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Editor's Letter

Sometimes we win, sometimes we lose. This rings true in all aspects of life, whether it be a relationship, sport, business, or politics. It is important to come to terms with this truth and graciously accept it as fact. Today we may have lost, but it doesn't mean that we can't win tomorrow, and vice versa. Unless we begin to face up to the truth, then it's unlikely the problems and sufferings we're experiencing will go away.

Sometimes it's alright to give up and step back to fight another day. Pushing ahead without a finish line in sight is just a waste of time and energy. We need to learn from our mistakes and avoid making the same ones next time. Sometimes it takes two steps back to make three steps forward. That's life.

Interestingly, we should turn to the Buddha's teachings for solace, especially the Four Noble Truths: dukkha (suffering exists), samudaya (the cause of suffering is due to attachments and the desire to possess or control things), nirodha (putting an end to suffering by never attaching ourselves to things), and magga (following the Eightfold Path – the Middle Path – to end all sufferings). This holds true in all aspects of life, too.

Life is complicated, but it doesn't have to be. We will all sooner or later experience the same fate as billions of people who lived and died before us. No one can avoid the suffering of birth, old age, sickness and death. From ashes to ashes, dust to dust. Everything is temporary, nothing lasts forever. Although we seem to realize and hold these facts of life deep in our hearts, but as human beings still prone to love, hate and greed, we find it difficult to put it all into perspective and practice in our daily lives.

Sooner or later, we all will pass, and those who know us, love us or hate us will do too, leaving almost nothing behind to remind posterity that we once walked the earth. Sad but true, but that's life for all of us – lesser mortals – no matter who you are or what you've done your whole life.

So don't fret and enjoy the journey while it lasts, appreciate what we have achieved. If you hit a brick wall, step back to contemplate and reflect, and then try again moving forward either in the same direction or try another, but do so as happily and peacefully as possible. Enjoy life, because that's how it's supposed to be. That's life – *c'est la vie*.

-VT

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PHOTOGRAPH: TEERARAT YAEMNGAMLUEA

The Sweet Scent of Khao Chae

BY NAAM SOMBATANANTAKORN

Summer's here and so is "khao chae", Thailand's best-known traditional summer meal. *Khao chae* (literally "rice" + "soaked") is rice soaked in chilled fragrant water and best eaten with an assortment of side dishes that chiefly include stir-fried sweetened pickled turnip with eggs, *luk kapi* (fried shrimp paste balls), and stir-fried sweeten shredded fish. It was once a favorite summer dish in the palace preferred by kings, but it is now a summer delight enjoyed by all.

There are two types of *khao chae*: *Khao Chae Mueang Petch* ("khao chae from Phetchaburi") and *Khao Chae Chao Wang* ("khao chae of the royal court"). The former is a minimal yet authentic version of *khao chae* originally created by the Mons, an ethnic group who has made Thailand their home since the Ayutthaya era after fleeing their homeland in what is now Myanmar.

In a Mon household, *khao chae* is prepared for special occasions such as Songkran when the dish is put together before sunrise and then offered to Buddhist monks on their morning alms rounds and also used as part of the offerings for deities. After the morning rituals, the elders are then served a meal of *khao chae*, and finally, the rest of the family would join in.

The dish is called *Khao Chae Mueang Petch* because Phetchaburi province has hosted a large vibrant Mon community that still exists until today. In the past, the province was also a favorite summer destination for Thai royalty on vacation. That's how *khao chae* came to be known as a palace dish.

Khao Chae Chao Wang (or royal *khao chae*) is therefore an adaptation of the traditional *khao chae* for the royal court that comes with additional special ingredients. This version is known for its complexity and lavish presentation.

Chao Chom Manda Klin (Klin Kotchaseni), King Mongkut's (Rama IV) consort of Mon descent, was the one who introduced the dish to the Siamese court and soon it became one of the king's favorite dishes. Over time the

palace's chefs developed several palace recipes of *khao chae* that were outstanding in both flavor and presentation. The extra side dishes from the palace recipe included stuffed sweet-pepper, stuffed shallots, shredded sweetened beef or pork, raw sour mango, and *krachai* (finger root or Chinese ginger).

The real challenge in the past lied in chilling the dish's scented water. Thailand had its first icehouse in 1905, and refrigerators were not imported until many years later. Thais in those days cooled drinking water by storing it in earthen jars that were sunk partially underground. When the outer part of the jar was covered with condensation, the water inside would be cool enough for use.

To make the water fragrant, jasmine flowers or Damask rose petals were added to a jar of water and left overnight to absorb the fragrance. The edible flowers needed to be properly cleaned before use. For extra coolness, Thais traditionally added borneol camphor and menthol to the scented water. Sometimes a jar of water was perfumed by filling it with smoke from scented candles (*tian op*).

The best way to enjoy *khao chae* is by enjoying the flower-scented water separately from the side dishes. Never mix the side dishes in the scented water as the food's overpowering smell could mask the fragrance of the flowers.

Start from the saltier dishes such as *luk kapi* and *krachai*, then take a sip of chilled *khao chae*. Chew them together to experience the complexity of flavors in your mouth. Then try the sweet side dishes such as fried pickle turnip or shredded sweeten fish for an even more flavorful experience. The meal traditionally wraps up with *tang-mo pla hang* (watermelon topped with dried shredded fish), if provided.

