

I am pleased to be here today to deliver an opening speech for the launch of Mr. Jean Pierre GABRIEL's Thailand Cookbook.

As part of the Thai Embassy's role is to introduce and promote Thai Kitchen to the World, this is again an opportunity, thanks to Mr. Jean Pierre Gabriel whom most of you here might have known for a long time. To my knowledge, Jean Pierre is the first Belgian writer of Cookbook who has written a Cookbook of Thailand. What I would like to mention is that this Cookbook is totally different from others that we have seen before in any book stores. It is different because it contains Thai dish recipes of Thai rural people in each region of Thailand. I wish to thank the Office of Agricultural Affairs who supported Jean Pierre's trips during two years from 2011 to 2012 to those rural areas. I should not forget either to thank two government officials of the Department of Agricultural Extension, Mrs. Kanokrat and Mrs. Patama, who are present here. It was these two ladies who, during those two years, arranged all the visit routes in each region, accompanied Jean Pierre and introduced him to the rural families whose recipes are gathered here in this Cookbook. And during almost two following years, it was again these two ladies who helped Jean Pierre to revise and edit the recipes, some of which are internationally known to the Thai food lovers, like spicy green papaya salad or Tom Yum Kung soup, while others are even unknown to me. But that is part of Thailand's culture which is different from one region to another. The book reflects what rural people eat in their every life. It also reflects what natural resources they have and in what geographical conditions they live in each region of Thailand.

Another point that I would like to make, in short, on Thai food is, "Thai Food, Good Health". You may notice that, in Thai food, we use a lot of herbs and spices, each of which has its own medicinal characteristics. To name just a few, we use a lot of garlic in Thai dishes, which we all know, can reduce cholesterol. We use Galanga which is high in fiber, phosphorus, calcium, iron and vitamin C in Tom Kha Kai or Chicken soup with Coconut Milk. The aromatic oil of galangal helps relieve upset stomach and loosen phlegm. We widely use Kaffir lime leaves which contain calcium, Vitamin A and beta-carotene in Tom Yum as well as Tom Kha Kai, curries, spicy stir-fried dishes and spicy salads. You can get to know these main Thai herbs as well as the main Thai ingredients from the display that the Office of Agricultural Affairs has kindly arranged here.

Last but not least, I do hope that Jean Pierre's Thailand Cookbook will give you an inspiration to visit Thailand for those have not yet been there. You might have heard that Thailand is a land of Smiles, Sea, Sand and Sun. It is another culture, another exotic part of the world and another type of delicious dishes that you need to explore. I am sure, you will have got a marvelous experience and wish to go back or live there, like many European retirees do.

My special thanks go to Mr. Cedric and Mrs. Deborah DRION who exceptionally provide the venue for this event, to their chefs and their staff who let us taste Thai fingerfoods that they have just enthusiastically learnt to make, and, again, to Jean Pierre, for his untiring effort to produce this cookbook masterpiece. I wish him and Cook&Book every success in their work and business.

Thank you.