

Spirit House



July to Dec 2010

NEWSLETTER

How Much Do You Tip A Thai Taxi Driver ?

One of life's great mysteries - solved . . . Page 3

What Does It Take To Work In Hospitality?

Interviews with a handful of our staff . . . Page 7

New BBQ, New Cook Book Let's Combine The Two

BBQ recipes from the NEW book Page 6

ESSENTIALLY THAI

Room service would have to be the most far removed food experience you can have. Sitting alone in a hotel room while, in some sweaty dungeon, a chef prepares my pizza and salad to be delivered by an anonymous room-service attendant sounds like a miserable way to spend an evening - but I have a newsletter to write.

I'm in the middle of our annual food tours to Thailand and have spent the past eight days exploring the mysteries not only of Thai food, but more interestingly, Thai culture. In fact, many of the questions on tour are related to things that all add up to what makes Thai people, essentially Thai.

I guess this segues nicely into the title of Spirit House's latest cook book -

Essentially Thai. Recipes are essentially Thai but with the special Spirit House twist that takes the essence of Thai flavours and techniques and adds a Western chef's touch.

Thais are masters at doing exactly the same thing - taking foreign foods and incorporating their own touches.

Italian food is the most popular foreign food in Thailand. The pizza that has arrived has come with a side dish of chilli powder. The salad is smothered in Caesar dressing. Thais love big flavours and anything raw and green is treated in the same way as Thais treat their own cuisine - drown it in something full of flavour.

Acland Brierty

About The Book

Thankfully our new book is not as hard to find as the actual Spirit House. All good book stores will stock it: Mary Ryan's, Borders, QBD, Angus & Robertson's and boutique book stores such as Annie's at Peregrine, Buderim Books and ABC at Noosa Junction.

The RRP is \$45. Hard cover, 220 pages with all new recipes, we think this is our best cook book yet.

Of course you can buy it online at spirithouse.com.au/shop and overseas clients can buy it at amazon.com.



How would you like a personally signed and inscribed copy? We thought you might - so here's a special link for our special clients: spirithouse.com.au/ultra_special_secret_book_page . . . psst, keep this secret link to yourself.

www.spirithouse.com.au

COOKING SCHOOL

Hands-on cooking classes are held everyday from 9.30AM to 2.00PM.

Evening classes are held most Fridays & Saturdays from 4.30PM to 9.00PM.

Classes can be booked online at www.spirithouse.com.au

Phone: (07) 5446 8977

RESTAURANT

Open every day for lunch

Dinner - Wednesday to Saturday

Fully Licensed, Bookings essential.

Call: (07) 5446 8994

GIFT VOUCHERS

Spirit House Gift Vouchers make the perfect present. Vouchers can be used in the restaurant, cooking school or shop. Go to spirithouse.com.au/vouchers to order your voucher online or call the office on 07 5446 8977.

Address:

20 Ninderry Rd, Yandina, Qld 4561

Thai Culture

LOTUS

One of the most symbolic icons in Buddhist art and folklore

The lotus is one of Buddhism's best recognized motifs and appears in much of Buddhist art across all Buddhist cultures. The roots of a lotus are in the mud, the stem grows up through the water, and the heavily scented flower lies pristinely above the water, basking in the sunlight.

In Buddhist symbolism, this pattern of growth signifies the progress of the soul from the primeval mud of materialism, through the waters of experience, and into the bright sunshine of enlightenment.

The lotus also signifies that even the dirtiest water will not cling to the lotus (pure in spirit). Try sprinkling water on a lotus leaf and it will just roll off.



The geometry and patterns of the lotus flower are the starting point to various shapes and motifs used in Thai Art.



BEHIND THE SCENES of THAI LIFE

One of the downsides to travelling is that often we simply aren't in a country long enough to really understand why things are the way they are. Our photos take on the role of postcards - without a real story behind them. A photo of the reclining Buddha poses more questions than it answers: who built it and why?

We just don't have time to find out all the intricacies of the culture. So here are a few of the things we have learned over the years that help answer some of the questions we are frequently asked on the Tag Along Tours.

