and, most importantly, actually enjoy the process.

For times that require the soothing comfort of the familiar, we have grains of jasmine rice suspended in a seafood stock (page 133), fluffy tomato eggs (page 58), cheesy baked pork chop rice (page 78), and a comforting fish congee (page 91) that tastes like it came out of an esteemed restaurant in Hong Kong.

As home cooks, our kitchen isn't like a restaurant's where the same dishes are churned out several times a day, seven days a week. And let's be frank, these days, we might not even have the energy to cook daily. So this leftover situation is something we know all too well — what on earth shall we do with the rest of the cured ham in the packet, the remaining glass noodles or that half a chunk of radish sitting in the fridge? So while we're dealing with whatever else life throws at us, we're also figuring out what to do with leftovers and what to make for our next meal. To salvage this guilt-inducing situation, I've included a "Continuing the Feast" guide with each recipe, which links you up with other recipes here that also make use of, say, Ingredient X.

As such, this becomes your continuous Asian-inspired modern feast. The recipes and ideas here are merely suggestions meant to stir your imaginations, tingle your taste buds, and tease forth your creativity as you whip up your own meals around your dining table.

From one home cook to another,

Lace

For Review Only

IN THE PANTRY

SAUCES, SEASONING AND OIL

OIL

Unless specified otherwise, I use mostly canola oil in these recipes. Feel free to substitute with another neutral-tasting oil of your preference or dietary requirement.

SALT

The salt used here is fine sea salt. If using any other type of salt, e.g. table salt, which tends to be way saltier, do make the necessary adjustments.

LIGHT SOY SAUCE

Soy sauce is indispensable in any Asian kitchen. Even when the food cupboard is empty or sparse, you will find light soy sauce in the pantry of an Asian home. Just a trickle of it over a simple dish, such as plain rice or a fried egg, elevates it. This is made with soy beans that have been fermented. I recommend testing a few brands to find one you like best. A good light soy sauce should have more complexity than just plain saltiness. There are notes of sweetness and sourness, and not just a straight, harsh and grating saltiness.

DARK SOY SAUCE

This is darker, thicker and sweeter than light soy sauce. Use this to add a tinge of sweetness and to make things look more appetising with a darker, caramelised colour.

FISH SAUCE

This book is basically built on this magical condiment — I'm not joking! A good fish sauce should consist of only anchovies and salt, which are left to ferment in barrels until this amber liquid gold results. Add a dash of it to anything and it will instantly taste better. Magic. In this book, it's used in pretty much everything to add a saltiness and a funky note of umami.

SRIRACHA

This now ubiquitous condiment is a pungent sauce with a tart edge to it. Just a squeeze of this can rescue anything bland. You can combine this spicy, punchy sauce with mayonnaise, sour cream or even yoghurt to make a creamy dip. It can also work on its own as a dipping sauce served on the side with any grilled meat or noodle dishes.

NAM PRIK PAO

This is a Thai chilli paste that's sweet, salty and spicy with a sticky jammy consistency. You can find these easily at Thai grocery shops or supermarkets. This is the thing you add to give red tom yum its signature colour. You could also dollop some into quick stir-fries or noodle dishes.

THAI CHILLI FLAKES

These ground up Thai chilli flakes have a rusty red hue to them and come speckled with the lethal seeds of the dried chilli. They are potent: a small sprinkling goes a long way. These can be found easily at Thai supermarkets. Substitute with any chilli flakes that have got substantial heat.

THAI PALM SUGAR

The sap of sugar palm, this is used to sweeten many dishes in South East Asian cooking. It adds a more complex, butterscotch note of sweetness to dishes and is particularly lovely in salad dressings. It comes either as a paste, which dissolves more easily, or as a small light-coloured cake that you shave down with a knife before using. Use in place of regular sugar to sweeten curries, stews, teas and desserts.



For Review Only

MOSTLY GREENS

“One of the very nicest things about life is the way we must regularly stop whatever it is we are doing and devote our attention to eating.”

– LUCIANO PAVAROTTI



FRESH SALAD ROLLS WITH PRAWN AND AVOCADO

Tons of fresh herbs and greens are nestled in lightly moistened rice paper, rolled up with some prawns and avocado, and then dipped in this bright, citrusy sauce. It's like a portable salad burrito (kinda). The lemongrass dipping sauce contains three types of citrus fruits, which lend a unique blend of tart-sweetness. My favourite way to serve this is SUPER chilled. Cover the rolls with cling film and stash them in the fridge for a couple of hours to get them chilled to the core. It's the perfect (and healthy) treat for a scorching hot day.

