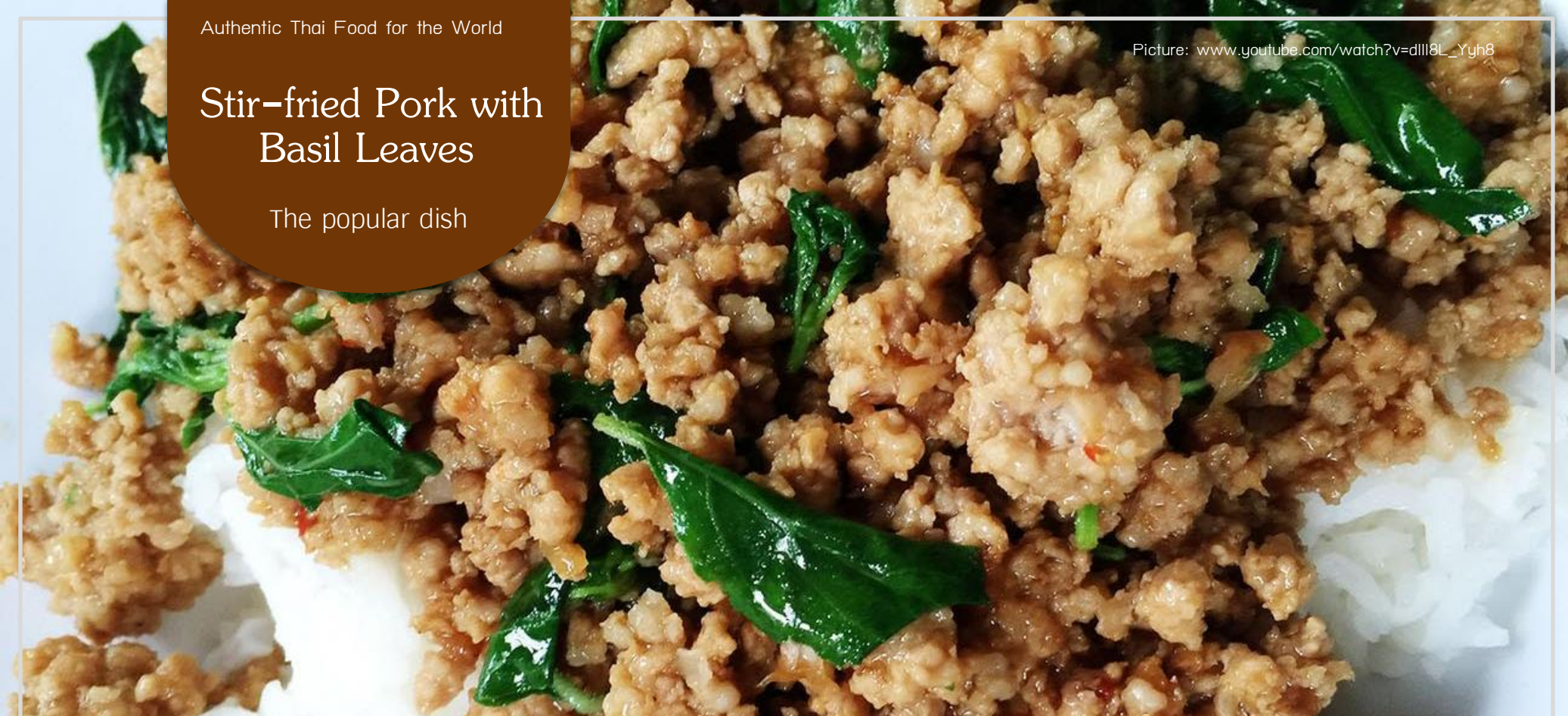


## Stir-fried Pork with Basil Leaves

The popular dish



“A dish of Kra Phao Mu with rice please” is a saying that is all too familiar, especially during an afternoon break. Minced pork in a hot pan, followed with rough chopped chili and basil leaves, which are the actors of this menu. Mix together and season with a little fish sauce, soy sauce, and sugar for mellow flavor. When everyone in the restaurant starts to sneeze, it is a sign that Kra Phao is ready to be served! There is no Thai person who doesn't know this menu, the winner of the one-dish meal—Kra Phao, whether Kra Phao Mu, Kra Phao Kai, Kra Phao Tale, or the menu for ladies who want to keep their figure, like Kra Phao Tao Hu. The simplicity yet varieties make Pat Kra Phao a menu that can be eaten every day. However, does anyone know that the Pat Kra Phao we are all familiar with was invented and became a Thai menu not a long time ago?

As a matter of fact, the first record of Pat Kra Phao was about 30 years ago. The reason was that in the past, Thailand had no stir-fry menu. Most traditional Thai foods were cooked by toasting, grilling, steaming, and making curry. Thai people learned how to stir-fry when many Chinese people came to live in Thailand and passed on this cooking method. Then, Thai people adapted it by changing the raw materials and taste to become palatable. Many stir-fry dishes were thought up and cooked. Eventually, Pat Kra Phao was formally introduced and recorded in the recipe book called “Ahan Rot Wiset Khong Khon Boran” by Achan Prayun Uluchata during B.E. 2531 (1988). On the other hand, basil leaves or the basil tree has been an herb in the Thai kitchen for hundreds of years and ingredient in many Thai menus since B.E. 2230 (1687) or in the reign of King Narai the Great.

Apart from the spiciness that has become its identity, another memorable characteristic of Pat Kra Phao is its strong smell that makes people cough and sneeze until their eyes become watery. The source of this strong smell is the essential oil that can be found in the basil leaves. Beside the outstanding smell, the packed nutritional value of the basil leaves are no less than other plants, whether they be properties for releasing gas, reducing heartburn, curing flatulence, and resisting bacteria. It also has high carotene that the body changes to Vitamin A to nurture the eyesight. There is also iron, calcium, and phosphorus that strengthens the bones and teeth.

Whether your favorite Phat Kra Phao menu is very spicy, less spicy, with onions or long beans; or no matter how it's adapted, the charm and identity of Pat Kra Phao is no less. The fame of this Thai one-dish meal is already in the world's kitchen. Maybe in some years ahead, the number one Thai food like Tom Yam Kung and Massaman might be shaken by the spiciness of Kra Phao Mu.

