



Thai-Foodie.com

**insider's
guide:**

how to

**stock up your
Thai Pantry**

*Find and Use Thai Ingredients
with Confidence*

Insider's Guide for How to Stock Up Your Thai Pantry

You grab a rickety shopping cart that's on its last legs and walk through the sliding doors of the Asian Market.

Your nose crinkles as the smell of fresh fish and durian hits you, but your eyes light up as you see aisles crammed full of exotic products with labels written in Thai, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, and more.

You spy ingredients you'd never see at your neighborhood grocery store—like blanched baby octopus, fish balls and lotus root.

Your heart is beating fast from the thrill of all this newness, but you don't even know which alluring and magical aisle to start on to find the ingredients for [Thai Red Curry](#).

You turn down an aisle that looks promising, but instead of Thai curry paste you find thousands of crinkly, brightly colored instant ramen noodle packages from every country in Asia lined up and down the length of the

aisle. You are dying to discover all the different flavors, but you still aren't any closer to homemade Thai curry night.

All of the sudden you wonder how you will ever find what you need to make [Thai Red Curry](#) in this labyrinth of intimidating, unknown ingredients before you?

Or which brands are even the best ones with so many options?!

Totally been there, and totally gotcha covered! I've navigated many Asian markets all over the world, and know how **exciting and overwhelming** it can be all at the same time.

This handy little survival guide full of **35 ingredients for your Thai pantry** will be your life preserver as you try out making all your favorite Thai meals in your kitchen.

Tips for using this guide:

- Show the pic on this printable to an Asian market employee, so they can help you find exactly what you need.
- Print this guide out, or download it to your phone, and bring it with you the next time you go to the Asian market.
- If they don't have the brand I recommend, no worries! Try a different one and see how you like it!
- Check out my Top 10 Thai Ingredient Essentials printable to see which of these ingredients are must-haves.

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Rice

1. Jasmine Rice



Instead of asking "How are you?" when you meet someone in Thailand, you say, "Have you eaten rice yet?" and if not, traditionally you are supposed to go eat together.

Um, how amazing is that? One of the many reasons I fell in love with Thai food culture!

And that's how central it is to Thai life, and why we finish off our 25 pound bag of Jasmine Rice in about a month or so.

Favorite Brand:

- We don't have a preferred brand, and we buy ours from Costco or Sam's because we buy so much of it. We always make sure whatever we buy is from Thailand.

How to find it:

- *Grocery Stores:* Noodle and rice aisle
- *Asian markets:* in the large rice section with pallets, and massive bags of rice stacked on them.
- [Amazon](#)

2. Sweet Rice



My [Thai cooking class students](#) are usually shocked when I tell them that to make [Mango Sticky Rice](#) you can't use Jasmine Rice, but you have to use a special rice, called Sweet Rice. In Thailand, sweet rice is also used with savory dishes from the Issan area of Thailand like

[Larb](#), or [Nam Tok](#).

Favorite Brand:

- We don't have a preferred brand, but always make sure it's from Thailand.

How to find it:

- *Asian Markets*: in the large rice section with pallets of massive bags of rice stacked up. Often they are sold in smaller bags than other kinds of rice.
- [Amazon](#)

Thai Sauces

3. Fish Sauce



I've written a whole [post about fish sauce](#) because it's so essential to Thai cooking. The umami, savory flavor is to die for, and you can't really find a substitute. If your Thai dish lacks a bit of flavor, but you aren't sure what it needs, *Thai cooks say, "When in doubt, add fish sauce!"*

Favorite Brand:

- **Our favorite brand we find at our Asian market is [Squid](#).** I've had people confused because they think it might be squid sauce! But if you read under the name Squid you will see "Fish Sauce".

How to find it:

- *Asian markets:* aisle with tall glass or plastic bottles of soy sauce, more brands and types than you've thought possible!
- [Amazon](#) : This is a link to Tiparos, another favorite brand

4. Thai Thin or Light Soy Sauce



My Thai friend and I were talking about how even she thinks it's odd that the Thai name for Thin Soy Sauce is literally translated to English as "White Soy Sauce" but it's not white, but a normal brown soy sauce color.

