

— WELCOME TO — THAILAND



By BananaThai

Preface

Moving to a new country can be both exciting and challenging. For many, the idea of settling down and integrating into a new culture, language, and way of life can feel overwhelming. I understand this deeply—not just as someone who grew up in Thailand and worked closely with expats, but as someone who has lived abroad and faced the same challenges.

When I moved to Switzerland in late 2023, I experienced firsthand the complexities of adapting to a foreign land. While the breathtaking views of the Swiss Alps and the high quality of life were incredible, what truly made me feel at home was something deeper: I learned the local language, embraced the culture, and built meaningful relationships. These efforts transformed Switzerland from a foreign place into “mein Zuhause” (my home).

These personal experiences inspired me to create the **Welcome to Thailand Guide**. My mission is to help you, as a newcomer or expat in Thailand, overcome challenges like language barriers, cultural differences, and feeling foreign. I want to help you integrate seamlessly, make meaningful connections, and feel truly “welcome” in the Land of Smiles.

My Journey and Inspiration

I was born and raised in Thailand and lived a small-town life before moving to Bangkok for university. During my studies, I spent a lot of time with exchange student friends from around the world, proudly introducing them to Thailand. Whether it was sharing language tips, explaining cultural nuances, or showing them around the city, these experiences gave me a unique perspective on my own country. I saw Thailand not just through the eyes of a local but also through the eyes of foreigners.

I loved helping my friends feel at home in Thailand. This sparked the idea for **BananaThai**, my online Thai school, where I’ve since helped countless students learn Thai language and culture through my lessons and resources.

Over the years, I've worked with students from all over the world who wanted to make Thailand their home or have an authentic experience. Through these interactions, I gained a deep understanding of the challenges foreigners face. These experiences taught me invaluable lessons about adaptation, connection, and integration—lessons I now share with you in this guide.

The Welcome to Thailand Guide is the result of years of teaching, learning, and co-creating with real students, as well as insights from my expat and local friends. It's not just my knowledge and experience—it's shaped by feedback, questions, and suggestions to create a guide that makes a positive impact on newcomers and expats.

The Three Pillars of This Guide

From my experience, traveling or living in another country isn't just about exploring or checking items off a bucket list. It's about connecting with local people and creating meaningful experiences as authentically as possible. These three pillars—language, culture, and relationships—are what makes a place feel like home.

1. Language

Language is more than just a tool for communication—it's the key to connection. Even learning a few basic Thai phrases can open doors and create warm, welcoming experiences. In this guide, you'll start with practical phrases like greetings, ordering food, asking for directions, or making small talk with locals.

Every time I've lived or traveled abroad, I've made an effort to learn the local language, even if it was just the basics. It's not about being perfect; it's about showing respect and curiosity. These small efforts often lead to authentic experiences and genuine connections, and I want to help you achieve the same in Thailand.

2. Culture

Understanding Thai culture is just as important as learning the language. Thailand is rich in traditions, values, and social norms. This guide will help you navigate cultural nuances like Thai daily interactions, concepts of Thainess, values we deeply cherish, and important aspects of Thai society.

Cultural understanding not only makes life in Thailand easier but also helps you build trust and confidence when interacting with locals. When I adapted to cultural norms abroad—like punctuality in Switzerland or greeting strangers with a friendly “Grüezi”—it helped me feel more connected and at ease. Similarly, this guide will help you embrace and understand Thai culture in a way that feels natural and rewarding.

3. Local Insights (People)

Experiencing a new country with local insights or friends can transform your journey into something authentic and meaningful. However, not everyone has those connections right away. That’s where this guide comes in.

With the Welcome to Thailand Guide, I will be your local Thai buddy, along with the fictional characters; John, Anne, and Mali. Together, we’ll help speed up your settlement, teach you the basics of the Thai language, and provide cultural and daily life tips from a local perspective.

Whether it’s advice for enjoying Thai cuisine, tips for traveling around the country, making friends, or understanding unspoken social rules, our insights will help you navigate Thailand smoothly—like sipping a mango smoothie on a hot day!

Co-Creation and Continuous Improvement

This guide isn't just a product—it's a collaboration. It was created with input from students around the world who shared their experiences, challenges, and ideas. Their feedback and suggestions have shaped the content to ensure it's practical, relevant, and impactful.

Your feedback is equally valuable. As you use this guide, I encourage you to share your thoughts, suggestions, or corrections. Together, we can continue to refine and improve it, making it an even more powerful resource for newcomers and expats in Thailand.

A Final Word

Last but not least, I hope this guide enriches your Thai journey as much as creating it has enriched mine. My wish is that you not only learn the language and culture but also understand and embrace the experience, creating meaningful connections along the way.

The Welcome to Thailand Guide is more than just a resource—it's your companion on this exciting journey. Whether you're visiting for a short time or planning to stay long-term, this guide is here to support you every step of the way.

So, let's get started. Welcome to Thailand!

With love,
Kru Smuk
Founder of BananaThai



Meet your Local Friends

Say hello to **John, Anne and Mali**, your awesome local buddies in the Land of Smiles—Thailand! They're here to help you conquer basic Thai and make your adventure or move as smooth as sipping a refreshing coconut smoothie.



Meet **John**, a friendly, cheerful Englishman who swapped rainy days for Thailand's sunny skies three years ago. Now thriving in Bangkok, he works for a local company and loves diving into the city's vibrant culture. With his friendly nature and insider knowledge, John is ready to share all the tips and tricks he's picked up along the way.

