

BEST OF THAILAND

By Diana Hubbell

EAT

Appia

We can't decide what we love most about this family-style trattoria: wood-roasted meats like the ultra-crisp-skinned porchetta, or the silky, handmade pastas. Chef Paolo Vitaletti flew his mother over from the Eternal City to help train the kitchen staff, and Bangkok is smitten with their rustic Roman cuisine: it's still one of the hardest tables to score. *20/4 Sukhumvit Soi 31, Bangkok; 66-2/261-2056; appia-bangkok.com; dinner for two Bt2,000.*

Opposite Mess Hall

Diners in the know head to this bare-bones industrial spot across from WTF Bar & Gallery for a taste of Chef Jess Barnes's endlessly inventive small plates. With buttermilk-battered fried chicken, croquettes of the day, killer cocktails, craft beers, regular pop-up events and now brunch—think chocolate waffles with passion fruit and bacon jam—they're perpetually packed. *27/1 Sukhumvit Soi 51, Bangkok; 66-2/662-6330; oppositebangkok.com; dinner for two Bt1,100.*

Rocket Coffee Bar

This smart new operation from the team behind the city's now classic Hyde & Seek is the perfect place for a lazy, sun-drenched brunch. The menu is an atypical blend of locavore and molecular gastronomy, sometimes in one dish: take their Benedict, starring eggs sourced from Northern hill tribes,

flown down once weekly, and then cooked *sous vide*. Healthful smoothies and the many single-origin coffees or teas match up nicely with the crusty sourdough baguettes and all manner of sweets churned out by their on-site bakery. *149 Sathorn Tai Soi 12, Bangkok; 66-2/635-0404; rocketcoffeebar.com; lunch for two Bt600.*

DRINK

Maggie Choo's

Oozing equal parts camp and class, this subterranean cabaret is a throwback to Suzy Wong-style hedonism. In a gorgeously detailed retro space, live jazz plays, cheongsam-clad models preen, and the city's trendiest crowd quaffs cocktails like the HMS Leviathon, a potent elixir of honeycomb-infused bourbon and sweet vermouth. *Underneath the Novotel Bangkok Fenix, Silom, 320 Silom Rd., Bangkok; 66-2/635-6055; drinks for two Bt560.*

Ku De Ta

In the most hotly anticipated opening of the year, this spin-off of Singapore's modern legend recently entered Bangkok's nightlife scene in decadent—if not fully finished—fashion. Ku Bar is warm, low-key, open-plan, while the Club Lounge is a long garden of overgrown greenery, round banquettes, flashing lights and popping bottles. But these are just two of the planned dozen restaurants, bars, clubs and private members' spaces set to take over two

sky-high floors in the hip-again neighborhood. Watch this space. *39th and 40th Floors, Sathorn Square Complex, 98 North Sathorn Rd., Bangkok; 66-2/108-2000; kudeta.com; drinks for two Bt600.*

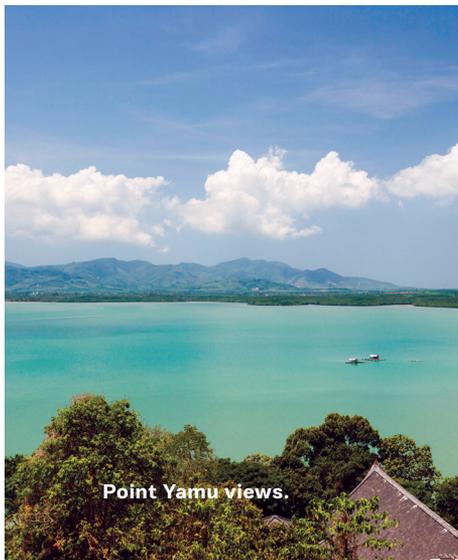
STAY

Regent Phuket Cape Panwa

This intimate property set high on a bluff on Cape Panwa is worlds away from the hordes of tourists in Patong. The 55-meter infinity pool has a jaw-dropping view of the Andaman, as does the Regent Spa. Don't miss the contemporary, molecular-tinged cuisine from Chef Justin Baziuk at The Grill—the restaurant makes its own cured meat, cheese, butter, yogurt and truffled butter. *48 Moo 8, Sakdidej Rd., Tambon Vichit, Amphur Muang, Phuket; 66-76/200-800; regenthotels.com/phuket; doubles from Bt7,488.*

Point Yamu by COMO

Designer Paola Navone brings an understated elegance to this tranquil haven overlooking the limestone karsts of Phang Nga Bay. The resort fuses Thai and Italian style both in its aesthetic, and in its cuisine, which is showcased in two distinct restaurants. There's a strong emphasis on wellness here, with a top-notch spa offering everything from *shirodhara* to traditional local therapies. *Point Yamu, 225 Moo 7, Paklok Thalung, Phuket; doubles from Bt9,000.*



Point Yamu views.



The menu board at Appia.



Rocket Coffee Bar.