

# Eat your way to understanding Thai with new app

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THE NATION

FEELING LOST among the food-stall choices? Turn to your phone and open a new app.

The Thai Food Terms app in seven languages was launched yesterday by Chulalongkorn University's Faculty of Arts in partnership with the National Electronics and Computer Technology Centre (Nectec).

"It will benefit gastronomy, tourism and the country's food industry," faculty dean Assoc Prof Kingkarn Thepkanjana said at a press conference yesterday at Chulalongkorn University.

"It will be useful for translators, interpreters, students, tour guides, flight attendants, hotel receptionists and restaurant owners – as well as tourists visiting Thailand," Kingkarn said. The application, derived from a decade-long research by the university's Faculty of Arts, was developed and launched by Nectec.



More than 1,600 Thai culinary terms are translated in seven languages – English, Chinese, Japanese, German, Italian, French and Spanish – and accompanied with an image and audio recording. The list ranges from main dishes, desserts and snacks to cooking methods, ingredients, herbs and drinks.

The list contains famous Thai staples such as *som tam* (spicy papaya salad) and *tod man pla* (fish cake) to such delights as *ka la mae* (Thai chewy caramel candy).

The idea behind the application

is to set a standard for Thai food terms and reduce confusion.

"For instance, 'curry' can refer to several different dishes," Assoc Prof Saraphee Gaston said.

It can refer to *massaman*, *choo chee* or even *kaeng phet*. This can be really confusing for foreigners. While *massaman* is a non-spicy Indian-style curry, *choo chee* is usually cooked with fish and coconut milk, and *kaeng phet* is a clear, spicy curry, Saraphee, who is the programme coordinator, explained.

"In Thai, we have three words for

three kinds of basil – *kra phao*, *ho ra pha* and *maeng luk* – and each is used to cook totally different dishes. Yet in English, they are all called Thai basil. When an expat wants to cook *phad kra phao* [stir-fried chicken with Thai basil], for example, they will be perplexed to find three different herbs all labelled Thai basil,” Saraphee explained.

University student Piyarat Panpoosa, who has downloaded the Italian version of the app, lauded the creation.

“I think it is a really good application. There are even terms for not-so-common Thai dishes – something other than *som tam* or *phad Thai*. It will give tourists more choices. But I think it should be made a little easier to use.”

The app will be fully available on both iOS and Android platforms next week. The “lite” version is free for download, but to access the comprehensive 1,600-word dictionary, opt for the full version (Bt99 on either platform).