

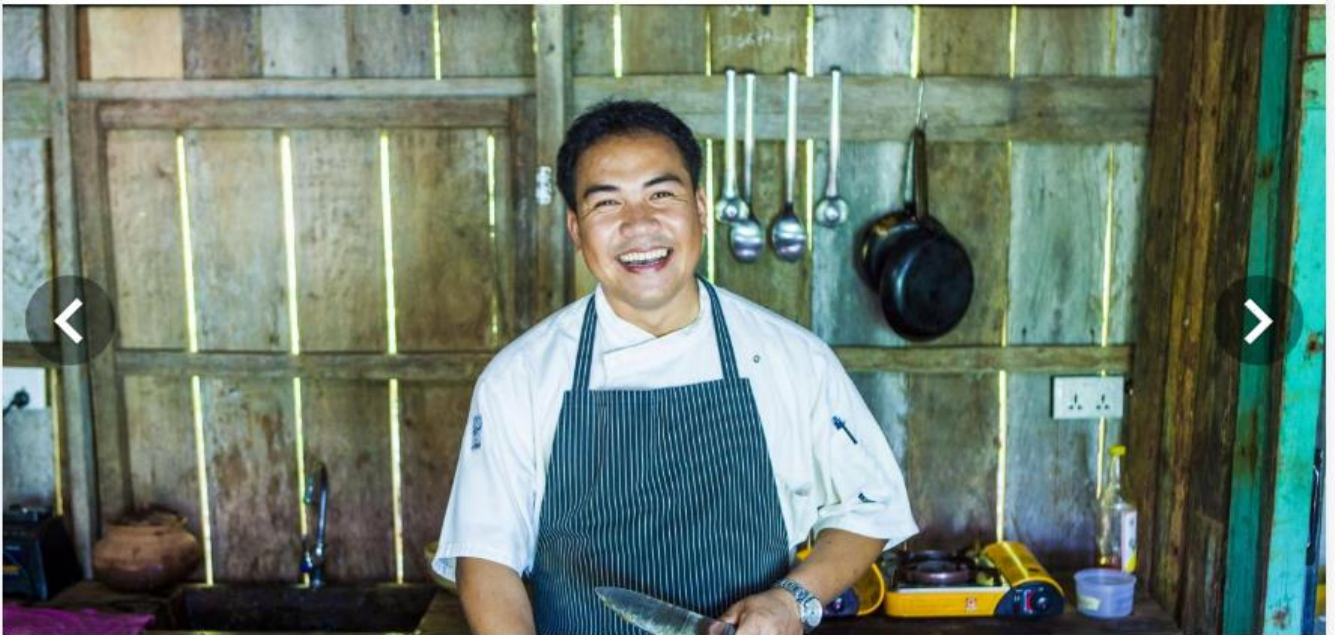
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5 things you need to know about Cambodian cuisine

Ahead of his London residency at Carousel, Cambodian chef Sophat Hing gives you the lowdown on this under-the-radar Southeast Asian cuisine known as Khmer

SOPHAT HING | 21 hours ago | 0 comments

📷 Khmer cuisine - in pictures



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Song Saa chef Sophat Hing

Whilst Londoners devour pad thai and massaman curry on the daily, pho shops dot London's high streets and banh mi stalls line the city's **street food markets**, one Southeast Asian cuisine has remained entirely under the radar - until now, that is.

1. It's hugely varied

Khmer cuisine originates in Cambodia, the nation of 15 million people sandwiched between the gastrotourism hotspots of Thailand and Vietnam. There's a strong French influence, reaching back to Cambodia's days as a French colony, which instilled a national love of baguettes and good coffee. There are also aromatic curries, fresh Thai-style salads and noodles passed down through years of Chinese migration. Cambodian food is strongly influenced by geographical variations, with plenty of seafood along the country's long southern coastline and freshwater fish along the meandering Mekong River.

2. Flavour is king

In common with Thai and Vietnamese dishes, Khmer cuisine is characterised by contrasting flavours and textures, using fresh herbs against tangy pickles, spicy chillies and sticky rice. Pungent Prahok fish sauce is used in most dishes, accented with zingy lime, sweet palm sugar, creamy coconut milk and salty soy sauce. The dishes tend to be heartier than those from Vietnam and more gently spiced than Thai cuisine.



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3. Rice is a staple at every meal

Each morning, Cambodians greet one another with “Nyam bai howie nov?” (“Have you eaten rice yet?”). Meals are built around a central bowl of rice, with the addition of several accompanying

dishes such as stir fries, pickles and curries.

4. It's exciting

Pork, beef and seafood are always popular, but the more adventurous diners might wish to try the Khmer delicacy of crispy fried tarantula.

5. It's delicious

Amok Trey is perhaps the nation's most famous dish, consisting fresh fish in an aromatic marinade of coconut milk and kroeung curry paste, steamed in a banana leaf until the sauce achieves a mousse-like texture. Other highlights include Cha K'dam - wok-fried mud crab - and stir-fried beef Lok Lak.

London's first Cambodian fine dining experience is opening at Carousel on November 15-26, where a five course set menu by Sophat Hing, head chef of Song Saa Private Island. Tickets are £37.50, book at carousel-london.com ■

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