



# THAI FOOD, NATURALLY!

## THAI “GREEN” SHRIMP – A LOVE STORY

### Thais Love Thai Shrimp!

Reflecting Thailand’s roots in the sea and in its rivers, as well as the Thais’ reverence for water, most Thai meals and dishes are built around shrimp and other seafood. Since the days of Thailand’s first independent Kingdom, the Sukhothai Kingdom in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, rice and fish have been essential foods – so much so that instead of “having a meal,” Thais usually say they are “eating rice and fish,” and newlyweds are compared with newly harvested rice and freshly harvested fish.

### Americans Love Thai Shrimp!

Thailand exports more shrimp to the United States than to any other country, with a value of more than \$1.28 billion annually, accounting for about one-third of U.S. shrimp imports<sup>1</sup>, and it is America’s top shrimp supplier.<sup>2</sup> Fresh-frozen Thai white shrimp or “easy peel” shrimp are found in grocery stores nationwide. While Thailand traditionally was known for producing black tiger shrimp, its Pacific white shrimp has captured the taste buds of American consumers, who eat 650,000 tons of shrimp per year,<sup>3</sup> and has taken over the market in the past decade.

### The World Loves Thai Shrimp!

The United States, the world’s biggest market for shrimp<sup>4</sup> imports between 50 and 55 percent of the shrimp Thailand exports, according to the Thai Shrimp Association, while Japan and the EU each account for 10 to 15 percent of its shrimp exports.<sup>5</sup> Canada, Australia, and South Korea also are major consumers of frozen Thai shrimp.

Despite the competition from other producers, Thai shrimp remains exceedingly popular because of its consistently reliable freshness, high quality, and the Thai industry’s advanced production and distribution technologies.

One of the world’s leading shrimp farming nation in terms of value and volume, Thailand exports about 90 percent of its shrimp. The Thai Shrimp Association predicts Thailand’s shrimp industry will earn more than \$US 2.6 billion from international exports of 370,000 tons in 2009, making shrimp one of the country’s most valuable international commodities.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Javier López, “Shrimp Market Report, May 2009,” FAO Globefish.org.

<sup>2</sup> “Shrimp Market Report, April 2008,” FAO Globefish

<sup>3</sup> Audun Lem, “The Future of Shrimp,” presentation Nov. 2008, FAO-MOA-INFOFISH Shrimp Conference

<sup>4</sup> R. Gillett, *Global Study of Shrimp Fisheries 475*, FAO Fisheries Technical Paper, 2008.

<sup>5</sup> “Thai Shrimp Exporters Expect a Good Year,” The FishSite.com, Sept. 24, 2009.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

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## **Thailand Is a Leader in Shrimp Production Standards**

For both domestic and foreign consumption of its products, Thailand's shrimp industry is following strict environmental standards and participating in the national program to promote compliance with Clean and Green standards, including minimizing waste, recycling, building solid waste disposal facilities, and following tighter water pollution and social welfare requirements.

The Thai Department of Fisheries' Clean and Green strategy for 2009-2011 encourages farmers to grow at least 5,000 rai (1,976.843 acres) of mangroves each year and to use seaweed, rather than the traditional shells, in shrimp ponds to absorb waste and residue.<sup>7</sup>

Thailand's high standards have been recognized by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), which invited Thailand's Department of Fisheries (DOF), a department under the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, to participate in the FDA's pilot program for third-party certification of imported aquacultured shrimp. FDA officials are working with fisheries officials to design inspection procedures that mirror those of the U.S. government and will conduct training sessions for Thai inspectors. If FDA agrees to implement the program, Thai shrimp inspected and approved by DOF personnel will be pre-qualified to enter the United States.

In addition, Thai shrimp farmers, hatcheries and companies that produce shrimp destined for international markets follow aquaculture practices that are environmentally sustainable and meet or exceed all globally accepted sanitary and hygiene standards, including those established by the Global Aquaculture Alliance, a U.S.-based industry group that certifies them as meeting "Best Aquaculture Practices" standards.

