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***The Island Bistro Cookbook:* Celebrity Chef Chai's Guide to Hawai'i Regional Cuisine**

Watermark Publishing announces the release of Chef Chai Chaowasaree's long-awaited guide to contemporary cuisine: *The Island Bistro Cookbook*, a collection of more than 90 recipes from his award-winning Honolulu restaurants, Chai's Island Bistro and Singha Thai Cuisine.

A prominent figure in Hawai'i Regional Cuisine, Chef Chai at last shares the secrets behind his unique brand of Pacific Rim cooking – from Butternut Squash Bisque to Pad Thai Noodles with Crab Claws to his signature dish, Kataifi and Macadamia Nut-Crusted Black Tiger Prawns. Chaowasaree is a founder of Hawaiian Island Chefs, the organization promoting homegrown agriculture and aquaculture. He hosts the popular television cooking program "Dining Out with Chai" and has earned numerous culinary honors, including the America's Top Tables award from *Gourmet* magazine.

In *The Island Bistro Cookbook*, Chaowasaree captures both the contemporary ambience of his restaurants and the spirit behind his distinctive style of fusion cuisine. From Eggplant Souffle to Crème Brulee, the dishes in this lavish, hardcover volume are simple yet elegant – equally at home in a tropical bistro or on the reader's dinner table.

Mouthwatering photography by Rae Huo captures the chef in action – shopping at Chinatown markets or preparing ingredients – as well as the palate-pleasing final products, completing this coffee table-presentation cookbook.

The Island Bistro Cookbook (ISBN 978-0-9815086-7-2) will be available in January 2009 priced at \$32.50 at bookstores and other retail outlets, from online booksellers, or direct from the publisher at www.bookshawaii.net. Contact Watermark Publishing, 1088 Bishop St., Suite 310, Honolulu, HI 96813; telephone (808) 587-7766; toll-free (866) 900-BOOK; fax (808) 521-3461; e-mail sales@bookshawaii.net.

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The ISLAND BISTRO

COOKBOOK

Chef Chai FAQs

Why have you taken so long to put out a solo cookbook? I wanted to be sure that I took the time to do it right, and to do it at the right time. By waiting so many years, I've been able to put together a large collection of recipes that I am proud of. Earlier this year, I decided to do the book so that I could share my accomplishments with my family in Thailand, who I never get to see. It was my hope that both my parents, who are very important to me, could see *The Island Bistro Cookbook*; unfortunately, my father passed away very recently, and I was unable to share it with him.

Did you attend culinary school? No, everything I know about cooking I learned at my mother's side. She is my idol and inspiration. My parents owned a restaurant, so my six older siblings and I grew up in the business. When I didn't have to go to school, my mother would take me with her to the open market to buy food for the restaurant. She's a perfectionist, so it wasn't always easy learning from her, but it's been a blessing. She taught me everything about food: how to choose the freshest fruits and vegetables, how to pick the best fish, how to cut meat—even how to kill the duck or chicken! By the time I was 13, I was going to the market to shop for the restaurant all by myself.

How long have you been cooking in Hawai'i? I first started out on the Big Island of Hawai'i in a small Thai restaurant in Kailua-Kona called Lanai Siamese Kitchen. I worked at several Big Island restaurants—even a Kentucky Fried Chicken!—and after two and a half years moved to Honolulu to pursue my dream of opening my own restaurant. I opened Singha Thai Cuisine in Waikiki in 1988 with my sisters, Joy and Nikki Saetung. Ten years later, in 1998, I took another big step and opened Chai's Island Bistro at the Aloha Tower Marketplace in Honolulu.

Tell us about your two restaurants. Singha Thai Cuisine is the only Thai restaurant in Hawai'i to be certified by the Royal Thai Government. The *Los Angeles Times* recommended it as one of the "three restaurants you must try while you're in Honolulu." At Singha Thai, I wanted to share the culture and food of Thailand, so my sisters and I added Thai music and dancers to perform in the restaurant.

At Chai's Island Bistro, we serve our own special version of the fusion cooking style known as Hawai'i Regional Cuisine—we use fresh ingredients from all over the Islands. But again, I wanted our guests to experience more than just good food, so I invited the best contemporary Island musicians to perform. We started out by having The Brothers Cazimero and Hapa come just a couple nights a week...Now we are known for featuring wonderful Hawaiian music every night!

What will we find in this cookbook? *The Island Bistro Cookbook* features over 90 of my favorite recipes from both my restaurants. I've also added my personal insights on the dishes, as well as my background as a chef. These recipes have been perfected over many years; all the ingredients are carefully chosen, and I try to use as many local sources as I can. I promise you'll relish the mingling of flavors in the unique cuisine that can only be found at Chai's!