Although in the past, *khao chae* was served only during the summer, nowadays you can enjoy *khao chae* all year round at many famous Thai restaurants. But believe me, it's best to enjoy the dish during this time of the year.

Mezzaluna

Dining with Stars

BY DAVE STAMBOULIS

While it's no easy thing to get awarded a Michelin star, getting awarded two stars is next to impossible. There are more than 3,000 restaurants in the world with a Michelin star, but only some 400 with two stars, and a minute 126 with the ultimate three stars. While some stellar cooking techniques and wildly delicious cuisine might land you a star, you really have to up the ante to move up into the two- or three-star galaxy, and the Lebua's Mezzaluna has done just that, receiving two stars for the second year running from the *Michelin Guide Bangkok*, showcasing Japanese chef Ryuki Kawasaki's amazing talents and pairing them alongside of the best view and service you'll find in Bangkok.

The Lebua has long been noted for its sky-high restaurants and bars, all of them offering stupendous views of the Bangkok skyline and the Chao Phraya River. The views from Mezzaluna go on for eternity, and in some ways, on my last visit here, I almost found myself not wanting to gaze out at the scenery, or feel that I was having the most romantic dinner of my life, as all I wanted to do was to close my eyes and succumb to Chef Kawasaki's tantalizing dishes.

Kawasaki grew up in his grandmother's kitchen in his native Japan and followed his culinary passions by enrolling in the prestigious Tsuji Culinary Institute in Tokyo. He has spent over 20 years working at some of the world's top Michelin-awarded restaurants in France, the United States, and Japan. Kawasaki received

the Chef of the Year award from the Escoffier Society while working at Twist by Pierre Gagnaire in Las Vegas, and is noted for his innovative and visually stunning gourmet presentations.

Kawasaki took over the helm at Mezzaluna in 2015 and has combined his superlative French cooking techniques with some of the most exclusively sourced ingredients and fresh seasonal produce to be found in Asia. Take the Niigata Murakami Wagyu beef for example,



which Kawasaki brings exclusively to Thailand from Japan. The beef comes from a small breed of carefully selected, high-quality calves from Niigata Prefecture in Japan, which are raised on rice straw, hay and premium compound feed, giving the beef a silky texture and absolute melt-in-the-mouth taste.

While most Michelin-starred restaurants in Bangkok offer degustation or chef's tasting menus, Mezzaluna offers one with a slight twist, in that you get to

choose between several dishes on the majority of the presentations. Opt between a Magaki oyster confit or braised veal, or a Madara Pacific cod or red snapper. While the undoubted highlight of the meal is the Niigata Murakami Wagyu beef with black truffle that is grilled over charcoal, even here it's hard to choose, as you can instead go for blackcurrant-crusted deer that is bold and gamey, paired with a lively red wine that bursts onto the palate with a flavor-filled punch.

Everything about a meal at Mezzaluna is over the top and done to perfection. A bevy of international staff hover around your table, never failing to notice whether you need more bread or water, constantly bringing palate refreshers before dishes, and giving detailed explanations of all the captivating creations that are appearing in front of you.

The sommelier knows his stuff, coming out to explain each wine pairing not only giving the origins of each bottle, but complimenting its highlights and flavor profiles. The cellar here is one of the finest and deepest in all of Bangkok, with several of the wines served being exclusive to Mezzaluna.

Each dish coming with the tasting menu is a work of art. A Madara Pacific cod is served marinated in sake and custard, accented with a slight bit of chorizo and accompanied by a green sauce of bok choy. Portions are small, but each bite is meant to be savored, just bursting with taste and a combo of ingredients that appear to be master-crafted.

The menu at Mezzaluna is seasonal, changing every three months, although dishes like the Wagyu beef are always featured. The end of the dining experience here is just as spectacular as the rest, with Kawasaki creating a Koshihikari rice (Japan's most premium rice) ice cream as well as a MarkRin 80% dark chocolate nougatine, ice cream and ganache.

This is an entire dining experience at its finest, from chef to server to table to ambience. At this point, the sky (and possibly even a coveted third star) is the limit for Mezzaluna and its all-star chef.

Mezzaluna

Lebua at State Tower, 1055 Silom Rd.

