



tgtgNewsletter

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You must remember your loved ones when you are eating something good.

- old Burmese proverb

Myanmar Assasa is the term for a Burmese or Bamar set meal. Unlike Indian food, the curries of Burma are mild not spicy, and simply cooked without a plethora of spices. Instead, shrimp paste or *ngapi* is king, plus tomato, onion, garlic, ginger and turmeric. Such a typical Burmese curry is cooked down to a thick sauce, and eaten heartily with rice. Better yet, this simple gravy is the base for other curry dishes, and it freezes well.

We globetrotted recently to this hermit country -- long isolated from the foreign influences of international tourism -- and its time to alert you: Burma, or Myanmar as it is now called, has found its way on the tourism radar screen. The country now boasts numerous first rate international hotels, and while the roads are still primitive, there are three private airline companies plying the main tourist routes, plus a fourth government airline. Myanmar is a nation of 50 million with a fabulously rich history, and while it attracts negative political press, its people are without doubt the friendliest in Southeast Asia. Not only that, English is widely spoken.

It's not too early to think about the holidays. Come celebrate New Year's Eve in old Rangoon with Robert and Morrison. Discover the delicious foods of Burma, at the junction where Southeast Asia meets India. Long closed to tourism, be among the first to experience this pristine land. Email us for more details. We can also arrange two day stopover packages in Bangkok or Singapore, if you are using these cities as hub destinations. You'll be spellbound by the 2000 ancient temples of Bagan, dating from the 13th century, the royal palaces of imperial Mandalay, and the colonial charm of old Rangoon, now known as Yangon. Inle lake could be called Asia's Titicaca, as like its South American counterpart, villagers here create floating islands of reeds and rushes.

As in much of Southeast Asia, rice is the staple of Burmese cooking, while noodles are relegated to breakfast or as a snack or light meal. Sweets are typically served with tea throughout the day, but not at the end of a meal. Surprisingly, one of our favorite Burmese dishes, *la peq* or fermented tea leaf salad, is eaten in place of dessert. Here, green tea leaves are steamed and buried to mature for six months, then washed and pounded with garlic, and tossed variously with sesame seeds, nuts, fried beans or peas, dried fish and fried garlic and ginger

A typical *Myanmar assasa* menu includes a mild curry or *hin-cho* of chicken, prawns or lamb; a light but spicy *thouq* salad of raw fruits or vegetables (locals like it *chin-chin*, *ngan-ngan* and *sut-sut* -- sour, salty and hot); lentil dhal and/or a clear broth gourd soup, *hin jo*; and finally a relish or sambal eaten with raw vegetables. Cooks prepare the sumptuous spread in the early morning, and serve throughout the day. But late morning and lunch is when to head to a local roadside eatery for Myanmar *assasa* at its freshest.

Likewise, *mohinga* could rightly be described as Myanmar's national dish -- albeit eaten only for breakfast. It consists of rice noodles and fish or chicken, and myriad side dishes, Shwe-taung Khauk-swear is an even more extravagant breakfast of wheat noodles, with chicken and coconut curry.

Join our next Globetrotting Gourmet foodtour to Southeast Asia, Dec. 29 to Jan. 13, and savor these Burmese specialties, plus much, much more. As an added enticement, we've arranged a spectacular New Year's Eve banquet at Yangon's best restaurant. Party the year away with us, and toast in 2007! www.asianfoodtours.com

Vietnam: Gourmet globetrotters on both our Vietnam's Regional Cooking- and Mekong heritage food tours will recall Tho Minh Vu, a handsome, witty and charismatic guide, who we count as a personal friend. Despite his busy schedule, Tho manages to regularly write us, and he also continues correspondence with many others from our past tour groups. We are delighted to hear that Tho is now in the running for the Wanderlust Paul Morrison Guide Award 2006 shortlist! No surprise, really, as we've always appreciated his expertise and professionalism. Sponsored by the UK's leading travel magazine, and named after the late Paul Morrison (no relation), Wanderlust is now calling for anyone who has travelled with Tho to contact the magazine to help support his nomination. The shortlist appear in the April/May issue, on sale now. More details online at www.wanderlust.co.uk Tho stands to win £5000 -- not an inconsiderable sum in a country those annual wage is half this sum.