Then there's **Anne**, a spirited Frenchwoman who's new to Bangkok and currently working as a teacher at an international school. As luck would have it, she shares a floor in her condo with John, and the two quickly become fast friends. Anne is eager to explore the city's lively streets, connect with its people, and soak up all the culture Thailand has to offer. While she loves spicy food, she's still adjusting to the tropical heat. Her favorite Thai phrase is "pèt nít-nòi"—"a little spicy, please."

Last but not least, please meet **Mali**, a local Thai, who grew up in Bangkok. She is John's colleague. They work in the same team.

Since she embraced her own culture and Thainess, she has helped John explore Thailand and taught him some basic Thai during lunchtime.



Together, **John, Anne, and Mali are your go-to local buddies**, ready to help you integrate into Thai daily life and community with ease. With their local tips and relatable experiences, they'll make sure your journey in Thailand is as exciting and enjoyable as theirs.



Your Learning Toolbox

Downloadable Guidebook

Enjoy the course by reading the [PDF guidebook](#). This guidebook can be downloaded to devices like laptops, tablets, and phones to read offline on the plane or on the go.

Video Lessons

We understand that learning a new language can be challenging which is why we've created dedicated video lessons, available on the online learning platform. **All the content from the language sections is paired with video lessons** to enhance your learning experience.

These lessons are designed to help you hear the pronunciation, engage in dialogues, and learn effectively. Enjoy a concise, focused, and informative approach to mastering key language tips.

Quizzes

On our online learning platform, you can find mini quizzes at the end of each chapter to help boost your understanding and review what you've learned from the lesson.

Emoji Indicators for Easy Navigation

In the online course and guidebook, we've incorporated emojis to help you quickly identify different parts of the content:

- 🇹🇭 **Language Tips:** Practical Thai phrases and language insights.
- 🐘 **Cultural Tips:** Essential guidance on Thai traditions, values, and etiquette.
- 💡 **Local Tips:** Everyday advice and insider knowledge to help you navigate life in Thailand.
- ❓ **Chapter Quizzes (online course):** Take the mini-quiz at the end of the chapter to review what you've learned and boost your confidence.

You'll find these emojis placed in front of each lesson title, making it easy to spot the focus of each section at a glance.

1

Big Picture

Overview of Language & Culture



In this chapter, we'll help you take your first steps into the Thai language and culture. You'll learn why understanding basic Thai is important for feeling at ease in daily life, connecting with people, and making Thailand feel like home.

We'll also give you a simple overview of the Thai language, including its key features, before starting the lessons. Plus, you'll discover what "Thainess" means and how it shapes the culture. Let's get started!

Why should you learn basic Thai?

Learning basic Thai can significantly enhance the experience of visiting, traveling, or living in Thailand. Here are some compelling reasons, explained in numbers:

Cultural Appreciation

Learning basic Thai phrases allows you to gain a deeper understanding of Thai culture. Language is intertwined with cultural nuances, gestures, and social customs, all of which are reflected in how Thais communicate. Moreover, many people notice that when they learn another language, their personality can shift, revealing new facets of themselves. Speaking Thai can help you connect more authentically with locals, enriching your travel experience.

Enhanced Experience and Connection

When foreigners attempt to speak Thai, even just a few words, it is genuinely appreciated by the locals. This effort fosters stronger connections and demonstrates respect and interest in the community.



Speaking a few basic sentences, like greetings or expressions of gratitude, can lead to warm smiles and friendly interactions. Locals often respond positively, sharing more about their culture and experiences, which can make your journey feel more personal and immersive.

Navigating Daily Life

Everyday interactions in Thailand become significantly easier when you know basic Thai. Utilizing simple phrases can save you time and alleviate stress when navigating local services. Not only will this enhance your experience while living or traveling in Thailand, but it will also create a sense of belonging, making life in Thailand feel more like home.

An Overview of Thai Language

1. Alphabet and Script

Thai has its unique alphabet and script. The Thai script consists of 44 consonants and 32 vowels, and it is written from left to right. As a beginner starting to explore the simple world of Thai, you should focus on learning basic Thai words and sentences to build a conversational foundation. However, if you're committed to mastering the language, learning to read will significantly accelerate your progress.

For now, we will use **English transliteration** ("karaoke" style) to help you learn the language. While this can be a helpful starting point, it's crucial not to rely solely on English spelling.

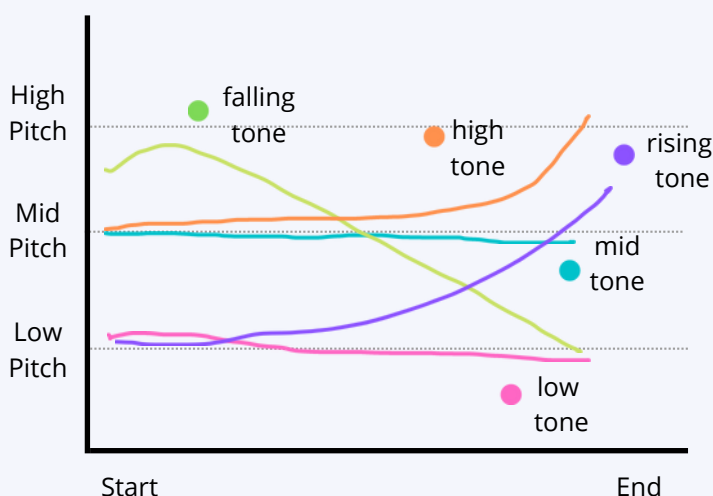
Pay close attention to the sounds of Thai words, as many sounds in Thai do not exist in English. Listening carefully will improve your pronunciation and comprehension. In the next lesson, we will discuss tips for Thai pronunciation.