HANDS



If you look closely at Buddha statues you will see his hands in different gestures called mudras and they symbolise different states of being.

So a Thai person wanting to attain wisdom (better grades) might pray to, or buy, a Buddha with his hands set in that Mudra. Below are just a few mudras you will find on Thai Buddha statues or artworks.



Pressing the Earth

Symbolizes the union of method and wisdom and considered a gesture of unshakability.



Meditation

Symbolises overcoming worldly attachment through enlightenment.



Turning Wheel of Dharma in Meditation

Symbolises reason, teaching and discussion.

PRAYER

Growing flowers of gratitude in the soil of prayer.

At most temples there will be vendors selling offerings consisting of small packs of incense, candles, sheets of gold leaf and a garland of flowers which people will buy to thank the Gods for hearing their prayers. The best place to see this is the Erawan Shrine in the heart of Bangkok - prayers are whispered, the offerings are placed on shrines around the temple - the gold leaf is rubbed on a Buddha or other sacred icon.

People drop in to local shrines or spirit houses any time during the day - the girl on the right is probably praying for bargains as she kneels in prayer at a spirit house outside a local shopping centre.

Thai Culture



MONEY

Love to haggle ? This might help to put it into perspective

The average wage for an unskilled worker in Thailand is around \$500 a month - that's not a lot of money even by Thai standards. So if my taxi driver can pick up 20 people a day with an average fare of 100 baht, he makes a profit of 1,000 baht which is around \$30 a day or \$900 a month!

The old man who sells Thai coffee and tea at the front of our hotel makes 10 baht profit on his 20 baht coffee. He can easily sell 100 to 200 coffees a day so he's making good money by Thai standards which could be anywhere from \$900 to \$1800 a month.

I should point out that these amounts are only dreamed of by the poor farmers and their children (who wear the Red Shirts) in the rural areas of Thailand, some of whom simply couldn't afford to go to school so can't read or write - which is why you find their sons and daughters working unskilled jobs in Bangkok.

My point is, haggling needs to be done with perspective. If you're buying a fancy helicopter toy for your nephew (you can tell I'm not making this up) and you manage to haggle from \$60 to \$20 you've done a good job and everyone walks away happy from the deal.

Haggling a taxi driver down from 100 baht to 60 baht (around \$1.50) really isn't anything to be proud of. The 40 baht buys lunch and a drink from a street side stall for the taxi driver. A tip of 40 baht (\$1.50) could be put to better use by the taxi driver than I ever could.

Sure, haggling is fun, but it's only fun if both sides have somewhere to sleep and something to eat.

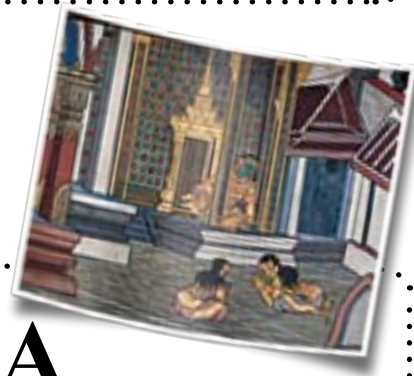
TUK TUKS

Noisy, Dangerous & Italian

The tuk tuk is found in various forms throughout Asia but owes its heritage to Vespa in Italy. The name however is distinctly Thai: tuk-tuk is the sound the engine makes to a Thai person.

After the second world war, Italy needed a cheap commercial vehicle, so after eliminating a wheel and many other safety features of a car, the tuk tuk was invented.

Different countries in Asia have adapted the design to locally available parts but they all share a few things in common: they're cheap, dangerous and noisy. They may be faster than a taxi but there's a lot to be said for air conditioning and seat belts.



RAMAYANA

A story known and loved by all of Asia

Carved into the walls of Angkor Wat, performed by shadow puppet theatres in Indonesia and painted on the walls around the Temple of the Emerald Buddha in Bangkok is the graphical story of the Hindu epic - The Ramayana.

