

# FLAVORS FROM LAOS

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*vendor* **DETAILS**

*venue* THE INN AT PARK WINTERS / *florals* LAMBERT FLORAL STUDIO / *recipes* CHANDARA K. PHANACHONE / *pinch bowls* NATHIYA DESIGNS /  
*table tops* THRESHOLD BY TARGET / *rentals* CLASSIC PARTY RENTALS /







Step inside the kitchen of a Lao family and from the heat of the peppers to the tanginess of the limes, and the saltiness of the fish sauce, papaya salad could not be a more perfect union of bold flavors. Green papaya salad (*tum maak boong*), a culinary legacy from the people of Laos — the land-locked country nestled in the middle of Thailand, Cambodia, China, Burma, and Vietnam — is a popular dish frequently found in the street food stalls and open-air markets throughout the country and in many regions of Southeast Asia. For the millions of Lao families who have resettled in the United States, France, or Australia following the end of the Vietnam War, the dish has since become a family staple, one that harkens back to memories of the homeland and speaks to a culture where eating fresh is simply the only way to savor the bounty of the season.

Made from the peeled and pearly flesh of the unripe, green papaya — its freshness marked by the milky sap that drips down its skin — the fruit is shredded in preparation for the salad. Cloves of garlic mingle with the spice of the chili peppers and the fragrant scent of citrus dances with the crispness of the papaya strands, making it a guaranteed crowd-pleaser for our salad-themed dinner party. Our menu also features a Lao-style chicken salad (*larb gai*), a light and healthy mix of herbs and spices with notes of toasted rice powder, along with a refreshing golden mango salad (*yum maak muang*) that we pair with grilled lemongrass-marinated prawn skewers. And of course, what's a dinner party without a glass of crisp Sauvignon Blanc and a few of our closest friends to enjoy it all with us?

#### *Tips* FOR PLANNING A STRESS-FREE DINNER PARTY

As soon as the engagement becomes official, there is always an endless cause for celebration prior to the wedding day. Regardless of who assumes the role of host or hostess, don't let the anticipated stress of planning overshadow the occasion that you're celebrating. By incorporating time-honored traditions into any celebration, the result is nothing short of spectacular.

1. *Set a Budget, Then a Guest List* – Guest lists are easier to justify once you have decided on a budget.
2. *Prioritize* – If the décor is what you are worried about, then plan for it. If food takes top honors in your book, then make sure you take advantage of what's fresh and local to you (which also translates to great cost-savings, too)! Whatever it is, understand how you want to allocate your budget and plan accordingly.
3. *Think Creatively* – The concept of a salad bar is certainly nothing new, but when that salad bar is chock full of tropical spices and flavors, and distinctly reflective of a culture's culinary legacy, now, that's one we wouldn't pass up! There are many digital and printed resources out there to help you get your creativity flowing, so use them.
4. *Delegate* – Wherever it is possible, don't be afraid to ask for help. People may be overwhelmed if they are asked to coordinate everything, but asking for help in accomplishing a specific task is something that most of us would be more than happy to do.
5. *Have Fun* – Whether or not you volunteered to host or were kindly asked to do so, the last thing anybody wants is for the stress of planning to get the best of you. When all is said and done, this is a celebration, so embrace it. Sip some wine, get inspired, and go forth!





Lao-style papaya salad TUM MAAK HOONG

## SUPPLIES

Mortar and pestle

## INGREDIENTS

- [2] cups fresh, green, unripe papaya (peeled and shredded)
- [10] cherry tomatoes (halved)
- [2] cloves of garlic
- [5] peanuts - toasted and coarsely pounded (optional)
- [1-5] red Lao or Thai chili peppers (adjust according to taste)
- [1-2] slices of lime, squeezed
- [1/2] tsp crab paste
- [1/2] tsp shrimp paste
- [10] small store-bought dried shrimp
- [2-3] tbsp Thai fish sauce - adjust according to taste
- [2] tsp palm sugar
- [2] tbsp tamarind juice
- [1] tsp fermented fish sauce or padaek (optional, but it is an authentic Lao ingredient)

## DIRECTIONS

1. Using the pestle, pound the garlic, peppers, dried shrimp, and sugar in the mortar until it becomes a fine paste.
2. Add the crab and shrimp paste and mix well.
3. Add the fish sauce, tomatoes, tamarind juice, fermented fish sauce, lime juice, and mix well.
4. Stir in the shredded papaya and peanuts.
5. Using a spoon and with gentle strokes of the pestle, toss gently until all of the papaya and juices are nicely incorporated.
6. Transfer papaya salad to a serving dish. Serve with a side of rice vermicelli noodles, fresh water spinach or morning glory, a wedge of cabbage, and if desired, pork cracklings for an added textural crunch.





#### Lao-style chicken salad LARB GAI

##### INGREDIENTS

- [1] lb minced or ground chicken
- [1/4] cup chicken stock
- [1] tbs toasted rice powder
- [1] tsp chili flakes or 1-3 chili peppers  
*(thinly sliced)*
- [1] red shallot *(thinly sliced)*
- [2] kaffir lime leaves *(thinly sliced)*
- [1/2] cup mint leaves *(loosely packed)*
- [4] cilantro sprigs *(coarsely chopped)*
- [2] green onion stalks *(thinly sliced)*
- [1] slice of galangal *(finely minced)*
- [2-3] slices of lime
- [2-3] tbsp Thai fish sauce  
*(adjust according to taste)*

##### DIRECTIONS

1. Heat stock in a large skillet over medium heat.
2. Add chicken and cook, stirring continuously for 3-5 minutes or until chicken is fully cooked.
3. Add fish sauce and crushed chili pepper flakes and cook for another 1-2 minutes. *(If using fresh chili peppers, you may add it with the fresh herbs).*
4. Remove the pan from the heat source and set aside.
5. Squeeze in fresh lime juice, and add the kaffir lime leaves, shallots, mint, galangal, cilantro, green onions, toasted rice powder, and toss gently.
6. Add more fish sauce if necessary; adjust according to taste.
7. Transfer to a serving platter and sprinkle with more herbs. Serve with fresh vegetables, chili peppers, and garnish with a few slices of lime.

#### golden mango salad YUM MAAK MUANG

##### INGREDIENTS

- [2] golden ripe mangos  
*(thinly sliced into matchsticks)*
- [1] unripe green mango  
*(thinly sliced into matchsticks)*
- [1] tbs toasted rice powder
- [2] Thai chili peppers *(thinly sliced)*
- [1] red shallot *(thinly sliced)*
- [1/4] cup mint or Vietnamese coriander leaves *(loosely packed, thinly sliced)*
- [2] tbs cashew halves
- [1] tbs palm sugar
- [2] tbs lemon juice
- [1] tbs lemongrass, thinly sliced
- [1/4] cup Thai fish sauce  
*(adjust according to taste)*

##### DIRECTIONS

1. Whisk fish sauce, sugar, chili peppers, lemon juice, lemongrass and shallots in a bowl.
2. Stir in mangos, cashews, and rice powder.
3. Sprinkle with Vietnamese coriander or mint leaves.

#### Toasted Rice Powder

##### DIRECTIONS

1. Heat uncooked sticky or glutinous rice in a dry hot wok.
2. Swirl until golden brown, and immediately remove from the heat and let it cool.
3. Grind in a mortar & pestle or spice mill.
4. Use immediately or store in an air-tight glass container for up to 6 months.