2. Thai is a Tonal Language

One of the most distinctive features of Thai is that it is a tonal language.

In Thai, there are five tones which are flat, low, falling, high and rising tones. Think of tones as pitch movements: a mid-tone is flat, while a rising tone starts low and ends high.



This means that the tone used when pronouncing a word can change its meaning entirely. I would recommend you learn the concept of tones and Thai pronunciation at the beginning of your journey.

I create a free source on YouTube to help learners improve their pronunciation, including the techniques to master Thai tones:

[Click here to see the video lessons on "Tips for Thai Pronunciation"](#)

3. Simplified Grammar

Another advantage for beginners learning Thai is that the language has no conjugation. Subject and object pronouns are often the same, and there is no conjugation for verbs even in different tenses.

For examples:

chăn **gin** Pizza

= I eat pizza.

chăn **gin** Pizza mēua-waan-nīi

= I ate Pizza yesterday.

chăn **gin** Pizza prung-nīi

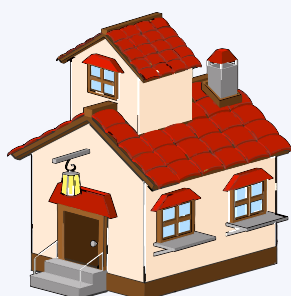
= I will eat pizza tomorrow.



As you can see, the verb “ăn gin” (to eat) was not conjugated according to the tenses.

Additionally, Thai does not have a plural form for nouns. This simplicity makes Thai much easier to learn, allowing you to focus more on vocabulary and communication rather than getting bogged down in complex grammar rules.

For example, the word “house” in Thai, is “บ้าน บ้าน”. The noun stays the same even though it’s a plural noun.



บ้าน บ้าน
house



บ้าน บ้าน
houses

4. Filler Words in Thai

Thai has many filler words, often placed at the end of the sentence, that help **add tone, feeling, or shade of meaning to sentences**. These words don't change the sentence's main idea but affect how we understand it. They can make speech sound softer, more polite, or give a certain tone and nuance.

These filler words are often used in everyday conversations, especially when people are speaking informally. Learning to use them correctly can help you sound more natural and understand spoken Thai better.

Example: เลย (looei)

This word emphasizes how sure or definite a statement is. It often means "really," "at all," or "extremely." It adds emphasis or makes a statement feel more urgent.

อร่อยมากเลย (à-ròi mâak looei) = It's really delicious!

5. Same Same but Different

Thai is a high-context language, where the meaning of words **often depends on context, tone, and placement** within a sentence. So communication relies on implicit understanding rather than explicit words or direct meaning.

This is especially true with homophones. The same word that sounds the same can have different meanings depending on the placement and context.

Such as the word “ได้ dâi”. If it's placed at the end of the sentence, it means “can, possible, permitted”. While, if it's placed before a verb, it means “did” (Past time).



chăn dâi gin Pizza
(I ate Pizza).



chăn gin Pizza dâi
(I can eat Pizza)

What is Thainess?

What makes a Thai, truly Thai? It's more than just our love for Pad Thai or the joy we take in our colorful festivals and stunning temples. At the heart of every Thai, are values, deep-seated and cherished, that shape our very identity – our 'Thainess'.

These values guide us, in our dealings with each other and the world at large. Let me give you a peek into the five core values of Thainess, from my viewpoint as a Thai.

1. A Deep Sense of Peace & Harmony

We, Thais, prioritize peace and harmony in our relationships and surroundings. This value can be reflected in our iconic Thai phrases:

- "Mâi bpen rai" (ไม่เป็นไร): This phrase, meaning "never mind" or "it's okay," reflects a stress-free attitude and a willingness to let go of small inconveniences. It helps maintain inner peace and avoids unnecessary conflict.
- "kreeng jai" (เกรงใจ): Thais are considerate of others' feelings and try to avoid causing discomfort or inconvenience. This can be seen in the subtle ways Thais communicate, often choosing polite and indirect language to preserve harmony.

Example scenario: Mali, a Thai lady, saw her colleague walking out of the office while she was driving past him. She offers him a ride even though she might have to take a 10-min detour, but he politely rejects and says "mâi-bpen-rai. greeng-jai" as he feels considerate and doesn't to cause her extra effort and time.



2. The Spirit of Hospitality

Thailand has a reputation as the “Land of Smiles”, however, smiles are just outer gestures, but what lies inside a Thai’s heart is the value of “น้ำใจ náam-jai”. This word doesn’t have a 1-to-1 English translation but it’s a combination of generosity, kindness, thoughtfulness, and the willingness to help others.

น้ำใจ náam-jai is a natural part of Thai culture, where kindness and helpfulness are extended to family, friends, and strangers. Those who have this value (มีน้ำใจ mii náam-jai) are highly appreciated and respected in our society.

It's the little things that matter. Whether it's guiding a confused tourist, helping with big bags, or sharing a meal with neighbors, Thais take pride in offering others some help and support. This warmth is what makes Thailand a favorite among travelers.



Mali is helping an old lady cross a street.

3. The Importance of Buddhism

Buddhism is deeply ingrained in Thai culture, with over 90% of Thais practicing the religion. While rooted in the core principles of the Buddha’s teachings, Thai Buddhism has evolved into a unique blend of spiritual practices and traditions, shaped by the country’s history, cultural values, and local beliefs.

One of the fundamental concepts in Thai Buddhism is “กสสุ gam” (Karma), the belief that our actions determine the outcomes of our lives. Thais hold that every deed—good or bad—produces a consequence, either in this life or future ones. This belief encourages kindness, generosity, and mindfulness in daily activities.