But the taste is lighter than Thai Dark Soy Sauce, and also a lighter flavor than the typical Kikkoman soy sauce brand you would find at your local grocery store.

One of the many dishes where Thai Thin Soy Sauce shines is in [Pad See Ew](#), which is literally translated to stirred soy sauce.

Favorite Brand:

- Healthy Boy Brand

How to find it:

- *Asian markets:* on the aisle with lots of tall glass bottles of soy sauce, more brands and types than you've thought possible.
- [Amazon](#)

5. Thai Dark Soy Sauce



Thai dark soy sauce, or Thai black soy sauce, is one of my favorite Thai sauces. It has an incredibly rich, sweet, savory flavor and is thick like molasses.

Its salty, sweet taste is really what makes you want to keep eating more of your favorite Thai dishes, and gives [Pad See Ew](#) noodles and [Pad Krapaw](#) their darker tint.

Favorite Brand:

- Healthy Boy Thai Sweet Soy Sauce

How to find it:

- *Asian markets:* aisle with lots of tall glass bottles of soy sauce, more brands and types than you've thought possible.
- [Amazon](#)

6. Thai Sweet Soy Sauce



Thai Sweet Soy Sauce is very similar to Thai dark soy sauce, but as the name suggests, it has extra sugar in it, so it tastes sweeter than Thai dark soy sauce. It's often used in Thai dipping sauces and some stir-fries. I rarely use it in my recipes, but if I do and you don't have it, feel free to add some extra sugar to whatever you are cooking to get that same sweetness.

Favorite brand

- Healthy Boy Thai Sweet Soy Sauce

How to find it:

- *Asian markets:* aisle with lots of tall glass bottles of soy sauce, more brands and types than you've thought possible.
- [Amazon](#)

7. Oyster Sauce



Fish sauce and Oyster Sauce are the two Thai sauces I run out of the quickest since I use both in MANY Thai dishes, and one of my favs is [Thai Garlic and Pepper Chicken](#).

My girls have been known to stick their little fingers in the lid of my oyster sauce and lick off all the remnants of the sauce they can find. Even I think the flavor is pretty intense to just eat solo, but they love its salty, umami with a hint of sweet notes.

Oyster Sauce is perfect for a quick marinade for any meat I'm about to stir-fry. I just mix a few tablespoons into the meat, some brown sugar and maybe garlic if I have some, and even after just 10 minutes, it makes all the difference.

Favorite brand

- MaeKrua Oyster Sauce

How to find it:

- *Asian markets:* aisle with lots of tall glass bottles of soy sauce, more brands and types than you've thought possible.
- [Amazon](#)

8. Thai Soybean Paste



If you love [Rad Na](#), a Thai Pork Noodle Dish with Gravy, then you have to have this Thai Soybean Paste in your pantry. Its taste is similar to miso, but the yellow tan-ish color, the little soybeans floating in it and the odd smell might either freak you out, or make you excited to use such a strange looking sauce (like I feel).

But it reminds me of magical fish sauce. It has such a powerful umami flavor that once you add it to the dish, it's a flavor punch that makes you want to come back for more.

Favorite brand:

- Healthy Boy Thai Soy Bean Paste

How to find it:

- *Asian Markets:* Thai Soy Bean Paste can be harder to find, but if it's there, it's on an aisle with lots of tall glass bottles of soy sauce, more brands and types than you've thought possible.
- [Amazon](#)

9. Thai Sriracha



Thai Sriracha is the Thai condiment we run out of the most quickly, we slather it all over our [Thai-Style Omelets](#) every time we eat them, which is at least a few times a week. But Thai Sriracha can be tricky to find even at Asian markets!

American Sriracha with the rooster on it, that you already have in your pantry that you found at your neighborhood grocery store, was born in Thailand, the land where all spicy and flavorful things are born.

But the authentic Thai version doesn't taste quite the same as the American version.

The Thai version has a sweetness that balances out the spiciness and makes you want to keep coming back for more even more than the American version.

