

A close-up photograph of a traditional stone mortar and pestle. The mortar is filled with a thick, bright red chili paste, likely made from fresh chilies and other spices. The pestle, which is dark and weathered, is positioned diagonally across the mortar. The entire scene is set against a background of a newspaper with Thai text, which is slightly out of focus. The title text is overlaid on the image in a white, elegant serif font.

The Food of Northern Thailand

Austin Bush

The recipes featured in my book, The Food of Northern Thailand,

were sourced from cooks, chefs, homemakers, academics, moms, dads, and community leaders in northern Thailand. I'm especially grateful to the vendors and restaurateurs; the recipes are the most precious resource these people have, and the fact that

they were willing to share them with me was a huge honor. These are also the very same dishes that visitors to northern Thailand can seek out and taste, and the following is a list of the restaurants and dishes featured in *The Food of Northern Thailand*.



Chiang Mai

[KHAO SOI JAY ME/ข้าวซอยเจ้เม](#)

SOI 13, THANON CHAROEN PRATHET, CHIANG MAI-[MAPS](#)

+6685 188 8114 8 A.M.-3 P.M. TUE-SUN

This shophouse restaurant is where I learned how to make “ancient” *khao soi*, allegedly a precursor to the coconut milk-based curry noodle dish that’s emerged as the most famous dish in northern Thailand. It isn’t part of the restaurant’s daily menu, but Jay Me’s mild Muslim-Chinese-style *khao soi* and other Chinese-influenced dishes are excellent.

[KHAO-SOI PRINCE/ข้าวซอยปรินส์](#)

79 MOO 9, BAN THUNG MIN NOI, CHIANG MAI-[MAPS](#)

+6689 435 3991 10 A.M.-6 P.M. SAT-THU

My recipe for *khao soi*, a dish of wheat noodles in a curry broth, is an amalgam of the bowls served at several restaurants in Chiang Mai. But had they been willing to share it, I would simply have gone with the version served at Khao-Soi Prince—in my opinion the best bowl of *khao soi* in the country. The broth is mild, meaty, and rich with a subtle background of dried spice, and a bowl features the really excellent wheat-and-egg noodles that are still made in-house.

[LAAP KHOM TON KHAM/ลาบخمตันขาม](#)

181/1 SAN SAI NOI, CHIANG MAI-[MAPS](#)

+6653 492 185 +6689 755 5531 7 A.M.-8 P.M.

This restaurant specializes in *laap*, a dish of minced meat, and other meat-heavy dishes, but they also dip into the broader northern Thai repertoire, including a deliciously tart and savory *naam phrik awng*, a dip of tomatoes and ground pork—the basis for the recipe in my book.

KHAO SOI JAY ME/ข้าวซอยเจ้เม



KHAO-SOI PRINCE/ข้าวซอยปรินส



LAAP KHOM TON KHAM/ลาบขมตันขาม



LAAP KAO CHAM CHAA/ลาบเก้าจ๋าจ๋า

[LAAP KAO CHAM CHAA/ลาบแก้วจำฉา](#)

THANON RATANAKOSIN, CHIANG MAI-[MAPS](#)

10 A.M. – MIDNIGHT

This raucous open-air place is a safe bet for just about anything northern Thai (Anthony Bourdain and Andy Ricker enjoyed a meal here while taping the northern Thailand episode of *Parts Unknown*) It's also the source of my recipe for *tam som oh*, a pounded salad of pomelo (a grapefruit-like citrus) and crab paste (a uniquely northern Thai condiment), although you'll want to ask them to go light on the sugar.

[OLD CHIANGMAI](#)

185/3 THANON THIPANET, CHIANG MAI-[MAPS](#)

+6653 202 993 7-10 P.M.

At this longstanding venue, you'll have the classic Chiang Mai tourist experience—deliciously inauthentic food coupled with traditional dance, the northern Thai equivalent of dinner theater.

AROON (RAI)/ร้านอรุณไร

45 THANON KOTCHASARN, CHIANG MAI-[MAPS](#)

+6653 276 947 NOON-9:30 P.M.

