

the Commuter

business • lifestyle • travel

Fall 2004

Thai! Fashion's Newest Fusion

Bangkok:
City in Search
of Identity

Spice is Nice:
The Art of
Cooking Thai

The Free Flow Energy
of Thai Yoga Massage

The New Jaguar XJL

Calm Reflections
by Artist Marvin Swartz



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Issue Three, Volume Five

Fall 2004

BUSINESS AND LIFESTYLE FOR A CULTURE ON THE MOVE

From the editor ...

I'd like to welcome readers travelling on Air Canada Jazz. The Commuter is proud to provide you with extra reading material on your Jazz flights across western Canada.

The Commuter is a western Canadian magazine that features articles on international and local people, places, fashions, business, art and culture. We try to focus on out-of-the-way destinations, and to find western Canadian connections to those places. We've enjoyed telling the stories of Canadian-born artists, musicians, fashion designers and business people in New York, San Francisco, Saigon and other major cities around the world.

Fashion is an important part of The Commuter. In every issue, we try to link fashion to our feature destination. In this issue, we feature the designs of an up-and-coming young Thai designer, Siroj Chaisam. The Thai government and city of Bangkok are very supportive of their local fashion industry, which may account for the warm welcome I received when I asked to do a photo shoot at Bangkok's prestigious Sukhothai Hotel. I hope you enjoy the results.

Our thanks to Miss Nuchareekorn Kornkirati, PR Manager of the Sukhothai Hotel, for going out of her way to ensure we had everything we needed, and to model Melissa Courtney for her tireless energy, Teerawat Saengsuwan (Winny) for make-up and hair, and of course Siroj for the beautiful clothes.

Enjoy The Commuter. And please email us your comments – we're always interested in hearing from our readers.

Sean Martin



FASHION'S LATEST FUSION

Feature designer Siroj Chaisam is a leading light in Thailand's red-hot fashion industry.

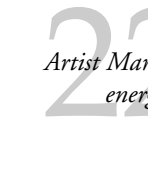
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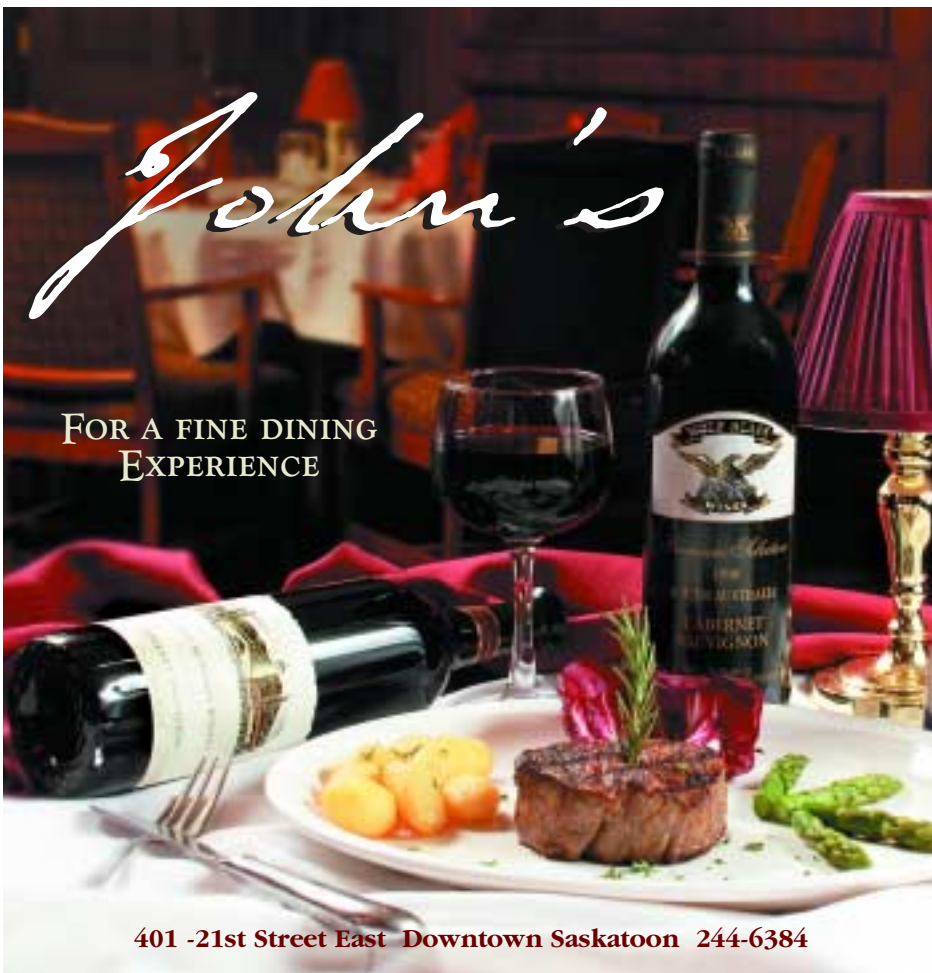
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FOR A FINE DINING EXPERIENCE

