

Thai (Issan) Garlic Sausage

This is the local sausage of the Northeastern region of Thailand, an area known as Issan. Thai sausages often use rice as the filler/binder. This particular sausage uses sticky rice, which is steamed and not boiled, has a somewhat nutty flavor, and which lends a slightly chewy texture while helping to retain the juices. Issan sausage is traditionally served with accompaniments like fresh bird chilies, toasted peanuts, fresh mint or cilantro, green onion and ginger. Generous amounts of garlic make this sausage very delicious.

Ingredients

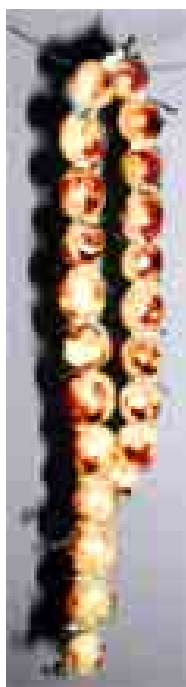
- 1 kg ground pork, well-chilled
- ½ c minced garlic
- 1 c sticky rice (glutinous rice), steamed
- 2 T ginger; finely minced
- 2 T shallots; finely minced
- 2 T cilantro; coarsely chopped
- 1 T bird chilies; finely minced
- 1 T lemongrass; bruised and finely minced
- 2 ts black pepper
- 2 ts salt
- 2 ts MSG (optional)
- ¼ ts Prague powder #1
- 4 T fish sauce
- 2 ts liquid smoke



After stuffing

Directions

Mix the cure, pepper, salt, MSG, fish sauce and liquid smoke with meat thoroughly, then chill for 1 hour. Separate sticky rice (cooled) as best you can into the pork. Combine the rest of ingredients with the pork and mix thoroughly. Stuff the mixture into hog casings, making very short links resembling spherical balls. Hang at room temperature for 24 hours (this sausage is fermented much like salami). Most often these are left to hang for a few days, but I prefer a less tangy end product. Barbeque slowly or grill on low heat until a smoky-caramelized color is achieved and sausage is cooked through to 160 degrees F.



Accompaniments:

- freshly roasted peanuts
- green onion sprigs
- cilantro and/or mint leaves
- ginger, sliced very thinly
- shallots, sliced very thinly
- bird chilies (red & green)

To Serve:

Separate the cooked links/balls and arrange sausages on a platter along with the accompaniments. Traditionally, diners will take a sausage ball into their hand along with any combination of accompaniments – such as a fresh bird chili, a bit of cilantro, and a peanut or two, and then chomp it down. One could even wrap it all into a lettuce leaf. These bite-sized garlicky sausages are extremely well suited to serve along with beer or whisky, as is often the case in Thailand.



Kirk Mazzia, February 2004

Huay Ngoo, Chainat, Thailand - Copyright (All rights reserved)

(borrowed from a sticky rice source)

How To Make Sticky Rice

Background information

Sticky rice is, in many parts of Asia, the rice of the "common people". In many Asian societies, sticky rice is considered somewhat "lower class", but this comes not from the quality of the rice, but from the fact that it is usually eaten with bare hands. In Thailand, where I live, sticky rice is very common in the North (Nua), and in the Northeastern (Issan) part of Thailand. It is usually eaten with a series of smaller dishes consisting of sauces, curries, and cooked vegetables. The typical way of eating sticky rice is to take a small lump and make it into a ball, using the fingers on your right hand. Using the left hand is considered very impolite because the left-hand is used in the bathroom for cleaning oneself (I know this sounds icky, but I want you to understand the culture here). The ball of rice is then dipped into your choice of sauce, curry, etc., and then eaten.

Preparation

First, you need to get the correct type of rice. You need to purchase "glutinous rice". Regular Jasmine rice or other types of regular rice will not work properly. Soak the glutinous rice in water for about 4 hours. Set up a steamer, wrap the rice in muslin, and steam for 15 minutes. Turn the muslin-wrapped rice over, and cook for an additional 15 minutes. Be careful not to over-cook the rice, or it will become quite mushy. The consistency you're looking for is slightly sticky, but not watery. The rice should hold together, but individual grains can still be easily separated.

Eating Sticky Rice

Sticky rice is chewy and tastes buttery and nutty. Cooked sticky rice is traditionally kept in, and served from, a beautiful bamboo woven basket, where it stays moist and warm for a long time. Because sticky rice is eaten only with the hands, a strict etiquette of washing before a meal is practiced.

To eat, each person takes a handful of sticky rice from the container and breaks off a small amount, kneading it into a ball. This small ball of rice is then dipped into sauce or used to scoop up pieces of vegetables or meat.

Thai people believe that sticky rice makes them mellow. Therefore, it is common to rest after eating sticky rice. One should avoid eating sticky rice and consuming cold liquids at the same time - it is believed that cold liquids will solidify the already sticky rice, making digestion difficult. The people of central Thailand, who seldom eat sticky rice, believe that those who eat sticky rice tend to be lazy!