

Benjawan

Wisootsat

Benjawan is co-owner of fin (fabulous is needed), a boutique events company that specialises in pairing fine wine with amazing food. It's a line of work that has allowed Benjawan to sample the best Bangkok has to offer but, while her taste in food and drink is as refined as it gets, she also retains an appetite for the local, authentic highlights of Bangkok.



Favourite place for a drink?

I like Zuma – it's a Japanese restaurant on Ratchadamri Rd that has a really nice space for drinks. It's a very comfortable place, very relaxing. They do some great cocktails and wine by the glass. I forget the cocktails that I like but the bartender always recommends something for me, sometimes with sake but sometimes without. I always like to experience something new.



Best place to eat out?

With our work as a wine distributor, we do a lot of that and, these days, I really like to cook at home. But if I'm looking for somewhere authentic to eat, I really like Appia on Sukhumvit Soi 31. But I like to go local as well – I know a place in Thonburi that does old-style fried rice, using charcoal and a big wok. Whenever I take Michelin star chefs there, they love it as well.

What makes Bangkok's eating and drinking scene distinctive?

I've travelled a lot and what makes Bangkok so interesting is that you can taste everything – all kinds of food – but we still use local ingredients. Of Asia's top 50 restaurants, five are in Bangkok, many with famous chefs, including foreigners, who are passionate about Thailand

and Thai favours. Someone like David Thompson started his restaurants overseas but is now in Bangkok. Thai food is very tasty already but it is becoming better-known and people are getting better at really bringing out those flavours.

Best place to shop?

I'm not big on shopping but I like to walk on the street. I don't look for brand names but if I see something I like then I can end up buying it. When it comes to food, I really like Sam Yan market – you can get all the produce you need, whether it's seafood, meat or vegetables. They have things that you can't get at the supermarket and everything is fresh, with real people.

What do you do to relax?

I find staying at home very relaxing but I also like to discover more of Thailand and Bangkok, particularly those small streets that are very local,

in places like Chinatown, Thonburi and Thanon Nang Lerng. I also like to visit floating markets.

Best place for art?

The biggest and best gallery is the country and the city themselves. Everywhere, you can go out and see people – it is the art of life. But I also like 100 Ton Son Gallery.

Where do you take visitors to Bangkok?

Sometimes I like to take them to the best hotels, places like the Mandarin Oriental and the Banyan Tree but we will also take them through the streets to taste the city's famous street food. Particularly when we are showing chefs around, the seafood in Chinatown and the ingredients really excite them.

What makes Bangkok such an interesting city?

I like the fact you can have a local experience or very international one. You can live in a way that is expensive or in a way that is cheap. You can eat at any time of day and if you go to somewhere like Sukhumvit Soi 38, you will see people from different backgrounds coming and eating together. The Thai people are flexible and the culture teaches that guests are the most important people.