MAKES 6-8 ROLLS

8-10 prawns

A bunch of fresh herbs (basil, cilantro, mint, etc. – I used basil and mint here.)

100 g assortment of vegetables (lettuce, carrot matchsticks, red pepper — anything you fancy. I've kept things simple here with just some lettuce.)

1 avocado

6-8 sheets rice paper rounds

THREE-CITRUS LEMONGRASS DIPPING SAUCE

2 stalks lemongrass, bottom halves only, minced

1 bird's eye chilli, finely minced

2 Tbsp fish sauce

1 1/2 Tbsp white sugar

1 1/2 Tbsp water

2 Tbsp orange juice

2 Tbsp calamansi juice

1 Tbsp lime juice

Continuing the Feast

Avocado is used in Forbidden Rice Grain Bowl (p 72).

Let's start by prepping the dipping sauce. For that, combine the lemongrass, chilli, fish sauce, white sugar, water and citrus juices. Let them hang out while you get on with making your rolls.

Poach the prawns briefly in a pot of boiling water. When they turn pink and curl up, immediately switch off the heat and transfer them to a bowl of iced water. I like soaking prawns this way to ensure they have a bouncy texture.

Prep your herbs and veggies by washing and drying them, then laying them all out on a wide plate.

Peel and core the avocado, then slice it into thin strips. Set this aside too.

Fill a tiny bowl with water. Place a large round plate in front of you and lay out a sheet of rice paper. Moisten the entire surface of the rice paper on both sides by dipping your fingers into the water and running them slowly over the sheet. Do this carefully, ensuring the rice paper is about 80 per cent moistened and not too wet, or it'll become too tacky to handle. You'll get the hang of it after a while.

With the rougher side of the sheet facing up, place a prawn horizontally near the top centre of the sheet. This lets the prawn peek through the translucent rice sheet when it's rolled up. Add a slice of avocado, then pile on the herbs and veggies.

Fold the left and right flaps of the sheet in towards the centre. Slowly, start rolling downwards from the side further from you. Since the rice paper is moistened, gently press the open edges against the roll to seal it. That's one roll done. Repeat until all your ingredients are used up.

Cover with cling film and chill in the refrigerator for about an hour or more if you have the patience and time. Serve chilled with the dipping sauce. You'll never go back to store-bought rolls.

MANGO SALAD WITH PRAWNS

In Hoi An, one of the most memorable dishes I had was a green mango salad. The shreds of fruit were spruced up with a refreshing calamansi dressing, tons of fresh herbs and shards of crisp prawn crackers. These airy crackers add textural dimension to the salad and when dipped lightly in the dressing, they act as the most ethereal, fleeting flavour-delivery vehicle as they dissolve on your palate. To shred the mango, you can use a mandoline, a food processor with a shredding blade or julienne it with your knife. My favourite way to get these shreds is to use this peeler-grater contraption I discovered at one of the morning markets in Vietnam. I simply run the scalloped edges against the fruit and out strews perfectly julienned slices.

SERVES 2 AS A STARTER OR 1 AS A SALAD-ISH MEAL

8–10 prawns, peeled

1 green mango, about 700 g

A bunch of cilantro and mint

Prawn crackers for serving

2–3 Tbsp peanuts for garnishing, roughly chopped

Crispy fried shallots for garnishing

DRESSING

2 Tbsp white sugar

2 Tbsp fish sauce

3 Tbsp calamansi juice

1 small red chilli, finely minced

Continuing the Feast

Green mango is used in Asian Slaw (p 28).



First, make the dressing by mixing the sugar, fish sauce, calamansi juice and red chilli together. Set aside.

Poach the prawns briefly in a pot of boiling water. When they turn pink and curl, immediately switch off the heat and transfer to a bowl of iced water. I like soaking prawns this way to ensure they have a bouncy texture.

Peel and shred the mango using a mandoline, a food processor with the shredding attachment or go old school with just your knife and cutting board.

Dip a few slivers of mango into the dressing to taste. Adjust the seasoning to account for the level of tartness in the mango you use. Taste and make sure you're happy with the end result.

To assemble, toss the mango, dressing and fresh herbs together. Pile onto serving plates, then arrange the prawns and prawn crackers on the side of the salad. Scatter crispy fried shallots and peanuts over. Enjoy!

For Review Only



For Review Only

SURF, TURF AND MORE

“The pleasures of the table belong to all times and ages, to every country and every day; they go hand in hand with all our other pleasures, outlast them, and remain to console us for their loss.”