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On the Cover: A dash of spice flavours this Siroj Chaisam original.

MARKETPLACE

Step Outside Your Comfort Zone

WE ALL HAVE OUR COMFORT ZONES.

In personal finance, they determine the risk levels we're willing to accept in investments, the type of investments we look for, even the amount we spend in retirement.

But I'm not talking about finance in this column, I'm talking about stepping outside your comfort zone in your personal life.



Succeeding at something you've never done before can be one of the greatest thrills of your life. With the time available in retirement, why not challenge yourself by pursuing a personal first? Here are some ideas you might want to explore.

- Programs like Outward Bound (www.outwardbound.ca) are not just about facing physical challenges. They give people of all ages an opportunity to test themselves. While you learn wilderness skills, you also discover more about confidence, leadership and team building.
- If you've always been afraid of speaking in front of a crowd, perhaps it's time to face your fears. Join Toastmasters and learn how to speak in a relaxed, supportive environment. To find a club in your area, go to www.toastmasters.org.
- Get off the couch and start training to run a half or full marathon. Jean's Marines (www.jeansmarines.com) has members throughout Canada who provide professional coaching and injury prevention advice. If you want something less demanding, check out the list of half marathons, 10K and 5K runs at www.canuckrunner.com.
- Exercise your mind and enhance your next trip abroad by learning a new language. Or if you have some expertise, you could become a tour guide. Imagine yourself shepherding an organized group through the ancient ruins of Greece – and getting paid for it!

Todd Degelman, M.B.A. is National Sales Manager for Wellington West Capital Inc. He can be contacted at 1-866-844-4400.



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vintagereport

THE WINE:
Rosemount Estate Traditional 2001

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN:
Australia – McLaren Vale, Langhorne Creek

GRAPE VARIETY:
Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Petite Verdot (18 months in American oak)

COLOUR:
Deep ruby/burgundy

NOSE:
Cedar smoke, blackberry

IN MOUTH:
Fairly tannic, plum, blackberry, dark chocolate, hint of coffee

FOOD:
Lamb is an excellent match, dark red meats

VALUE:
Not inexpensive, but good value for the quality

RATING:
4.5 grapes (0 lowest – 5 highest)
This is worth trying. Won the Jimmy Watson Memorial Trophy (best 1 year old dry red), the Australia wine industry's most prestigious award. Decant several hours before drinking. Cellar for at least 10 years.



Vintage. WINE IN RESTAURANTS

BY LEN STECKLER

I'VE HAD ENOUGH. Call me cranky if you must, you can even call me a wine snob, but in this column I'm going to address some of the things that frustrate me about wine service in restaurants. First I want to point out that waiters or waitresses who know nothing about the wines on the list is not a reflection on them. Owners who care about their customers give their staff a basic knowledge of the wines they carry and how to properly serve them.

I've compiled a simple list of what to look for when dining out. It will tip you off to less than quality wine service.