Favorite brand

- Shark

Where to find it:

- *Asian Market:* The aisle with different hot sauces, or even on the soy sauce aisle. Look for an aisle with lots of tall glass bottles.
- [Amazon](#)

10. Golden Mountain Seasoning Sauce



If I'm making a Thai dish and it needs a flavor punch of umami and savory hints, I reach for one of Thai cooks secret weapons, Golden Mountain Seasoning Sauce. It's like soy sauce, but saltier and with a hint of sweetness. I especially like to add it over Crispy Fried Eggs, or to [Thai Fried Rice](#) to give it some more flavor with just a little bit of sauce. Its taste is almost identical to Maggi seasoning, if you've ever cooked with that.

Favorite brand

- Golden Mountain

Where to find it:

- *Asian Market*: The aisle with different hot sauces, or even on the soy sauce aisle. Look for an aisle with lots of tall glass bottles.
- [Amazon](#)

Curry Pastes

11. Massaman Curry Paste



If I'm making Thai food for Americans who have never had Thai food, [Massaman curry](#) is my favorite way to gently introduce them to the flavors of Thai food. Massaman curry paste isn't spicy, and the curry is made with potatoes and meat, so I like to tell Americans that it's sort of like a meat stew, but way better in my opinion!

Favorite brand

- Maesri

Where to find it:

- *Asian market*: in the canned goods aisle that's bursting at the seams with goodies from canned lychees to canned baby clams.
- [Amazon](#)

12. Panang Curry Paste



Panang curry paste is spicier than Massaman curry paste because of the zesty dried Thai chilies in it. I love to use it in [Chu Chee, a salmon curry, aka my go-to 15 minute weeknight dinner.](#)

The more you use it though, the spicier it gets, so I stick with one tablespoon if kiddos are eating it. But I like to bump it up to at least two if I'm making it for awesome people who like spicy.

Favorite brand

- Maesri

Where to find it:

- *Asian market:* in the canned goods aisle that's bursting at the seams with goodies from canned lychees to canned baby clams.
- [Amazon](#)

13. Green Curry Paste



[Green curry](#) is one of the most well known [Thai curries](#). I adore the baby eggplants that look like tiny watermelons. They soak up all the flavor, and once you bite into them, the spicy, creamy, sweet Thai green curry flavor explodes all over your tastebuds.

Favorite brand

- Maesri

Where to find it:

- *Asian market:* in the canned goods aisle that's bursting at the seams with goodies from canned lychees to canned baby clams.
- [Amazon](#)

14. Red Curry Paste



Sometimes Red Curry is used interchangeably with Panang Curry paste since really the only major difference between them is the addition of ground peanuts and nutmeg in Panang curry paste. Especially if you have a peanut allergy and want the taste of Panang curry, stick with red!

Favorite brand

- Maesri

Where to find it:

- *Asian market:* in the canned goods aisle that's bursting at the seams with goodies from canned lychees to canned baby clams.
- [Amazon](#)

15. Yellow Curry Paste



Thai Yellow Curry is super popular with my students and many Americans because it's not as spicy as Red or Green curries. Thai yellow curries might sometimes look like Indian curries because of their color, but taste distinctly Thai.

What gives Yellow Curry its golden-yellow hue is tumeric, curry powder and yellow chilies.

Favorite brand

- Maesri

Where to find it:

- *Asian market*: in the canned goods aisle that's bursting at the seams with goodies from canned lychees to canned baby clams.
- [Amazon](#)

Thai Noodles

16. Fresh Rice Wide Noodles



I've written a [whole post with tips on cooking with rice noodles](#) because typical dried rice noodles at neighborhood grocery stores, can be so finicky and hard to work with. Instead, I stock up my fridge and freezer with fresh rice noodles that are so quick and easy, and what everyone uses in Thailand.

If you are making two of my all time personal favorite Thai comfort foods, [Pad Kee Maw](#) or [Rad Na](#), you must have the wide rice noodles in your fridge or freezer.

They are about the width of wrapping paper tape, hold the soy sauce flavors so well, and add that extra layer of coziness to whatever you are cooking.