— JEAN ANTHELME BRILLAT-SAVARIN

PRAWNS IN COCONUT WATER

During dinner in Ho Chi Minh City one night, I came across this dish of shell-on prawns poached ever so gently in coconut water alongside some slices of ginger. It was light, delicate and sweet — nothing too heavy or in your face — and everyone at the table was blown away by the dish. The coconut water really enhances the inherent sweetness of the prawns and the resulting juices act as a dipping sauce for your seafood. Since there's really not much to this dish, get your hands on the best quality coconut water you can find — preferably from freshly cracked coconuts.

SERVES 2–4 AS A SIDE DISH

16–20 prawns

180 ml coconut water

40 g ginger, peeled, chopped
into chunks and bruised

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt

Snip off the prawn feelers and any sharp edges of the shell.

If you want to, you can devein the prawns by making a slit down the back of their shells and removing the black vein. Wash thoroughly and set them aside in a steaming bowl or shallow dish. Make sure the dish is able to contain the coconut water without overflowing.

Add the coconut water, ginger chunks and salt to the prawns.

Steam over high heat for $3\frac{1}{2}$ –4 minutes, depending on the size of your prawns, until they are tenderly cooked through.

Enjoy the prawns with their coconut broth.

COCONUT WATER RICE

Jasmine rice cooked this way is particularly lovely. The sweet nuttiness of the coconut water pairs well with the aromatic rice grains. This is a nice twist to plain rice, and it echoes the subtle coconut flavours in dishes like the pork belly stewed in coconut water and the steamed prawns above. Try serving this in place of regular white rice next time for a change! If you're scaling the recipe up or down, just stick to the ratio of 1 cup rice to $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups coconut water.

SERVES 4

400 g Thai jasmine rice, rinsed

500 ml coconut water

Place rice and coconut water in a rice cooker. Use the usual setting for cooking white rice.

When rice is done, fluff it up with a rice paddle and serve.

Continuing the Feast

Coconut water is used in Pork Belly Stew (p 66).



THE ULTIMATE PRAWN TOAST

Is there anything better than deep-fried bread? When you deep-fry white bread, it becomes crispy and filled with large airy pockets. Bless. Here's the ultimate prawn toast so that you have an excuse to consume deep-fried bread. The prawn paste topping is bouncy, crunchy and so flavourful. You can achieve this by the way you work the paste (similar to how the filling is made for wontons) and by sneaking a little lard into it. Each slice of bread is then heaped with an outrageously generous mound of prawn paste, before being smothered in aromatic sesame seeds. When they're deep-frying, you will know they're just about done because you will smell how fragrant they get. Please don't use any fancy bread here – stale white bread is perfect for this.

SERVES 2– 4 AS A SNACK, DEPENDING ON
HOW LIGHT A SNACKER YOU ARE

2 slices white bread, slightly stale
2–3 Tbsp white sesame seeds
Canola oil for deep-frying

PRAWN PASTE FILLING

200 g prawn meat
15 g lard (optional, but good)
2 stalks spring onions, minced
1/2 tsp salt
Ground white pepper to taste
1/2–3/4 tsp light soy sauce,
or to taste
1 tsp Shaoxing wine
1 tsp sesame oil
1 tsp cornstarch
1 egg white

Devein the prawns by making a slit down their backs and removing the black vein. Wash and pat dry with paper towels.

Using the flat side of your knife, press down against the prawns and smash them so that they are flattened. Then, you'll want to hack at the meat until it becomes paste-like. Start chopping diagonally in one direction, then going in the other. It's a very natural and easy move to do, much quicker than, say, getting clear cuts of tiny prawn meat. Set aside in a large mixing bowl.

Finely mince the lard and add it to the prawn paste.

To that, add in the spring onions, salt, pepper, soy sauce, Shaoxing wine, sesame oil, cornstarch and egg white. Using clean hands or a pair of chopsticks, keep stirring the mixture until it lightens and becomes tacky. You'll feel the texture change as it becomes a more cohesive mass.

When you are able to handle the sticky mass like a ball, pick it up and slam it hard against the bowl. Do this 10–12 times to ensure a pleasantly bouncy texture for your prawn toast.

Cut the crusts off the bread. Spread the paste equally on the two bread slices, then cover with sesame seeds. Cut each slice of bread into 4 triangles or squares.

Get ready to fry your prawn toast. Add sufficient oil into your cooking vessel of choice and allow it to heat up. You can check if the oil is ready by dipping a large wooden chopstick or spatula into the oil. There should be light bubbles forming around it. If it bubbles too vigorously, reduce the heat.