1. The room has bottles out for decoration in open areas. The wines are oxidizing in the heat. I've even seen some in windows.
2. The wine list has Burgundy as a wine style or varietal. Burgundy is a wine region from which varietals such as Pinot Noir and Chardonnay come.
3. Sparkling wines are listed as Champagnes. Again, Champagne is a region in France that produces sparkling wine in the methode champenoise.
4. When you ask what the house wine is, the server simply says, "it's from France."
5. The wine list has spelling mistakes and incorrect vintages. This is okay if the waiter tells you what vintage is available, because vintage IS important.
6. The server pronounces Riesling (rise-ling instead of reezling).
7. The waiter brings the wine to the table already opened.
8. The waiter doesn't peel the capsule covering the cork back far enough and the wine touches the capsule when poured. If the wine has a foil capsule the acids in the wine may produce a tinny metallic taste.
9. The waiter breaks the cork off while opening.
10. The waiter has sparkling wine bubbling all over after opening. The wine should just smoke not foam - this is NOT the Indy 500.
11. The server fills your glass to the top. This does not allow you a chance to swirl, smell and taste.
12. The server automatically places the wine in an ice bucket when it is obviously too cold already.
13. The waiter or manager argues if you suggest the wine is faulty. The customer is always right even if they are wrong.

Wine service need not to be rocket science. When a restaurant invests time in educating its waiting staff or has a wine steward or sommelier, they not only reduce the frustration level for wine knowledgeable customers – they heighten everyone's enjoyment. Till next time, CHEERS!

LEN STECKLER received his Cellar Masters Diploma in 1995 and is a member of the Wine Educators Society. He has visited wineries in every major wine region in the world and does wine seminars for sales groups, customer appreciation groups, and restaurants (staff training and wine list building and maintenance). If you are interested in learning more, call Len at 306-933-4393.

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photography by Sean Francis Martin

FASHION'S LATEST FLAVOUR: THAI

Siroj Chaisam, 30, is one of the leading lights in a new generation of Thai fashion designers.

Born in Bangkok and educated at Rangsit University and the Taxila Fashion School, Siroj Chaisam won his first award at the tender age of 20 – Best Young Designer 1994, Prew Magazine. The title earned him the right to represent Thailand at the Asian Fashion Grand Prix in Osaka, Japan later that year.

Siroj has since followed up with a list of awards, including winner of the 1995 Design 21 Project (Paris), Thailand Young Fashion Designer of 1996, Excellent Piece of Work at the Asia Collection Makuhari Grand Prix '99 (Japan) and an invitee at the annual Young Designers Room, Bangkok International Fashion Fair 2002-2004.

The flavour of a Siroj Chaisam design is unmistakably Thai – the bold fusion of fabric, colour and line, the blend of traditional elegance with sassy character. Perhaps it is simply part of the Thai identity, itself such a mixture of cultural influences, but this ability to coalesce different looks into something new and fresh is the distinguishing feature of Siroj's work.

"I enjoy expressing my creativity by turning it into real clothes," Siroj says. "My inspiration comes from what surrounds me and from my experience of my country."



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BANGKOK'S MAKE-OVER

Fashion in Thailand is hot.

But is it hot enough to remake
Bangkok into the Paris of Asia?

The Thai government is banking on the fashion industry to help revitalize its economy, which has been slow in recovering from the 1997 Asian economic crisis. Close to 1.8 billion baht (about half a billion dollars) is being poured into the *Bangkok Fashion City* initiative, an all-out effort to change Bangkok's international image from a great place to shop for brand name knock-offs to Asia's new capital of original haut couture.

The challenge is that Thailand is not the only Asian country looking to fashion for an economic jump-start. Vietnam, Singapore, China, Taiwan, India – all are jockeying to be number one in the red hot Asian fashion industry. Quality textiles and low cost labour are two obvious drawing cards for the international design houses and brand name manufacturers.

