









# \* Savoury \*

**Acarajé** Brazil  
**Arancino** Italy  
**Balık Ekmek** Turkey  
**Bamboo Rice** Taiwan  
**Banh Mi** Vietnam  
**Baozi** China  
**Bhelpuri** India  
**Bo Bia** Vietnam  
**Breakfast Burrito** USA  
**Brik** Tunisia  
**Bsarra** Morocco  
**Bún Cha** Vietnam  
**Burek** Bosnia & Hercegovina  
**Cevapcici** Croatia  
**Ceviche de Corvina** Peru  
**Chivito al Pan** Uruguay  
**Chole Batura** India  
**Choripán** Argentina  
**Cicchetti** Italy  
**Cocktel de Camarón** Mexico  
**Conch** Bahamas  
**Cornish Pasty** England  
**Currywurst** Germany  
**Elote** Mexico  
**Felafel** Israel  
**Fuul Mudammas** Egypt  
**Gordita** Mexico  
**Gözleme** Turkey  
**Gyros** Greece  
**Hainanese Chicken Rice**  
 Malaysia & Singapore  
**Hollandse Nieuwe Haring**  
 The Netherlands  
**Hopper** Sri Lanka  
**Hot Dog** USA  
**Jerked Pork**  
 Jamaica & Carribean Islands  
**Juane** Peru

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## \* Sweet \*

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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. 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 hysteresis. '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. *Takoyaki* (balls of octopus-spiked batter), eaten in the freezing Tokyo night, their outsides crisp, their innards just

the right side of molten. *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. However, armed with this tome, you'll march straight past the second-rate pretenders. 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. Lack of native language is unimportant. Communication of pleasure and delight is universal. A smile, or vigorous rubbing of the gut. You get to see far more of an alien culture from behind glowing charcoal or a wok than through any number of guidebooks. 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'. And don't be afraid. Most street-food sellers are delighted when a foreigner appreciates their work. This is a book dedicated to some of the greatest eating in the world. Clasp it to your chest and hit the streets. Gastronomic bliss awaits.











# \* Savoury \*

## Legend



### Recipe

**Easy** - A very basic recipe, eg, putting together a sandwich or tossing salad ingredients.



**Medium** - Suitable for the average home cook.



**Complex** - Several parts to make, or lots of ingredients to prepare, or a specific technique involved that may take some practice.

**Note** Definitions for words in blue in the recipes can be found in the glossary on page 214.

## Utensils



**Hands**



**Knife • Fork • Spoon**



**Chopsticks**



**Drinks**



**Spicy**



**Vegetarian**