When the oil is hot, add your bread pieces with the paste side down. When the paste side is nicely golden and puffed up, use a pair of tongs to flip the bread and fry the other side as well. You'll know it's done when you can smell the aroma and the bread pieces are a beautiful golden colour. Drain the toast on paper towels while you fry the remaining pieces.

Plate up and serve alongside any chilli sauce you desire.

For Review Only



For Review Only

RICE, NOODZ AND OTHER CARBS

“I have made a lot of mistakes falling in love,
and regretted most of them, but never the
potatoes that went with them.”

— NORA EPHRON

WAXED MEATS RICE (CLAYPOT RICE)



This traditional HK dish is typically eaten during months when the weather is cold and the claypot, piping hot, brings about warmth and energy from its fiery heat and oily cured meats. This recipe was generously shared by the highly skilled and talented Tonny Chan, who runs his namesake Tonny restaurant in Geylang. He cures his own pork belly there, dangling them from the ceiling above his cooking station. He also makes a unique and superb rendition of this using Canadian wild rice wrapped in and perfumed with lotus leaf. Do pre-order this should you wish to it — and you should!

But if you're making this at home instead, all you really need is a very good heavy-bottomed claypot or a Dutch oven. Yep, your trusty Dutch oven will get you that crisp golden brown layer of rice at the bottom of the pan.

SERVES 2–4

300 g jasmine rice

350 ml water

10 g ginger, peeled and cut into thin strips

2 stalks spring onions, white portion only, chopped + more for garnishing

2 Chinese waxed sausage (*lup cheong*), sliced

1 liver Chinese waxed liver sausage (*lup cheong*), sliced

80–100 g cured pork belly, sliced (available at Chinese dried goods shops)

SAUCE

3 Tbsp dark soy sauce

1 Tbsp light soy sauce

2 Tbsp sesame oil or garlic oil or lard

2 Tbsp water

A dash of ground white pepper

Continuing the Feast

Chinese waxed sausage is used in Seared Scallops (p 42) and Radish Cake (p 82).

We start by prepping and soaking our rice. This soaking period allows the rice to cook more evenly. After rinsing and draining your rice well, place it in your cooking vessel of choice — a claypot or Dutch oven — then add the water. Leave to soak for 1–2 hours.

While the rice is soaking, let's prepare our sauce. Simply mix the dark and light soy sauces, oil, water and pepper together. Taste and adjust the seasoning as desired. Set aside.

When you are ready to cook the rice, cover the pot and let it simmer on the lowest possible heat for about 15 minutes, until the water is almost completely absorbed by the rice. Strew the ginger and spring onion slices over — these aromatics will eventually soften in the heat and perfume the rice. Then, arrange the sliced waxed meats and cured pork belly on top, cover the pot and turn the heat to medium. Cook for another 10–15 minutes, allowing the rice at the bottom to crisp up and form a crust. You will hear a sizzling, crackling sound, which means that our rice is getting crisp at the bottom!

Switch off the heat and leave to rest for 5–10 minutes. Serve with the sauce on the side for drizzling over, and garnish with more chopped spring onions if desired.

You know that coveted golden brown, crisped parts of rice touching the bottom of the pan, that textural contrast so prized by many cultures all around the world? Yep, all you really need is a very good heavy-bottomed claypot or a Dutch oven to achieve that.

HK BAKED PORK CHOP RICE

One of the best things that came out of launching my first book was that I got to meet and become friends with more like-minded, food-obsessed people. One of them is Sandra (IG: @Sandrasim), an incredible cook and host who also runs a couple of bars (@SumYiTai). Their retro-chic interiors are all designed by her. This recipe here is contributed by Sandra, and is inspired by one of her favourite dishes in Hong Kong, where she used to live.

If you've never tasted this dish before, I'll break it down for you. The base layer consists of fragrant golden egg fried rice, followed by a couple of juicy marinated pork chops that are smothered with a tomato-ey ketchup sauce. The entire mass is then bound together by stringy, gooey cheese. It's the sort of dish that would please kids and inner-kids alike.