The belief in reincarnation also runs deep in Thai Buddhism, reinforcing the idea that life’s circumstances—whether fortunate or challenging—are tied to one’s past actions in previous lives. This perspective fosters a sense of acceptance among Thais, as we often view challenges as part of their karmic journey.

For instance, people regularly “ทำบุญ tam bun” (make merit) by donating to temples, offering food to monks during their morning alms walks, or contributing to community projects.



Thai people usually wake up early to give alms and provide food to monks.

4. Respect for Hierarchy and Seniority

Thai society has a clear hierarchy that influences how people live, work, and interact, especially when it comes to seniority. This concept is rooted in the value of respecting seniors, known as “ผู้เฒ่า” (pūu-yài), which translates to “elders” or “those of higher standing.”

However, seniority in Thai culture goes beyond just age—there are deeper layers to this value that shape behavior and communication in everyday life:

- **Age:** In Thai culture, age plays a significant role in determining respect. We highly regard not only the elderly but also anyone slightly older, even by just a few months or years.
- **Social status:** While Thai society is gradually adopting more individualistic ideals, traditional respect for positions of power remains strong. This is why the role of a teacher (ครู kruu) is highly revered, and leaders are often addressed with honorifics that acknowledge their position.
- **Experience:** Seniority in Thailand also encompasses experience, regardless of age. When we just started a new job, we call our colleagues “คุณ kun” (Mr. or miss) or “พี่ pīi” (older sister or older brother)
- **Strangers:** In daily life, it’s common to address strangers with terms like “พี่ pīi” (older one) or “น้อง náawng” (younger one) based on perceived age or seniority, even if you don’t know their actual age. For instance, at a market or in a taxi, addressing someone as “พี่ pīi” when they seem older is seen as polite and respectful.



John is calling a waiter to order food.

5. Simple, Stress-free Mentality

Thais embrace a relaxed, “go-with-the-flow” attitude toward life. This mentality is evident in phrases like “ไม่เป็นไร *mâi bpen rai*” (it’s okay) and “สบาย ๆ *sà-baai sà-baai*” (easy-going).

This mindset reflects a preference for avoiding conflict and letting things go to maintain peace. Rooted in Buddhist values of mindfulness and presence, it encourages staying calm, flexible, and stress-free, even when things don’t go as planned. This approach fosters a sense of inner peace and social harmony in daily interactions.

Example Scenario: Mali and John have a plan to meet their friends at 10 am. They decided to avoid Bangkok’s traffic by taking BTS however the previous train was full so they needed to take the next train. Even though they will make it in time, John starts to panic while Mali is trying to calm him down by saying “สบาย ๆ *sà-baai sà-baai*” (take it easy)



2

Cultural Etiquette

Politeness in Thai Conversations



Respect and politeness are at the core of Thai culture. This topic introduces you to the concept of polite Thai, focusing on the use of polite ending words, which add a respectful tone to your conversations.

You'll learn how to address others appropriately using "คุณ" (kun) for formal situations and names for casual interactions. We'll also explore the cultural nuances associated with being a farang (foreigner) in Thailand, helping you navigate social dynamics with confidence.

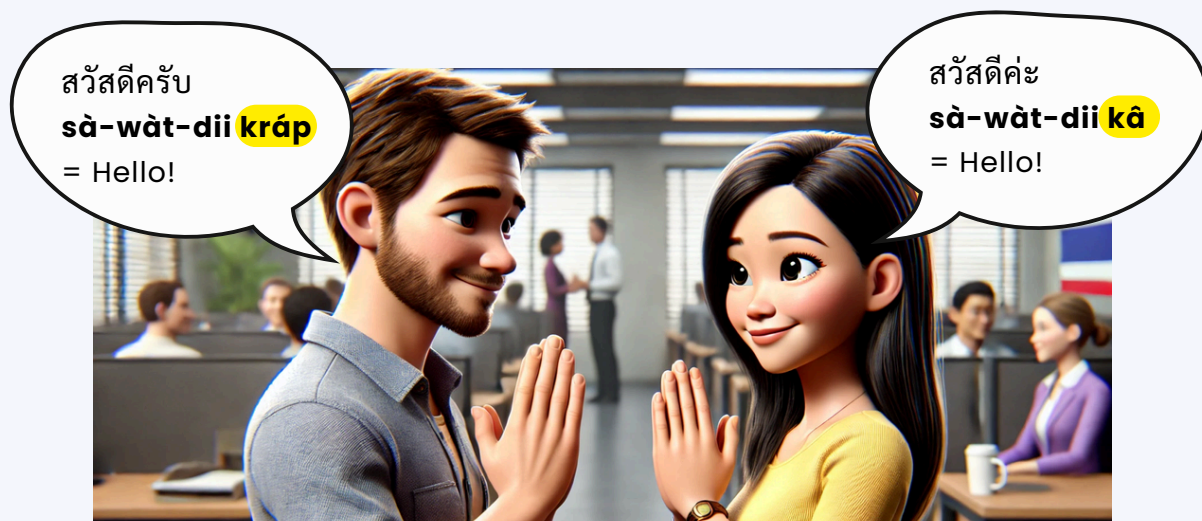
How to speak Thai politely

When learning Thai, one of the essential aspects to understand is the importance of politeness in communication. Thai culture places a strong emphasis on **respect and politeness**, so knowing how to speak politely is crucial to making a good impression. Here are some tips to help you navigate conversations without coming across as rude.