Thailand, like its neighbours, is also determined to create a home grown industry. The government promotes young designers in showcases such as the annual Young Designers Room, the Young ThaiBrands store and a variety of initiatives aimed at increasing the profile of Thai brands both at home and abroad.

THE SUKHOThai BANGKOK

In a city increasingly catering to high-end tourists, The Sukhothai Bangkok hotel is in a class by itself.

For our fashion article, we asked for permission to shoot our model Melissa Courtney in the lobby and grounds of The Sukhothai, one of Bangkok's finest hotels. The hotel not only agreed, staff went out of their way to ensure we had everything we needed.

The Sukhothai believes in pampering guests. The service is stellar, amenities are immaculate and varied, restaurants are international, and rooms are simple yet somehow lavish. The architectural style is inspired by Sukhothai, the first great capital of Siam (1238-1376). The name itself means 'dawn of happiness.' The concept is somehow embedded in the Thai character, but you get a glimmer of its meaning in the lobby of the

hotel. Here you find the Sukhothai Tri Ratna, a stunning floral art installation by Thai artist Sakul Intakul and the focus of much of our shoot.

In English, it is known as the Triple Jewel of the Dawn of Happiness. It embodies the Tri Ratna (triple jewel) of Buddhism: the Buddha (the enlightened one), the Dharma (the teachings) and the Sangha (the community of monks). The floating lotuses at the base of the five-tier installation symbolize the Buddha, the pervasive fragrance of the tuberose the Dharma, and the reed mace the Sangha. This deeper meaning often eludes visitors, but the beauty of the work is something all relate to. 🌸



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THAI YOGA MASSAGE

DRAWING ON A BLEND OF ANCIENT EASTERN HEALING TRADITIONS, THAI YOGA MASSAGE ADDS A NEW DIMENSION TO THE PURSUIT OF WELL BEING.

STORY BY LAL INGRAM

It's only Monday, but I can already feel the tension creeping up my shoulders and into neck. My head is starting to get that achy, stuck-on-a-stick feeling that comes from spending eight hours in front of a computer screen. No matter how much stretching I do, the tension lurks there all day.

I've tried massage, with good results, so when someone suggests Thai Yoga massage I think sure, why not. It's healthier than taking a handful of acetaminophen tablets. I get to keep my clothes on, call me modest but that's a plus. And it's supposed to treat my whole body – toes to fingertips to ear lobes – to both a penetrating massage and deep stretch.

Thai Yoga massage is an ancient art. Its roots go back more than 2,500 years, to the traditional Ayurveda healing system of India. In its modern form, it combines Ayurveda, yoga, meditation and Shiatsu massage techniques.

There are a number of practitioners in Canada and the United States; our expert, Marvin Swartz, is certified by the Lotus Palm School founded in Montreal by author, practitioner and teacher Kam Thye Chow.

"Thai Yoga massage is a very holistic treatment," Swartz says. "We work the whole body instead of focusing on a particular area. The practitioner uses hands, feet, arms, legs and body weight to compress muscle tissues."

The massage, or bodywork as Swartz calls it, involves manipulating the body through various supported yoga postures. Because you're supported in the movements, you get a good stretch. The technique begins with the upper body and works down to your legs and feet, then up again, working your back,

abdomen, arms, upper body and finally, wonderfully, ending in a gentle massage of head and face.

The goal is to 'gently stretch and open the body.' This helps increase your joint mobility and flexibility, enhances blood flow to cells, tissues and organs, stimulates the lymphatic system and unblocks your energy lines.

The concept of energy lines is central to Thai Yoga massage, and reflective of its Ayurvedic influence. According to Ayurvedic tradition, humans have a network of energy lines running through the body. "In the Thai tradition, there are ten important lines. These lines are connected to acupressure points, and massaging them promotes the free flow of energy," Swartz says.

By applying yoga postures in different rhythms and intensities, Thai Yoga massage also helps rebalance your 'doshas.' This goes back to the belief that each individual is a combination of three doshas, or elements: vat (air-ether), pitta (fire-water) and kapha (earth-water). An imbalance can manifest in health or emotional problems.