The Ramayana tells the story of Rama whose wife Sita is abducted by Ravana, the demon king of Lanka (Sri Lanka). Packed with action and adventure and dealing with greed, love, lust, jealousy, wealth and poverty the Ramayana is known and loved by most people in Asia. Originating in India, the story was spread by Indian traders throughout Asia as early as 200BC.

Thematically, the epic explores the tenets of human existence and the concept of dharma - which for many Buddhists means the body of teachings expounded by Buddha. The compound walls at the Temple of the Emerald Buddha in Bangkok contain the entire story painted in Thai style and is as spectacular and breathtaking as the roof of the Sistine Chapel.



News & Views

MEET the STAFF

Every issue we always talk about introducing the team to our readers but we usually run out of space. To make up for that, meet 6 of the 40 or so wonderful people who make the Spirit House what it is.

We tried to include our restaurant manager, Jessica DaCosta, but she went into labour the day we did the photos - so she misses out on her chance of stardom, but gains a baby girl!

Nonetheless, here are a few perspectives from our staff on what made them choose the restaurant industry and what it takes to make a career in hospitality.



Ben Bertei
Restaurant Head Chef

Biggest career influence? Dad making me cook every bbq from the age of 8! **Advice for aspiring chef?** It's not a job, you have to want it & love it - food that is. **Your food philosophy?** Keep it simple & work clean. **Toughest part of the job?** Managing personalities and maintaining consistency in the food. **Favourite cook book?** Currently - Thai Street Food by David Thompson. **Favourite meal?** Anything mum cooks when she's in town.



Leanne Farrell
Sous Chef

Biggest career influence? Rowley Leigh - chef/owner of Kensington Place Restaurant in London. **Advice for aspiring chef?** It's not a job, you need to be very passionate. **Your food philosophy?** Let the food talk for itself. **Toughest part of the job?** Personalities - creating a balanced, harmonious team. **Favourite cook book?** Tough question - I collect cook books and love them all individually. **Favourite meal?** Whatever you're going to cook for me.



Nathan Lastavec
Sous Chef

Biggest career influence? My Croation Grandmother - food in our family is taken very seriously. **Advice for aspiring chef?** It's not a job. It's a lifestyle that takes up a large part of your life. **Your food philosophy?** The simplest things are always the most enjoyable. **Toughest part of the job?** Holidays - the peak season means we're working when everyone else is having fun. **Favourite cook book?** Thai Food by David Thompson. **Favourite meal?** Anything my Nana cooks.



Shelly Wright
Floor Manager

Why hospitality as a career? Every day is different & there is never a dull moment. **Advice for an aspiring waiter?** Don't get too emotional - enjoy yourself. **Best part of the job?** Making people feel special and seeing them leave happy. **Toughest part of the job?** Managing all the moving parts and the emotions. **Favourite Food?** Brekky in bed.



Michael Bensick
Floor Manager

Why hospitality as a career? You get to work in some of the most beautiful locations in the world. **Advice for an aspiring waiter?** Always work somewhere busy. **Best part of the job?** Working with people. **Toughest part of the job?** Working with people. **Favourite Food?** Mashed Potato.



Clare Bates-Pay
Floor Manager

Why hospitality as a career? I didn't, it chose me for my charm and wit. **Advice for an aspiring waiter?** Learn how to be an octopus first. **Best part of the job?** The people. **Toughest part of the job?** Not having a normal weekly routine. **Favourite Food?** Chocolate and lots of it.

Thinking of you - thinking of us

Electrolux approached us about equipping our cooking school kitchen with a refrigerator and their latest barbecue as a way of showcasing their new appliances.

Electrolux are working with top chefs, like Tetsuya and Donna Hay, as well as cooking schools, to create appliances that are functional and stylish.

18 people in our cooking classes opening fridge doors, smoking, sizzling and baking on the barbecue - and don't even get us started

about cleaning it - certainly tests the limits of any appliance.

