

Daeng Cooking for the Kids

May 13, 2008

It was a nice but overcast day in Mae Sai, Thailand. Daeng and I had coffee and toast in our apartment above the morning market. Daeng has agreed to help “Bac-o-la” (I’m sure the spelling is incorrect but that is how it sounds.), the manager of NANA BUFFET, today. Daeng is going to make over 20 kilograms of her special salad, “Papaya Som Tam”.

Daeng has been making and selling this salad for over 10 years in this little border town of Mae Sai. That is why “Bac-o-la” asked her to fix her specialty for the more than 100 kids at CHILDLIFE.



Note the big tub of fermented Crab on the left side of picture!

CHILDLIFE (or “Baan Nana” in Thai) founded in 1999, is a strictly grassroots organization, providing direct intervention for children at risk in Mae Sai, Northern Thailand at the border to Myanmar (Burma). We are a non-religious, non-government organization and care for all children in need, regardless of ethnicity, nationality or religion. Link to website is:

<http://www.childlife-maesai.org/>

On the way to NANA BUFFET



we took a few minutes to watch the unloading of a big shovel. It was comedy itself to watch the lady shovel operator and the truck driver work together to move it off the truck.

We arrived at NANA



BUFFET around 9:30 AM and Daeng put on a work apron and got right to it. I started to help



he but she told me the best way to help was to let her do it. Since it is her



specialty, and the big knife is in her hand, I said: "Okay!", gave her a hug, jumped on her motor bike and rode to the internet cafe to do some communicating with the folks in the USA.

Daeng usually doesn't like to me drive her motor bike as she says that I'm a crazy driver. Now, coming from a female Asian, I think that is a little harsh. I even have a Thai driver's license but that is another story.

I stopped back to see Daeng around 12:30 PM and she was right



in the middle of cooking a dozen chickens on the bar-b-que. It smelled really good, too.



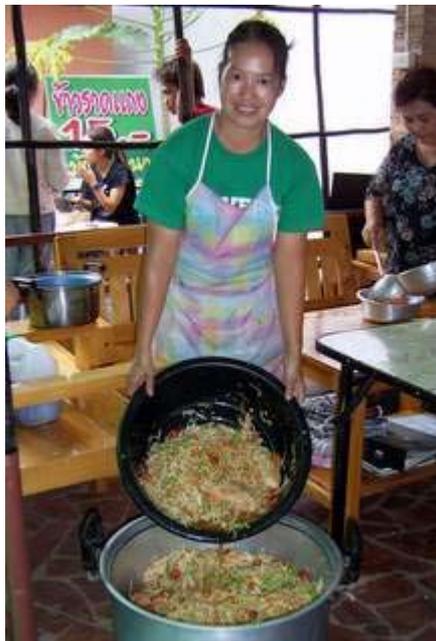
I had some lunch at the buffet after taking a few pictures of her working. For the old, FAT plumber an “All you can Eat” buffet for 39 Thai Baht (\$1.25 USD) is hard to turn down. The food is very tasty, too.

Daeng said she would call me when she was ready to put the “Papaya Salad” together as I wanted to take a few pictures. Off to the internet café again.



Daeng called about 3:15 PM

so I



met her, took some more pictures and helped get things ready to be picked up and transported to CHILDLIFE. It took me and another fellow, together, to lift and carry the huge container of “Som Tam” Salad.

We then drove the 20 minutes by motor bike to CHILDLIFE and



hung out with the kids.

Part



of the trip is on dirt road.



For some reason the kids like to hang out with me. I think it has something to do with my size as they are always comparing my legs, feet or hands to theirs.



The kids

also started



setting the tables

with these round compartment trays that they would eat from. They are pretty tidy



with the settings

and when they found a tray not as clean as they wanted, it was rewashed.

All the kids came into the eating area at about the same time the food arrived on the pickup truck. They played some singing



games
gotten ready to serve.

as the food was

After the games, they came up to the serving line, half a table at a time, and filled the round trays full of food. There was Bar-B-Que Chicken, Cooked Pork in Gravy, Som Tam Salad, Sticky Rice and Fruit.



Daeng really
serving the kids.

had fun

It was also nice to see and talk with CHILDLIFE's founder,



Guljohn Jeamrum,

as he

was meeting and greeting some of the folks that had brought cookies, clothes, bedding and supplies.

After they filled their trays, the kids were also giving a bag of



cookies that had been brought by these folks, too. Then they sat down and waited for



everyone to get their food



and thank God for Everything.



The kids were all very well mannered.

Everyone enjoyed the food.

Now, what is a dinner without dessert? Yep, home made ice



cream.

The ice cream was made the old fashion way of ice and salt to get it cold enough to make the cream freeze while stirring it.



I tried all the food
was delicious.

and it



Daeng enjoyed cooking and feeding these wonderful kids. I enjoyed eating with them.

We also hope you can enjoy this wonderful salad from her recipe and the video below.



Daeng's recipe for this salad is:

- 2 cups green papaya peeled and shredded (substitute: green hard mango or cucumber).
- 2-3 cloves garlic
- 1-3 small red chilies
- ½ cup long bean or green bean, cut into ½ to 1 inch lengths.
- 2 tbsp dried bamboo worm (for westerners - use 2 tbsp dried brine shrimp)
- 1-2 tbsp Thai fish (anchovy) sauce
- 1-2 tbsp lime juice or tamarind juice
- 1 tbsp palm sugar (or brown sugar)

- 1-2 small tomatoes, quartered
- 2 tbsp crushed roasted peanuts
- Daeng likes to add about 1 small fermented crab (I do not like the fermented crab as you have to pick out the pieces as you eat.) You weak stomached folks may want to stay away from this fermented crab, too.

First, she peels the papaya and rinses with running water to remove the acid. She uses a knife to make little cuts in the papaya and then cuts it long ways to get skinny pieces about the size of a tooth pick. Another way is to remove the seeds and shred the papaya with a grater. Set aside for now.

Next, place the garlic cloves and the chilies in a mortar and mash with a pestle until crushed into chunks. If you use fermented crab this is the place to put it in.

Then place the papaya and the remaining ingredients in the mortar and gently combine all ingredients by mixing with the pestle and a spoon.

For more spicy - add more chilies, less spicy - use less chilies and a little more sugar. Westerners (farangs) seem to like the sweet taste.

Serve cold but have some fresh cabbage sliced along with some sticky rice to dip into the "Som Tam" sauce.

Note: The bamboo worm does not taste like chicken, it tastes like shrimp.

Here is a video link to a down and dirty recipe, also:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OCgN7jjCfu8>



Here is an internet link to more information on this wonderful salad:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Som_tam

Love to all,
Daeng & Terry