COBRA



COWFACE

Thai Yoga massage is performed on a mat on the floor rather than a table. A typical session lasts about two hours. "It takes the first hour for the body to relax. It's in the second hour, when you see the body becoming more relaxed, that I do some of the deeper work," Swartz says.

And what is the tell-tale sign of a relaxed client? "I look for that first yawn," he laughs. "Sometimes tension is obvious, sometimes it's not, but you learn to see it. I think a good practitioner can sense whether someone is relaxed or not."

"During a session, there's a deep focus on my part: I watch body movements, eye and facial expressions. Sometimes when you move one part of the body, another part will move and that tells you something. It can help you identify problem areas."

The Lotus Palm method has been adapted to the North American lifestyle, which means it focuses more on the upper body – neck, shoulders and back where so many of us hold our tension – than the lower. But Swartz notes that he does an assessment of new clients to identify problem areas.

"It's a challenge because each person has their own issues. When I'm doing the bodywork, it's almost like a game where I'm figuring out what techniques will work on what spots. There's a procession I follow, but I have advanced techniques I can draw on to alleviate specific issues."

Stress relief is probably the biggest reason people come for Thai Yoga massage. "People are definitely looking for a stress outlet," Swartz says. "But I think people are also paying more attention to their own wellness today. They're disillusioned with health care and trying to take charge of their own health. And massage is a drug-free alternative to stress relief."

He also points out that today's society is more accepting of massage and touch. "In our Christian-Judeo culture, touch has always had a sexual connotation, and that's led to a fear of touch. There's still a bit of a taboo, but it is breaking down."

Swartz believes that our society is more open to experiencing new things. And that is being helped along by medical research showing the positive benefits of touch.

"I think there is a therapeutic benefit, in terms of flexibility, stress relief and mental release. And there's a very strong meditative quality during the session. There's a sense of achievement in being able to successfully release an individual's tension and stress levels. My ultimate satisfaction is when they fall asleep and start snoring, because it shows a complete sense of trust in me. I consider that an accomplishment."

It is mostly male clients who do the snoring, but everyone has their own reaction. I felt wide awake and physically invigorated. The ache in my shoulders and neck was gone ... at least until next Monday. 🐻

