



ABC Delicious

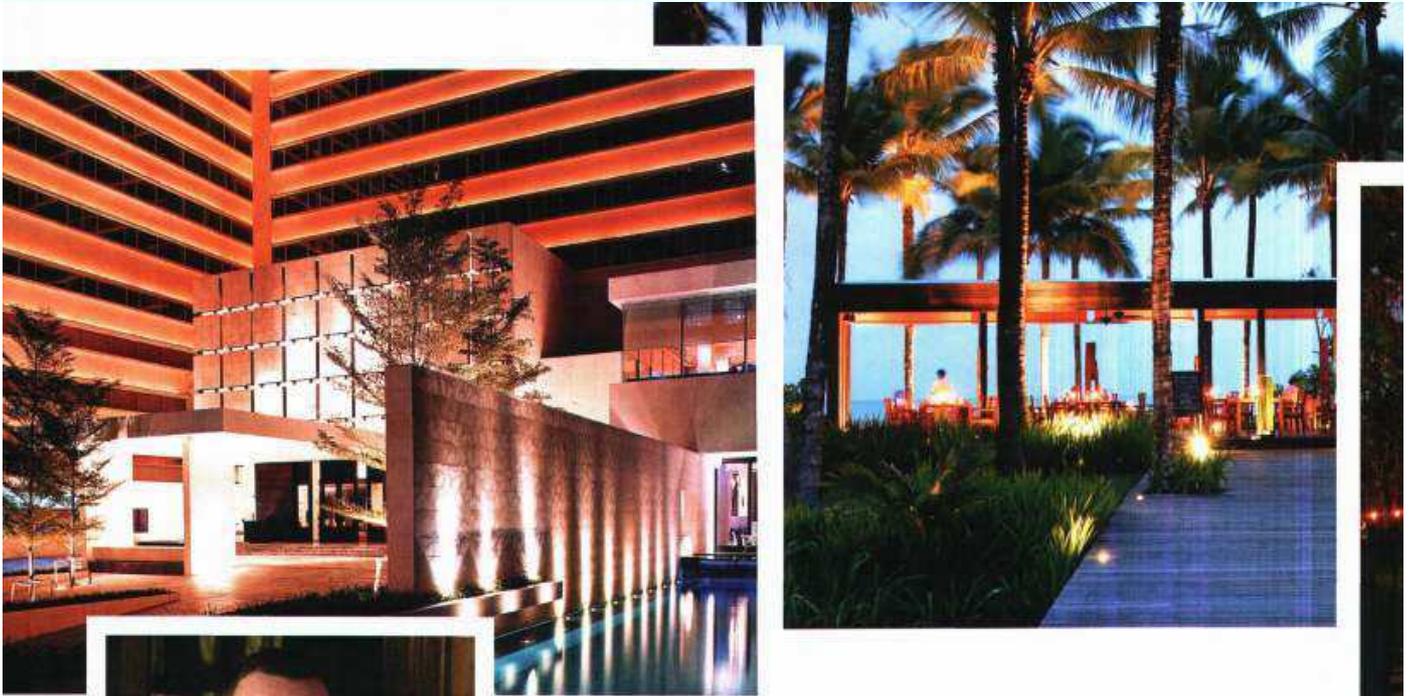
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my thai

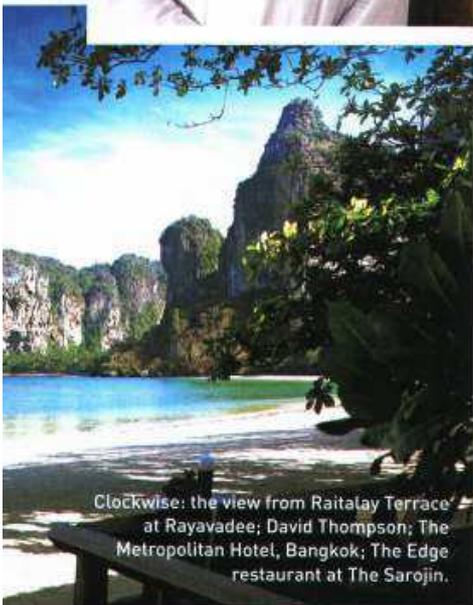
Valli Little experiences the extraordinary traditions, tastes, sights and smells that Thailand has to offer.

There can be no better introduction to Thai food than to eat at the table of our very own, highly acclaimed chef David Thompson. His restaurant Nahm, at Bangkok's Metropolitan Hotel, is a far cry from the street hawkers and food stalls a short distance away, but his food is just as authentic. Pomelo and prawns on betel leaf, minced prawn, peanut and palm sugar on pineapple, a clear soup of roast duck with Thai basil and a refreshing prawn and cucumber salad are all presented with David's unique style.

There are some who have questioned David's ability to cook genuine Thai food, but one taste of his sour orange curry with crayfish and hummingbird flowers will dispel any doubts. His efforts to preserve the culture of Thai cooking – a craft he initially learnt from a Thai woman affectionately called *khun yai* (grandmother) and with whom he credits elevating his knowledge of the Thai kitchen from basic to extraordinary – are evident in his every dish.

Leaving Bangkok and travelling 800 kilometres south took me to the island resort of Rayavadee, near Krabi. This tropical paradise is reached by a 15-minute boat ride across azure waters and past soaring limestone cliffs. There are 98 beautifully furnished pavilions that sit in the lush garden setting. The four restaurants, dotted at various locations throughout the resort, offer relaxed Thai and Western menus. Seafood features predominantly and the best place to try it is at The Grotto, nestled in the limestone cliffs of Phranang Beach, where the seafood barbecues are legendary. Grilled local lobster, reef fish wrapped in banana leaves and a variety of curries flavoured with exotic herbs and spices evoke the rich offerings of the region.