More Chef Chai

Chef Chai hosts Dining Out with Chai, airing Sundays at 5PM on KHON2

Awards & Accolades:

America's Top Tables—Gourmet magazine

Hands Down Best Thai In Town

—Zagat Survey Award

"Best Restaurant"—City of Bangkok

Hale 'Aina Award, "O'ahu Top Restaurant"

—HONOLULU magazine

'Ilima Award—The Honolulu Advertiser

Golden Platter Award—International Food, Wines & Travel Association

Outstanding Chef of The Year

—Honolulu Wine Festival

Taste of Honolulu, "People's Choice Award"

Taste of Kapolei, "Best Restaurant Award"



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COOKBOOK

Chef Chai's Fundamentals of Thai Cooking

Basil—There are three principal varieties of basil in Thailand: sweet, holy and lemon. Western (Italian) sweet basil may be substituted for any of these, but it is much milder in flavor.

Bean Thread/Long Rice/Cellophane Noodles/Rice Vermicelli (Woon Sen)—Made from mung beans, these are thin, almost transparent in appearance. They are normally found dried and will need to be softened by soaking in water for a few minutes before use.

Chili (Prik)—Chili was not my favorite ingredient when I was growing up in Thailand. I found that in general Thai people tend to enjoy their food spicier than I do. The small, thin red or green chili called Prik Kee Noo, about one inch long, is the hottest chili in Thailand. A larger-sized chili, about three inches or longer, that comes in different colors including yellow, red and green, is normally the one to use for making Thai curry paste.

Cilantro/Chinese Parsley/Fresh Coriander (Phak Chee)—I love the smell of cilantro, with its strongly aromatic green leaves that are often used in Thai cooking. It is my favorite herb; there is no substitute for it. The root has a much stronger taste and aroma, making it perfect for marinades.

Coconut Milk (Kar Tie)—When I was young, the only way to get coconut milk was to mix freshly grated coconut meat with water and squeeze the creamy liquid from it. Now you can buy coconut milk in a liquid or powder form. I find that powdered coconut milk is not as good as liquid, however.

Fish Sauce (Nam Pla)—This acrid-smelling sauce is a mainstay of Thai cooking, adding both protein and salt to the dishes. It is the fermented extract of salted small fish. Even though it is very strong when you smell it directly, the smell seems to mellow down upon heating, and the sauce gives dishes a rich and smooth flavor that is the secret of authentic Thai taste. I personally prefer Thai fish sauce to the Filipino or Vietnamese varieties.

Galangal (Kah)—This root comes from the same family as ginger, but it has a totally different taste and aroma. Galangal is very fibrous and is used for flavoring only, not for eating. It can be stored in the freezer or dried and will keep a long time.

Ginger (Khing)—Ginger is my mom's favorite ingredient. This pungent, spicy rhizome has a lot of nutrition packed into it. It's good for the blood. Young ginger is often used for pickling or can be sliced thin and stir-fried; older ginger is more fibrous and is better for flavoring than eating.

Kaffir Lime Leaf (Bai Mar Kroot)—Kaffir lime trees belong to the citrus family, just like regular limes, but the leaves are identifiable by their double-lobed, figure-eight shape. If the leaves are to be eaten, not merely used for flavoring, they should be shredded thin or pounded into a paste.

Lemongrass (Tra Krai)—Lemongrass is the most popular herb used in Thai cooking. The outside leaf is very tough and fibrous, and it is best used for making stock or tea. The center shoots, lighter in color and more tender, are often used for salad dressings or marinades.

Sambal Oelek—One of my most favorite chili sauces, this Asian-style chili sauce, made of ground chili, garlic, shallots and vinegar, is often used in stir-fried dishes or as a condiment.

Sticky Rice (Khao Neow)—This rice is whiter, more solid and chalky in color when dry than regular rice. It is often called sweet rice, as it is slightly sweet and sticky when cooked. It must be soaked in water for several hours before use.

Thai Curry Paste (Prik Kang)—A paste made of different-colored chili peppers, lemongrass, Kaffir lime, garlic, shallots, galangal and shrimp paste. Curry pastes can be purchased pre-made from any Asian grocery store or shop in Chinatown. They come in different varieties, including green, red, yellow, Massaman and panang.



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COOKBOOK

Blackened Fresh 'Ahi Summer Rolls with Soy-Ginger-Sesame Sauce



This is one of the original creations from my first restaurant, Singha Thai in Waikīkī. Summer rolls are served at most Thai and Vietnamese restaurants, and nearly all of them include the usual shrimp with sweet and sour sauce. To me, that's kind of boring. I wanted to do something different, so years ago I introduced 'ahi to the recipe. You can also use chicken or tofu or whatever you like. The great thing about these summer rolls is that they aren't deep-fried. They're relatively light and healthy, too.