Favorite brand

- No preferred brand, always grateful anytime we find any kind of fresh rice noodles

Where to find them:

- *Asian Market*: In the refrigerated noodle section, usually either in massive plastic bags that a restaurant might buy, or in a plastic bag that would serve around 4 people.
- [Amazon](#) : If you can't make it to the Asian store to get fresh ones, you can get dried wide rice noodles online.

17. Fresh Rice Thin Noodles



If you are a [Pad Thai](#) fan, and don't have these in your fridge, you should go to the Asian store now, and get some ASAP. The legit Pad Thai street vendors use fresh noodles every day, and even if you like [Thai noodle soups](#), or Vietnamese noodle soups, these noodles work too!

Favorite brand

- No preferred brand, always grateful anytime we find any kind of fresh rice noodles

Where to find them:

- *Asian market*: In the refrigerated noodle section, usually either in massive plastic bags that a restaurant might buy, or in a plastic bag that would serve around 4 people.

- [Amazon](#): If you can't make it to the Asian store to get fresh ones, you can get dried thin rice noodles online.

18. Fresh Chinese Egg Noodles



My favorite way to use fresh chinese egg noodles is in [Khao Soi](#), a creamy, coconut noodle curry that tastes just as soothing as it sounds. Beware, egg noodles that you might find at the regular grocery store, aren't the same thing. Look for ones like in this picture. And what I love about these is how quick they are to cook, and no soaking time is needed!

Favorite brand

- No preferred brand, always grateful anytime we find any kind of fresh rice noodles

Where to find them:

- *Asian Market*: In the refrigerated noodle section, usually in a plastic see-through carton.
- [Amazon](#): if you can't make it to the Asian store to get fresh ones, you can get dried egg noodles online.

19. Bean Thread Noodles



Bean thread noodles, are what brings life to [Spicy Thai Glass Noodles, aka Yum Woo Sen](#). When I first saw bean thread noodles after ordering Yum Woo Sen I thought they were noodles from another planet because of their translucent, thin, slippery look.

I love how the spicy flavor of any sauce on these noodles just pops off them. They are made from mung bean, green soy bean, and water. Since they are lower in carbs, high in protein and fiber, my Thai friends tell me they like to eat them when they are trying to eat healthier.

Favorite brand

- No preferred brand, but try to buy ones that are from Thailand

Where to find them:

- **Asian Market:** In the packaged noodle aisle, which is crammed full of dried noodles from dried black bean to ramen instant noodles from every country in Asia.
- [Amazon](#)

20. Mama Noodles



Every Sunday night we have a Family Movie Night, and instead of typical pizza that many families eat while movie watching, we eat Mama Noodles, aka Thai instant ramen noodles, the best instant ramen in the world.

If you ask my kids their favorite Thai food, they would say, "Mama Noodles!" I love [Stir-Fried Mama Noodles](#) or even [Mama Noodles Thai-Style Omelette](#) with Cheese (my Thai sister-n-law loves it!). Of course you can also make typical Mama Noodles Ramen soup, and add anything that needs to be used up from your fridge.

Favorite brand

- Mama Instant Ramen Noodles, love trying all the different flavors: Tom Yum Goong is one of my favs, and the kids like the Pork flavor because it's not spicy

Where to Find Them:

- *Asian Market:* In the packaged noodle aisle, which is crammed full of dried noodles from Korean black bean noodles to ramen instant noodles from every country in Asia.
- [Amazon](#)

Thai Herbs

21. Cilantro



The one herb that is always in my fridge year round is cilantro. It is often sprinkled on top of Thai dishes at the end as a finishing touch and the citrusy, fresh flavor pairs so well with Thai dishes.

Where to find it:

- *Grocery Store*
- [Amazon grocery](#)

22. Thai Basil



Thai basil has a sweet, licorice taste. It's easily confused with Holy Basil. I was always asking my Thai Hubby which was which, but Thai Basil's leaves are smooth, and it has purple stems. It's sprinkled at the end in [Thai curries](#) to give it one more layer of fresh flavor. I love how it's dark green color pairs so well with the vibrant red

curries and makes them shine.