SERVES 4

500 g pork chops, about 4 chops

4 Tbsp canola oil or any other neutral-tasting oil

160 g grated mozzarella cheese

MARINADE

2 cloves garlic, peeled and minced

1 tsp minced ginger

A dash of ground white pepper

2 tsp cornstarch

1 tsp white sugar

1 Tbsp oyster sauce

1 Tbsp Shaoxing wine

1 Tbsp sesame oil

1 Tbsp Maggi seasoning

EGG FRIED RICE

350 g cooked rice, left overnight

3 eggs

½ tsp salt

1 tsp sesame oil

1 tsp chicken powder

Ground white pepper to taste

2 Tbsp canola oil

Light soy sauce to taste

TOMATO SAUCE

8–10 Tbsp ketchup, or to taste

1 tsp Maggi seasoning

1 tsp light soy sauce

2 Tbsp white sugar

1 tsp chicken powder

A dash of white pepper

1 yellow onion, peeled, halved and each half cut into 3–4 chunks lengthwise

3 tomatoes, cut into chunks

We start by tenderising and marinating the pork chops. Using the back of a knife, a rolling pin or a meat mallet, you wanna pound the chops until they're slightly flattened. Combine all the marinade ingredients and pour it over the chops. Leave to marinate for a couple of hours or, ideally, overnight.

For the egg fried rice, place the rice in a large mixing bowl and add eggs, salt, sesame oil, chicken powder and pepper. Mix until well combined.

Heat a wok or large saucepan over high heat and add the cooking oil. When the oil is hot, add the rice mixture and stir-fry until lightly golden brown and charred. Add soy sauce according to taste. Transfer to an ovenproof baking pan — a casserole or cast-iron pan would work as well. We'll get back to this in a bit.

To a large sauté pan, add 4 tablespoonfuls of oil and heat over medium-high heat until the oil is hot. Using a pair of tongs, place your chops in the pan. Sear on both sides until nicely golden. You don't have to worry about them being fully cooked at this point, since they'll be finished off in the oven. Arrange the seared chops on top of the egg fried rice.

To make the tomato sauce, mix the ketchup, Maggi seasoning, soy sauce, sugar, chicken powder and pepper together in a bowl. In the same pan used for searing the chops, heat onion chunks over high heat. Stir them around before adding the tomatoes and cooking for about 45 seconds.

Add ketchup mixture and about 150 ml water. Let the mixture come to a boil and reduce until it thickens, about a couple of minutes. Taste and adjust for seasoning. If you want a stronger tomato flavour, add an extra 1–2 tablespoonfuls of ketchup. If you want a thinner sauce, splash in more water a little at a time, until the desired consistency is achieved.



Continuing the Feast

Tomatoes and ketchup are used in Tomato Egg (p 58).

Chicken powder is used in Radish Cake (p 82) and Vietnamese Chicken Porridge (p 88).

Smother the chops with the tomato sauce and top generously with mozzarella cheese. You can make this ahead of time and leave it in the refrigerator overnight or a few hours until you're ready to serve.

To serve, preheat the oven to 175°C. Bake for 8–10 minutes, until the cheese gets all bubbly, golden and burnished.

Serve and dig into your bowl of gooey, cheesy carbs.

For Review Only

SOUPY STUFF

“For me, a good bowl of pho will
always make me happy.”

— ANTHONY BOURDAIN

VEGETARIAN PHO (PHO CHAY)

Joycelyn Shu, a culinary instructor and writer, has had a long-held fascination with the vegetarian foodways of South East Asia. In particular, she’s passionate about the Vietnamese noodle soup, *pho chay* (vegetarian pho). While it is relatively easy to find a good bowl of *pho bo* (beef pho) or *pho gà* (chicken pho), it’s far more difficult to get your hands on a bowl of great *pho chay*. The solution is clear: make it at home, with a vegetable stock brewed from scratch. A great *pho chay* broth, the kind you want to lick every last drop of, takes as much time and effort to craft as a meat-based broth. There are no shortcuts to get this broth with flavours teased from root vegetables, dried mushrooms, a cast of warm spices and charred aromatics. This is a recipe that Joycelyn has been refining for years now; she hopes you will like it. If you’re pressed for time, you can choose to make just a few of the toppings.

- SERVES 4
- RICH VEGETABLE STOCK**
15 dried Chinese mushrooms, preferably flower shiitake (*hua gu*)
Water as needed, at room temperature
4 Tbsp neutral vegetable oil
4 stalks celery, ends trimmed, thinly sliced
2 carrots, peeled, trimmed and thinly sliced
2 onions, peeled, trimmed and thinly sliced
4 cloves garlic, peeled, trimmed and smashed
1½ tsp fine sea salt
400 g fresh shiitake mushrooms or portobello mushrooms, diced and stems removed

BROTH
1 Tbsp whole black peppercorns
1 Tbsp coriander seeds
6 star anise
6 cloves
2 sticks cinnamon
2 onions, peeled, trimmed and quartered
1 head garlic, papery outer layer peeled off, top trimmed to expose flesh
7.5-cm knob young ginger, unpeeled, cleaned and halved
2 stalks scallions, white portion only, trimmed and smashed

We begin with the rich vegetable stock. Place the dried mushrooms and 2 litres water in a bowl. Cover with cling film and soak for 12–24 hours at room temperature. Strain and reserve the soaking liquid. Trim and discard the mushroom stems.