Blackened Fresh 'Ahi

- Cajun spice (to be sprinkled on the fish before cooking)*
- 4 12-inch Thai rice papers
- 1 oz. radish sprouts
- 1 oz. enoki mushroom
- 1 c. carrot, shredded
- 1 c. beet, shredded
- 1 c. green mango, shredded
- 16 mint leaves
- 4 3-oz. strips of fresh 'ahi, about 10 inches long
- 4 oz. baby lettuce

- Sprinkle Cajun spice evenly over the fish. In a hot, non-stick pan, quickly sear the fish for about 30 seconds; set aside.
- Soften each piece of Thai rice paper by spraying it with water or covering it with a damp cloth. (It will take about 15 to 30 seconds to soften.) Lay it on a flat surface.
- Divide the remaining ingredients into 4 portions to be wrapped into rolls. First, put the enoki mushroom and radish sprouts at opposite sides of the rice paper. Next, evenly layer the carrot, beet, green mango, 4 mint leaves, 1 piece of fresh 'ahi and some baby lettuce between them.
- Roll the rice paper from one end to the other to form a tube with all the ingredients wrapped inside. Repeat for all four rice papers and then cut each roll into bite-size pieces.
- Serves: 4

Soy-Ginger-Sesame Sauce

- ¼ c. Aloha Shoyu (low sodium)
- ¼ c. cooking mirin (Japanese sweet rice wine)
- 1 c. water
- 1 oz. fresh ginger, sliced
- 1 oz. onion, sliced
- 1 oz. celery, sliced
- 1 oz. carrot, sliced
- Dash of sesame oil
- 2 Tbsp. unsalted butter

- In a pot, combine all the ingredients, except butter. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat and simmer for about 10 to 15 minutes. Just before serving, strain out the vegetables. Slowly whip butter into the remaining sauce. Turn off the heat.

Tip: Butter should be at room temperature. When adding butter to the sauce, whip continuously until the butter is incorporated into the sauce. Turn off the heat right away.

The ISLAND BISTRO

COOKBOOK

Wok-Seared Jumbo Black Tiger Prawns with Thai Chili-Ginger Sauce



This recipe features one of my signature sauces. Because the Thai Chili-Ginger Sauce is so versatile, you can substitute scallops or lobster or fish. There's a lot of flavor in the sauce, and you can turn the heat up or down according to the amount of chili you use. Also, with this sauce as a base, you can use your imagination and create different dishes.

Wok-Seared Jumbo Black Tiger Prawns

- ½ lb. fresh black tiger prawns, peeled, rinsed and butterflied
- Flour for dusting prawns
- 2 c. vegetable oil, for deep-frying
- 1 c. spinach
- ½ Tbsp. vegetable oil
- 1 Tbsp. chicken stock or water
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 1 c. steamed rice

- In a wok, preheat 2 cups of vegetable oil. Dust the prawns with flour and drop carefully into the hot wok. Cook until prawns are pink and tender; remove from oil and set aside.
- In a hot pan, add ½ Tbsp. of olive oil and the spinach. Toss a few times, then add 1 Tbsp. of chicken stock or water. The steam will cook the spinach in 1 to 2 minutes.
- Serves: 1

Thai Chili-Ginger Sauce

- ¼ Tbsp. garlic, chopped
- Splash of vegetable oil
- ¼ Tbsp. Prik Pao Thai chili paste in oil
- ½ Tbsp. ginger, chopped
- 1 Tbsp. onion, diced
- 1 Tbsp. oyster sauce
- Dash of sugar, to taste
- 1 c. chicken stock or hot water

- Sauté garlic in vegetable oil for 10 seconds, then add remaining ingredients. Cook for 3 minutes or until the liquid is thickened. Strain off and reserve liquid; discard solids.

Presentation: For a dramatic presentation, fill a round metal ring mold with rice and press it down evenly. Unmold rice, add sautéed spinach, top with prawns and drizzle Thai Chili-Ginger Sauce around the plate.

The ISLAND BISTRO

COOKBOOK

Tom Yum, Spicy Lemongrass Soup with Seafood

This is the perfect dish to cook when you have a cold; it will certainly help clear your sinuses! This is also one of the most popular traditional Thai dishes. When people think of lemongrass, they automatically think of Thai cooking.



