

# Khlong Khon Shrimp Paste

Shrimp paste, though it does not look nice, is the leading actor of the chili paste. The shrimp paste that everyone sees in the form of a purple lump was actually “Khoei”, a saltwater animal that is shaped like shrimp but very small and transparent with black eyes. Some people called it “Khoei Ta Dam”, which is good for making delicious shrimp paste. Khoei will be abundant in the rainy season. Therefore, it is the time for villagers to catch Khoei by using a trawl net to catch Khoei in the sea, about 1-3 kilometers away from the coast. After catching Khoei, villagers will rinse them, then mix with a good quality sea salt. After that, they will be dried in the sun and flipped regularly for about 3-5 days. Khoei that looks orange will become purplish black because of the sun. If the sun is less, the shrimp paste will become saltier. However, if you want the grilled shrimp paste to smell good, ferment them in a clean water jar or bucket for about 15 days to 1 month. You can see that the weather directly affects the deliciousness and color of the shrimp paste, which mirrors the people’s way of life – a life that is nourished by interacting with nature.

If talking about a famous Khoei Ta Dam shrimp paste, it must be “Khlong Khon Shrimp Paste” of Samut Songkhram Province. People from all over desire this shrimp paste because it has a good quality, mellow taste, and is different from the shrimp paste from other places. Apart from the skills and expertise that must be accumulated for a long time, the raw materials are considered to be a very important part. Khlong Khon Shrimp Paste made from Khoei Ta Dam can be found mostly at Klong Khon. Therefore, it is considered to be first-class raw materials that can be found naturally and an asset that is hard for other places to imitate. Therefore, Khlong Khon Shrimp Paste is the outstanding shrimp paste and difficult to copy. Anyone who has bought it has to come back and make a purchase again. For the selling price, it is divided into 2 grades; Shrimp Paste No. 1, which is made from clean and fresh Khoei Ta Dam priced at 110-150 baht per kilogram; and Shrimp Paste No. 2, which is made from less quantity and non-fresh Khoei priced at 80-100 baht per kilogram. In retailing in tin, the price is 50-70 baht per tin. Khlong Khon Shrimp Paste has no preservatives and can be kept for years. But most people do not keep it that long. Moreover, Khlong Khon Shrimp Paste is a tool in spreading income and creating jobs for this community. However, it is exchanged with sweat, patience, and true love for the things that you do.





Picture: <https://kaijeaw.com>  
[www.freepik.com](http://www.freepik.com)

#### References:

- On-Uma Sinwatthanakun. (2016). Khlong Khon Shrimp Paste. (Online System).  
Source: <http://www.yingthai-mag.com/magazine/reader/14901>
- ASTV Daily Manager. (2013). The favorite "Food" of King Rama V. (Online System).  
Source: <http://www.manager.co.th/daily/ViewNews.aspx?NewsID=9560000132497>

"Nurture your bones, helps with anemia, preserve your teeth, enriched with fish oil, provides microorganisms, protects the eyes, offers vitamin D, prevents polycythemia, rich with ideas, and conquer heart disease" is considered a description of the advantages of shrimp paste to remember easily. Shrimp paste is full of many important elements, which are calcium which nurtures the bones and teeth; Vitamin B12 which helps the body to create red blood cells; Vitamin D which strengthens the bones and provides a healthy mood; Omega 3 which nurtures the brain and the same type which can be found in deep sea fish; and good microorganisms which help to build immunity and astaxanthin, which is antioxidants. Shrimp paste that is made from tiny Khoei can create huge benefits that are full of nutritive value. It also comes from the local area, which can lead to being healthy without the need to spend money for expensive stimulants.

When talking about popular dishes with the shrimp paste as the seasoning, it is definitely Shrimp Paste Dip with Fried Mackerel and soft-boiled vegetables with undiluted coconut milk as a side dish. It looks like simple food but it is full of nutritive value. Another familiar dish is Rice Mixed with Shrimp Paste. In the past, Rice Mixed with Shrimp Paste did not have any side dishes like now. Therefore, it is easier to prepare. Just mix the rice with the shrimp paste while the rice is still hot and you will get a delicious dish that our grandparents have eaten since the old days.

Shrimp paste is not only the food for villagers like us, it is also an ingredient for the Royal people. There was a story about the food of King Chulalongkorn (Rama V). It is well known that the King was capable in all aspects. However, many people might not know that the King was interested in food and received the title of being an expert in gourmet. Shrimp Paste Dip was one of the King's favorite dishes, which had to be offered every time. The side dishes that could not be left out were fried threadfins, salted eggs, and vegetables for dip. Who would think that Shrimp Paste Dip, which was the King's favorite, was just chili paste that the villagers eat. You can see that even the King was fond of food from shrimp paste because it is easy to eat and delicious. It is considered to be a seasoning of the nation that it cannot be without, from the common people's kitchen to the royal kitchen.

Therefore, shrimp paste can be compared as something that can greatly narrate the food culture of Thailand. It is the local wisdom of the grandparents who saw the value of tiny animals by preserving them, making various dishes, and becoming the national food for Thai people at all levels and generations.