

## Part 330 for Cathy's blog

### Saturday 28th February

Today we went with students and teachers from the language school to Preah Dak. Preah Dak is a village about 15km from Siem Reap. Along the road, many houses have set up various stalls to sell food or produce or products. You can buy steamed cakes, palm sugar, roast pork, traditional noodles, baskets, Kroma (scarves) etc etc.



**Our way out to Preah Dak took us past Pre Rup temple.  
These ladies were on their way into Siem Reap.**

Our first stop was to learn about how the palm sugar is collected, refined and used.



The sap from the tree is collected morning and night (by climbing the tree, cutting the trunk and collecting the sap, traditionally in bamboo tubes, but in modern times, in plastic tubes ).





**The sap is boiled down.**



When reduced, it forms crystals. You can buy it as little cakes or sugar crystals, or blocks of sugar. It has a nice flavour as well as being sweet. You can drink the sap.

The palm fruits have orange flesh. This is used in the traditional steamed palm cakes. Coconut cream is put into the middle of the cake, and shaved coconut is served on the top. They are a bit stodgy, but sweet and filling.

Our Tuktuk driver remembers when you could buy five or six for 1000R, but now you get 9 for 10 000R.

Then on to see incense being made.

Sawdust and ground herbs, mixed. The bark of a particular tree is used to make a “sticky” gum. This mix is then rolled onto a long straw.



**Siem, the elderly lady showing us, can make one stick in 15 seconds.**

Thirdly, it was the rice noodles.

(raw) Rice is soaked overnight, then ground and squeezed into a “cake” which is cooked 30% (in a big pot over a wood fire), then broken up and pounded. It is then mixed with water into a paste. The paste is pushed through the holes in a tin, into the gently boiling water.

They cook for about one minute and then are scooped out, washed in filtered water and set into neat little bundles, ready to eat (or sell). One kilo of cooked rice makes two kilos of noodles.



**Soaking the rice.**



**Grinding the rice.**



**First partial cooking of the rice.**



**Pounding the rice.**



**The “pounder”... you stand on the two planks and rock the pounder, so that it hits the rice in the tin bowl.**



The pounded rice is mixed with water and then put in this extruder. Body weight pushes the noodle paste through little holes and into the boiling water, where they cook for about 60 seconds.

They are scooped out, rinsed and are ready to eat.



Then we had lunch. Nom ban chock is a traditional (often breakfast food) with a lovely mild flavour of mixed herbs, almost a curry. Delicious.



**Ox cart (decoration) at the noodle making place.**

Then it was time to go home.  
It was a long morning.

