

# Deep Dive: Songkran

## What is Songkran?

Songkran, Thailand's traditional New Year Festival, is a vibrant and widely cherished tradition that is celebrated annually from April 13–15. Rooted in ancient Hindu and Buddhist traditions, the festival marks the end of the dry season and the beginning of a new astrological year. The word Songkran comes from the Sanskrit *saṅkrānti*, meaning “movement” or “transition,” and the holiday is seen as a time to reset, cleanse, and begin anew.



## Food

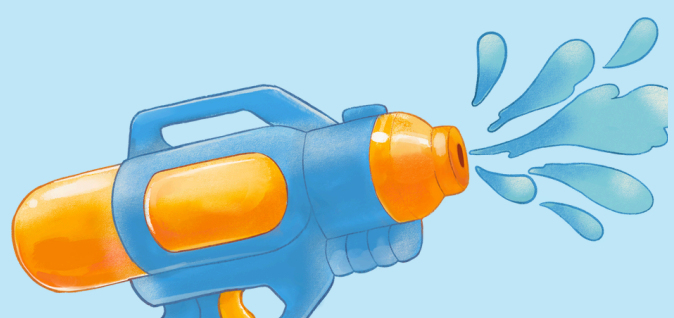
During Songkran, people opt for refreshing and flavorful dishes to celebrate the auspicious new year. Mango sticky rice is especially popular, as April coincides with the peak mango season. The dish features a steamed glutinous rice is steamed mixed coconut milk alongside fresh mango slices. Khao chae (rice soaked in ice floral water), red and green curry, and steamed or fried fish are also widely eaten during this time.



## How is Songkran celebrated?

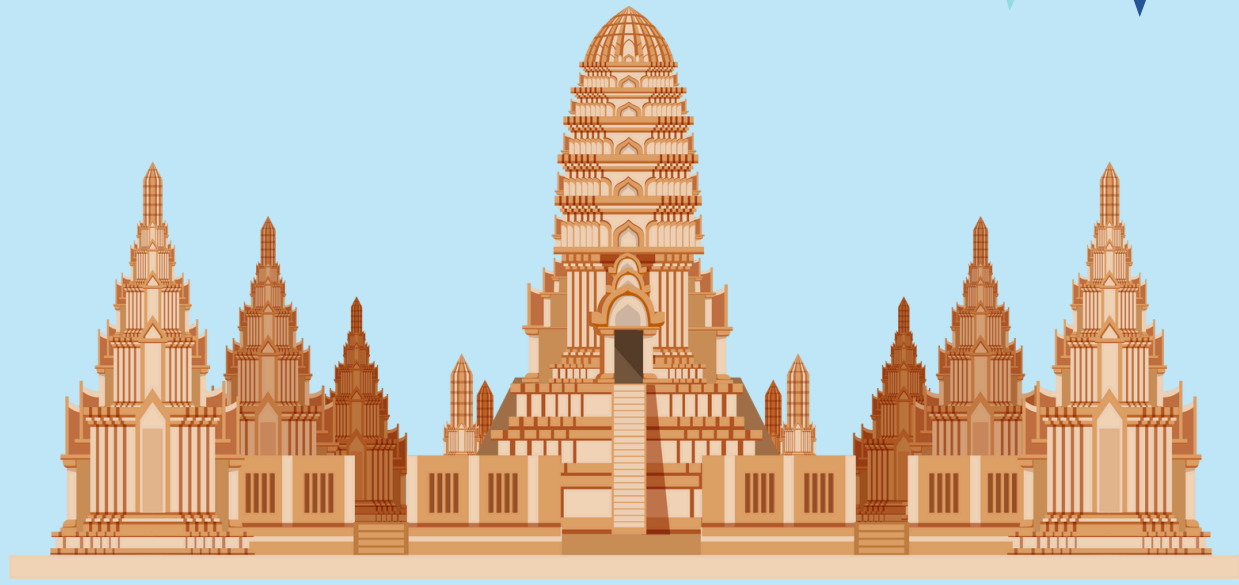
People begin by cleaning their homes to drive away bad luck. Many visit temples to offer food to monks and to pour scented water over Buddha statues in a symbolic act of purification.

Over time, this symbolic act of water pouring has evolved into what many now know as the world's largest water fight. In cities like Bangkok and Chiang Mai, entire streets turn into joyful battlegrounds as tourists and locals alike spray each other with water guns, buckets, and hoses.





# Overview: Thai History



**1351**

Ruled by Thailand's first king, Ramathibodi I, the Siamese capital of Ayutthaya lays the foundations for what will later become the Kingdom of Thailand. Ramathibodi I proclaims Buddhism as the official national religion and the city goes on to become the prosperous center of Southeast Asia, with more than one million inhabitants.

**1782**

General Chakri deposes Taksin and adopts the name Rama I at his coronation, marking the beginning of the Chakri dynasty. He moves the capital to Rattanakosin, modern-day Bangkok. He also commissions the building of the Grand Palace, now one of Bangkok's most popular tourist attractions. His successors build trade relations with France, England, and China, which later help Thailand avoid colonization.

**1941**

During World War II, Thailand is invaded by the Japanese, who demand free passage to Malaysia. The Thai agree, but request Japanese assistance in retaking territories seized by the French and the English. This diplomatic relationship changes dramatically in 1944, when Thailand sides with the Allied forces and expels the Japanese. It later becomes a member of the United Nations. The decades that follow are accompanied by political unrest, including coups and military juntas.

**1238**

Often considered the first Thai kingdom, Sukhothai marks the beginning of Thai independence from the Khmer Empire. It's known for early developments in Thai art, language (creation of the Thai script), and Theravāda Buddhism.

**1767**

Burmese forces annex and demolish the Ayutthaya kingdom. Afterwards, the famed General Taksin reunifies the country and establishes a short-lived capital in Thonburi (now part of Bangkok). His reign is marked by military campaigns and political consolidation.

**1932**

In 1932, Thailand becomes a constitutional monarchy.

In 1939, it changes its name from Siam to Thailand (Prathet Thai in Thai), which means "free land."

**Present**

Thailand changes course in the 1980s, and in the 1990s, a constitution is signed into law. 2001 marks another milestone, with the first government entirely elected by the people.