To meet Global Aquaculture Alliance standards, the Thai shrimp industry has constructed water-treatment processes and buffer canals to avoid pollution and restored mangrove swamps, which serve as important breeding grounds for commercial seafood species and play a major role in flood control, erosion-prevention, and the viability of coastal fishery.

Thailand's shrimp processors also meet and generally exceed such globally recognized standards as ISO-9001 (Quality Management System) and ISO14001 (Environmental Management System), International Food Standard, British Retailer Consortium Global Food Standard, OHSAS/TIS 18001 (U.S. Occupational Health & Safety System), Thai Labor Standards, Social Accountability (SA 8000), Halal, and The Aquaculture Council Certification.

Since 1947, the Department of Fisheries has been authorized by federal law to audit the food safety, environmental policies, sustainable animal health and welfare, and social responsibility (including adherence to laws and regulations governing employee safety and welfare) practices of Thai shrimp farmers and fisheries. DOF's traceability system allows the government to quickly detect and prevent any possible contamination caused by suppliers of broodstock, feed, hatchlings, and other components of shrimp farming. The Department certifies shrimp farms as meeting Good Aquaculture Practices and/or

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<sup>7</sup> Shrimpers Plan Greener Future," Bangkok Post, September 29, 2008.

adhering to the Code of Conduct for Responsible Shrimp Aquaculture. Among DOF's objectives is to strengthen small-scale farmers, enabling them to qualify for GAP and CoC certification and obtain access to international markets.

Shrimp producers also are required to follow strict federal laws prohibiting the hiring of illegal immigrants, children, and forced laborers, which the Royal Thai Government takes seriously. The government has: established the Commission for Protection of Child Labor (1987); implemented the Labor Protection Act of 1998 to inspect sites for safety of workers as well as the safety of food; ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention No. 182 on the Elimination of All Worst Forms of Child Labor (2001); launched development of a national plan of action (2006); adopted a new Constitution providing for the promotion and protection of children's rights (2007), launched a series of joint efforts with the ILO to tackle human trafficking and child labor and endorsed a number of ILO-supported "Good Practices" (2007); and enacted the Employment of Aliens Act to better protect migrant workers (2008).

To combat child labor violations and human trafficking, the Thai government has worked closely with international agencies, including ILO, International Organization for Migration, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), UN Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region Taskforce, and the UN Global Initiatives to Fight Human Trafficking (UN-GIFT).

### **Thai Shrimp Producers Are Meeting Demand through Innovation**

Since the 1970s, Thailand's shrimp industry has moved from harvesting wild shrimp to farming commercial shrimp. As part of this evolution, the industry uses the most up-to-date technology and has developed new and innovative products that satisfy growing customer demand for high-quality shrimp that meets international safety and environmental standards and are sustainable.

Thailand's approximately 22,000 shrimpers farm some 110,000 shrimp ponds covering 76,800 hectares (nearly 188 acres). In 2008, they produced 495,000 tons of shrimp; production is expected to reach 520,000 tons this year. The fully integrated shrimp processing industry employs approximately one million people throughout the country, according to the Department of Fisheries.<sup>8</sup>

In the near future, the industry is expected to begin exploring niche markets for shrimp, producing "bio-secure" shrimp (safeguarded against disease) and shrimp-related processed foods such as dumplings, and shipping fresh, chilled shrimp directly to end-users such as restaurants and hotels in Asia, only a two-to-three hour flight away.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> "Thai Shrimp Exporters Expect a Good Year."

<sup>9</sup> "Shrimpers Plan Greener Future."

## Thais Are Raising Organic Shrimp

Responding to consumer interest, Thailand is beginning to export organically raised shrimp, particularly to Europe and Japan. The pioneer in organic shrimp production is Sureerath Farm, [www.sureerathprawns.com/display/home.htm](http://www.sureerathprawns.com/display/home.htm), which was one of Thailand's first shrimp farms when it began operating in 1985. Owner Prayoon Hongrath raises organic shrimp in an environmentally friendly fashion that includes a fully closed water system, water recirculation canals, and organic water treatment pond. No waste material is discharged into the surrounding ecological system. Sureerath Farm's black tiger prawns were the first in Thailand to be certified as organic by Naturland, a German-based, international certifying organization accredited by the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements.

