

# History of Mohinga

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by [Dr Khin Maung Nyunt](#)

Geographically, Myanmar is the second largest country in South East Asia. It is the largest among inland countries of ASEAN. Area is about the total area of England and France.

Myanmar is an agricultural country. Ninety percent of the populations are farmers. The main crop is rice among various kinds. Since time immemorial rice was grown on the hilly regions and plains. And rice is used as food in various methods-cook, fry, boil, dry and etc. Snacks are made from grinded rice by using one of these methods.

Rice noodles are given three names according to size. The biggest noodles, which are a bit smaller than Udon, are called *Nangyi*. Smaller noodles are called *Nantay*. The noodles like flat noodles are called Nanpya. Salad made of *Nangyi* is called *Nangyi* salad. Noodles used in *Mohinga* are Nanthay (small noodles). These small noodles are eaten with chicken, fish, prawn, fritters and vegetables as salad. The salad is served with thin gravy and is called *Motilakthoke*. It is common for Myanmar people to eat this noodles salad with soup.

At this point, I would like to explain something about the origin of *Mohinga*. But I still cannot find exact facts and evidences. But I will give some facts I have studied so far.

There is no written evidence about *Mohinga* in historical records like stone inscriptions, palm-leave inscriptions and *Parabaik* (writing tablet made of paper, cloth or metal in the form of accordion fold).

The word *Mote* was first used in the literature of *Konbon* period (18-19 century AD). U Pu Nya, a famous playwright of *Konbon* period wrote "round rings like *Motehin*". in one of his plays. *Mote* is the same as *Mohinga*. It can be assumed that *Mohinga* was already in existence in the period. Because *Mohinga* is called *Mote* in some regions.

Moreover, a lot of equipment used in making rice powder and dough were unearthed lately. The earliest objects were from *Pyu* period. Considering this fact, we can come to the conclusion that since the time rice was first eaten there were snacks made from rice and *Mote* and *Mohinga*, which were eaten as a substitute of rice. So we can assume that the origin of *Mohinga* began from *Pyu* period (1-9 century AD).

I also notice that about selling *Mohinga* was written in a novel published at the early time of colonial era. Sayagyi U Yan Aung, a noted writer of that time illustrated about people from all walks of life of Myanmar in his novels. A newspaper called *Toetetyay* carried his novel *Anya Tha Galay* (young man from upper country). The main character of that novel was a young man who earned a living by selling *Mohinga* with a *Sinehtan* (cane or bamboo frame work slung from a yoke to carry things).

At this point, I would like to explain something about selling *Mohinga* with a *Sinehtan*.

At the one end of the yoke rice noodles and other ingredients such as chilies, onions, and fritters are neatly put. At the other end a charcoal oven is placed. On it the pot of gravy is put. The hawker sells *Mohinga* shouldering the yoke, shouting "*Mohinga*", going street after street. The water to be used for washing the dishes can be asked from the customers and nearby houses. Ingredients of *Mohinga* in this story were peas, garlic, onions, lemon grass, ginger, soft core and tender layers of stem of banana plant and etc. In that region, fish is not used in cooking *Mohinga* for it is scarce.

In Southern part of Myanmar, apart from above mentioned ingredients, *Ngaiji* (small fresh-water catfish *Heteropneustes fossilis*), *Ngakhu* (kind of fresh water catfish *Clarius batrachus*) and *Ngapano* (small snake-head fish *Ophiocephalus punctatus*) are used in cooking *Mohinga*. Although there are many kinds of fish, other fish are not used in preparing *Mohinga*. The concept of using these fish in *Mohinga* in cooking gravy was handed down by words. So, it can be assumed that these kinds of fish are the best for preparing *Mohinga*. And *Mohinga* can be prepared as vegetarian food.

I once read a cookbook of court of Myanmar monarchs. Although the book carried various kinds of preparing rice, curries and snacks, it expressed nothing about *Mohinga*. Considering that fact, it did not seem to be a snack for Royal people like kings and queens. But court people would eat *Mohinga*.

But ordinary people eat *Mohinga* daily. There is nothing new about it. That is why nobody recorded about *Mohinga* in written form as a special matter. Therefore there are not any other references for making a guess except some phrases in the play I have mentioned earlier. *Mohinga* is used to serve the people in various social and cultural gatherings. Moreover, it is easily available, cheap and tasty. And it is served at the special receptions and functions. These days *Mohinga* is in vogue in Myanmar among both Myanmar people and foreigners.

With beautiful mountain ranges, abundance of natural resources and cultural heritage, Myanmar will never run out destinations. There were a lot of visitors who became to like *Mohinga* after trying eating it during their visit to Myanmar.

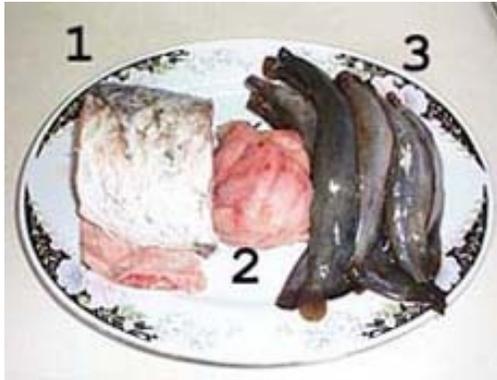
Recently, a competition of *Mohinga* was held in Yangon. A wide variety of methods of cooking *Mohinga* was presented and demonstrated in that competition. Recipe for *Mohinga* contains no chemicals and are natural ingredients. Moreover, it is a healthy food and contains no fat. So, it can be eaten as a diet.

