



From taco carts and noodle stalls to hawker markets and gelaterias, it's on the street that you'll find the heart of a cuisine and its culture.

With these 100 authentic recipes, Lonely Planet delivers the planet's freshest, tastiest street-food flavours direct to your kitchen.

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THE WORLD'S BEST STREET FOOD



# THE WORLD'S BEST STREET FOOD

Where to find it & how to make it







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# INTRODUCTION

BY TOM PARKER BOWLES

You never forget the first time. Mine took place, nearly 20 years back, on an insalubrious backstreet in Bangkok's Patpong. The experience was brief, and fairly inglorious, but remains seared in my soul forever. One taste was all it took. The stall was little more than a pushcart with a bright yellow awning. A tattered advert for Carnation milk hung precariously from the side while the owner, a small woman in a Coca-Cola cap, gossiped incessantly with a friend perched on a wobbly plastic stool. Workspace was severely limited, as a huge wooden pestle and mortar dominated

the display. Neatly arranged around it, like small satellites circling the sun, were metal bowls filled with ingredients of every hue.

As a street-food virgin, I wasn't exactly sure where to start. A friend more experienced in the ways of the road had told me about *som tam*. 'Just look for the stall with the fat, shiny green fruit. And someone pounding the hell out of their mortar.' So I giggled nervously and pointed at the plump papaya. The lady stopped her chat and smiled back. 'You want *farang* hot? Or Thai hot?' she asked as she threw a handful of green beans into the dark wooden depths. 'Umm, Thai hot,' I muttered, puffing out my chest. 'OK,' she answered, adding what seemed like a suicidal amount of scud chillies, along with a few cloves of garlic. She pounded and mixed with a technique well honed by experience. I was mesmerised. Dried shrimp and peanuts were dropped in. Pound, pound, mix, mix, mix. Then palm sugar and tomatoes. Pound, pound, mix, mix. And lime juice and fish sauce. Pound, pound, mix. Then a mass of green papaya, cut into the thinnest of strands. One final mix, and it was dumped onto a polystyrene tray and handed over.

I took a bite. The first taste was sharp and fresh, then salty, from the chewy dried shrimp. Sweetness came next, underscoring and smoothing every discordant note. Tomatoes jostled with peanuts and crisp green beans as they swirled around my mouth. An involuntary smile spread across my face. This was food like I'd never tasted before, big, ballsy and beautifully balanced, the sort of thing to restore one's faith in life, love, the universe...then the chillies hit. Hard. So hard that my eyes flooded with tears, my tongue seemed to swell and I lost the power of speech. Even thinking hurt.



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It took a full five minutes for the pain to subside, replaced by that heady endorphin warmth sent in by the body to battle the pain. I looked up. Both ladies were crying. But tears of laughter rather than agony. ‘You like?’ asked one, between fits of hysterics. ‘Yes,’ I managed to mutter. ‘Hell yes.’

Since then, street food has become my obsession. Some travel to drink in the culture, others to lap up the sun. I travel to eat, preferably on the street. Because this is where you’ll find the real soul of a cuisine, somewhere among the taco carts and noodle stalls and baskets of herbs. Michelin stars hold little interest, with the rarest of exceptions. And the tourist restaurants, with their bland, dreary, ‘safe’ menus fill me with gloom. No, my first stop is always the street. The scent of wood fires and burning fat, the glare of artificial lights, the natural hubbub of regalement, and proper good cheer. No foams, or smears or strangely shaped plates. No egos, or supercilious sommeliers or dining rooms with all the atmosphere of a morgue. Just food to make the taste buds sing. Some of the finest things to ever have passed my lips have been eaten standing up, or sitting at the most rickety of roadside tables, surrounded by diesel fumes, cigarette smoke and noise. There was that noodle soup in Luang Prabang, the buffalo broth looking like melted amber, with a depth I can only dream of re-creating. Or those tacos al pastor from the hole in the wall in Mexico City – thin shavings of pork doner kebab, mixed with hot sauce, and fresh salsa, and lime. Then wrapped in a steaming taco. Baozi (Chinese steamed buns) in Shanghai, oyster cakes in Bangkok and panelle (chickpea-flour fritters), all soft, salty crunch, sold on a Palermo street corner. I could go on and on and on. Street food is the most democratic grub in the world, a place where politician eats alongside peasant, and flavours are unashamedly bold. I like the fact that countries with a strong street-food culture – Mexico, Thailand, China, Malaysia and Vietnam, to name but a few – take it very seriously indeed. Everyone has



their own view as to what makes the finest tamales, samosas, stinky tofu, laksa or spring rolls.

That’s not to say that everything cooked up on the sidewalk is edible gold. Far from it. There’s a lot of tired, dirty, grease-soaked muck about. But that’s easily avoided: local recommendations are worth their weight in spice, and always look for queues. High turnover not only means they must be getting something right, but that the food’s cooked fresh too, as there isn’t time for it to sit around. Find a busy stall, watch what the locals are ordering and when you arrive at the front, just smile and point. The only phrase you really need is ‘thank you’.

This is a book dedicated to some of the greatest eating in the world. Gastronomic bliss awaits.





SALVADOR, BAHIA, BRAZIL

# ACARAJÉ

MAKES  
APPROX  
10-12  
PATTIES

A tantalising taste of Africa in the New World, these shrimp-stuffed black-eyed pea fritters fried in traditional Bahian *dendê* (reddish palm oil) are Brazil's most beloved street food.

## YOU'LL NEED

400g (14oz) dried black-eyed peas, soaked overnight in plenty of cold water  
1 onion, roughly chopped  
1 tsp salt  
*dendê* oil for deep-frying  
dried shrimp  
hot pepper sauce and chopped green tomatoes to serve

**TIP** *Using dendê oil will give the fritters their characteristic red hue, but if you do not have a Brazilian grocer handy, vegetable or canola oil is an acceptable substitute.*

## METHOD

- 1 Skin the peas by rubbing and breaking them up or by quickly pulsing in a food processor, resoaking in water and letting the loosened skins come up to the surface.
- 2 Discard the skins and drain the peas.
- 3 Using a food processor, puree the peas with the onion and salt into a smooth mixture.
- 4 Divide the mixture into equal size balls and flatten each ball into the shape of a hamburger patty.
- 5 Heat the oil in a deep-fryer or heavy-bottomed saucepan.
- 6 Fry each patty until it becomes golden brown in colour on both sides.
- 7 Slit each patty horizontally and fill the acarajé sandwich with dried shrimp, pepper sauce and green tomatoes. Serve immediately.

## TASTING NOTES

*Acarajé* is sold on street corners throughout Bahia, but especially in Salvador. The traditional carts are operated by *baianas de acarajé*, women clad in the white hooped skirts and headscarves associated with Candomblé priestesses. The fun part is choosing the fillings: spicy *malagueta* sauce, dried shrimp, *vatapá* (a nut, coconut and shrimp paste), *salada* (tomatoes, onions and coriander) and *carurú* (a shrimp-and-okra stew). Crispy, pungent and spicy, it's a combination of tastes you won't encounter anywhere else. ● by Gregor Clark

## ORIGINS

*Acarajé* was brought to Brazil by Yoruba-speaking slaves from West Africa, where bean fritters known as *akará* were (and continue to be) a staple. In the New World, *acarajé* evolved into a sacred food, associated with the Afro-Brazilian religion Candomblé and featuring in ritual meals offered to *Lansã*, goddess of fire, wind, thunder and lightning. Women from the sisterhood of *Lansã* became the first *acarajé* vendors, their presence in the streets dating back to the 19th century.


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