

# The Greater *Phuket* Vol.17 N°2

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**H**ow close to the beach can one eat in Phuket? Absolute proximity to sand and water is something I constantly seek when arriving on the island from my home base in Bangkok. I don't want to just see the ocean, I want to smell it, even feel it. Sand squishing between the toes is indeed excellent.

But sometimes it is good to wear shoes and experience something a little higher class than rickety bamboo or plastic chairs sinking into the sand. And my favourite is a big leap up the class scale – but definitely not in distance from the beach. The favourite old story here is about the foreign manager who fell off my



เป็นที่คาดหวังไว้ว่าจำนวนผู้โดยสารที่เข้ามายังเพิ่มขึ้นเป็นเท่าตัวที่คาดหวังไว้ว่านานาชาติจังหวัดกระบี่จะเพิ่มขึ้นเป็นเท่าตัวเป็นที่คาด

The owner of Kan-eang II, Khun Prachan Pachanthabut, and assistant editor Chantana Jasper enjoy the view from the restaurant.

# Sands to fall on, prawns to talk to.

By John Everingham

favourite beachside restaurant while pouring a guest's wine. Hurt by the two-metre fall? No, for he landed right in the sand. Now that's how close I like my classy, beachside eatery.

Here, right by the sands of what I consider to be Phuket's most beautiful beach, Kata, is Mom Tri's Boathouse. For location, food quality and wine selection, it is simply unbeaten in my books. As are the sunsets, which the open-air, terraced seating faces and soaks up day after day. And it is here that well-known architect and owner Mom Tri Devakul installed Phuket's first serious, high-quality wine cellar.

That lone figure lounging back in the easy chairs, meditating on a glass of white wine and the fiery orb of red as it douses in the Andaman Sea? Well, if it is the quiet off-season, and the figure is alone and looking very relaxed, it is likely me. Often I have just emerged from an evening's surfing Kata's off-and-on waves, showered and settled in for last light across the waters.

And if confirmation of identity in needed, it is simple. Look for *kung chae nam pla* (raw prawns) on the table. I no longer have to order this most delectable of prawn dishes. Shortly after the wine, they just arrive: one of the benefits of being a well-known

regular. Raw prawns marinated briefly in a mix of fish sauce, lime juice, garlic and chilli are simply superlative. It's amazing how many Westerners who normally shun raw foods are converted by their first raw prawn at the Boathouse. This dish is a well-known standard throughout Thailand, but no establishment in the country can match those served up at the Boathouse.

Two reasons: the prawns, and the meticulousness of the Boathouse's preparation. Only perfect bay prawns, *kung*

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*chae buay*, do this dish justice. This particular species netted in the shallow waters of Phang Nga Bay has a soft, absorbent flesh that sucks in the spicy juice and cures itself so it almost melts on your tongue. And they have to be fresh, *really* fresh. The Boathouse staff realize this and it is reassuring when on occasion they emerge from the kitchen with apologies saying, 'the prawns are not quite fresh enough today'. Most restaurants across Thailand serve up the tougher tiger prawns from farms – they don't have a shallow bay right next door. And how

many notice that freshness must be near-perfect for raw foods?

Some years back my favourite *kung chae nam pla* disappeared from the Boathouse menu. But in the customer-first manner that rules here, they continued to serve it each time I settled in. Interesting too, when one asks about other dishes not on their menu the staff don't respond with the 'Sorry, sir', typical of lesser establishments. There is usually a quick consultation in the kitchen with master chef Thammanoon, and, most often the reply is, 'Yes, we have that'.

Stunning sunsets, seductive wine selections, perfect prawns and sand to fall on are all reasons the Boathouse brings this long-time visitor back. But the inner message here, after that of location, is the desire for perfection. No other place on the island puts in the same effort to be the very best, nor gets closer to succeeding.

Finally, before the last light fades; I do like to think that the *kung chae nam pla* came back onto the Boathouse menu due to the constant requests from one guest with salt still in his ears, lounging in the easy chairs during the quietest times of year, alone with prawns so fresh they almost talk to him.