Bun Cha goes fusion: We can't rave enough about Saigon's trendy new *Bun Ta* restaurant ("where everything is bun") and their take on our favorite Hanoi classic: *bun cha* roasted pork patties and grilled pork neck served with thin rice bun noodles and a large dipping bowl of nuoc cham. Bun Ta's "Bun Ta" combines tricoloured noodles topped with traditional herbs and peanuts, shredded pork rind, and bean spouts and cabbage strips. It's delicious, but in all honesty, the nuoc cham sauce made from fish sauce, chili and sugar is too sweet. But then, so is much of Vietnam's southern cooking. Bun Ta is located just next door to another one of our favorite Saigon restaurants, Quan An Nong, an upmarket lunch and dinner hang out designed around traditional hawker stalls selling their Vietnamese specialities. 136 Nam Ky Khoi Nghia St. Matter of fact, the street is starting to get a line up of top eateries. A simple beer house is located just down the street, barely a quarter block. It's a good place to drink fresh bia hoi, or unpasteurized beer, and fresh seafood.

Bali: We love Bali, and despite the calamitous events over the past years, it deserves its rank as a premier world tourist destination. If you're heading to this exotic Hindu island in the middle of the Indonesian archipelago, check out the new *eWay Portal Hotel & Direcitory EGuide*, out in March. Other destinations include Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore. www.ewaypublishing.com Also in Bali, photographer and chef Heinz von Holzen has just opened a new market eatery. Capitalizing on a growing popular

theme of combining street hawker stalls in a clean centralized restaurant environment, Pasar Malam Balinese market restaurant opened in March in Benoa, near Heinz's other properties -- a luxurious villa and cooking school and nearby restaurant. Pasar Malam is set in a reproduction village center, with each pavilion constructed around the principals of ancient Balinese architecture. Writes von Holzen: *Imagine sitting in the midst of a Balinese village market and enjoy the best dishes our island has to offer, and at the same time be confident to sit in a perfectly clean and save environment. Each pavilion is dedicated to one specific type of food, and together we will tell you the entire story of food culture in Bali.* There are specialist pavilions for distilling arak, another for coffee, plus for spices, rice, and tropical fruits. Heinz's latest book, *Feast of Flavors From the Balinese kitchen*, was also lunched in March.

Books: We all know that olive oil is one of the world's healthiest, brimming with antioxidants while decreasing low density lipid cholesterol. (What you probably didn't realize is that many cold-pressed nut oils have the same benefits -- so start shopping for oils in the health food stores, instead of supermarket aisles!) Better yet, olive oil can be re-heated many times without the deleterious effects present in most other oils. But for those who prefer their olive oils cold at the table instead of hot in the kitchen, read *Judy Ridgways' Best Olive Oil Buys Round the World*. Originally printed in '02, her new edition includes both tried and true varieties from Spain, Italy and Greece, and less familiar new world brands from Australia and Argentina. Ridgway notes that new EU regulations require olive producers to include results of a "peroxide test" which is a better indication of likely shelf life. "Look for peroxide levels well below 20 -- the threshold for extra virgin status," she advises. Gardiner Press.

We've made a vow never to use the term "Chinese New year" any further. This festive lunar holiday -- falling anywhere between late January and early February -- is celebrated throughout Southeast Asia and the orient -- not just by the Chinese. (Some Americans may remember the Vietnamese *Tet* offensive during that war.) Yet we'll use the word once more when describing the new book *Chinese Feasts & Festivals a Cookbook*, by S.C. Moey. The cover and pastel prints superficially belong to a children's book, yet the contents are anything but -- with many authentic holiday recipes we've longed to source. Periplus Books. \$24.95

Hotels:

Singapore has long been a favorite stopover destination. The island state is a small, compact and conveniently jam packed with delicious foods every where you look. It's shopping is world class, plus the city is safe. Not only that, its airport the best in the world (along with its national airline). It's hotels were also bargain priced -- but unfortunately, not any longer. At the urging of its government, lodging prices were hiked this year an average of 30%, with another rise on the horizon. Seems local hoteliers were miffed that Singapore rates were among the lowest in the developed world, and even cheaper than neighboring Bangkok. Yet at its current exchange rate, Singapore is still a bargain. Not only that, you can safely drink the tap water!

Register your interest to visit China in March 2007. We'll focus on the historic cities of Kunming and Lijiang in Yunnan, plus an optional side tour to Xi'an, China's central capital 1000 years ago, and home to the famed Terra Cotta warriors

Cheers,
Robert & Morrison

www.globetrottinggourmet.com
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