Although this restaurant has been around for decades and is probably the first place I tried northern Thai food back in 1998, most of its dishes are, admittedly, pretty mediocre. The exception is *naem khua kap khai*, a northern Thai-Chinese fusion of fermented pork flash-fried with egg, tomatoes, onion, and pickled garlic. It's tart, smoky, meaty, and delicious—one the best versions in Chiang Mai, and the basis for the recipe in my book.

[MIDNIGHT FRIED CHICKEN/ไก่ทอดเที่ยงคืน](#)

THANON KAMPHAENG DIN, CHIANG MAI-[MAPS](#)

10 P.M. – 5 A.M. MON-SAT

One of Chiang Mai's most legendary restaurants is this temple to deep-frying. Choose your protein—chicken, pork belly, sun-dried beef, among others—and it will be coupled with a pile of steaming sticky rice, a plate of crunchy pickled mustard greens, and a northern Thai-style dip.

[PANNIKA/พรรณีกา](#)

ROUTE 1089, MAE SAO-[MAPS](#)

+6653 899 084 9 A.M.-9 P.M.

Pannika, the epitome of the rural northern Thai grill, is where I learned how to make dishes such as *sai ua* (a grilled herbaceous pork sausage) and *aep awng aw* (pork brains and herbs grilled in banana leaf packages).

Chiang Rai

SUE HAI/ซือไห้

288 ROUTE 1130, DOI MAE SALONG-[MAPS](#)

+6689 429 4212 9 A.M.-10 P.M.

Located in the mountaintop hamlet of Doi Mae Salong, this place specializes in Chinese dishes ranging from the simple (a stir-fry of air-dried pork and fresh chilies) to the complicated (slices of pork belly steamed for hours on a pile of oolong tea and pickled greens), both of which made their way into my book.

[LUNG EED/ลาบไก่ลึงฮีด](#)

THANON WATPRANON, CHIANG RAI-[MAPS](#)

+6698 735 9412 11:30 A.M.-9 P.M.

From its tender, tofu-like texture to its unique spice mixture, Lung Eed's *laap kai*, a dish of minced chicken, is unique and delicious. But it's the dish's crispy, savory garnish, a tangle of deep-fried shallots, garlic, and chicken tendons, that takes it beyond exceptional.

[PA ORN/ป่าอ่อนข้าวซอยลึงสองปันนา](#)

SOI 6, THANON SAI KLANG, CHIANG KHONG-[MAPS](#)

+6681 034 1889 8 A.M.-4 P.M.

The signature dish here, *khao soi naam naa*, is really only available in the border town of Chiang Khong. But with its pleasantly oily, savory, rich topping, salty broth, and unique sides, it's well worth the drive—or to cook at home.

OLD CHIANGMAI



AROON (RAI)/ร้านอรุณไร



MIDNIGHT FRIED CHICKEN/ไก่ทอดเที่ยงคืน



PANNIKA/พรณิกา



SUE HAI/ซิวไห่



LUNG EED/ลาบไก่ลุงอี๊ด



PA ORN/ป้าอ่อนข้าวซอยลือสองปันนา



MAE HAE/แม่แห

Lampang

MAE HAE/แม่แห

1017 THANON UPPARAJ, LAMPANG-[MAPS](#)

+6654 221 904 10 A.M.-7:30 P.M.

Mae Hae is Lampang's oldest restaurant and serves virtually the entire northern Thai repertoire, from soups to salads. But a highlight is the *jaw phak kaat*, a soup of pork ribs, yu choy, and tomatoes with a laser-precise balance of sweet, salty, and tart flavors.

PAEW/ส้มตำ แป้วบ้านดง

147/2 SOI WAT BAN DONG, LAMPANG-[MAPS](#)

+6681 366 0916 10 A.M.-2 P.M. TUE-SUN

Locals come here for pounded salads, including *tam mamuang*, a dish of strips of tart mango pounded with a mortar and pestle along with a spice paste that also includes smoky dried fish—a dish featured in my book.