Tel. 02 624 9555

www.lebua.com/mezzaluna

Open 6 pm-1 am Tuesday-Sunday



1



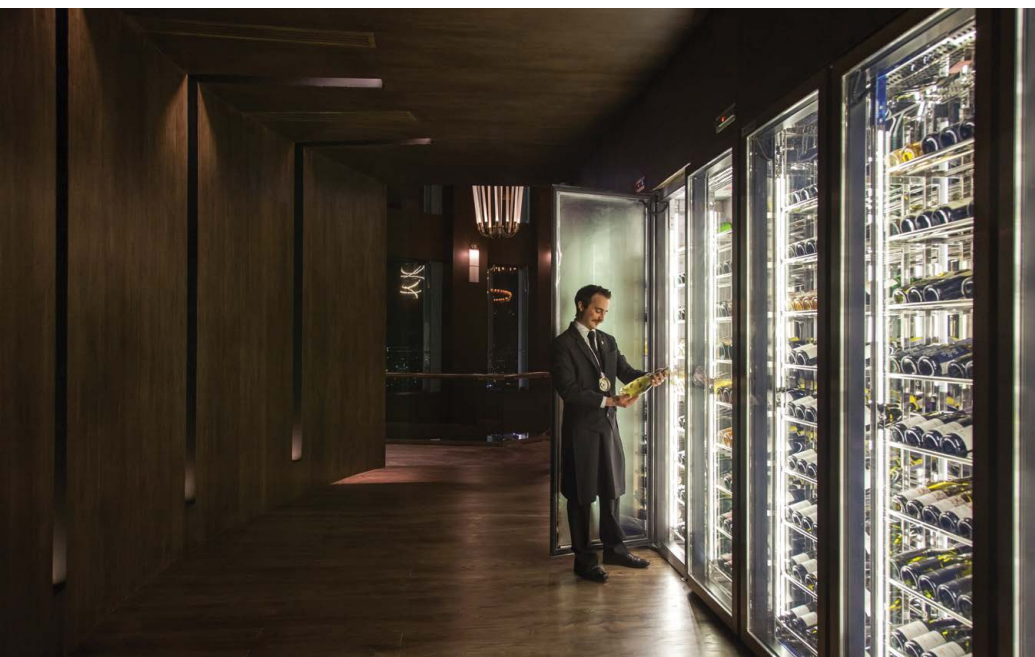
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1 The ambience at Mezzaluna.

2 Magaki oyster confit

3 Koshihikari ice cream, meringue and pudding

4 Niigata Murakami Wagyu Beef A5 grilled over Binchō charcoal.

5 The wine cellar stocked with the finest wines and spirits.



1

Suan Luang Rama IX Park

A Regal Breathing Space

BY CHRISTOPHER SCOTT DIXON

There's something nasty in Bangkok's air—clouds of smog, as the numbers and letters N95 and PM2.5 have now become part of our daily vocabulary. People don the N95-grade facemasks to try and protect themselves from hazardous PM2.5 dust particles and emissions caused by factories and the many vehicles releasing toxic fumes into the atmosphere.

Mercifully, there are some natural outdoor havens within the city where inhabitants can escape the dust and dirt to a number of green spaces, if only for a few hours a day. It's perhaps appropriate to start with Suan Luang Rama IX Park (*suan* means park, *luang* means royal), also known shortly as just Suan Luang, the largest public park in Bangkok.

The park was built in 1987 to commemorate HM the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej's 60th birthday and to house plant species from around the country for educational and recreational purposes. Set in an area of 500 *rais* (almost 200 acres), it is indeed magisterial in its appearance and surroundings, and cannot all be seen on one visit.

The park is some 15 km from the city center and located in Prawet district. There are various travel options to reach the park. The easiest way is to take a taxi directly from Sukhumvit Road or use the BTS and get off at Udomsuk station exit 3 and hail a cab or take a more local ride on a *songthaew* passenger truck from Udomsuk, Sukhumvit 103, for only a few baht.

Suan Luang is an utterly fascinating combination of conventional park, museum, botanical wonderland and memorial. The park is divided into six areas, with splendid gardens and a range of striking architectural structures, including the wonderful Thakon Phrakiat Pavilion which is a perfect showcase for Thai teak design and is set in the center of a lotus pond.

Dominating the venue is the intriguing Ratchamangkhala Pavilion with its soaring golden spire, it wouldn't look out of place in a science fiction movie. In actuality it's a gallery crammed full of images and exhibits about the Thai royal family and information about the royal projects. Fronted by a large lake, visitors can take a ride in swan- and duck-styled pedal boats and enjoy the floating lotus gardens.



2



3

PHOTOGRAPHS: TEERARAT YAEMNGAMLUUEA

- 1 Locals taking a quiet stroll in the Suan Luang Rama IX Park.
- 2 The Ratchamangkhal Pavilion fronted by a lake with swan pedal boats ready for rent.
- 3 Wooden pavilions in the Chinese garden.

There is an instant feeling of calm when you enter the park, you are at one with nature amid the smells of the flora and the sounds of birds. To say the whole location is photogenic is an understatement. There are over 40 varieties of lotuses and lilies there, and it is said there are plants here representing all 77 of Thailand's provinces. Stroll around the manicured lawns, cross pretty footbridges, and indulge your senses in the gorgeous flower beds which catch the eye at every step.

The different gardens are a kaleidoscope of color and are internationally diverse with French, Chinese, Italian and American versions modeled on famous global gardens. They boast some spectacular fountains, colonnades and statues. A personal favorite is the Chinese garden with fabulous and skillfully crafted wood and glass work.

There are constant delights and surprises, with leafy lanes giving way to swamp-like forest areas, then hosts of orchids and bamboo groves, flower covered walls and twisting pathways through more greenery. If all the walking proves too tiring, then you can jump on the park's mini train which carries people around the park.

While most visitors seek relaxation and sanctuary from the hustle and bustle of the city, Suan Luang also caters for the more active with plenty of space for cyclists and joggers. In addition, there is a sports center with a swimming pool and tennis court.

Bring your own food and stretch out in the many picnic spots while gazing at the lake, or if you prefer, there is a fixed restaurant in the center of the park. Inside and outside, there are also more stalls and kiosks selling food, both savory and sweet items. There are ample seating areas and play facilities for children.