Where to find it:

- *Grocery store or farmer's market if you are lucky!*
- *Asian Market:* At the produce section, often pre-packaged in little plastic bags, or plastic wrapped on styrofoam.
- [Online](#)

23. Holy Basil



Holy basil (aka Krapaw) has a peppery flavor with notes of clove. It's the main character in [Pad Krapaw](#), one of the most loved dishes of Thais. I call it their version of how Americans feel about grilled cheese sandwiches, the easy to make, comfort food they long for after a long day. My Thai Hubby always sees the amount of Krapaw I'm about to put in a dish, and wants me to double it. He can never get enough of it.

Where to find it:

- *Grocery store or farmer's market if you are lucky!*
- *Asian Market:* At the produce section, often it's pre-packaged in little plastic bags, or plastic wrapped on styrofoam.
- [Online](#)

24. Kaffir Lime Leaves



Kaffir Lime Leaves, aka makrut lime leaves, are grown on a kaffir lime tree, of course. But the funny thing is Thais don't use the kaffir lime juice much because it's very bitter, so they mainly use just the leaves from the lime tree. Once you tear them apart, they smell so good, so citrusy and fresh, and are what give your [Tom Kha Gai](#) and [Tom Yum](#) that extra punch of lime flavor.

Where to find it:

- *Asian Market:* At the produce section, pre-packaged in little plastic bags, or plastic wrapped on styrofoam.
- [Amazon](#)

25. Lemongrass



We started growing lemongrass in our garden a few years ago, and I never realized it got its name from its super long grass stalks that are over a foot long!

Lemongrass is what brings [Tom Yum](#), the classic Thai sour and spicy soup, to life. It also goes in [Tom Kha](#), and even in some Thai stir-frys.

Where to find it:

- *Asian Market:* Lemongrass can be found in the produce aisle usually tied up in a bundle of 4 full stalks.
- *Grocery store:* sometimes if you are lucky you can find it in the produce section where the fresh herbs are in small plastic containers.
- [Amazon](#)

26. Galangal



I like to call galangal the grandpa of ginger because it looks like ginger, but more mature, and has a woodier, more intense spicy flavor than ginger. It is the star of the show in the Thai Soup, [Tom Kha](#) (kha is the Thai word for galangal), and I love that it doesn't even need to be peeled like ginger, but you just chop it into coin sized pieces and throw it in the soup.

Where to find it:

- *Asian Market:* produce section either sitting loose near the herbs, or wrapped up on styrofoam in plastic wrap, or in the freezer section.
- [Amazon](#)

Thai Chilis

27. Thai Fresh Bird's Eye Chili



The Thai name for this tiny, powerful chili is prik kee nu, which directly translated to English means mouse poop chili, which my 9 year old son thinks is hilarious. It's because the shape of the chili is the same as, you guessed it! It's the spiciest Thai chili out there, so if you are looking for spice, head no further! It's used in soooo many

Thai dishes, and it's the star of my [Spicy Thai Seasoning Sauce](#), and [Pad Krapaw](#)

Where to find it:

- *Asian Market:* produce section either in a plastic bag, or on styrofoam with plastic wrap over it.
- [Amazon](#)

28. Thai Chili Flakes



If you love that spicy kick that you can sometimes get in [Pad Thai](#), it comes from Thai Chili Flakes. I always tell my Thai cooking class

students that it's not like the red pepper flakes you find at your favorite pizza place!
Thai roasted chili flakes really pack a punch, so be gentle, and add a little bit at a time.

Favorite Brand:

- No preferred brand, just make sure they are from Thailand

Where to find it:

- *Asian Market:* In the spice aisle, sometimes in a tall, plastic container and has a red lid or baggie like in this pic.
- [Amazon](#)

29. Thai Roasted Dried Chili



I love frying Thai Dried Chilis up in some oil to crisp them up, and then serving them with dishes like [Thai Cashew Chicken](#) or [Laarb](#). I always tell my friends to take a little bite of the pepper at a time with a spoonful of food because they are way more of a spicy flavor bomb than you think.

