


**HINTS
FROM
HELOISE**

A vanilla answer about longevity

Dear Heloise: I bought a bottle of real vanilla extract at least eight years ago. I was told it would keep forever. Is this true? How long can I realistically keep it? — **Jo in New York**

Some things are not meant to be kept forever! Yes, the experts say that if it's really pure vanilla extract and is stored properly, it should last for longer than we need it to. — **Heloise**

Sticky pie crust

Dear Readers: You came through again! I knew you would. Here are two hints that were sent in about how to keep pie crust from sticking to the pan:

► Carol, via email, said: "I find that crusts don't stick to the pan if you thaw them thoroughly before adding the filling."

► Roberta H. in Arkansas wrote: "To keep refrigerated pie crust from sticking to your dish, remember to flour the bottom of the crust before putting into the dish, just like you would if you had made it." — **Heloise**

Favorite recipe

Dear Heloise: I grew up loving my mom's homemade sloppy Joes. To my surprise, when I asked for her recipe, it was just cocktail sauce and ground beef. That's it! So delicious! — **Susan B., via email**

Isn't it fun to discover that a family "recipe" is really pretty simple? Cocktail sauce can add just the right "zing" without much effort. Recipes can be a strong connection, and more so when passed down from generation to generation or shared with friends. There are many of my mother's recipes that I love and used to put together my Heloise's All-Time Favorite Recipes pamphlet to share them. To order one, go online to www.Heloise.com, or send \$5 and a long, self-addressed, stamped (70 cents) envelope to: Heloise/Recipes, P.O. Box 795001, San Antonio, TX 78279-5001. Collect favorite family recipes in a binder or holder and then make copies to give as gifts to siblings. — **Heloise**

Easy clean

Dear Heloise: I found an easy way to clean inside artichokes: by using a grapefruit spoon. It comes out so much easier and cleaner. Being Italian, I make stuffed ones all the time. — **Dolly L., Irvine, Calif.**

Last drop

Dear Heloise: I buy olive oil in the large cans and find it difficult to get the last bit of oil out. I use a nail to punch a hole in the corner opposite the spout and tilt the can so it drains into a cup. I get 1/3 cup more of oil that way. — **David H., Rindge, N.H.**

Turn around

Dear Heloise: If you have struggles with resealing those resealable bags that products come in, here is a hint: Turn the bag around so you're facing the backside of the bag. I struggled with a cat-food bag for months. On a lark, I turned the front to the rear, and it now works every time with ease. — **Not Struggling in Ohio**

I gave this a try, and it did seem to work! Really not sure why, but who cares? — **Heloise**


Sirichat, the hostess at Baan Rao, welcomes customers to the establishment.

Carolyn Ferguson/Special to MDN

Thai dining at Baan Rao

By JOHN BECHTEL

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After months of trying, I finally succeeded in making the acquaintance of the owner of the Thai restaurant, Baan Rao, located at the southwest corner of the Walmart Plaza. Her name is Walaya, and she was worth the wait. Walaya came to America in 2002 with her sister Pat, who is an oncologist at Trinity Health. As is common with Thai names, their family name is quite long by American standards, with 16 letters. It is my understanding that for Thai of Chinese descent, the lengthy surnames are an attempt to translate Chinese names into Thai equivalents, and the same is true of Thai with Sanskrit-derived names. Walaya was very patient and engaging as I embarrassed myself several times trying to properly pronounce her family name.

The restaurant name, Baan Rao, simply means "our home," and that is how Walaya describes their cuisine; home cooking, Thai style. Thai cooking differs from Chinese in a number of important ways. The Thai use less oil and more spices, including Thai chili pepper, fish sauce, shrimp paste, onion and garlic. My personal perception is that it tends to be more delicate in its flavorings. Walaya informs me that the use of chopsticks is less ubiquitous in Thai households than among the Chinese, so if you ask for chopsticks at Baan Rao, you may have them, but they might wonder why. This is not a Chinese restaurant.

Walaya attended North Dakota State University in Fargo for four years. When I asked her why she owns and runs a restaurant, she answered simply, "It's a good business." She does not have any particular background or training in the culinary arts, but then she has four good Thai cooks, one of whom has been with her for four years, to rely on. Her restaurant reflects her cultural values; it is bright, spacious, exceptionally clean and everyone, from Sirichat, the demure and smiling hostess, to the servers and kitchen staff, are friendly and exquisitely polite. I have eaten there when the spacious dining room was full, and even though surrounded by conversation, there was an ambience I can only describe as respect. Somehow you get the feeling you've been invited to eat at the Thai embassy and you're



Photos by Carolyn Ferguson/Special to MDN

ABOVE: The No. 8 Stir Fry entree, Laab, can be spiced to the diner's specifications.