Despite its size, jaw-dropping beauty and historical importance, the park is patronized by mostly locals and you will see relatively few tourists. Perhaps its best kept as it is, a welcome, uncrowded oasis and entry fee is only 10 baht per person. We will be back!

Suan Luang Rama IX Park

Sukhumvit 103, Suan Luang, Prawet

Open daily from 5am to 6pm.

PHOTOGRAPH: TEERARAT YAEMNGAMLUEA



4

4 In the International Gardens, the US is represented by a geodesic dome with several drought-resistant plants and cacti planted inside.



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The Fragrance of Songkran

BY J. PAKCHUEN

A vivid Songkran picture in many people's minds would be one of a colorful crowd frantically splashing water on each other with so much fun on a balmy summer afternoon. However, many Thais love celebrating Songkran in a more traditional way: they would journey back to their hometowns to reunite with their parents and elder relatives. Then, they would take part in the *rod nam dum hua* ceremony where sons and daughters come together to pour scented water onto the hands of their parents and grandparents and offer them beautiful garlands in exchange for their blessings to mark an auspicious start to the Thai New Year.

Let's take a closer look at some of the traditional essentials used during the ceremony.

Nam Ob

The chilled water used in *rod nam dum hua* is usually scented with traditional Thai perfume, or *nam ob*, and added with rose petals and jasmine. *Nam ob* is used beyond Songkran on such occasions as a merit-making ceremony, wedding and even a funeral. *Nam ob* has been historically used since the Sukhothai era, but during the reign of King Phutthaloetla Naphalai (Rama II) the perfume gained in popularity as courtiers used the refreshing fragrance to mask their body odor. Soon it became widely available and popular with commoners as well.

Nam ob contains essential oils extracted from fresh fragrant flowers such as *dok mali* (*dok* means flower) or jasmine, *dok kaew* or orange jasmine, or *dok chommanard* or bread flower (*Vallaris glabra*). The essential oils are then mixed with herbs and spices. Some of the well-known ingredients include kaffir lime, pandan leaves, sandalwood, frankincense, wax, nutmeg, brown sugar, white sugar, borneol camphor – a natural resin collected from the trunk of the evergreen camphor tree – and musk from *chamodched* or the small Indian civet (*Viverricula indica*) for a stronger and long-lasting scent.

It takes a lot of effort and time to make *nam ob*. The process involves mixing part of the ingredients together in water and boiling it at the right temperature. The flower and herbal extracts are then perfumed with the scent of candle smoke several times in a closed container to intensify the scent. *Nam ob* is usually available in light yellow color and can be mixed with powder. The mixture is applied to the skin with the scent and coolness lingering for a long time.

Flowers

One thing that is indispensable during Songkran or in a

Buddhist ceremony is a collection of flower garlands. Three main types of fragrant flowers are often used for making flower garlands: *dok mali* (jasmine), *dok champee* (*White champaca*) and roses.

Over 200 species of jasmine are native to the warmer regions of Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Pacific. Jasmine is also a symbol of purity synonymous with Mother's Day in Thailand because its color symbolizes the purity of a mother's milk and love. There are about 45 types of jasmine around the world, 15 of which are native here. The type of jasmine that is widely used as a garland's main body is Malila (*Jasminum sambac*) or Arabian jasmine.

Dok champee is also white and oftentimes mistaken for *dok champa* (*Magnolia champaca*), the yellowish flower that smells as good but is of a different color. *Dok champee*, a native plant of south China, Malaysia and Indonesia, has more than 50 species and is usually used in the middle or the ending part of a garland. In the old days, people would collect *dok champee* and simply put the flowers in small trays as an offering to the Buddha or to freshen up a room with its sweet fragrance.

Roses are more popular nowadays as an essential part of a garland. There are so many species grown in northern Thailand where the weather is cooler. Unlike *dok mali* and *dok champee*, roses come in different vibrant colors including red, pink, yellow and orange. The one type that is normally used to make garlands is the hybrid tea rose, used to decorate the middle and ending part of a garland.

Scented Powder

One last element used in the *rod nam dum hua* ceremony is the *pang ram* scented powder. The powder is usually mixed with water and gently applied to the face and skin thanks to its cooling properties. It was originally used as a traditional remedy to protect the face and skin from dampness and the sun.

Like *nam ob*, *pang ram* – available in grains – is made from aromatic flowers, herbs and spices and a mixture of fine talc or chalk and Thai perfume. Then, the mixture is molded into small cones that are left to solidify. It will then be perfumed several times for at least three days in a closed container suffused with smoke from a mixture of fragrances from herbs and spices. The finished product can be dissolved in water when used or mixed with *nam ob* for extra fragrance and coolness.

Happy Songkran and enjoy the traditional part of it, too!



PHOTOGRAPHS: DAVE STAMBOULIS

Brunch at Ocken

BY DAVE STAMBOULIS



Other than hotel buffets, half a decade ago it was tough to find a decent brunch in Bangkok. That all changed when Roast and its hip partner Roots Coffee arrived on the scene, with Roast starting up casual all-day brunch service over on Thonglor. Paired with gourmet coffee and a comfy hipster joint hangout, it was a real winner, and launched a whole trend of Bangkok breakfast nooks. Now, the folks behind Roast and Roots have taken things a step further, opening up Ocken, which features fine-dining brunch on the weekend, as well as gourmet dinners throughout the week.