Heat the vegetable oil in a large heavy-bottomed pot over medium-high heat. Add the celery, carrots, onions, garlic and salt, then sauté for about 10 minutes, stirring occasionally, until wilted and slightly golden.

Add the fresh mushrooms as well as the soaked dried mushrooms. Sauté for another 5 minutes, or until the fresh mushrooms have released their juices. Add the reserved soaking liquid and 2 litres water. Bring to the boil over high heat before turning the heat to low and simmering for about 1 hour with the pot partially covered.

Let the stock cool slightly before straining through a fine-mesh sieve. Do this in batches and press firmly on the vegetables to extract as much flavour as possible. Pick out the dried mushrooms and discard the other vegetables. To get rid of any grit, strain the stock a second time through a fine-mesh sieve lined with a muslin cloth. Set aside 4 tablespoonfuls for the braised mushrooms and return the remaining stock to the pot.

Now, to make the broth. In a small frying pan over low heat, toast the peppercorns, coriander seeds, star anise, cloves and cinnamon together until aromatic. Set toasted spices aside.

In a large frying pan over medium heat, char the cut sides of the onions, garlic, ginger and scallions until deeply caramelised, blistered in spots and aromatic.

- 1 portion rich vegetable stock, setting aside 4 Tbsp for the braised mushrooms
7 stalks lemongrass, trimmed and spliced in half
6 slices galangal
2 dried red chillies
8 kaffir lime leaves
1 Tbsp raw cane sugar, or to taste
4 Tbsp light soy sauce, or to taste
1 tsp fine sea salt, or to taste

BRAISED MUSHROOMS
15 cooked dried Chinese mushrooms, from making the rich vegetable stock
1 Tbsp Shaoxing wine
1 Tbsp raw cane sugar, or to taste
4 Tbsp light soy sauce, or to taste
4 Tbsp rich vegetable stock

SMOKY KING OYSTER MUSHROOMS AND TEMPEH
4 Tbsp light soy sauce
4 Tbsp maple syrup
1 Tbsp liquid smoke seasoning
4 Tbsp Shaoxing wine
800 g large king oyster mushroom, trimmed, cut into 0.5-cm thick slices
225 g tempeh, cut into 0.5-cm thick slices
Toasted white sesame oil for searing

In a large pot, add charred aromatics, toasted spices and vegetable stock. Throw in the lemongrass, galangal, dried chillies and lime leaves. Bring to the boil over high heat before turning the heat to low and simmering for about 30 minutes with the pot partially covered.

Strain the broth and season with sugar, soy sauce and salt, adding more to taste as desired. Leave to cool and store in an airtight container for up to 5 days.

For the braised mushrooms, cut the mushrooms into 1-cm thick slices. Combine with the Shaoxing wine, sugar, soy sauce and stock in a small saucepan over medium-low heat and braise with the pot partially covered until the juices have reduced to a syrupy consistency. Adjusting the seasoning to taste if necessary.

For the smoky king oyster mushrooms and tempeh, combine the soy sauce, maple syrup, liquid smoke seasoning and Shaoxing wine to make a marinade. Coat the mushrooms with 5 tablespoonfuls of marinade. Separately, coat the tempeh with 2–4 tablespoonfuls of marinade. Cover mushrooms and tempeh with cling film and leave to marinate at room temperature for 1–2 hours.

Drain the mushroom and tempeh slices and pat dry. Heat a drizzle of sesame oil in a non-stick skillet over medium-high heat. In a single layer, fry the mushroom and tempeh slices on both sides until crispy and lightly caramelized. Do this in batches, wiping the skillet clean and adding more sesame oil as necessary before each batch. Deglaze the skillet with leftover marinade if you would like the mushroom and tempeh pieces to taste more assertively of the marinade’s flavours.