Polite particles (ending words)

In Thai, polite particles like **ครับ** (kráp), **ค่ะ** (kâ), and **คะ** (ká) are used to convey respect and politeness in conversation. They help soften statements and show respect to the listener. Here's a breakdown of each:

Thai words	Transliteration	Used by	Usage
ครับ	kráp (high tone)	Male speakers	all sentences
ค่ะ	kâ (falling tone)	Female speakers	statement and negative
คะ	ká (high tone)	Female speakers	questions



Common Mistake

It's not about the gender of the people you're talking to. It's YOUR gender. If you're a female speaker, you just keep saying "kâ"

Address others as “คุณ kun”

In Thai culture, the way you address someone can convey respect, familiarity, and the nature of your relationship. One of the most commonly used terms is “คุณ kun”, but it's important to understand when and how to use it appropriately.

Formal settings

The word “kun” translates to “you” or can be used as a prefix similar to “Mr.” or “Ms.” in English. Here are some key points to consider when using “kun”:

- **Semi-Formal Setting:** “kun” is typically used in semi-formal situations, especially during your first meeting with someone or in a work environment. It demonstrates politeness and respect, making it a safe choice when you're unsure about how to address someone.
- **Neutral Usage:** This term can be used for both men and women and is generally well-received across various age groups. It's a good default when you're getting to know someone or in a professional context.



Fun Fact

The word “คุณ kun” is also a personal pronoun for “you” which is used in a semi-formal to formal setting. Though it sounds polite, it can imply some distance in the relationship. Let's learn how to casually address others in Thai in the next topic.

🇹🇷 Address others by their names

Casual settings

While “kun” is polite, it's not always necessary, especially in casual settings or when speaking to someone younger than you. Here are alternative ways to address people:

First Names: In informal situations or among friends, you can simply use the person's first name. This creates a more relaxed atmosphere and shows familiarity.

Example:

If your friend is called สมชาย (Somchai)
you can just call him สมชาย (Somchai) without “kun”

Family Terms: Thai culture places a strong emphasis on familial relationships, even among friends. Using terms like พี่ (pī) for older siblings or friends and น้อง (náawng) for younger siblings or friends can enhance warmth and closeness in conversation.



From the picture, “Mali” (one on the left) is younger than “Anne” (one on the right). She then calls her “pī Anne”, while Anne calls her “náawng Mali” or just by her name because Mali is younger.

Summary

Understanding how to address people in Thai according to the social hierarchy and relationship dynamics will enhance your communication skills and reflect your respect for Thai culture. Using appropriate language and polite endings can help you build stronger connections in both personal and professional interactions.

Here's a table to help illustrate how to address people in Thai and when to use polite ending words based on the level of formality and the relationship between speakers:

Settings	Addressing Method	Polite Ending Words
Formal and polite settings: At work or social events With strangers	kun / kun + name	always
Casual settings: With people in the same age With acquaintants or friends Close colleagues	By their name	optional
	pīi (older) náawng (younger)	optional

Insider's Tip:

I personally enjoy incorporating polite ending words into my speech as it adds a touch of sweetness and warmth, making my sentences sound more polite and gentle. This practice allows me to show respect and maintain good manners, even when conversing with friends, close colleagues, and acquaintances. However, when I'm with very good friends, I feel comfortable skipping the polite endings.

Did you know that we, Thais, call everyone else, even a stranger, as part of our family? We might address an old man selling fruits on the street, “อา lung” (uncle), or a young waitress serving our food, “น้อง náawng” (younger sister or brother).

Avoid These BIG No-Nos

When interacting with Thai people, understanding their cultural values can go a long way in maintaining harmony and showing respect. Here are some major things to avoid—consider these the "BIG No-Nos" to ensure you don't unintentionally upset Thais:

1. Losing Your Temper or Being Confrontational

Thai culture values harmony and polite interactions. Losing your temper, shouting, or pointing in someone's face can cause deep discomfort and be seen as highly disrespectful. Thais prefer resolving conflicts privately.

2. Insulting Someone's Family

Family is central to Thai identity, and any insult directed at someone's parents, siblings, or relatives is taken personally. Such remarks are seen as attacking their honor and dignity.



When she felt respected

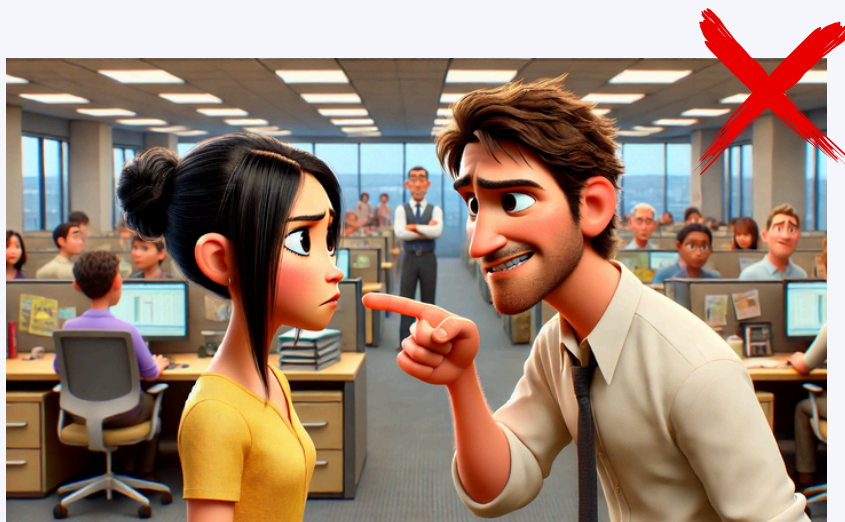


When she didn't feel respected

3. Don't Embarrass People

In Thai culture, “เสียหน้า *sĭa-nâa*” (**losing face**) is a significant concern. Publicly embarrassing someone or pointing out their mistakes, even as a joke, can deeply damage their reputation and cause emotional hurt. Thais take pride in maintaining their dignity, and such actions are seen as disrespectful and inconsiderate, often leaving a lasting negative impression.

