

# Khao Chae



Picture: <http://www.siamguide.net/>

Khao Chae is a food that comes from Mon people originally. Mon people called it "Poeng Dat" in which "Poeng" means "rice" and "Dat" means "water." Therefore, "Poeng Dat" means "rice in water." It is popularly made as an offer to the deities during Songkran Festival. Khao Chae is offered to monks and respected elders for fortune. Khao Chae is made once a year, only in Songkran Festival. Therefore, Khao Chae can be called "Khao Songkran" or as Mon people call it: "Poeng Sakran." When Mon people migrated into Thailand, they brought the tradition of Khao Chae to Thailand with them so that Thai people would know about Khao Chae. Khao Chae was brought as food for the royals when a Mon lady served under the King as the King's concubine. She made Khao Chae as an offering. Later, M.L. Nueang Ninrat, who used to work in the kitchen of King Chulalongkorn (Rama V), brought Khao Chae to the market. Therefore, Khao Chae has received popularity until present. The Khao Chae that we are familiar with are Khao Chae Sawoei, Khao Chae Chao Wang, and Khao Chae Mueang Phet, all of which were derived from Khao Chae Chao Mon.

"Khao Chae water, in the former times, came from rainwater in earthen jars. It is kept in shaded and damp areas until vapor occurs, and then it is considered to be cool enough. As for flowers, Bread Flower is the best because it smells like Pandan. If using Damask Rose, it must be Pink Damask Rose only because the smell is good. If there is no Bread Flower or Damask Rose, use Jasmine instead. However, do not pick the stalk off because the water will become dark turbid from Jasmine rubber, and the flower should be upturned. Then, light the fragrant candle and put it in the glass. Burn the candlewick properly and then extinguish. Allow the smoke to flow, put the glass to float in the water, and firmly close the lid. Do not let the flowers float overnight because they will go bad and the water will have a sour smell. Leave it for half a night and take it out. If the water still remains, you can repeat these actions the following night.

"Khao Chae rice" must be cooked with old rice because there will be no rubber and its body is beautiful. Nice Khao Chae rice comes from rubbing steamed rice in the palms under flowing water until it becomes "Ta Kop." Then, it will be cooked again but not like cooked rice. When rinsing, it needs a lot of water so that the rice is clean. Alum is put in the water for the dirtiness



Picture: <https://www.ilovetogo.com/Article/71/16234/Article.aspx>

to precipitate. Then, the rice will become tighter and not break up. After that, it is cooked in boiling water. Leave it to cook for about 50 percent or what we call "Ta Kop." The middle of the rice must be harder than normal Ta Kop. Then, rinse the rice with cold alum water to cool down the heat in the rice. Rinse with clean water. After that, wrap Ta Kop rice with a thin white cloth and steam with chopped Pandan. When it is cooked, spread the rice on a threshing basket for the water to drip, relieve the heat, and drain the water.

"Khao Chae side dishes" or food that is eaten with Khao Chae are: "Fried Shrimp Paste Ball," which is the basis of Khao Chae's side dish. It is made from red onion, garlic, galangal, lemongrass, bergamot peel, grilled fish, roasted coconut, shrimp paste, and finger root that are crushed and stirred together until it becomes sticky. Then it is molded it into small balls, coated with eggs, and fried; "Stuffed Bell Pepper with Minced Pork," which is made from minced pork and salted fish in Hainan style. It is adapted by taking out the salted fish and putting only the minced pork seasoned with fish sauce to make it salty and wrapping it with a beautiful net-shaped egg; "Fried Onion," which is made by peeling an onion, cutting the middle, and stuffing with shrimp paste and dried shredded pork. Then, it is coated with flour and fried; "Sweet Shredded Pork," which used to be shredded beef in the past. However, at present, some people do not eat beef so we use sweet shredded pork instead; "Fried Anchovy," frying the anchovies and mixing with palm sugar; and "Stir-fried Turnip," stewing the turnips, drying with the stir-fried method, and adding the seasonings. The side dishes are finger root carved into Champak, and eaten with fried shrimp paste balls, which will provide the best deliciousness. Moreover, there is green mango, green onions in the shape of flowers, and red goat peppers for decoration.

"How to eat Khao Chae" – The container for Khao Chae and side dishes of the old people were usually a white porcelain to hide the grease and murky Khao Chae water while eating. For the method of eating, do not put the rice and side dish in the same spoon. Do not put Khao Chae side dishes into Khao Chae bowl because the water will become murky. Scoop a spoon with Khao Chae and fresh flower water without putting the flower in the mouth, followed by any kind of Khao Chae so that while eating Khao Chae, its water is clean from the beginning to the end.

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