For recipes from chefs like Tetsuya and to see how leading fashion designers are influencing the design of household appliances, you can visit their website *Thinking of you*.com.au

 **Electrolux**



AWARDS

Earlier this year, readers of the Weekend Australian Newspaper were asked to vote in seventeen categories covering areas such as: food and wine experiences, destinations, accommodation etc. for their Travel & Tourism Awards.

The shortlist was compiled by a panel of travel media experts from the Weekend Australian, Vogue Entertaining and freelance travel journalists.

Spirit House won the national award for Best Food Experience 2010. Awards like this validate the hardwork and commitment of our 42 staff. It's a national pat on the back.

Recipes

BQ Lemongrass Pork

with sweet chilli dipping sauce

500g	pork fillet, pork loin or leg chops
½ tspn	white pepper
2	cloves garlic, peeled
2	coriander roots, washed and scraped
2	stalks lemon grass, bottom half only, outer leaves removed and finely chopped
2	green spring onions, including some of the green part, finely sliced
2 tblspns	light palm sugar
2 tblspns	fish sauce
2 tblspns	soy sauce
2 tblspns	sesame oil
1 tblspn	rice whisky, whisky or wine
2 tblspn	coconut cream
soft lettuce leaves	
red vinegar for dipping	

Grind the white pepper in a mortar, and then add the garlic, coriander roots and lemongrass, pounding to a paste. Transfer to a bowl and add the remaining ingredients. Pour marinade over the pork and coat well. Refrigerate for 2 hours.

Barbecue over medium heat, turning often until cooked, about 10–15 minutes depending on the cut of pork used. If using pork fillet, cut into slices, transfer to a serving plate and serve with Sweet Chilli Dipping Sauce



Tapioca pudding

with Palm Sugar Sauce

Tapioca is an ingredient with texture but no flavour but in this dessert it takes on the rich caramel flavour from the palm sugar syrup.

8 cups	water
1 cup	tapioca or sago

Palm Sugar Syrup:

200g	dark palm sugar
150ml	water

Coconut Sauce:

200ml	thick coconut milk or cream
½ tspn	salt

2 tblspns	fresh coconut, shredded
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To make tapioca: Bring water to the boil and add the tapioca, stirring well to stop the grains clumping together. Simmer until just translucent, about 5 to 10 minutes, then strain, rinsing well under cold water.

To make palm sugar syrup: Combine the chopped palm sugar and water in a saucepan and bring to the boil. Simmer until the sugar has dissolved. Cool before using.

To make coconut sauce: Gently warm the coconut milk with the salt until dissolved. Cool before using.

Divide tapioca between serving bowls, then pour over the palm sugar sauce, followed by the coconut sauce. Garnish with shredded coconut.

Thai BBQ Chicken

with sweet chilli dipping sauce

1 size 16 chicken or 4 chicken marylands	
½ tspn	white peppercorns
6	cloves garlic, peeled
4	coriander roots, washed and scraped
2	stalks lemongrass, bottom half only, trimmed and finely chopped
1–2	small chillies, chopped
2 tspns	peeled fresh turmeric or pinch of powdered turmeric
4 tblspns	fish sauce
2 tblspns	soy sauce
1 tblspn	palm sugar

Cut the chicken into pieces or, if using maryland, cut at the joint and place in a large bowl.

Grind the peppercorns in a mortar and pestle, then add the garlic, coriander root, lemongrass, chillies and turmeric and pound to a paste.

Mix with the fish sauce, soy sauce and palm sugar and add marinade to chicken pieces, rubbing to coat well.

Marinate overnight or for a minimum of 2 hours. Cook slowly on a preheated moderate barbecue, turning often.

The chicken can also be roasted in a moderate 180°C oven.

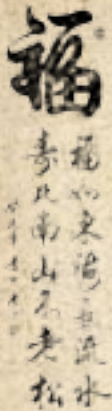
Transfer to a plate and serve with Sweet Chilli Dipping Sauce.