## Tips on Cooking with Shrimp from Thailand, the “Kitchen of the World”

Thai shrimp may be incorporated into any favorite seafood recipes. Once cooked, they also make delicious additions to rice, egg, and pasta dishes as well as to salads.

*Pad Thai*, a famous noodle dish, is one of the most popular dishes at Thai restaurants around the world, while the shrimp soup, *Tom Yam Kung* is much loved by Thais. Here are recipes for these two favorites, courtesy of the Tourism Authority of Thailand:

### Pad Thai (Stir-Fried Thai Noodles)

Serves one

#### Ingredients:

- ½ cup cooking oil
- 3 cups narrow rice noodles (Sen Lek) soaked in warm water till flexible
- 1 cup chicken meat, sliced into small strips
- 4 Thai shrimp
- 1 tablespoon pickled white radish (Chai-Po), chopped
- 1/3 cup soy bean curd, cut into small slivers
- 2 eggs
- 1 teaspoon garlic, chopped
- 1 teaspoon shallots or onion, chopped
- 4 tablespoons sugar
- 4 tablespoons fish sauce
- 2 tablespoons vinegar
- 2 tablespoons tamarind juice or vinegar
- 1/3 cup spring onion, chopped into 1 and ½ inch lengths
- ½ cup bean sprouts
- 1 lime, cut into wedges, for garnish
- 2 tablespoons ground roasted peanuts, for garnish
- 1 teaspoon ground dry red chilli or paprika, for garnish+

#### Method:

- Soak the rice noodles for about 30 minutes or until soft. Drain.
- Pour the cooking oil into a large pan, and then stir-fry the garlic and onion until they turn yellow.

- Add the chicken slices and stir-fry until well cooked.
- Add the shrimp, pickled white radish and soy bean curd.
- Crack the eggs into a small bowl, stir lightly, then add to the mixture, and scramble, stirring all the while.
- Add sugar, fish sauce, vinegar, tamarind juice, and stir until cooked.
- Add the drained, softened noodles and stir-fry until mixed well.
- Then add the spring onion and bean sprouts and stir-fry until cooked.
- Put into a serving bowl and garnish with roasted peanuts, ground dry chili or paprika, and more bean sprouts.

### **Tom Yam Kung (Hot and Sour Shrimp Soup)**

Serves one

#### **Ingredients:**

- 3 cups (24 fluid ounces) water or light chicken stock
- 5 kaffir lime leaves (Bai Makrut)
- 3 thin slices fresh or dried galangal
- 1 cup fish sauce
- 2 stalks of lemon grass, lower third only, cut into one inch lengths and coarsely pounded
- 2 shallots, coarsely pounded
- ½ cup sliced straw mushrooms
- 5 hot green Thai chili peppers (Phrik Khi Nu) – OPTIONAL
- 8 ounces Thai shrimp, shelled and deveined
- ¼ cup lime juice
- 1 teaspoon roasted chilli paste (Nam Phrik Pao)
- 1 tablespoon chopped cilantro or coriander leaves (Bai Phak Chi), for garnish

#### **Method:**

- Bring the stock or water to boil in a pan set over medium heat.
- Add lime leaves, galangal, fish sauce, lemon grass, and shallots and stir.
- Then add the mushrooms and chili peppers (if using).
- Let the stock simmer for at least two minutes, or until fragrant.
- Add the shrimp and cook until the shrimp turn pink, opaque and firm – about one minute.
- Set aside.
- Quickly combine 1-2 teaspoons of lime juice and the chili paste in a serving bowl.
- Pour the soup into the bowl, stir, and garnish with chopped cilantro leaves.