



What is Pandan in Thai Cuisine?

### Description

Eat Pandan With Abandon!

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*Thai food is my food, especially pandan. Pandan desserts are only limited to your imagination.*

Thai pandan cuisine always makes my tongue wag. I eat pandan with abandon!

If your experience with Thai food is going out to a Thai restaurant in the U.S. or Europe every month or two, then you may not be familiar with Thai dishes that are flavored with pandan. Seldom do Thai restaurants outside of Thailand offer pandan dishes.

But in Thailand, pandan is used with a great variety of foods and drinks, especially desserts.



## *Pandanus Amaryllifolius*



Pandan leaves have a variety of uses for Thai cooking.

Pandan (*Pandanus amaryllifolius*) is a plant with narrow, sword-like leaves. These leaves are used in Thai cuisine in a variety of ways. It has a very subtle flavor that's almost impossible to describe as nothing else quite tastes like pandan.

I describe the taste as somewhat nutty, but only somewhat. In other words, pandan tastes like pandan!

Pandan grows throughout Southeast Asia, and countries such as Viet Nam, The Phillipines, Malaysia, Laos and Burma (Myanmar) all have great pandan cuisines.



## Cookin' With Pandan



*Photo Above: Pandan Stuffed Salt Fish in Kalasin, Thailand.*



*Thai pandan salim dessert. These gooey noodles are flavored with pandan and served with ice and coconut milk. Photo attribution: <http://www.runawayrice.com>*



Chicken wrapped in pandan leaves. This is probably the most common menu item for dinner that uses pandan.

The pandan leaf can be used to wrap food and the flavor is then infused. Or pandan leaves can be ground into a fine powder and added to a recipe. There are pandan cakes, custards, cookies, chicken, smoothies...the list is endless.



It's common to put a couple pandan leaves in a jar of water for a day and drink pandan infused water-great for the digestion. Taxi drivers often use pandan leaves in the back of their taxis as an air freshener. In Thai homes, you may find a vase of pandan leaves on the kitchen table to clear the air. Pandan powder is sometimes sprinkled on top a fruit smoothie or a cup of cappuccino.

In the video above, you can watch a Thai chef cook with pandan leaves.

I was walking through a tropical garden the other day in Malaysia when I abruptly stopped and turned to my wife to exclaim that I smelled pandan. Sure enough, as my wife pointed out about 5 yards away, was a clump of this wonderful plant.

The aroma is very subtle, but once it's in your head, you'll never forget it.



*Pandan cuisine takes a very good chef to master this very subtle flavor.*

So if you see a pandan dish on the menu, order it. If you see baked goods with pandan, buy it. If you see a smoothie offered with pandan sprinkled on top, get it. At first, you may not even taste this very subtle flavor. But over time you'll be like me and notice it almost immediately.

When I'm in the United States, nothing makes me think of Thailand more than the scent of pandan leaves. Bon appetite.

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**Author**

jeffcgallagher

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