VEGETABLE SLICES

2 carrots, peeled, trimmed and cut into 0.5-cm slices

500 g Chinese white radish, peeled, trimmed, quartered and cut into 0.5-cm slices

TO SERVE

240 g dried flat rice noodles

A large handful of bean sprouts, blanched

1 block deep-fried firm tofu (*tau kwa*), cut into 0.5-cm slabs

1 onion, peeled, trimmed and thinly sliced, then soaked in water for 15 minutes and drained

1 red chilli, thinly sliced

2 large limes, halved

2 stalks spring onions, trimmed and thinly sliced

Large handfuls of fresh herbs such as coriander, mint or Thai basil

Crispy fried shallots for garnishing

Crispy fried garlic for garnishing

Continuing the Feast

Coriander seeds are used in Chicken Pho (p 122).

Cinnamon sticks and star anise are used in Tea-Smoked Duck Legs (p 52), Braised Beef Brisket (p 63) and Chilli Beef Noodlez (p 98).

Galangal is used in Seared Snapper (p 40), Laab Meatballs (p 64), Tom Yum Spaghetti (p 104), Creamy Tom Yum Goong (p 112) and Vegan Tom Yum (p 130).

For the vegetable slices, bring the broth to the boil, then add the carrot and radish. Turn the heat to low and simmer for 10–15 minutes until the vegetables are tender (but not mushy). Use a skimmer to gently lift the vegetables out to set aside.

To serve, cook the rice noodles according to the package instructions. Portion into serving bowls and ladle the broth over the noodles. Top with braised mushrooms, smoky king oyster mushroom and tempeh slices, and vegetable slices. Add bean sprouts, tofu slabs and onion slices. Garnish with cut chilli, limes, spring onions, herbs and crispy fried shallots and garlic.

If desired, serve with hoisin and sriracha as dipping sauces. You can also serve this with marinated drunken eggs.



For Review Only

SWEET SOME- THINGS

“A party without cake is just a meeting.”

— NORA EPHRON

MELISSA’S BEST CINNAMON ROLLS

This recipe comes from my amazing baker friend Melissa Joy, whom I met in southern Italy. We hit it off instantly, sharing a passion for pastries, pork fat and books. Melissa is one of the best bakers I have the privilege of knowing — I mean, she makes glazed dried fruit pastry rolls with duck fat pastry! Midway through one of our conversations, cinnamon rolls were mentioned and with a glint in her eyes, she handed me the recipe for these babies, telling me that I HAD to make them. The recipe is straightforward enough but the secret lies in the ratios, which is what makes this basically foolproof. She’s tinkered with the recipe to come up with the perfect fat ratio in the dough to ensure a tender end-product. So even if you’re utterly clueless about the intricate workings of bread baking, this recipe will still work. This bread dough is as forgiving as your grandma.

MAKES 8–10 ROLLS

DOUGH

- 400 g plain flour
- 200 ml milk
- 1½ tsp instant yeast
- 65 g white sugar
- 60 g unsalted butter, melted
- 1 egg yolk
- ¾ tsp salt

CINNAMON SUGAR

- 80 g light brown sugar
- 1½ Tbsp ground cinnamon
- 75 g unsalted butter

CREAM CHEESE FROSTING

- 250 g cream cheese, softened
- 30 g unsalted butter, softened
- 30 g condensed milk
- 40 g icing sugar

Continuing the Feast
Condensed milk is used in Thai Milk Tea Roll Cake (p 146) and Ginger Milk Pudding (p 151).

To make the bread dough, place all the ingredients in a large mixing bowl. Using a stand mixer with a hook attachment, mix and knead over medium-low speed (about speed 3 or 4) for 5–6 minutes until everything comes together and forms a smooth dough. When poked with a finger, it should spring back lightly.

Pull the rough edges of the dough down and tuck them underneath to form a ball. Cover the mixing bowl with cling film or a tea towel and leave to rise until doubled in volume, about 1–1.5 hours.

Before you begin rolling out the dough, prepare the cinnamon sugar. Mix the sugar and cinnamon together in a bowl. Let the butter stand at room temperature to soften.

Transfer the dough that’s doubled in size onto a clean work surface. You can choose to lightly flour the work surface and a rolling pin, but you can get away without doing so. Gently press and lightly flatten the dough into a rectangle. Using a rolling pin, roll out the dough into a 40 x 25-cm rectangle, with the length parallel to you. If you find that the dough springs back or is difficult to roll, leave it alone for 5–10 minutes before trying again. It should roll out quite easily now.

Spread the softened butter evenly on the dough and scatter the cinnamon sugar on top.

Roll the dough along its length away from you to form a long log. Keep tucking the dough as you roll to make sure it’s snug. When you’ve reached the other end, pinch the two edges together to seal the log. You can also moisten them with a little water to help with the sealing.

