

Yorkshire Life lunch

The sun shone, the wine flowed and the food impressed at Sangthai Restaurant. What more could you ask for? says Food and Wine Editor Elaine Lemm
Photographs: Andy Bulmer



The Sangthai team

HOW lucky we were. The one sunny day of a soggy month and it was our Yorkshire Life lunch.

Robert Malpas and his wife Sangthai, owners of Sangthai Restaurant in Escrick near York, had set lunch outside in their charming plant-filled courtyard - although a room inside was on standby in case our luck ran out.

There was an almost giddy atmosphere among the guests, perhaps brought on by the sunshine, the lingering aromas from the kitchen, which drifted temptingly across the courtyard, and the light, fruity Deville Rosé Champagne served on our arrival.

Unless you speak Thai or are familiar with its food, an a la carte menu can be daunting. Not only does it take an hour to read, but balancing the myriad of flavours, textures and heat of the spices is a minefield. Thank goodness for the set menu. It was all neatly worked out for us, three canapé dishes, three starters and three main courses.

The journey through would take us from chicken to pork, seafood and beef all dressed in aromatic herbs, lashings of coconut milk, crunchy nuts and spiky chilli - the major components of Thai cooking.

The knack of choosing well is to build the heat slowly - blowing the roof of your mouth off in the first bite results in a dead palette.

Unfortunately, the Si Oua sausage canapé blasted us with both barrels and for me killed both the champagne and the other tiny morsels served alongside it. A gulp of water soothed the fire raging on my tongue but I did worry that I wouldn't be able to



Head chef
Charoen Inthanin



Sangthai



Watermelon
decoration

Menu

Canapes
Deville Brut Rosé Champagne

Goong Hom Pa (tiger prawns with a crispy coating and sweet chilli sauce);
Gai Satay (marinated strips of chicken fillet, barbecue grilled with a special peanut sauce);
Tod Mun Goong (Thai fishcakes flavoured with coriander root and black pepper)
Sauvignon blanc/Semillon 2005, Willow Bridge Estate, western Australia

Pia Nung Manow (steamed filets of haddock with chilli and lemon);
Gai Pat Med Mamuang Himmapan (stir-fried chicken with cashew nuts);
Gaeng Massaman Nua (rich beef curry, potatoes and peanuts cooked in coconut milk with aromatic spices); Khao Suey (Thai fragrant rice)

Gewürztraminer 2006, Waipara Hills Marlborough, New Zealand; Domaine Berthoumieu 2001, Madrian, Cuvée Charles de Betz

Guay Tort (crispy fried banana with vanilla ice cream)



Above left:
Amanda Key
Above: Barry and
Eve Wood
Left: Angela
Cameron, Elaine
Lemm
Right: Simon
Winterburn
Below: Paula
Laker, Hillary
Haresign



Above: Cathy Poole
Left: Eileen Yatron,
Les Banton
Below: John Wynne



Above: Ann
and Nathalie
Wray
Left: Angie
Morrell
Below: Anne
Leggett,
Emma Cook
Bottom: Gail
Harrison



taste the rest of the lunch.

Happily, I could. I worked my way through tiny crisp fish cakes, succulent chicken with a gooey tangle of peanut sauce and plump prawns encased in a whisper of batter.

Steamed haddock with a dash of lemon, a tiny prick of chilli and the faint aroma of fish sauce was fresh and lively. But the beef curry was my hero, its coconut milk sauce soothing away any remaining damage done by the sausage.

The finale of glossy nuggets of fried banana and soft ice-cream finished the meal perfectly.

Wine consultant John Wynne encouraged us to resist reaching for a bottle of beer and

to step away from the security of a Riesling or Gewürztraminer.

The Australian Sauvignon/Semillon he provided was a lovely crisp, well-balanced wine and just about powerful enough for the food. But John's choice of a red, especially the Domaine Berthoumieu Madrian, didn't work for me as the coarse tannins took over and confused the flavours. I much preferred the Gewürztraminer he served - boring perhaps, but a match I felt worked exceptionally well.

The food at Sangthai was excellent, the service exceptional, the wines exciting and challenging and, as an added bonus, it didn't rain. What more could we ask for? ■

Fact File

Sangthai Restaurant, Church Cottage, Escrick, York, YO19 6EX
Tel: 01904 728462 www.sangthai.co.uk

Open from 6pm, Tuesday to Sunday. Closed Monday. Open for lunch Friday and Sunday from noon to 2.30pm.