- 8 c. chicken stock
- 2 lemongrass stalks, sliced
- 8 kaffir lime leaves
- 1 clove shallot, whole
- 1 clove garlic, whole
- 2 cherry tomatoes, cut into halves
- 4 large shrimp, peeled, de-veined and rinsed
- 4 scallops
- 4 oz. lobster meat
- 4 oz. fresh fish filet
- 1 c. mushroom, cut in half
- ½ Tbsp. sugar
- 2 Tbsp. fish sauce, to taste
- ½ Tbsp. Prik Pao chili paste in oil
- 1½ Tbsp. lime or lemon juice
- Fresh chili pepper, if you like it hot
- 1 Tbsp. Chinese parsley, chopped

- In a soup pot, boil chicken stock, lemongrass, kaffir lime leaves, shallot, garlic and cherry tomatoes. Add seafood, mushroom, sugar, fish sauce and chili paste. Boil for about 3 minutes or until the seafood is cooked. Do not overcook the seafood.

- Before serving, add lime juice, fresh chili and Chinese parsley.

- Serves: 2

Optional: You may substitute any meat, vegetables or firm tofu for the seafood.

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COOKBOOK

Pan-Roasted Chicken with Spicy Shiitake Mushroom Sauce

This is a combination of Chinese and Thai cooking. We used to serve this stir-fry style at Singha Thai, with the chicken cut into small pieces. For presentation purposes, however, it looks better to keep it whole. You can make this dish ahead of time and just heat it up when you're ready to serve. The flavor will soak right in.



- 8 c. dry shiitake mushroom, soaked in water for a minimum of 30 minutes or until soft, stems removed
- 2 Tbsp. vegetable oil
- 3 pearl onions
- 1 chicken breast, skin on
- 1 clove garlic, chopped
- 1 c. chicken stock or hot water
- 1 Tbsp. oyster sauce
- ½ Tbsp. fish sauce or Aloha Shoyu
- ¼ Tbsp. paprika
- Sugar, to taste
- 4 choy sum stalks

- In a hot pan with medium-high heat, sauté shiitake mushroom with vegetable oil for 30 seconds. Add pearl onions and chicken breast with the skin side down. Cook for 1 minute or until the skin turns light brown. Turn the meat over and cook for 1 more minute, then add chopped garlic.
- Add chicken stock or hot water, oyster sauce, fish sauce, paprika and sugar, bring to boil and turn the heat to medium-low. Keep cooking until the chicken is done, approximately 2 minutes. You may add more chicken stock or water if needed.
- Add choy sum and keep cooking until it's done, about 1 to 2 minutes.
- Put choy sum on the bottom of the plate, and then top with chicken and sauce.
- Serves: 1

Optional: Pork, beef, shrimp, scallop or tofu may be substituted for chicken.

Tip: For faster cooking, you can cut the chicken or meat into bite-size pieces. Serve with a bowl of steamed rice.

The ISLAND BISTRO

COOKBOOK

Thai Tapioca Pudding with White Chocolate-Grand Marnier Sauce



Thai desserts generally aren't big on presentation. In a typical Thai restaurant, they'll usually just put the tapioca in a cup with coconut milk. I wanted a similar idea, but with a different and more creative presentation. So instead of coconut milk, I used white and dark chocolate. The end result is almost like a tapioca cake.

Thai Tapioca Pudding

5½ c. water
½ lb. tapioca pearls
1½ c. sugar
1 c. canned water chestnuts
1 c. canned young coconut meat
White Chocolate-Grand Marnier Sauce
Berries of your choice, for garnish
Mint leaves, for garnish

- Over medium heat, bring water to a boil and add tapioca pearls. Let boil for 1 minute, then turn off heat and let sit for 5 minutes.
- Turn the heat on again and return tapioca to a boil, then add sugar, water chestnuts and young coconut meat. Keep boiling for about 5 minutes over low heat, stirring constantly to keep the tapioca from burning and sticking to the bottom of the pot. Remove from heat and let sit for 3 minutes.
- At this point the tapioca should be cooked halfway through, with a white core remaining in each pearl; if not, bring to a boil again.
- Divide up the tapioca into 1-cup molds or small bowls. Let cool to room temperature. Then refrigerate for 30 minutes or until the tapioca is firm.
- Serves: 10

White Chocolate-Grand Marnier Sauce

1½ c. creamy, high-quality white chocolate
1 c. heavy cream
½ c. Grand Marnier
orange, peeled in large pieces

- In a double-boiler over medium-low heat, combine white chocolate, cream, Grand Marnier and orange peel. Stir until white chocolate is melted and ingredients are combined. Remove orange peels.

Presentation: To serve, ladle White Chocolate-Grand Marnier Sauce onto a plate and spread into a pool. Run a small knife around the sides of the Thai Tapioca Pudding molds and/or rinse the outside of the molds with warm water to loosen the tapioca. Unmold upside-down onto the sauced plates and garnish with fresh berries, mint leaves and extra sauce.