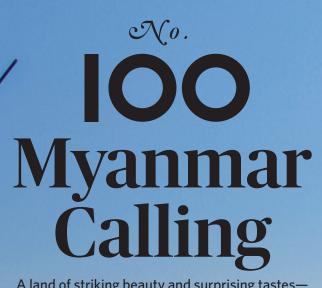
Myanmar's Inle Lake, known for holding species that appear nowhere else the world.



A land of striking beauty and surprising tastes—

hen Myanmar (formerly Burma) opened its boryears ago, I hopped on a plane as quickly as I could. I'd traveled extensively in Southeast Asia before opening Pig & Khao, my Southeast Asian restaurant in noodles out of a crisp green shredded New York City, eating fresh spring rolls at market stalls in Vietnam, plopping down at divey restaurants in Thailand, and inhaling steaming bowls of noodle flavors back to my menu, as I'd done besoup laced with lemongrass, bringing back the best of what I'd learned to my diners back home—but Myanmar was the country, were an instant hit. They're still an enticing mystery to me.

first thing I noticed was the tomatoes. Shan spice—a heady mix of cloves, star Sure, there were the chiles, the cilantro, and mint I'd seen in neighboring countries, but the base for many Burmese garlic, ginger, onions, and tomato. It's dishes was a vibrant quartet of ginger, my way of bringing a little bit of Myangarlic, onion, and tomato. Perhaps this mar back to the States, but if you ever appealed to me so much because in my first professional job as a young cook, few of my favorite places and taste the

Nix the ginger, and you've got yourself the three main building blocks of most Italian dishes. Traversing the country of Myanmar from top to bottom, I cooked crispy rice cakes with a local vendor by Inle Lake, slurped wheat papaya salad, and scarfed up crunchy tempura-battered scallions.

When I came home, I brought those fore. My Shan noodles, inspired by the flavors of the Shan state in the East of made with ground chicken, turmeric When I hit the ground there, the powder bloomed in peanut oil, and anise and black peppercorn—and built upon, of course, that glorious base of find yourself in this country, go visit a

WHERE TO GO

Bogyoke Aung San

Hawking everything from antiques to clothing to food, this giant bazaar is a mustvisit. Bo Gyoke Road, Dagon, Yangon; bogyokemarket.com

Chauk Htat Gyi

Head to this temple to see a reclining Buddha that's more than 200 feet long. Shwe Gon Taing Road, Tamwe Township, Yangon; myanmartravelinformation.com

Five-Day Market

This rotating market—so named because it moves every five days among villages that ring Inle Lake—is the place to go for fresh produce and handicrafts. Locations rotate; inlelaketourism.com/ inle-lake-floating-market.asp

Inthar Heritage House

Feline lovers, take note: Among the attractions at this upscale resort is a Burmese cat sanctuary, Inpawkhon Village, Inle Lake; inleheritage.org

Mr. Toe Restaurant

Accessed by boat, this beloved restaurant showcases fish caught in Inle Lake. Thar Lay village, in front of Phaung Daw Oo Pagoda, Inle Lake

Shwedagon Pagoda

The most sacred Buddhist pagoda in the country. Sing-