*Mohinga* shops are opened near clinics and hospitals and sells *Mohinga* for patients. The patients who have recovered from their illness usually have a desire to eat *Mohinga*. Everyone can eat *Mohinga* regardless of race, religion, age and time. That is why everybody likes it. Nowadays, instant *Mohinga*, which can be eaten with boiling water, is available in Myanmar.

A tourist who ate *Mohinga* every morning while he was in Myanmar said, "Myanmar fast food *Mohinga* is healthy one. So, there is no need to sell any European food like hamburgers and hot dogs. More *Mohinga* shops should be opened."

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## The Necessary Materials For 18 Persons



1. Hamilton's carp (fish)825 g
2. Feather back (fish)330g
3. Catfish825g



4. Pitch of the banana stem 20cm
5. Coriander 80g
6. Chili 16g
7. Garlic 400g
8. The lemon grass 4 units  
(One kind of spice with sweet smell)
9. Ginger 30g
10. Duck egg 4 units
11. Onion 825g



12. Fish Sauce 300cc
13. Salt a little
14. Cooking oil (bean) 500cc
15. Taste powder 1 tea spoon
16. Pepper 16g
17. Rice powder 80g
18. Gram 250g  
(The persons who do not find extra time use gram powder)
19. Roasted chili powder a little
20. Turmeric powder a little



21. Rice noodle 3kg



1. Rinse the chili, cut them and soak till they are soft
  2. Steep gram in the water about 10 minutes. If it can be detached, boil it 10 minutes.
  3. Rice powder (Roast rice in the fried pan then pound it in the mortar)
  4. Pound pepper in the mortar.
  5. Boil 3 duck eggs and cut them. One egg was to be cut and to be stirred
  6. The lemon grass is to be rinsed and to be cut into small pieces.
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## The Method Of Cooking



**1.** Remove the head and inner parts of catfish. Rinse it. Remove the mucous. Boil it by on oven. Make a number of shallow incisions so that bones can be removed easily.



**2.** Grasp the fish with taste powder till it sink into the meat.



**3.** Make the balls of feather back, which is rubbed with some salt and taste powder.



**4.** Boil half of the Hamilton's carp, feather back and catfish with sauce 300 cc. Cover the when it is on the oven so that it is not overcooked.



**5.** While you are boiling the fish, rinse the lemon grass removing the hard cover and taking out the soft core.



Cut the soft core into equal halves.

**6.** Slice the lemon grass into pieces. Slice the ginger and garlic into pieces.



**7.** Pound them (mentioned in No.6) with the ripe chili in a mortar)



**8.** Cut the pitch of the banana stem into equal halves. Put out the soft parts. Remove the fibre from the hard cover. Then cut it into 5mm pieces.



**9.** Stir one spoonful of turmeric in the two-litter water. Steep the cut banana stem in the water 5 minutes.



**10.** Boil the pitch of the banana stem with turmeric powder in the one litter water. The more the length of the time to boil it takes, the sweeter the taste of the soup is.

**11.** The fish from No.4 is to be taken. Remove the bones from its meat. Cut the ball of feather back into pieces. \*Women are not tired to do so, because they can make a chat about their husbands while they are extracting the bone.





**12.** Boil the bone with one litter water in a pan because sweetness can remain in it.

The lemon grass is used to remove the bad smell of the sauce. Boiling the bone originally is better than boiling the pounded bone because the sweetness is different.

**13.** Put the soup form No.12 into the pan in which banana stem was boiled. Take the liquid of sweetness by putting one litter water. The rest bone is to be thrown away.



**14.** Cut the half of onion slice into small pieces.



**15.** Fry 500 cc oil in the fried pan. When some vapour comes out, put turmeric powder in it. Fry the onion form No.14 until it becomes red. When it is brown, put it on a plate leaving the oil in the pan.

**16.** Put the half of the cooking oil form No.15 into the pan. Fry the half of pounded garlic, ginger, and the lemon grass from No.7.



**17.** The weighed gram is to be mixed as in No.16.

**18.** tir the rice powder with the 200-litter water in the pan from No.16.

**19.** Put the water, in which banana stem is boiled, into the pan form No.16. Pour the rest onion and 500 cc of water in the pan and boil it 30 minutes at a moderate heat. Watch the condition while you are stirring it.



**20.** Fry the block of feather back in the second half of the oil from No.15. Then put it away till it is cold.

**21.** Fry slowly the garlic, which is left from No.16 in the cooking oil from No.20 until it becomes dark brown. Cooking oil must be left separating the fried garlic from the oil.



**22.** In the cooking oil from No.21; the chili from No.7 must be fired steadily. Put the rest ginger and the lemon grass in it. Fry the fresh and the lemon grass in it. Fry the fresh of fish, which is gotten from peeling, from No.11.



**23.** Add one litter of water to the pan from No.16 in which the fried anion from No.15 and the crushed things from No.22 are put. Boil that pan with the moderate heat.



**24.** Pour the pounded pepper and the stirred egg into the pan. Add some salt. Boil them at a moderate heat about 30 minutes.



**25.** The container is fulfilled.

### **The method of eating mohinga**

Put the rice noodle in the bowl. Pour the gravy to optimum level.

1. Fried garlic
2. Coriander
3. Sauce
4. Fried feather back
5. Boiled duck egg
6. Roasted chili powder
7. Rice noodle
8. Fried gourd
9. Fried pea paste
10. Gravy of mohinga