

Restaurant review: Baan Thai Kitchen, Paphos

By Nan Mackenzie

It would be so much easier to just say here is a marvellous place that excels at being an authentic Baan Thai kitchen, and when one uses the word 'authentic' here we have a refreshing example of it being used to describe great quality.

The owner is Guenael Le Berre, who used to be the executive chef at the Elysium Hotel in Paphos, but the master stroke Guenael played was in marrying a talented Thai lady in the delightful form of Piak, who runs the kitchen while he is front of house.

'All the best Thai chefs are women,' says Guenael whose wife marries the most delicious herbs spices and raw ingredients to create food that really puts the P back in passion. The menu includes Thai spring rolls so that means always rice noodle, greens, mint, wrapped in fresh rice paper sheets and served with sweet chilli sauce, or the Por Pia Tod version which are deep fried stuffed with veggies and minced chicken. Both get the starters going along with a plate of Thung Thong which all Thai food fans will recognise as fired golden pouches stuffed with minced pork and vegetables. This is not to forget the array of tasty dipping sauces which accompany the dishes such as a creamy coconut, tamarind, garlic, or peanut, these alone are tiny bowls filled with pure deliciousness.

Thai dishes aren't that simple. In fact they seem to western eyes somewhat complicated, but at the heart of real Thai cuisine is a balance of five flavours – spicy, sour, sweet, salty and bitter. The real art is in combining all five so the taste buds experience a harmony of flavours.

One can, as in the case of my dining partner, opt for a very spicy version of some dishes (on offer are mild, medium, spicy or very spicy). He loved his Tom yum Goong, which is billed as the best soup in the world and rightly so, but I wisely opted for the medium version of this spicy and sour soup with prawns and watched as my friend consumed his entire bowl – throughout it looked as if he was crying into his soup from sheer pleasure, until he explained that was only part of the reason, he was in fact perspiring from the top of his head.

This soup has to be the starter dish for everyone as it is truly delicious. We followed with Thai jasmine rice and wok fried chicken pieces with roasted cashew nuts, then a khao phad which is Thai fried rice with prawn served with sliced cucumbers and lime wedges.

Vegetarians will be able to sit and smile with sheer pleasure at the variety of dishes available to them and although the restaurant itself is small and still undergoing some decoration, we have here a perfectly formed eating experience which is guaranteed to make for numerous repeat visits.

Chef Piak is also quite missionary in her desire to convert us to the healthy eating that the Thai kitchen delivers. Used in her repertoire are Bai Makrut which are Kaffir lime leaves and these aid digestion and help cleanse the blood, Prik Khee Noo are chilli peppers which boost weight loss and control heart rate, not forgetting lemon grass which relieves stomach and lung disorders and is credited with greatly aiding those who suffer with insomnia.

I can assure you that no-one will suffer from insomnia after eating Paik's food, in fact you will like me sleep like a baby, dreaming of the next time I can return to this haven of absolute authenticity.

VITAL STATISTICS

SPECIALTY Baan Thai

WHERE Baan Thai Kitchen, opposite Papantoniou supermarket, Kato Paphos

PRICE from €3 for starters up to €7 to €10 for mains

CONTACT 96 447619 or 26 220290

WHEN lunch and dinner