BELOW: Baan Rao owner Walaya came to America in 2002. Baan Rao means "our home."



made to feel that you are not only welcome, but that you belong there, and that rude behavior would be unthinkable. They don't ask you to remove your shoes at the door, but I almost expected it. This is not the Thai equivalent of TexMex or Chinese American cuisine; this is the real deal, and walking in the door of Baan Rao is a unique and authentic Thai cultural adventure. Baan Rao is first class.

The menu has nine pages. Let's take a quick tour. The first page is the Quick Thai Guide. This covers some special deals, like a free entree up to \$15 on your

birthday, and some disclaimers about peanuts, shellfish, gluten allergens and substitutions. It tells you how to reserve the Banquet Room, and small groups for Kan-toke (Northern Thai styled elegant dinner seated on the floor mats). For the latter, the menu is fixed, and reservations need to be made a day or two in advance. It is also on this page of the menu that I learned Baan Rao has a platinum list of customers for whom they bend a few rules. Ask your server. Maybe you're already on the list, if you're a regular.

I'd like to share with you one of my rules for eating at Baan Rao. As is common at many Thai restaurants, you can choose how spicy you want your food to be, usually by picking a number between one and 10; one being very bland and 10 being nuclear fission. That's when smoke comes out of both your ears and your nose. You become a fire-breathing dragon, and drinking water does not help. White rice will help and you will be able to rejoin the family conversation by the time you get home. Of course, I learned this the hard way. I love the heat,

but I have since learned that a seven at Baan Rao gives me the enhanced flavor without any of the pain. If you make this same mistake, your companions won't know whether to be moved to pity or humor. Do not ask for a refund — unless, of course, you are a platinum member. But then if you are a platinum member, you wouldn't have made this mistake, would you? Probably not.

Baan Rao does not have a liquor license, unfortunately, but you can bring your own wine and there is no uncorking fee. (As a frame of reference, Bismarck's Bistro has a \$20 corkage fee if you bring your own.)

There are separate pages for Appetizers, Bowl Entrees, Thai salad (yum), and then categories of main dishes: Stir-Fry, Rice Dishes, Noodle Dishes and Seafood Entrees.

Everyone loves Spring Rolls, but I would encourage you to venture out beyond the mundane and experiment a little. As is my custom, I asked my server to order for me, without any help from me. Be advised that if you try this, you assume all personal responsibility for the consequences and lose your right to complain or send anything back to the kitchen. On the other hand, it is an expression of great trust in your server and the kitchen staff, who will usually confer before deciding. The good news is they will always bring you something that they consider special and a source of pride to

See THAI — Page C3

Thai

Continued from Page C1

them: a signature dish. I do not recommend this strategy unless you are an omnivore and definitely not a picky eater.

My appetizer was No. 12 Pla Duk Foo, a favorite Thai dish. It comes out on a small plate and at first glance looks like a salad. It isn't. At the base it had what resembled super fine, delicate, crispy, curly noodle threads, topped with yummy sauce and mango, onion and peanuts. It turns out the noodle threads were not noodles at all, but steamed tilapia that was then mashed into a paste, cut into a filigree and deep fried. A mouthful of all this leaves you in wonderment, with a simultaneous combination of textures and flavors. The tilapia was delicately crunchy and the yummy sauce left you with a sweet-sour finish to your



This is the interior of the new Thai mini-mart, located at 2110 10th St. SW, and scheduled to open at the end of the month.

Carolyn Ferguson/Special to MDN

palate. At \$7.25, this is an appetizer that demands your full attention, and it should be eaten right when it is brought to the table because something important is lost if the tilapia gets soggy in the yummy sauce. This is not a dish you are going to take home as leftovers in a to-go box.

The Khao Soi, No. 9 Noodle Dish, which is egg noodles in curry broth and chicken topped with crispy egg noodles, was excellent, followed by the No. 8 Stir Fry entree, Laab, which can

be spiced to your level of heat. At seven, this Northern Thai minced chicken stir fried with a spicy chili powder was perfect. There was enough left over from these two dishes for an entire meal the next day, and they reheated well.