To avoid this, it's best to avoid criticizing or giving direct feedback to colleagues in a group setting where others are present (if it's not necessary). Instead, opt for a private 1-on-1 meeting in a closed-door room where the conversation can remain confidential. When addressing issues, approach the discussion with empathy. This thoughtful approach not only preserves their dignity but also strengthens trust and mutual respect.



4. Criticizing Thai Culture, Religion, or the Monarchy

Thai people hold their culture, religion (Buddhism), and the monarchy in the highest regard. Criticizing these aspects is not only offensive but could also lead to legal consequences under Thailand's strict lèse-majesté laws.

5. Being Disrespectful in Temples and Toward Buddha

Temples are sacred spaces, and Buddha images are deeply revered. Using Buddha statues or images as decorations or failing to follow temple etiquette (e.g., not dressing appropriately, sitting with your feet pointing toward a shrine) is seen as disrespectful.

They call me “Farang”

In Thai, the word ฟาร์แรง (fà-ràng) is commonly used to refer to foreigners, particularly Westerners or people of European descent. The term ฟาร์แรง is a casual, everyday word with an interesting background and cultural significance.

Origins of the Word

The word ฟาร์แรง (fà-ràng) has its roots in the Thai language from the time of European colonization and trade in Asia. It is believed to have originated from the word "Frank," a term historically used to describe people from the West, specifically Europeans. Over time, it evolved in Thai to refer broadly to Westerners.

Usage of ฟาร์แรง

In everyday Thai conversation, ฟาร์แรง (fà-ràng) is used to refer to non-Asian foreigners, especially those with Caucasian features. Thai people often use ฟาร์แรง as a way to differentiate between locals and foreigners in a casual setting. It reflects a certain curiosity and fascination with foreign cultures, as well as a recognition of cultural differences. While it's not offensive when used in normal conversation, the context and tone can matter.

Guava or Western Foreigners?

The word ฟาร์แรง (fà-ràng) in Thai has a dual meaning: it refers to both foreigners (particularly Westerners) and the fruit "guava."

This is because guava was introduced to Thailand by Portuguese traders during the colonial era, and since the fruit came from foreigners, it became associated with the term ฟาร์แรง, which is used to describe Westerners.



6

At Restaurant

Food Culture in Thailand



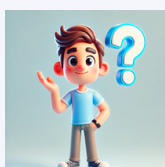
The phrase "กินข้าวหรือยัง gin káao rŭh-yang"—meaning "Have you eaten yet?"—is asked daily in Thailand, even more frequently than "สวัสดี sa-wat-dii" (hello). This reflects how food serves as a vital connection among Thais.

In this topic, you will discover Thai cuisine and gain important **food vocabulary and phrases** to help you order meals confidently at restaurants. We will go over essential expressions commonly used at restaurants, learn the cultural significance of **rice and side dishes**, and share **local tips for dining out** at a restaurant.

Essential Words for Food

If you're learning Thai, I assume that you're not only interested in the language but also a Thai food lover. Let's learn how to say the word "Thai food" and other cuisines together.

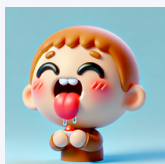
Keywords	Transliteration	Translation
ชอบ	châawp	like
กิน	gin	to eat
ดื่ม	dèeum	to drink
อาหาร	aa-hǎan	food
อร่อย	à-ròi	delicious
เผ็ด	phèt	spicy



คุณชอบกินอาหารไทยไหม

kun châawp gin aa-hǎan thai mái?

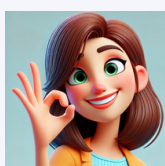
Do you like to eat Thai food?



ชอบกินมาก

châawp gin mâak

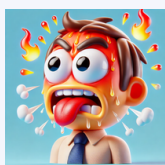
I like to eat a lot.



อาหารไทยอร่อย

aa-hǎan thai à-ròi

Thai food is delicious.



อาหารไทยเผ็ด

aa-hǎan thai phèt

Thai food is spicy.

🇹🇭 Words with “อาหาร ǎa-hǎan”

Did you know that the word “ǎa-hǎan (อาหาร)” not only translates to “food” but also encompasses meanings like “cuisine” and “meal”? Allow me to share some additional related words with you.

Keywords	Transliteration	Translation
อาหาร	ǎa-hǎan	food, cuisine and meal
อาหารไทย	ǎa-hǎan thai	Thai food
อาหารฝรั่ง	ǎa-hǎan fà-ràng	Western food
อาหารอีสาน	ǎa-hǎan ee-sǎan	Isaan food
อาหารจีน	ǎa-hǎan jiin	Chinese food
อาหารเกาหลี	ǎa-hǎan gǎo-lī	Korean food



อาหารเช้า
ǎa-hǎan cháo
breakfast



อาหารกลางวัน
ǎa-hǎan glāng-wan
lunch



อาหารเย็น
ǎa-hǎan yen
dinner

Let's Order Food

In Thai, it's common to use numbers when ordering food and drinks, and it's important to understand unit words (called ลักษณะนาม, lák-sà-náa-nam) that indicate quantities. These unit words are used with nouns to specify how many items you want.

Additionally, when making a casual order, the word เอา (ao) is often used, meaning "to take" or "to have." This helps make the ordering process more straightforward and conversational.