I recently had the chance to stop in for the weekend brunch and wasn't disappointed. The sleek restaurant is set at street level in the stylish Bhiraj Tower on Sathorn Road, and sits behind a long hedge just outside of the Surasak BTS station, making for ultra-convenient access. Inside, soft tones, wooden tables, and dim mood lighting welcome you, as a bevy of apron-clad bakers, cooks, and other servers scurry around

the stylishly designed open kitchen, busy mixing, baking, and putting together a wide array of unique brunch delights.

The brunch menu here is separated into sections. Naturally, "first things first" leads the way, divided between sharing platters for the table as well as small individual bites which are labelled "for me." My partner and I started with the spreads platter, which featured Middle Eastern favorites hummus, baba ghanouj, and tzatziki spreads, served with garlic naan bread fresh out of the oven, and we also opted for an OcMuffin, in which an English muffin was stuffed with a fennel sausage patty, American cheese, and folded chive omelet. Both were stylishly presented, tasty, and of course immediately Instagram-worthy.

The chefs here have created an eclectic brunch menu that is inspired by their world travels and personal brunch favorites, and while Roast might be known for its comfort dishes like pancakes

and waffles, Ocken heads into more serious, complex, and refined terrain.

Take the Cheeky Pho Rice on the main brunch section of the menu. The bowl comes with boiled rice, pretty much akin to a Thai *khao tom* rice soup, which is a popular breakfast staple in Thailand, but here it is made with fine beef cheeks, ribeye, herbs, and genmai-infused Japanese rice. It draws from both Japanese and Vietnamese cuisines, yet is also firmly Thai, and comes served with both spicy and Hoisin sauce options.

Another brunch main which is a real delicacy is the omelet with melted brie, in which your standard omelet is turned into a real tongue tingler by adding sautéed kale, Mornay sauce, and decadent brie to the mix. Other mains include grilled harissa-marinated prawns with zucchini and smoked yoghurt, and spinach spaghetti served up with bacon, clams, basil, and sous vide egg yolk.

While the name Ocken might sound a bit Scandinavian (and certainly goes with the rather Nordic look and feel to the restaurant), it actually comes from something far more mundane. When the founders here put together their first dinner menu, they featured their two favorite foods, octopus and chicken, and thus Ocken was born! At any rate, this combining of names parallels the idea of combining cultures, travels, and cuisines, which is what the brunch spot sets out to do, hopefully luring a crowd just as diverse as the menu.

There is also a bakery section on the menu, offering sweet-tooth addicts glorious indulgences such as chocolate mascarpone crepe cake

with fresh blackberries, cashew toffee, and hot fudge sauce. We were already sated by the time this option rolled around, but having been to Hanoi before, I couldn't help but to have to try the Hanoi egg coffee, something that in Vietnam is known as *ca phe trung*, in which creamy soft, meringue-like egg white foam is perched on dense Vietnamese coffee.

Here at Ocken they combine knockout Roots cold brew coffee with coffee crumble, egg yolk foam, and espresso powder, and this was by far our favorite item of the morning, both to devour and to photograph. The coffee at Ocken, served up by the new Roots café right next door, is probably the best in town, and the bold house blend

here is served as an endless cup, which will certainly jolt start your morning. You can also opt for alcohol with your leisurely brunch, as there are craft beers and fine wines by the glass or bottle. Even better are the variety of creative brunch cocktails the chefs' team has created, from the Un-bloody Mary (tomato water, vodka, pickle juice and vermouth) to the Bellini, made with peach puree and Cava Spanish sparkling wine.

If you're looking for a convenient, comfy and chic spot to while away a slow weekend morning over good food and company, head over to Ocken to do a bit of culinary traveling.

PHOTOGRAPHS: DAVE STAMBOULIS



Ocken

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Life in the Time of Social Networks

BY SWISA ARIYAPRUCHYA

Advancements in technology have changed how we consume news and information considerably over the past few decades. Growing up in a time before the internet existed, news or information consumed then came to us through a handful of forms. To get reference material for school reports, we would have to go to the library and check out books related to the topic. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* was the “go to” reference guide and a big investment for many households. News would be received either through newspapers, magazines, televisions, radios, or through the grapevine. Letters were how we corresponded with family, friends and loved ones living farther away.

It was a different time back then, and time seemed to move at a different pace now. The advent of the internet and advancements in technology promised greater efficiency and productivity so that we could do more in less time and have more time to live our life. Little did we know then that technology would give birth to social networks which are now consuming a lot of our precious time.

The first recognizable social network site was created in 1997 called Six Degrees, and it was based upon the concept of “six degrees of separation”. Before that, chat rooms based on internet relay chats or IRCs were platforms where youngsters met friends online. Friendster, Hi5 and Myspace soon followed suit and were popular online platforms where users could upload photos, share and comment with friends. Interaction required the use of a computer and dialing in with 56K

modems. There were no such things as accessing the internet through cell phones, yet. A cell phone was simply a cell phone and if you owned one with a blue screen, you were carrying the latest technology.

