



WHAT'S ON THE TABLE?

An appetite for interaction? Make a reservation at Plaza Athénée Bangkok's table experience and double your friends.

It's a concept that is both simple and adventurous. The menu the waiter handed me at a recent wine dinner was like any other. The meal had been split into five courses: two starters, two entrees, and a sweet finish. Nothing out of the ordinary here, except that the *carte du jour* doesn't catalogue dishes on offer or a food and wine pairing as is the norm. Instead there was a trio of wines listed under each section with tasting notes, and ratings from Robert Parker and *Wine Spectator*.

Amusing the jaded palate of gastronomes is the idea behind 'The Table' concept at Plaza Athénée Bangkok's The Reflexions restaurant. All you do is select a wine for each course from the options, advise your server about dislikes or dietary restrictions, and Chef Thibault Chiumenti will create a dish to match. The restaurant reserves a table every day of the week for diners willing to embark on a culinary journey into the unknown. The X factor in this case being that the food is a mystery until it is put in front of you and so is the person sitting next to you.

Restaurant manager Thomas Deledalle is quick to point out

"there's no obligation to talk to the person next to you. Getting to know your neighbours, however, is often part of the fun."

"It's a two-in-one concept. You order the wine, the food is a surprise, and you meet new people with whom you share an evening of discovery together," says Jan Ganser and Benjawan Wisootsat of fin, local boutique wine importers, whose top drops are part of this experience. fin, and the food and beverage department of the Plaza Athénée Bangkok have been offering Wine Boutiques for the last two years. For this particular collaboration, they spent months tasting and pairing the wines and the dishes, before they came up with the final listings.

On the evening to showcase the 'Table Experience' I started the ball rolling with two full-bodied Italians from Alois Lageder: a 2004 Terlaner Sauvignon "Lehenhof" and a 2004 Pinot Bianco "Haberlehof", both fruity. Chef Thibault's response to these excellent wines was first rate. For the Terlaner, it was marinated scallops carpaccio with lemon mint oil, seared salmon and a drizzle of citrus dressing, whose fruity marinade paired well with the wine's acidity



and aroma of apple and pear.

For the second starter, the Pinot Bianco's light banana aroma and minerally finish teamed perfectly with rock lobster and Atlantic salmon stuffed into black and white cannelloni that sat in white asparagus vanilla foam, topped with cold smoked caviar.

Few may have heard about Jürg Saxer's wines that come from the Lake Constance region in Zurich, but his 2004 Cabernet Pinot Barrique was my choice for entrée No 1, honey peppered glazed Challans duck breast with apples and red wine onion croustade, snow peas and truffle jus. The barrique barrel this wine is stored in lends it a spicy nose that combines well with the honey peppered duck and truffle jus.

From Switzerland I hopped borders to Spain for a swig of Telmo Rodriguez and his 2002 "g" Pago La Jara Toro Do that wine guru Robert Parker rates at 92 points! With its complex formula of sweet figs, black cherry jam, and plums, Thibault matched it with roasted pigeon breast and seared legs with sautéed cabbage pomme dauphines stuffed with foie gras and drizzled with rosemary jus, to great effect; the bird standing up to the oaky exuberance.

In the dessert section, I was hard pressed to make a choice. In end spurning the vintage port and the moscato, I settled on another Italian, 2003 Rigoletto "Santa Christina" IGT, Zenato, Veneto that brought forth from the kitchen exotic *mille feuilles* topped with passion fruit cream, crunchy coconut and tropical sorbet. The wine's ripe fruity bouquet orchestrated well with the passion fruit cream, while the interplay of its nutty nose and the crunchy coconut gave it an exotic finish.

The Table experience offers three-, four- or five-course meals priced at Bt3,300++, Bt4,400++ and Bt5,500++ respectively. If dining solo is not your style, make a booking at 'The Table' for a great gastronomic experience and a chance to make new friends. For reservations, call +66 (0) 2650 8500. – Gavin Nazareth /