Favorite Brand:

- No preferred brand, just make sure they are from Thailand

Where to find it:

- *Asian Market:* in the spice aisle, in a large plastic, see through bag like in the pic.
- [Amazon](#)

Thai Spices

30. Roasted Rice Powder



I stock up on Roasted Rice Powder in the summer when I'm making [Laarb](#) once a week with mint and cilantro from our garden. It's the umami ingredient in [Laarb](#) that makes you keep coming back for more! You can also make it at home, and I share about it in my [Instagram](#) Stories Highlights under Thai Pantry.

Favorite Brand:

- Any brand as long as it's not powdery and has thicker granules, as shown in this pic.

Where to find it:

- *Asian Market:* Spice aisle
- [Amazon](#)

31. Turmeric



My mortar and pestle is forever a sunshine yellow from the bright yellow turmeric that has been pounded in it to make [Khao Soi paste](#). Turmeric powder and fresh turmeric root are both used in Thai cooking to add an earthy, and bitter notes to Thai flavors.

Favorite Brand:

- Any brand I find at the Asian market, because you often get more of it for less money compared to brands at the average grocery store.

Where to find it:

- *Grocery Store:* Spice aisle and turmeric root, can be found at some grocery stores, in the produce section.
- *Asian Market:* Spice aisle, and turmeric root in the produce section.
- [Amazon](#)

32. Cumin



This spice is also used in [Khao Soi](#), and other dishes from the Southern area of Thailand. I love how with any Thai dish it's

sprinkled onto it adds those notes of warm, earthy flavors with a hint of citrus and depth to it.

Favorite Brand:

- Any brand I find at the Asian market because you often get more of it for less money compared to brands at the average grocery store.

Where to find it:

- *Grocery Store:* Spice Aisle
- *Asian Market:* Spice aisle
- [Amazon](#)

33. White Pepper Powder



This is the one spice that I run out of the quickest, mainly because it goes in Thai-Style Omelets, which I make a few times a week. It also is a perfect finishing touch on [Thai Rice Congee](#), and is what gives [Thai Garlic and Pepper Chicken](#) that great kick.

Favorite Brand:

- Any brand I find at the Asian market, because you often get more of it for less money compared to brands at the average grocery store.

Where to find it:

- *Grocery Stores:* Spice aisle
- *Asian Market:* Spice aisle
- [Amazon](#)

34. Palm Sugar



If you love [Pad Thai](#), palm sugar is one of the reasons! It's the sweet flavor you find in Pad Thai Sauce, and one of the most common sugars used in Thai cooking. It can be hard to break down though, so this softer type pictured of [Palm Sugar](#) is my favorite. But if you can't find that, even the hard blocks will do as long as you don't mind shaving it down with a grater or a

knife.

Favorite Brand:

- Any brand you find that's in a kind of jar pictured here, but I rarely find it! I usually just get the hard blocks of it and whatever brand they have since usually there aren't many options.

Where to find it:

- *Asian Market:* spice aisle, but it's usually a trickier one to find. Make sure you show this picture to get what you need.
- [Amazon](#)

35. Tamarind Paste



If you want to make [Pad Thai](#) at home, you have to pick up some tamarind paste, which is where that tangy flavor comes from in Pad Thai. Whenever I teach kids cooking classes, I always tell them that tamarind tastes like sour candy, and then after they try it, their eyes light up, and they say, "It really does! This is so good!" And I heartily agree!

Tamarind paste is used not only in Pad Thai, but other Thai recipes, like [Massaman curry](#), and in the zesty sauce that goes with [Thai Meatballs](#).

Where to find it:

- *Asian Market:* Tamarind blocks or paste can be found in the spice aisle.
- *Amazon:* You've got two options: [tamarind blocks](#), and then you make your own paste. Or buy the [tamarind paste](#).

Happy shopping! If you have any questions about any of the ingredients, please [contact me](#) or DM me on Instagram [@thaifoodie](#). I'm happy to help!

About the Author



Sherri Pengjad has had her Thai cooking blog, Thai-Foodie, for over 10 years. She adores writing, cooking, teaching Thai cooking classes, and sharing her love of Thai food with others, so they can learn the wonders of Thai cooking too and make it at home for their loved ones.

She and her Thai Hubby met in Thailand, and were married there, and now they live in NC and have 4 of the best half-Thai kiddos in the world who she is always wrangling into the kitchen to cook Thai food with her.