The technology boom in the early 2000s provided the infrastructure of today’s world with decreases in the price of broadband technology, creation of Google, Facebook, Twitter, iPhone, and Wi-Fi, to name a few. Nowadays, finding someone without a Facebook, Instagram or

According to a Pew Research Center survey of US adults, roughly three quarters of Facebook users and around six in ten Snapchat and Instagram users visit the sites daily. The Nielsen Total Audience Report for Q1, 2018 also revealed that adults spent almost four hours per day on digital mediums with 62% of the time attributed to smartphone usage. It’s no wonder social networks addiction is now being diagnosed and taken seriously. Sleep depravity, depression, anxiety, and anger management issues are but a few of the social problems arising from social network addiction. People are now undergoing therapy to treat their addiction, and since 2018, Apple and Google have offered screen time statistics to let users know exactly how much time they are using on social networks, so that they can make better use of their time.

Apple and Google’s decision to offer time screen statistics is a step in the right direction for time spent digitally is not necessarily

wasted if we understand how to use social networks for all its benefits and wealth of information. Many users are now starting to understand and learning how to live a quality life in the time of social networks. Balancing our offline and online lives has become a challenge, and the prerequisite is that we have to be aware of our interactions and relationship with our smartphones and social networks. At the end of the day, it all runs down to how we choose to spend our precious time, for our time is finite.



Twitter account is a rarity. Within its first year of operations Facebook achieved its one millionth registered users in 2004. As of December 2018, Facebook had over 2.32 billion monthly active users with 1.15 billion mobile daily active users. On a daily basis, 1.52 billion people log onto Facebook. Over 30 percent of the world’s population owns a Facebook account not including other social networking sites such as Instagram, Flickr, LinkedIn, Whatsapp, Snapchat or Twitter. The statistics are astounding.



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PHOTOGRAPHS: STEPHANIE WANG





2

Kasayapi Boutique Hotel

Thonburi's Hidden Gem

BY PLOYLADA SIRACHADAPONG

Bangkok has more than its fair share of outstanding boutique hotels, each with its own unique story, character and design. If you're looking for somewhere serene and cozy to stay in Bangkok's Thonburi area, then look no further than Kasayapi Boutique Hotel.

Located on the Thonburi side of the Chao Phraya River on a tract of land belonging to the Xuto family, Kasayapi is only a ten-minute walk from Wat Arun (Temple of Dawn) and right next to the MRT Itsaraphap station, which is scheduled to open in August 2019.

Founded by two sisters, Amornratana and Kanyaratana Xuto, and inspired by their family home, the hotel ensures that guests feel perfectly at home while getting the hang of Thonburi's cultural life.

Amonratana "Noom" can still recall how her mother, Kasayapi, raised her four children in a house designed by their architect father who ensured it had adequate natural light, air flow and ventilation.

"My siblings and I grew up seeing our parents welcoming family members, friends and her colleagues, both foreigners and Thais, at our house. They came to meet up and enjoy themselves on countless occasions. These fond childhood memories have inspired us to build a hotel where we can also welcome guests to enjoy the same, wonderful experiences we had when we were young," said Noom.

A hardwood door marks the entrance that leads guests to a small garden that affords a sweeping view of the main building with béton brut concrete walls, which provides a modern touch to the décor that contrasts with wooden Thai-style exteriors.

Talented designers Piya Muangprae and Somboon Wangmunphol from HUB Architecture and Design preserve the family's childhood memories by adorning the main building with perforated walls and ceilings to allow natural light to enter. The spacious lobby also serves as an open-air dining area for breakfast and is inspired by the family's original house inherited from their grandparents.

The hotel has only ten bedrooms, all spacious and unique in design. “One of my inspirations was to introduce the Thonburi neighborhood to our guests, so all ten rooms have been designed with different themes, each telling a story about an iconic building or area in Thonburi,” said Noom.

One of the Deluxe King rooms on the ground floor is decorated with graphics of Thonburi Palace, also called Phra Ratchawang Doem of King Taksin the Great. The palace is open to visitors only once a year because the palace is in the grounds of the Royal Thai Navy headquarters. The headboard resembles the roof design of that palace. The room has a luxurious ambience, amped up by hardwood custom-made furniture.

The bedrooms are a mix of smooth floor tiles and concrete and have wheelchair access thanks to a gentle slope at the threshold. This is to make sure that the hotel welcomes everyone and is accessible to all by installing handrails and providing easy access for wheelchair users.

The stairway leading up to the second floor is decorated with perforated metal artworks of royal barges on display on both sides of the concrete walls. There’s also a gorgeous perforated metal replica of Wat Arun at sunset on the second-floor landing. The dimly lit art pieces – made from sheets of metal cut into Thai patterns and painted black – lend a modern touch to the hotel’s Thai style décor.

The second floor hosts seven Superior rooms, one of which features décor in the theme of “Royal Barges”. There are also exquisite wood carvings displaying familiar Thai patterns that go well with the clear-glass window offering a panorama of the lush garden below. The Kudi Cheen room comes alive thanks to its vibrant red Chinese decor and art objects symbolizing the Chinese community living in Thonburi alongside Thais and Portuguese back in the days.

The next room is adorned with Noom’s painting of a *khon* mask of Tossakan (aka Ravana, the demon king in the Ramayana epic), a fitting tribute to the traditional Thai puppet shows at Baan Silapin (the Artist’s House) at Klong Bang Luang Market.

Kasayapi is a boutique hotel in every sense: intimate and cozy with every inch of the hotel displaying fine details and every well-thought-out design telling a story of its own. The Xuto sisters have not only turned their childhood memories into a reality, but they have also done a great job by presenting the relatively quiet Thonburi neighborhood and its story to the outside world through art and design.