Turn the log so that the sealed edge sits against the work surface. Cut into log into 8–10 equal rolls.

Generously butter an 8-in (20-cm) round or square baking pan and arrange the rolls in it with the spiral side up. Cover with a tea towel and leave to rise until doubled in size, about 1 hour or so.



Alternatively, leave to proof overnight in the refrigerator and pop them into the oven the next morning for freshly baked cinnamon rolls.

To bake, preheat the oven to 175°C. Bake for 20–25 minutes until golden brown. Remove and set aside to cool while you prepare the cream cheese frosting.

Using a spatula, mash the cream cheese and butter together until combined. Add the condensed milk and icing sugar and whisk together until it takes on more volume. Taste and adjust the sweetness as desired.

Slather the frosting on top of the cinnamon buns and devour while everything’s still sticky, gooey and warm.



COCONUT PANNA COTTA WITH LIME CURD AND MANGO

This is a contribution from the doyenne of desserts, Tish Boyle. Anyone who has read *The Cake Book* or *Flavorful* (incidentally, I contributed a recipe to that book!) will know how exacting and passionate about desserts Tish is. I have never followed a recipe of hers that didn't turn out well. When I approached her, Tish was so game for the challenge of coming up with a dessert that incorporates Asian ingredients and here, she's set out to combine some of Thailand's most refreshing flavours. She says, "This dessert is a dance of intense acidity and subtle sweetness. The bottom layer is a sweet coconut panna cotta, and it's topped with a tangy kaffir lime curd. Sweet, fresh mango chunks and a crunchy macadamia-coconut streusel round out this celebration of flavours."

SERVES 6

1 mango, peeled and cut into cubes
6 sprigs cilantro

COCONUT PANNA COTTA

2 sheets gelatine, soaked in iced water for 10 minutes

240 ml coconut cream

35 g white sugar

1/4 tsp salt

LIME CURD

285 g white sugar

160 ml lime juice

Zest of 2 limes

6 kaffir lime leaves

90 g unsalted butter

2 eggs

4 egg yolks

160 g heavy cream

CRUMBLE

40 g plain flour

40 g coconut sugar

35 g desiccated coconut

30 g salted macadamia nuts,
roughly chopped

55 g unsalted butter, at room temperature

Continuing the Feast

Coconut sugar is used in *Brown Butter Coconut Sugar Madeleines* (p 143) and *Milk Chocolate Chunk Shortbread* (p 144).

Heavy cream is used in *Sticky Plum Pudding* (p 138) and *Thai Milk Tea Roll Cake* (p 146).

Desiccated coconut is used in *Sam's Chicken Satay* (p 54) and *Thai Steak Salad* (p 60).

Make the panna cotta. While the gelatine sheets are soaking, heat the coconut cream, sugar and salt over low heat. When the mixture comes to a boil, squeeze the gelatine sheets to remove the excess water before adding them to the saucepan. Stir until they dissolve, then remove from heat and portion equally into 6 serving glasses. Leave to cool to room temperature before chilling to set.

Make the lime curd. In a medium saucepan, whisk together 150 g sugar, lime juice, lime zest, lime leaves and butter until combined. Bring the mixture to the boil over medium-high heat.

In a medium bowl, whisk together 135 g sugar, eggs and egg yolks. Slowly pour half of the hot lime mixture into the eggs, whisking constantly. Pour the mixture into the saucepan, whisking as you go, and reduce the heat to medium-low. Stirring constantly with a heatproof spatula, cook until thickened, about 2–3 minutes. Remove from heat and strain through a fine-mesh sieve into a container. Cover, ensuring the cling film comes in direct contact with the mixture's surface, and chill until set, at least 2 hours.

Using an electric mixer with a whisk attachment (or a hand whisk, if you're feeling peppy), whisk the cream until medium peaks form. Gently fold the cream into the chilled lime mixture.

Preheat the oven to 175°C and line a baking tray.

Combine all the crumble ingredients in a bowl and mix until the butter is incorporated and the mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Spread on the prepared baking tray and bake until golden, about 10 minutes. Toss using a spatula and leave to cool completely.

Spoon 3 tablespoonfuls of the crumble on top of the panna cotta in each glass. Set leftover crumble aside. Spoon or pipe the lime curd over, top with some diced mango, then cover each glass and refrigerate for at least 1 hour. Right before serving, top each one with some of the remaining crumble and a sprig of cilantro.

For Review Only



*“Travelling — it leaves you speechless,
then turns you into a storyteller.”*

— IBN BATTUTA