



TIMELINE

# Changing Seasons

American chef Andy Ricker, lauded for his take on fiery northern Thai cuisine, reflects on the journeys that helped him perfect his craft.

Thanks to Pok Pok NY, which was awarded a star in the 2015 Michelin guide, and Andy Ricker's six other restaurants, authentic Thai cuisine is getting some serious recognition outside of its home country. It doesn't hurt that Ricker's first cookbook, *Pok Pok: Food and Stories from the Streets, Homes, and Roadside Restaurants of Thailand*, went on to become a runaway bestseller and a James Beard award-winner. We caught up with the globetrotting chef to find out about the Southeast Asian destinations that have most inspired him and his cooking. —AS TOLD TO DIANA HUBBELL



1992

**Lampang, Thailand**

"Beautiful temples dot the old city along with some amazing Chinese shophouses, making it an aesthetically pleasing and still under-the-radar place to visit. Pair that with some nice museums, a great food scene and a quiet vibe and you have a traveler's paradise."



1999

**Vientiane, Laos**

"Vientiane is still relatively sleepy as far as country capitals go. A riverside restaurant scene, great French bakeries and friendly people make this is an ideal spot to spend a few days. Many revered Buddhist temples are situated in the city limits."



2005

**Battambang, Cambodia**

"The trip from the Tonle Sap to Battambang was a memorable one: up a small waterway in a motorboat for hours witnessing riverside life. Battambang city itself is full of temples and markets and some of the best-preserved French colonial architecture in Asia."



2003

**Macau, China**

"Macau is a fascinating mix of colonial Portuguese architecture butting up against traditional Chinese shophouses. The explosion of mega-casinos has thankfully been contained to one area and the old part of Macau is still intact. I love the hybrid tastes of local cuisine."



2005

**Phu Quoc, Vietnam**

"Phu Quoc is famous for fish sauce and black pepper, but I come for the endless kilometers of undeveloped beaches where you can eat delicious seafood meals caught by local fishermen and cooked fresh over charcoal, right on the shoreline."



2011

**Mae Hong Son, Thailand**

"I travel here several times a year. Mae Hong Son is mostly populated by Shan people who immigrated from Burma in the distant past. The food is different from the rest of Thailand: sour tomatoes, turmeric, soybean cakes and sesame oil result in simple, flavorful cuisine."

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: COURTESY OF ANDY RICKER; @SHINJI3802/DREAMSTIME.COM; @TEERACHONG/DREAMSTIME.COM; @EYE\_UBIQUITOUS/GETTY IMAGES; @RAPTORCAPTOR/DREAMSTIME.COM; @EFFIRED/DREAMSTIME.COM; @JEAFISH/DREAMSTIME.COM; @KAISKYNET/DREAMSTIME.COM; @DIETPOOD/DREAMSTIME.COM; DENNIS K. JOHNSON/GETTY IMAGES