Kasayapi Boutique Hotel

102/1 Itsaraphap Road, Soi Itsaraphap 32, Bangkok Yai

Tel. 02 891 1191

www.facebook.com/kasayapithonburi/

PHOTOGRAPHS: STEPHANIE WANG





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6

- 1 Stairs leading up to the second floor with perforated metal artworks of Wat Arun and the royal barges.
- 2 Family pictures with Kasayapi Xuto, whose name is used to name the hotel.
- 3 The hotel exterior as viewed from the main entrance.
- 4 The headboard resembles the roof design of Thonburi Palace.
- 5 Noom's painting of Tossakan mask. 6 Bedroom on the ground floor.



Pomelo

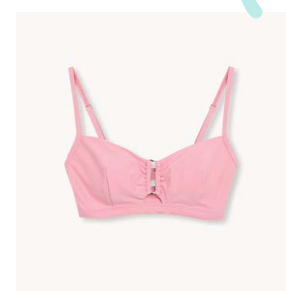
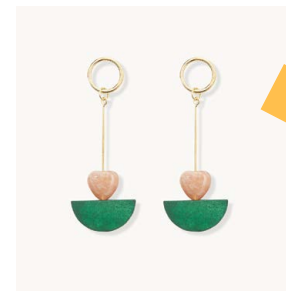
Under the Tuscan Sun

BY PEKKY THE ANGEL

This summer, Pomelo is back with its Summer '19 Campaign, "Under The Tuscan Sun", presenting a collection of more than 100 trendsetting summer pieces for woman.

The new summer collection is an exclusive collaboration with Chanaradee Chatrakul Na Ayudhya, an up-and-coming artist, who showcased her work in this collection with hand-drawn illustrations complete with vibrant fruit designs. The "Under The Tuscan Sun" collection comes with lightweight fabrics from pure cotton to linen, and arrives in a variety array of bold colors, citrus prints and sunny florals.

Some of its statement pieces includes "Tie Front Crop Top", "Linen High Waist Pants", "Mini Open Back Floral Dress", and "Fruit Print Tie Front Jumpsuit". Starting at THB 490, "Under The Tuscan Sun" Summer '19 Collection is available at POMELOFASHION.COM or on the Pomelo iOS and Android Apps.



PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY OF SWEET POPPY

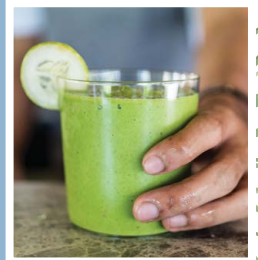
Sweet Poppy Opens in Nonthaburi

BY PEKKY THE ANGEL

People living in and around Pak Kret, Nonthaburi, can now enjoy wholesome, healthy dishes inspired by Australia's world-famous café culture at the newly opened Sweet Poppy. Designed as a restaurant, café and juice bar, Sweet Poppy's dishes are made with sustainably and mostly organic produce.

The breakfast and brunch menus feature favorite dishes such as avocado on toast with tomato, feta and basil, as well as more unique takes on an "Aussie" brunch such as poached eggs with hummus. Larger plates in their all-day menu include BBQ butterflied prawns with lemon and duck leg confit with green lentils.

Located near Nichada Thani and many international schools, Sweet Poppy is open Mon to Thurs from 8am to 10pm, and Fri to Sun from 8am to 11pm. For more info, call 02 005 5206 or visit www.sweetpoppy.co.th.



2019 Spring/Summer UNIQLO and JW Anderson Collection

BY PEKKY THE ANGEL

UNIQLO recently launched the 2019 Spring/Summer UNIQLO and JW Anderson collection, a line created with JW Anderson, the London-based brand that is currently driving the global fashion scene.

The collection features trench coats, bomber jackets, and other clothing items that symbolize JW Anderson's witty British fashion designs mixed with UNIQLO's everyday wardrobe theme that combines high-quality materials, fit, and functionality.

This will be the third season for UNIQLO to design a line with JW Anderson, following collaborations in 2017 Fall/Winter and 2018 Spring/Summer.

For more info, visit www.uniqlo.com/jwanderson.



PHOTOGRAPH: COURTESY OF UNIQLO & JW ANDERSON

April

Songkran Splash Away Weekend at W Bangkok

Back for its 7th edition, W Bangkok is throwing a bigger and cooler party for its “Songkran Splash Away Weekend” during the April 13-14 weekend. It's two days of pool partying at its outdoor swimming pool with famous DJs in the lineup. Ticket prices start from THB 990 for the one-day pass, and THB 1,600 for the two-day pass. Visit www.facebook.com/WBangkok for more information.

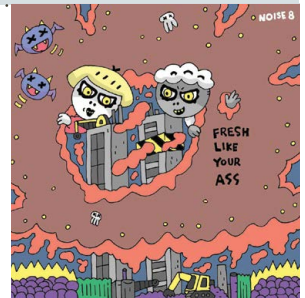


S2O Songkran Music Festival 5th Festival

One of the largest Songkran music events in Bangkok, S2O Songkran Music Festival will be held from April 13-15 at Live Park, Bangkok. The three-day festival will be headlined by Fatboy Slim (April 13), Tiësto (April 14) and Steve Aoki (April 15), among others. With enormous LCD screens, pyrotechnics and state-of-the-art sound system, S2O's main stage is one of the most visually and sonically unique stages at any festival in Asia. For more info, visit www.s2ofestival.com.