เอา (ao) + Food + Number + Container (unit word)



เอาข้าวเปล่าหนึ่งจาน

ao kâao bplào nùeng jaan

One plate of plain rice, please.



เอาข้าวผัดหนึ่งจาน

ao kâao pàt nùeng jaan

One plate of fried rice, please.



เอาผัดไทยสองจาน

ao pàt thai sǎawng jaan

Two plates of Pad Thai, please.



เอาผัดผักสองจาน

ao pàt pàk sǎawng jaan

Two plates of stir-fried vegetables, please.



เอาก๋วยเตี๋ยวหนึ่งชาม

ao gǔuay-dtǐiao nùeng chaam

One bowl of noodle soup, please

Please note that the words “จาน jaan” (plate) and “ชาม chaam” (bowl) are containers used as the unit nouns for food. You can skip them to simplify the sentence, however learning the unit words is very useful.

Order Basic Drinks

Let's learn to order basic drinks in Thai using these numbers. To tell an amount of noun, we usually mention the noun first, followed by an amount and then a unit word (container).



เอา (ao) + Drink + Number + Container (unit word)

Key words	Transliteration	Translation
เอา	ao	to take/order
กาแฟ	gaa-fae	coffee
น้ำเปล่า	nám bplào	plain water
เบียร์	bia	beer
แก้ว	gâew	glass/cup (unit word)



เอากาแฟหนึ่งแก้ว

ao gaa-fae nùeng gâew

I want a cup of coffee.



เอาน้ำเปล่าสองแก้ว

ao nám bplào sǎawng gâew

Two glasses of water, please.



เอาเบียร์สามแก้ว

ao bia sǎam gâew

Three glasses of beer, please.

If you wish to sound exceptionally polite, consider using "ขอ kǎaw" (I would like to have) instead of "เอา ao" (I want). In any case, don't forget the polite ending words to sounds friendly and polite.

Useful Phrases at Restaurant

Here are some useful Thai words and phrases to help you navigate a restaurant, from ordering to paying the bill:

ขอเมนูหน่อยครับ/ค่ะ (**kăaw mee-nuu nòi kráp/kâ**)
= "May I have the menu, please?"

สั่งอาหารครับ/ค่ะ (**sàng aa-hăan kráp/kâ**)
= I would like to order food.

มีอะไรแนะนำบ้างครับ/ค่ะ? (**mii à-rai náe-nam bâang kráp/kâ?**)
= "What do you recommend?"

มีอาหารมังสวิรัติไหมครับ/ค่ะ? (**mii aa-hăan mang-sà-wí-rát mái kráp/kâ?**)
= "Do you have vegetarian food?"

ขอผัดไทย 1 จานครับ/ค่ะ (**kăaw pàt-thai nèung jaan kráp/kâ**)
= "May I have one plate of Pad Thai, please?"

เอาน้ำเปล่า 2 แก้วครับ/ค่ะ (**ao náam-plàao sǎawng gâew kráp/kâ**)
= "I'll have two glasses of water, please."

ไม่เอาเผ็ดครับ/ค่ะ (**mâi ao pèt kráp/kâ**)
= "I don't want it spicy."

อร่อยมากครับ/ค่ะ (**à-ròi mâak kráp/kâ**)
= "It's very delicious."

เผ็ดมากครับ/ค่ะ (**pèt mâak kráp/kâ**)
= "It's very spicy."

คิดเงินด้วยครับ/ค่ะ (**kít nguahn dûay kráp/kâ**)
= "The bill, please."

Dialogue: Ordering food at a local restaurant

Before heading home after work, Mali made a quick stop at her local favorite Thai place near the office to have a quick easy dinner. Let's see the conversation between Mali and a waitress.



น้องคะ สั่งอาหารค่ะ
náawng ká. sàng aa-hăan kà
Hello, May I order?



รับอะไรคะ
ráp à-rai ká
What would you like to have?



เอาผัดกะเพราหนึ่งจานค่ะ
ao pàt gà-prao nèung jaan kâ
I want one dish of stir-fried basil.



เผ็ดไหมคะ
pèt mǎi ká
Do you want it spicy?



เผ็ดนิดหน่อยค่ะ
pèt nít-nòi kâ
Little spicy.



ดื่มอะไรคะ
dèeum à-rai ká
Would you like to drink?



เอากาแฟเย็นหนึ่งแก้วค่ะ
ao gaa-faae yen nèeng gáaew kâ
I want a glass of iced coffee.



ได้ค่ะ
dâi kâ
Sure!

Local Tips for Dining

This guide will help you feel at ease, whether you're grabbing a quick meal from a street stall or sitting down for a leisurely dinner in a restaurant. From ordering to tipping, here are a few local tips to ensure a smooth, authentic experience.

Booking and Arriving at a Restaurant:

- For Street Vendors: No need for reservations—just show up, and you're set! Street food spots are casual, and seating is often first-come, first-serve.
- For Permanent Restaurants: In larger cities like Bangkok, Chiang Mai, or Phuket, making a reservation is recommended, especially at popular or higher-end spots. Many restaurants in these areas have English-speaking staff.

Finding a Seat at Casual Places:



At smaller, casual eateries (like noodle shops or food courts), simply look for free seats when you arrive. It's often acceptable to take any open table directly. Just keep an eye out for a free spot and settle in.

If the staff comes to greet you, feel free to inform the number of people with a hand sign or tell the number of people in Thai. (You've already learned the number in Thai)

Asking for an English Menu:

Menus will be provided upon seating. You can politely ask, "**มีเมนูอังกฤษไหม?**" (**mii mee-nuu ang-grit mǎi**) to see if they have an English menu. When ready to order, it's entirely normal to raise your hand to catch a staff member's attention. Thais don't consider this rude—on the contrary, it's how service flows smoothly!