YAY FONG/ผัดไทยยายฟอง

229 THANON BOONYAWAT, LAMPANG-[MAPS](#)

+6689 266 9123 4:30-9 P.M.

Think you know *phat thai*? Think again. The version served at this stall in landlocked Lampang substitutes pork for shrimp, and honestly, might be better than the original.

PA BUNSRI/ขนมจีนป่าบุญศรี

THANON TALAD GAO, LAMPANG-[MAPS](#)

+6654 322 162 9 A.M.-3:30 P.M.

This decades-old restaurant specializes in *naam ngiaw*, a hearty, meaty, smoky, tart broth of pork ribs, fermented soybeans, and tomatoes served over noodles.

[KHUN MANEE/ข้าวแต๋นคุณมณี](#)

35 TH RATSADA, LAMAPANG-[MAPS](#)

+6654 312 272 7 A.M.-7 P.M.

Come to this homebound factory for *khao taen*, deep-fried rice cakes seasoned with watermelon juice and drizzled with palm sugar—one of the tastiest sweets in Thailand..

Mae Hong Son

[PAA JAANG/ร้านข้าวเส้นยายจ่างี](#)

OFF ROUTE 108, MAE HONG SON-[MAPS](#)

4-7 P.M.

Every afternoon, locals flock to this old wooden house for bowls of *khao sen*, a tart thin broth of tomatoes and pork served over thin, round rice noodles.

[PAA KHON/ข้าวเส้นป่าคนธ์](#)

16/1 THANON KHUNLUM PRAPHAT 1, MAE HONG SON-[MAPS](#)

+6681 602 3286 7 A.M.-3 P.M.

This roadside stall has earned a glowing reputation for its *khaang pawng*—crispy, golden, herbaceous fritters of green papaya, shallots, or banana blossom.

[PAA NII/ป่าณี](#)

9 PRADIT CHONG KHAM, MAE HONG SON-[MAPS](#)

9 A.M.-4 P.M.

The couple behind this homebound stall have been making Shan-style sweets for decades. Not only won't you find these dishes elsewhere in Thailand but they're among the most delicious desserts in the country.



PAEW/ส้มตำ แป้วบ้านดง



YAY FONG/ผัดไทยยายฟอง



PA BUNSRI/ขนมจีนป่าบุญศรี



KHUN MANEE/ข้าวแต่นคุณมณี



PAA JAANG/ร้านข้าวเส้นยายจำเริญ



PAA KHON/ข้าวเส้นปากนคร



PAA NII/ป้าณี



PHEN/เพ็ญ

PHEN/เพ็ญ

THANON WIANG MAI, MAE SARIANG-[MAPS](#)

+6653 681 765 8:30 A.M.-6 P.M.

One of northern Thailand's greatest grills, this is where I was taught how to make *jin tup*, beef that's been marinated in fish sauce, grilled, then thwacked with a hammer—to tenderize it, of course.

Phrae & Nan

[JIN SOT/จิ้นสด](#)

ROUTE 1023, PHRAE-[MAPS](#)

+6654 627 067 9 A.M.-9 P.M.

Unassuming Jin Sot (“Fresh Meat”) is one of the best meat shacks in northern Thailand. Everything is above average, but the *kaeng awm*, a meaty, herbaceous stew, is in a league of its own, and is the basis for the recipe in my book.

[BOKLUA VIEW](#)

ROUTE 1256, BAN BOKLUEA-[MAPS](#)

+6654 778 140 7 A.M.-10 P.M.

Just about everything is tasty at this resort-based restaurant, but a highlight is *kai thawt makhwaen*—scrawny free-range chicken deep-fried with salt from the local wells and *makhwaen*, a mouth-numbing spice—a dish invented here.