Noise Market 8 x Yip In Tsoi Less Waste

Museum Siam is hosting “Noise Market 8 x Yip In Tsoi Less Waste”, a weekend of art and craft activities and performances by indie bands. Held on April 20-21, the event has a market full of interesting recycled goods and lots of food for the whole family. For more information, visit www.facebook.com/noisemarketfest.



Easter Brunch Buffet

Enjoy a delicious Easter Brunch Buffet with family and friends at the Drunken Leprechaun on Sunday, April 21 from noon to 4 pm. Children can enjoy egg painting in the bunny garden. The venue is located on the lobby level of Four Points by Sheraton, Sukhumvit 15. Buffet prices are THB 750 for food only, and kids get 50% off. Call 02 309 3255 for more information or visit www.ticketmelon.com/fourpoints/easter-sunday-brunch.

Water Flip Festival 2019

Water Flip is organizing the Water Flip Songkran Festival 2019 which will take place on April 25 at Water Flip Space (Bangna-Trad Rd, km 25). The event will feature DJ Sunny, Make You Freak, OG Smith, Gongroj, Nearlygod, and the rapper/singer, Urboy TJ. Tickets are THB 500. For more information, visit www.ticketmelon.com/laserspace/water-flip.



Ed Sheeran's Divide World Tour in Bangkok

Global megastar Ed Sheeran is returning to Bangkok on his “Divide World Tour” on April 28 at Bangkok's Rajamangala National Stadium. His latest global hits include “Shape of You”, “Castle on the Hill”, and “Perfect”. Ticket prices start at THB 2,000 and on sale at www.thaiticketmajor.com.

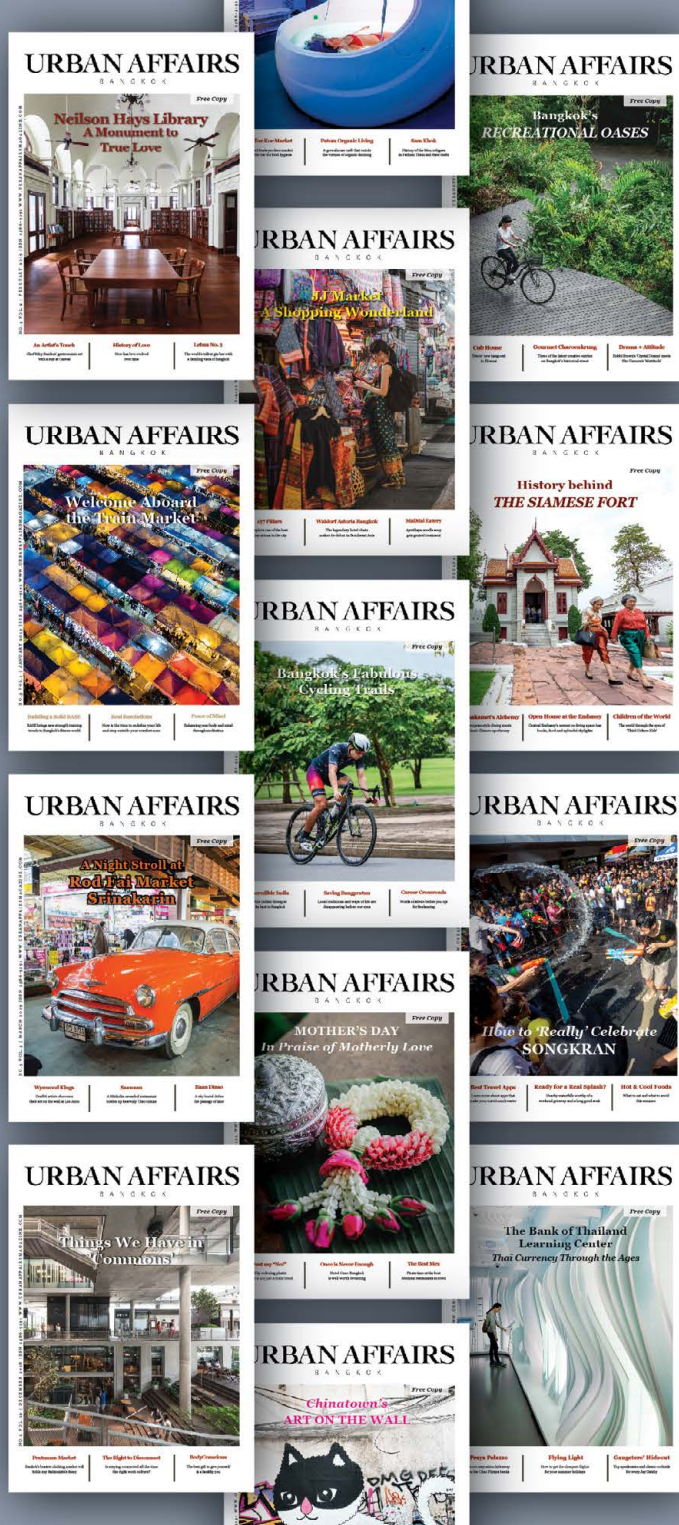
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