

XTRAVAGANCE

A delicious detour on Koh Samui

Minutes from the airport, dining at H Bistro engages in fanciful flights of its own

MANOTE TRIPATHI
THE NATION

You're catching a flight back to Bangkok from Koh Samui but have enough time to spare for a nice, relaxing lunch over wine. Does the Samui airport even have a business-class lounge? Maybe it's best not to ask. Instead, there's H Bistro at the Hansar Samui, a 10-minute drive from the airport.

Samui is something of a "refuge" for world-class chefs, and one of them is on the culinary team at H Bistro, the hotel's beachfront restaurant.

Executive chef Stephen Jean Dion, born and raised in Montreal, has been whipping up authentic French Mediterranean fare for some time. After five years with Lebua at State Tower Bangkok (also known as the Dome), the Canadian decided to move to Samui.

Samui – and the Hansar – were delighted to have him, because Dion was formerly private chef to the King of Jordan, so he's cooked for such visiting dignitaries as the Sultan of Brunei and Britain's Prince Charles.

Wine importer Fin treated me to lunch at H Bistro before we caught a 3pm flight to Bangkok. Aware of our tight schedule, Dion had a four-course repast in front of is in no time, and all the dishes were steeped in style and taste.

Adding to the sunny experience were some excellent wines – Osteria Prosecco DOC Vino Frizzante, Mareno di Piave from Italy and the 2010 Le Petiot Touraine Sauvignon AOC from Domaine Ricard in Loire, France. That prosecco certainly helped tame the heat.



Grilled Hokkaido octopus



Stockyard Wagyu 9 Sirloin



Rustichella Black Winter Truffle Risotto and Deep Sea Red Prawn



Duo of Scottish Sea Trout

The first course was Grilled Hokkaido Octopus and Jumbo Scallop with spinach, avocado and Sicilian cherry tomatoes. The presentation was fantastic, with froth forming over the octopus on its eclectic bed of ingredients.

Then came another eye-catching course: Duo of Scottish Sea Trout with apple glacier mint jelly and caviar pearls. There was trout tartare on one side and a morsel of cooked trout on the other. The mint jelly, with its seductive colour, begged to be savoured. The grapefruit hints of the Sauvignon rounded off the flavours.

Next, Rustichella Black Winter Truffle Risotto and Deep Sea Red Prawn topped with Jerusalem artichoke froth was a feast for the eye. The prawn looked more like an object of art than food, and it went well with the creamy risotto.

Finally there was Stockyard Wagyu 9 Sirloin with butternut pumpkin puree, needle leek, blue-foot mushrooms and pink peppercorn sauce, and it was a bit too heavy by this stage, but the wine helped with the digestion.

Nothing beats H Bistro when it comes to fine dining near the airport. In addition to the French fare, the chefs have a Thai menu, as well as Maine lobster and oysters from Canada, Japan and France. Dining here for lunch, you might just want to postpone your flight.

HIGH CUISINE

<< The Hansar Samui is at 101/28 Moo 1, Bophut, Koh Samui. It's online at www.HansarSamui.com.

<< Set up dinner at (077) 245 511 or reservation@hansarsamui.com.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF FIN