Rice and Side Dish

In Thai culture, sharing food is an important aspect of social interaction and community. Meals are typically communal, where people gather around a table and share various dishes. The concept of ข้าว (kâo) and กับข้าว (gàp-kâo) is central to this experience.



ข้าว

kâo

rice (main carb)

กับข้าว

gàp-kâo

all the accompanying side
dishes to eat with rice

This reflects how a Thai meal is structured: rice is served, and various dishes are shared for everyone to eat with their rice. Each dish complements the rice, and people can take small portions of each dish onto their plate of rice.



Plus, Thai food is a flavor explosion! That's why we eat it with rice—to keep the taste in perfect harmony! Some families even don't start the meal unless the rice is served on the table.

The Concept of ข้าวราดแกง (Khao Rad Gaeng)

ข้าวราดแกง (Khao Rad Gaeng) translates to "rice with curry and side dishes" and is a staple of everyday Thai dining. This style of eating involves selecting pre-cooked dishes displayed at food stalls or restaurants to be served over steamed rice. It's a convenient, affordable, and delicious way to enjoy a variety of Thai flavors in a single meal.



How It Works

1. At a food stall, you'll see an array of pre-cooked dishes displayed in trays, ranging from curries to stir-fries and fried items.
2. You can choose one or more dishes to be served over a plate of rice. Most vendors offer an option of one dish (ข้าวราดแกง 1 อย่าง) or two dishes (ข้าวราดแกง 2 อย่าง).
3. The vendor will scoop your selections onto the rice, creating a flavorful and satisfying meal.

Local Tips:

- Khao Rad Gaeng is perfect for affordable and efficient meals such as lunch. Local Thai workers usually take a short break and go to Khao Rad Gaeng place near by the office.
- Many families usually buy a few dishes from the Khao Rad Gaeng shop and cook them. rice at home. This is a casual way of dining at home without spending time cooking.
- For the add-on toppings, Thais usually like extra protein like the variety of eggs. ไข่ดาว kài daao = fried egg, ไข่เจียว kài jiiao = Thai omlet and ไข่ต้ม kài dtôm = boiled egg.

A Guide to Plant-Based Living

Even though we use a wide variety of herbs and greens in our cuisine, most of our Thai dishes include meat, eggs, and the most important seasonings; fish sauce and oyster sauce. Making it such a hard time for those who are vegan or vegetarians.

In this topic, we will dive into the concept of Thai veganism and some helpful tips to navigate a plant-based life in Thailand.

The Thai Concept of Vegan and Vegetarian

“เจ jay” (Buddhist vegan) and “วีแกน” (vegan) are similar in some ways. The key differences lie in their origins, restrictions, and cultural contexts. Here's a breakdown:

The Thai word “เจ” (**jay**) refers to a strict form of veganism inspired by Buddhist principles. Jay food excludes all animal products (including meat, fish, eggs, and dairy) and avoids pungent ingredients like garlic, onion, and chives, which are believed to stimulate the senses.

อาหารเจ a-hǎan jay (vegan food) can be found only at dedicated Jay restaurants. Besides, there is a cultural and religious event during the Vegetarian Festival (October). Look for yellow flags with red text “เจ” (Jay) at street food stalls, markets, and restaurants.



So if you just follow a vegan diet, it's ideal to say “กินวีแกน gin wii-gaen” (literally means I eat vegan) even though this vegan concept is not yet widely acknowledged in Thailand. It might be more understandable for Thais if you express yourself as “กินเจ gin Jay”.

If you're a vegetarian, you can express yourself as “**กินมัง gin mang**” which is a shortened word of “**มังสวิรัถิ mang-sa-wí-rát**” (vegetarian). This diet excludes meat but may include other animal-derived products, similar to Western vegetarianism.

Words and Phrases

Keywords	Transliteration	Translation
ไม่ใส่เนื้อสัตว์	mâi sài néua sàt	Don't put meat
ไม่ใส่น้ำปลา	mâi sài náam-bplaa	Don't put fish sauce
ไม่ใส่ไข่	mâi sài kài	Don't put egg
ไม่ใส่ซอสหอย	mâi sài sáawt hăawi	Don't put oyster sauce
เต้าหู้	dtâo-hûu	Tofu
ซีอิ้ว	sii-íw	Soy sauce
ฉันกินเจ	chăn gin jay	I am vegan and practice buddhist principle.
ฉันกินวีแกน	chăn gin wii-gaaen	I am on vegan diet.
ฉันกินมังสวิรัถิ	chăn gin mang-sa-wí-rát	I am on vegetarian diet.
ฉันไม่กินเนื้อสัตว์	chăn mâi gin néua sàt	I don't eat meat.

Customize your dishes

In Thailand, the chef cooks to order, and it's quite common to customize your Thai dishes according to conditions such as non-allergic ingredients and preferences. Hence, it's important to inform the kitchen if you'd like to avoid any particular ingredients and request a specific replacement.

Use the phrase “**ใส่ sài**” as “to put in” to include a particular ingredient, while using “**ไม่ใส่ mòi sài**” to exclude something.



ไม่ใส่เนื้อสัตว์
mòi sài nêeua-sàt
Without meat



ใส่เต้าหู้และผัก
sài dtào-hûu lée pàk
With tofu and veggies



ไม่ใส่น้ำปลา
mòi sài náam bplaa
Without fish sauce



ใส่ซีอิ๊ว
sài sii-íw
With soy sauce



WELCOME TO
THAILAND