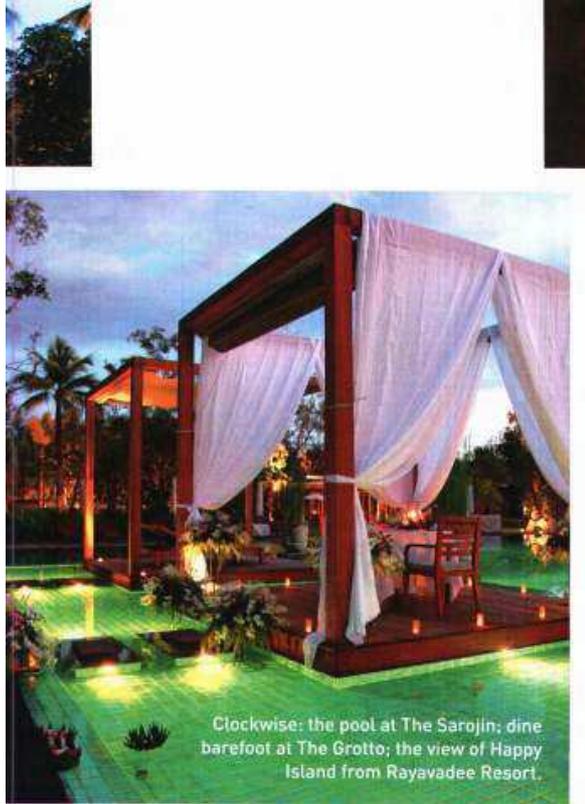
The final part of my journey took me to The Sarojin at Khao Lak, one hour north of Phuket. The luxury resort, which overlooks the Andaman Sea, is surrounded by national park and is home to 56 luxury guest rooms scattered on 4 hectares of secluded grounds.



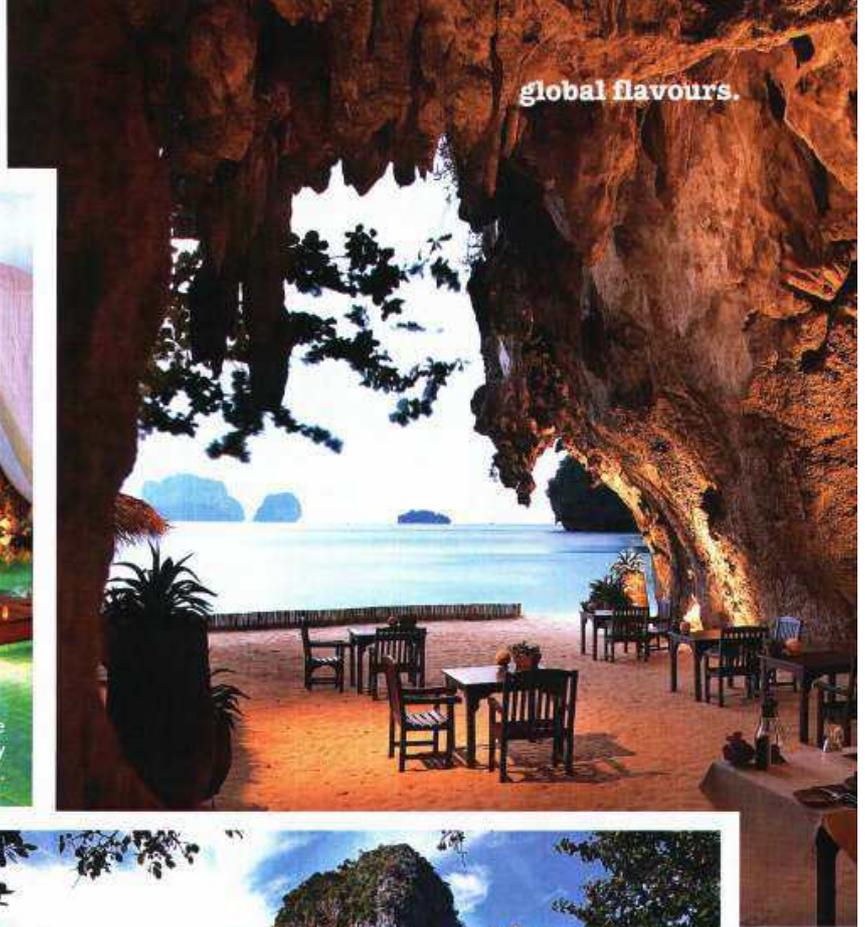
Clockwise: the view from Raitalay Terrace at Rayavadee; David Thompson; The Metropolitan Hotel, Bangkok; The Edge restaurant at The Sarojin.



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Clockwise: the pool at The Sarojin; dine barefoot at The Grotto; the view of Happy Island from Rayavadee Resort.



global flavours.

The restaurants at The Sarojin offer an extensive selection of Thai specialties, but the highlight for me was their 'catch, cook and dine' experience. The day begins with a fishing expedition on a traditional pleat boat meandering along the local estuaries, then following a picturesque route through the mangrove-laden canals of 'Little Amazon' to the Takuapa market. There, The Sarojin's chef helps source fresh, local ingredients for a lavish banquet. The day ends with a bespoke cooking class using the day's produce. In an exotic riverbank setting, we cook over an open fire, then sit down to a dinner under the stars of braised fish with ginger and tamarind, grilled prawns in red curry, fried local vegetables with soy sauce and marinated shrimps deep-fried and served with noodles. It's a fitting end to a week of Thai sensory delights that I can't wait to share with everyone back home. **d.**

Thanks to Thai Airways who fly to Bangkok from Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth. Visit: thaiairways.com.