For dessert I had a Happy Monkey, which is a dip of vanilla ice cream surrounded by bananas wrapped in little pastry squares, deep fried, and then drizzled with honey. Walaya assured me this was the only monkey on the menu. They occasionally

have special desserts of the day. Ask your server.

You will notice there are dishes from southern and northern Thailand. Walaya and her staff are from the Chiang Mai metropolitan area, about a million people nestled in the mountains of the north. One of the most memorable features of Chiang Mai for tourists is the quality of their street food. Walaya says it is so good and so cheap, a lot of the residents, herself included, never used their kitchens at home, but simply ate the

street food. Some of that street food has found its way onto the Baan Rao menu. Baan Rao provides a culinary diversity and authentic Thai menu that would keep the population of a much bigger metro area than Minot coming back for a long time. The restaurant is handicapped accessible. They not only deliver all over town, but Walaya's sister Pat is opening Minot's first Thai mini-mart on May 31. The address is 2110 10th St. SW, right beside Minot's Main Fire Station on 20th Ave. The Baan Rao mini-mart sign is very visible from the U.S. Highway 52 bypass.

the cooks get the orders on their screens in the kitchen. The server enters the entire order from the dining room, and the computer screen asks if they want to put a hold on the entree, and if so, for how many minutes. If the server enters a hold time of let's say 10 minutes, the salad will come out right away, but the cook won't even see the entree part of the order for another 10 minutes. This is a very useful tool to avoid what everyone hates, getting two or more dishes delivered to your table at the same time, instead of at appropriate intervals. Like all tools, it still requires skill and alertness on the part of the server, but it does eliminate blaming the cook if everything comes out at once. If this software is available to the restaurant, the server controls the timing.

As always your comments and suggestions are welcome at the email address above. Bon appetit!

Los Angeles Times Daily Crossword Puzzle

Edited by Rich Norris and Joyce Nichols Lewis

ACROSS

- 1 Windows precursor
- 6 Hard-to-control groups
- 10 Forensic investigator's item
- 14 Advil alternative
- 15 Pair on a lake
- 16 Place to slog through
- 17 "Wait, there's more ..."
- 20 Hullabaloo
- 21 Barry White genre
- 22 Dossier cover?
- 23 "Boy, am I dumb!"
- 25 Touch the ground
- 27 "Wait, there's more ..."
- 33 Airline with the MileagePlus frequent flier prog.
- 34 Ole Miss rival
- 35 Customs collection
- 38 Golf lesson subject
- 40 Charmin layer
- 42 Black & Decker rival
- 43 Dapper
- 46 Gave up for money
- 49 Irritated state
- 50 "Wait, there's more ..."
- 53 Brainsy Simpson
- 54 Not within walking distance
- 55 One needing a lift
- 58 "Girl": 2014 Affleck film
- 61 Battery terminal sign
- 65 "Wait, there's more ..."
- 68 D.C. dealers
- 69 Hawaiian coffee district
- 70 Put a cap on
- 71 Eye woe
- 72 Kiddie-lit dog
- 73 Stops bleeding

DOWN

- 4 Go to extremes
- 5 Complete collection
- 6 Con - briskly, on scores
- 7 Iolani Palace site
- 8 Estracell sponge brand
- 9 Phishing fig.
- 10 Does a slow burn
- 11 Surfing convenience
- 12 Opera showstopper
- 13 Gets in the pool, maybe
- 18 Milo of the movies
- 19 She adopted Tigger
- 24 Top of a scepter, perhaps
- 26 Part of MoMA
- 27 Perturbs
- 28 O.K. Corral gunfighter
- 29 Toy (with), as an idea
- 30 Sitter's challenge
- 31 Quiz answer
- 32 Maori carvings
- 36 Unshakable
- 37 Cut and run
- 39 "Don't make me laugh!"
- 41 __ Kippur

ANSWER TO PREVIOUS PUZZLE:

L	A	Z	Y	A	B	Y	S	S	S	M	E	W
O	B	O	E	B	L	U	T	O	E	A	V	E
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E	K	G	B	E	R	R	I	E	S	F	E	N
T	E	E	N	A	D	I	N	O	A	F	A	R
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H	E	R	O	Y	E	N	T	A	O	R	G	I

By Gail Grabowski and Bruce Venzke
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