



ANSON MILLS

Thai Grilled Beef Salad (Neua Naam Tok)

Yield

4 main course servings

Time

About 1¼ hours, start to finish

Cooking Remarks

Since the shallots are uncooked, make sure they are fresh and perky—spongy shallots with long sprouts will not work here. If no fresh firm shallots are to be found, better to use a small red onion in their stead; cut the onion into fine half rings and use about 1 cup. If your shallots or onion are mature or otherwise extremely pungent, put the slices into a fine-mesh strainer and give them a quick rinse under running cold water, and then drain and gently pat them dry. Rinsing removes some of the sulfurous compounds that make these alliums taste hot and harsh.

Thai dried chile flakes are the heat source in authentic versions of this dish. Unlike the flakes we sprinkle on pizza, Thai chiles are toasted and seeded before they are ground, giving them deep, faintly smoky notes. Dried árbol chiles ground into powder will mimic Thai chile flakes reasonably well, though we found the real deal itself online at the Spice Jungle. If making your own chile powder is too much for you to bear, substitute red pepper flakes or, heaven forbid, cayenne.

Equipment Mise en Place

For this recipe, you will need a small skillet, a pair of tongs, an electric coffee grinder dedicated to spice grinding, a ramekin, a small bowl and a medium bowl, a couple of plates, a charcoal or gas grill, a digital instant-read thermometer, and a serving platter.

Ingredients

2 tablespoons Anson Mills Laurel-Aged Charleston Gold Rice
6 dried Thai or árbol chiles
2 stalks lemongrass
1½ teaspoons freshly ground black pepper
3 tablespoons fish sauce, plus additional to taste
1 tablespoon neutral oil, plus additional for the grill grate
1½ pounds beef skirt steak or sirloin flap
2 teaspoons sugar
⅓ cup plus 2 tablespoons juice from 5 or 6 juicy limes
4 ounces small, very fresh shallots (4 or 5), peeled
1 cup fresh mint leaves, torn
1 cup fresh cilantro leaves, torn
1 recipe Semi-Sticky, Super-Simple Laurel-Aged Charleston Gold Rice, hot

Directions

1. In a small skillet, toast the rice over medium heat, shaking the pan frequently, until the rice is deep golden brown, 15 to 20 minutes; the rice may smoke lightly as it toasts, so turn on the hood or open a window. Transfer to a small bowl. Put the chiles in the now-empty but still-hot skillet and toast them over low heat, turning them frequently with tongs and pressing them against the pan, until fragrant and dark spots appear, about 1 minute. Remove the chiles from the skillet and let both the rice and chiles cool completely.

2. In an electric coffee grinder dedicated to spice grinding, pulse the toasted rice to a coarse powder, 3 or 4 pulses. Return the rice to the bowl. Break the stem off the toasted chiles and shake out the seeds; break the pods into small bits and add them to the grinder. Process the chiles, vigorously shaking the grinder, until you have a slightly coarse powder. Tip the chile powder into a second small bowl.

3. Trim off the bottom of the lemongrass stalk and peel off and discard a couple of the outer layers. Using the back (blunt) side of the knife blade, give the bulb end of the lemongrass a few good whacks to flatten and bruise it. Mince the pale green portion of the stalk, sprinkle on the black pepper, and continue to mince until the lemongrass is as fine as you can get it. Transfer the mixture to a ramekin, add 2 teaspoons of the fish sauce and the oil, and mix to form a paste. Rub this paste into both sides the steak, evenly coating it, set it on a plate, and refrigerate while you prepare the dressing and heat the grill.

4. In a small bowl, combine the lime juice, the remaining fish sauce, the sugar, and $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 teaspoon of the chile powder, depending on your heat preference. Stir until the sugar dissolves and set the dressing aside.

5. Build a very hot fire for direct-heat cooking in a charcoal grill or heat a gas grill with all burners on high. Let the grill grate heat, covered, for about 10 minutes, scrub it clean with a wire brush, and oil it lightly. Grill the steak, moving it as little as possible and flipping it once, until a digital instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part registers 120 degrees for rare or 125 degrees for medium-rare, about 3 minutes on the first side and about 2 minutes on the second, depending on the heat of your grill and the thickness of the steak. Transfer the steak to a clean plate and let rest for 5 to 10 minutes while you prepare the shallots.

6. Slice the shallots into $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch-thick rings and separate the rings; you should have about 1 cup. Set the shallots aside. When the steak is rested, cut it with the grain into sections about $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide, and then slice each section against the grain and on the bias into very thin slices. Toss the steak slices into a medium bowl and pour in any meat juices from the cutting board as well as from the resting plate. Add the shallot rings, 1 tablespoon of the rice powder, most of the mint and cilantro, and all of the dressing. Toss to combine, taste and add more fish sauce, if you like, and then transfer to a serving platter. Sprinkle the remaining mint and cilantro on top and sprinkle with the remaining rice powder. Serve right away, with the rice.