KHANOM JEEN NAM YAWY/ขนมจิ้นน้ำย่อย

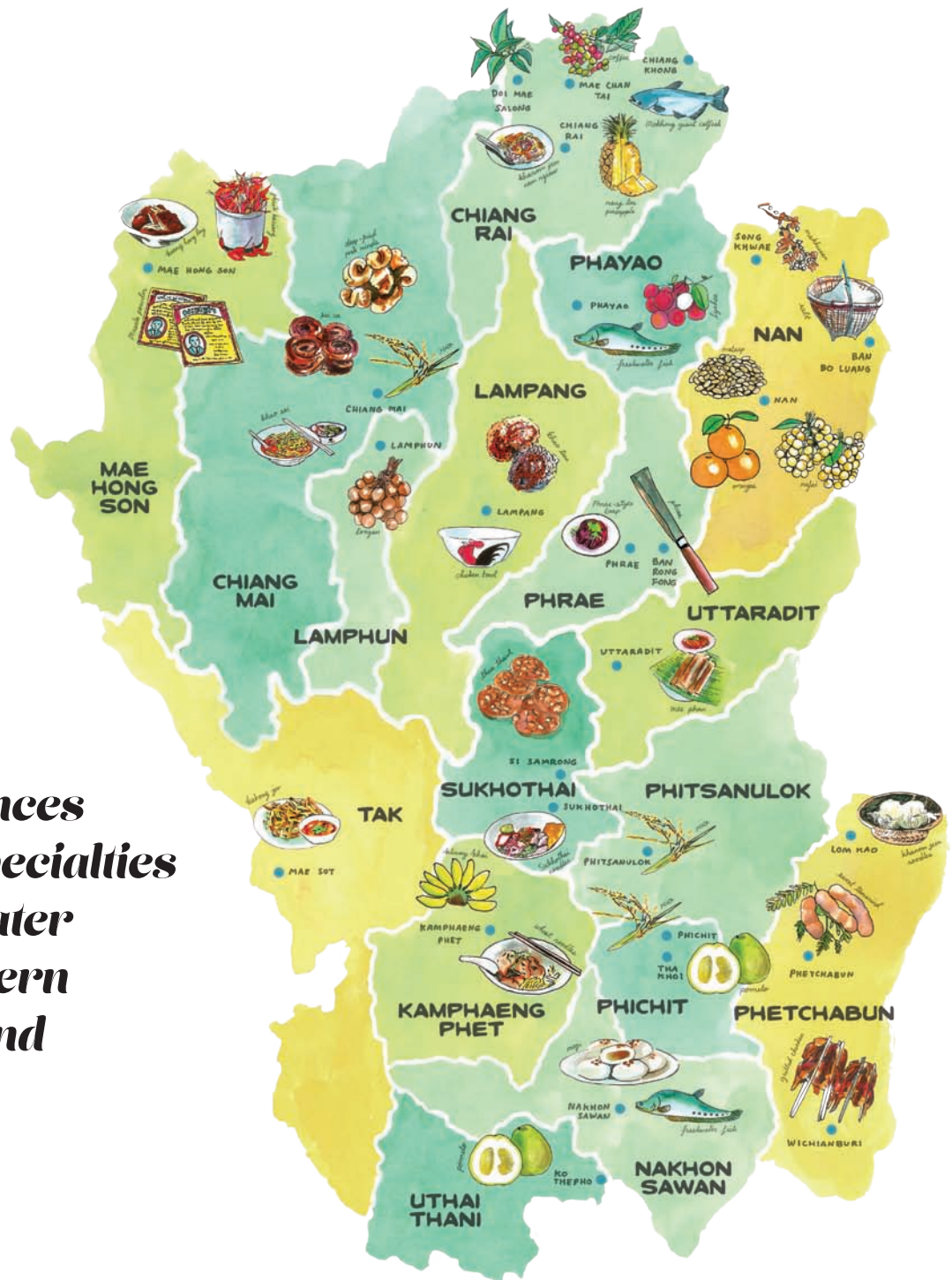
MAE LAN-[MAPS](#)

+6654 778 140 7 A.M.-10 P.M.

The owner here claims to have invented the eponymous dish, a dry topping of deep-fried garlic, dried chili, and shallots that's served over the house-made thin rice noodles.

KHANOM SEN PAA NET/ขนมเส้นดวงเนตร
 THANON MUANG DAENG, PHRAE-MAPS
 +6685 106 5020 9:30 A.M.-2 P.M.