Sweet Chilli Dipping Sauce

½ cup	white sugar
¼ cup	rice or coconut vinegar
¼ cup	water
1 tspn	salt
2	cloves garlic, peeled and crushed
¼ cup	chopped coriander leaf and stem
2–6	small red chillies, finely chopped

Method:

To make dipping sauce: Combine sugar, vinegar, water and salt in a saucepan and bring to the boil, cooking over a high heat until the sauce has reduced by half. Stir in the garlic, coriander and chillies and remove from heat.



MEGACHEF OYSTER SAUCE
"SIMPLY AWESOME"

The real deal - this oyster sauce is made with fresh oysters that have been smoked over hardwood and then simmered with sugar and sea salt - the result: a rich, dark sauce with smokey flavour that you can eat by the spoonful - it's that good. Now available from the cooking school shop.

megachefsauce.com



GREEN PAWPAW SHREDDER
"SEEK NO MORE"

In the past our stocks of this sought-after kiwi brand pawpaw shredders were limited to what we could smuggle back in our suitcases from our tag-along tours to Thailand. We have found an Australian supplier of these rare tools and you can now buy them at the school or from our online shop.

spirithouse.com.au/shop/kitchen-stuff



FOOD TOUR TO TASMANIA
"KEEP APRIL 2011 FREE"

Cooking School chef, Katrina Ryan has put together a private tour to Tasmania that looks simply awesome! In 5 days visit farms, wineries, boutique cheese manufacturers plus two cooking classes. You'll butcher a whole pig, learn all there is to know about salmon. Visit Katrina's website to find out more . . .

katrinaryanfood.com



FIND US ON FACEBOOK
"SEARCH FOR SPIRIT HOUSE"

A few years ago, we created a fan page on facebook and then promptly forgot about it. Recently we revisited the Spirit House fan page and found nearly 200 people had joined and hadn't heard a peep from us. Well, that's all changed - we're facebooking again with gossip, news and special offers.

facebook.com

NEW SPIRIT HOUSE TOURS

Grab your frequent flyer card, call your travel agent and download our tour booking sheets - we have a handful of tours to Asia coming up and places fill fast. We're going to finish the year with 2 tours to Vietnam in October. Over three days explore the markets, sample vendor food around Hanoi and enjoy a cooking class. This tour is the perfect way to start your Vietnam holiday.

In Feb/March 2011 we're back to Thailand again with three tours.

With eight like-minded foodies and Spirit House chefs, explore the old city of Bangkok with its specialty vendors and hidden alleyways before heading to the countryside for two nights in a boutique hotel.



cruising up the canal behind our resort in Ayutthaya

Thailand Food Tour

February - March 2011

Ayutthaya Food Tour

If you love your Thai food, enjoy history and want to discover parts of Thailand most tourists never see - and you want to do this in just four days, we have the tour for you.

Earlier in 2010 we discovered even more food and cultural experiences in Ayutthaya which has led us to spend two nights in this fascinating UNESCO listed world heritage city.

You'll be staying in a boutique resort surrounded by rice fields, nestled on a canal where monks arrive by boat early in the morning for offerings. We've also organised a cooking school at the resort commencing with a visit to local markets to buy the ingredients and then working with Thai chefs to create dinner. The resort has full spa facilities too!

We meet in Bangkok to explore the old city and its unique food delights. You can find full details, prices and itineraries at: spirithouse.com.au/tours.

Vietnam Food Tour

October 2010

Hanoi Food Tour

After time off to have a baby, Sarah Clark, our Vietnam tour guide/chef, has created an exciting food tour of the markets, vendors and boutique restaurants in Hanoi. Make your way to Hanoi, meet up with Sarah and our Spirit House chef for three fun-filled, half-day tours sampling some of the best street food Hanoi has to offer.

Sarah has a deep interest in colonial architecture and will shed light on historic buildings discovered on the tour. You will enjoy lunch in the restored former Spanish Embassy, hidden from the hustle and bustle of chaotic streets.

Sarah has also organised a cooking class featuring some of her Vietnamese favourites. Hanoi is a fascinating city and our tag-along itinerary gives you plenty of time to shop and explore on your own or with other members of the group. Visit spirithouse.com.au/tours for dates, prices and itineraries.