This long-standing stall serves the local version of *khanom sen*, an almost clear, overtly porky broth studded with tomatoes and served over thin rice noodles.



*Provinces
 and Specialties
 of Greater
 Northern
 Thailand*



JIN SOT/จิ้นสด



BOKLUA VIEW



KHANOM JEEN NAM YAWY/ขนมจีนน้ำย้อย

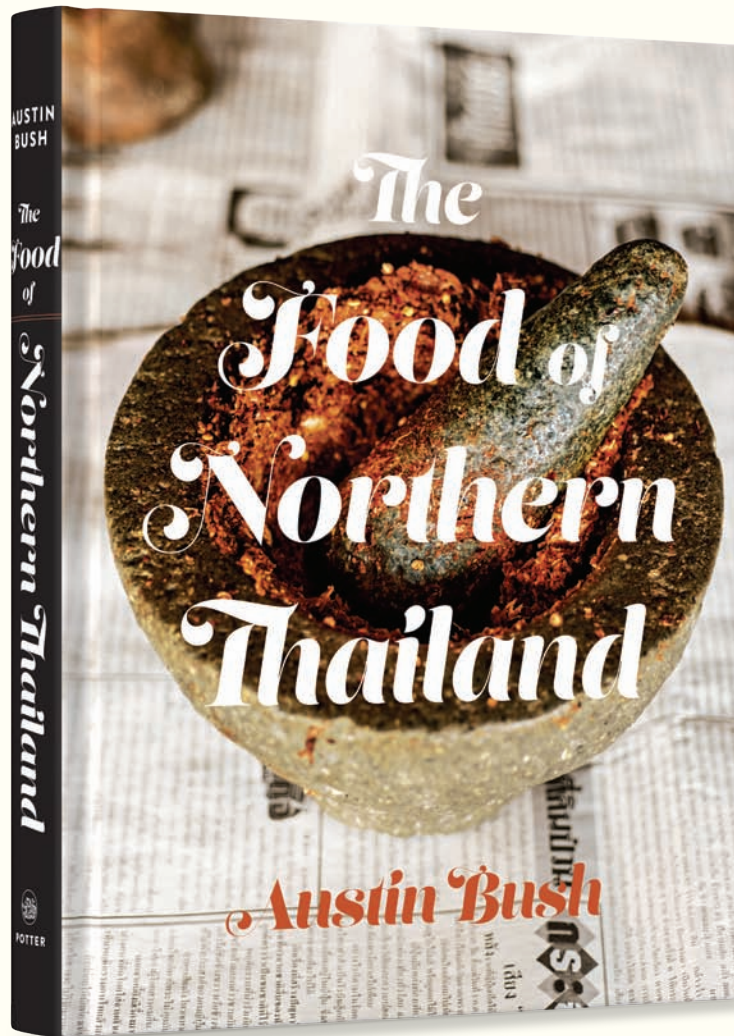


KHANOM SEN PAA NET/ขนมเส้นดวงเนตร

The Food of Northern Thailand

is a beautiful deep dive into the regional cuisine of northern Thailand with a documentarian's approach and a photographer's eye.

The food of northern Thailand is a world away from the highly refined, royal court- and Chinese-influenced style of cooking in Bangkok—the Thai food that most of us are familiar with. It's a cuisine with its own distinct identity, one that is rustic and earthy, meaty and fragrant; one with roots in the Thai repertoire but with branches that extend into unfamiliar areas; a cuisine that feels ancient, but is ever evolving.



A writer, photographer, and travel-guide writer, Austin Bush has lived in Thailand for nearly twenty years. In this book, Bush travels across northern Thailand to talk to the region's home cooks, academics, restaurateurs, writers, and hawkers. Their recipes and stories, along with Bush's photographs,

capture the people, countryside, markets, and of course, dishes and cooking techniques of northern Thailand. Each of the chapters in the book will focus on a single province, giving a snapshot of the dishes, staple ingredients, cooking methods, and people specific to that area.

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