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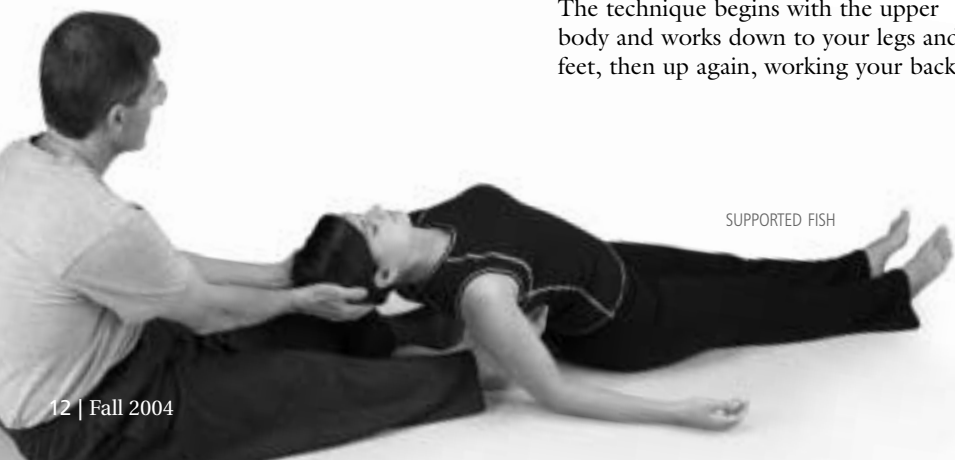
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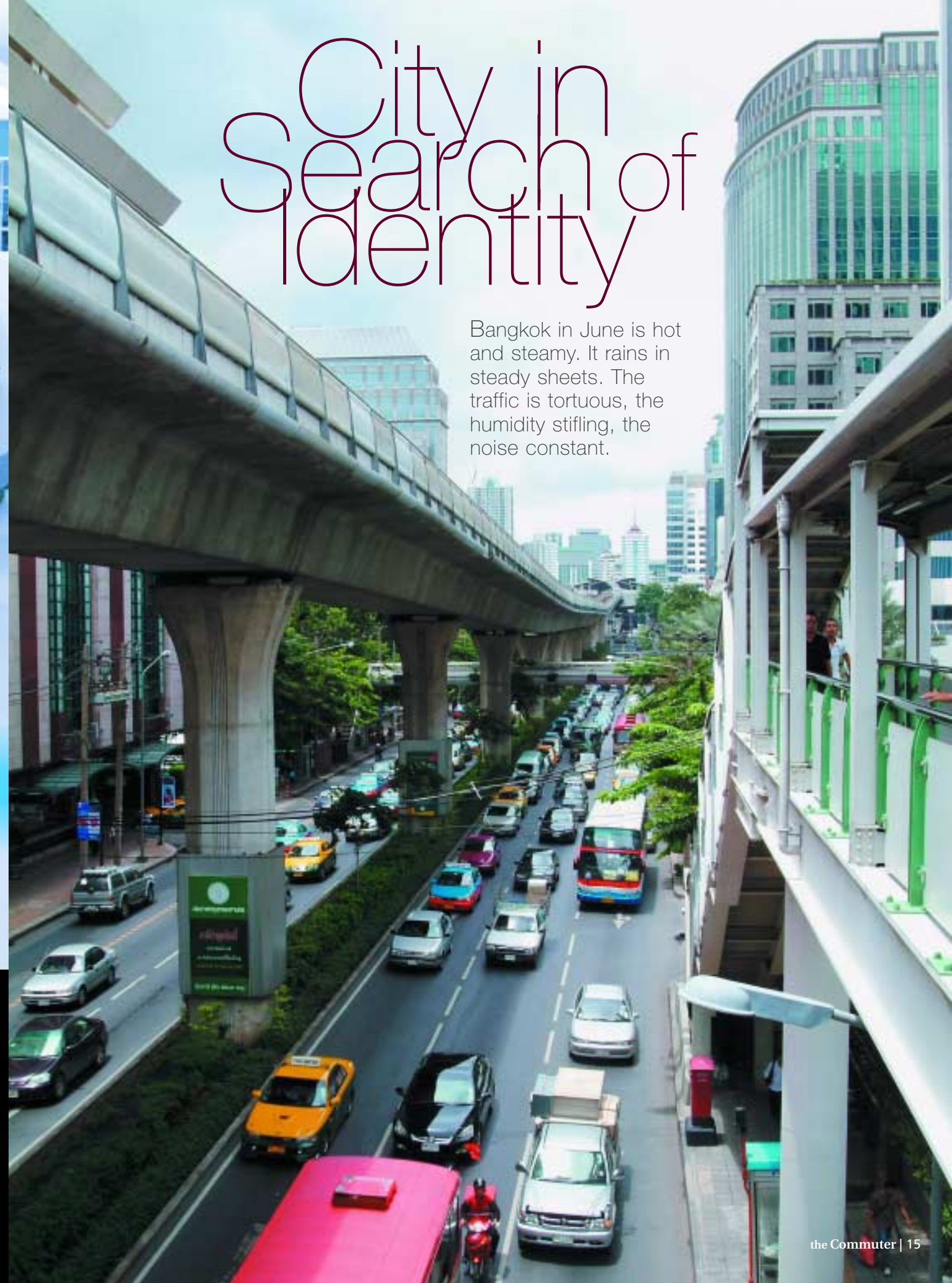


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City in Search of Identity

Bangkok in June is hot and steamy. It rains in steady sheets. The traffic is tortuous, the humidity stifling, the noise constant.





AND NONE OF IT matters. Bangkok is one of the world's most intriguing cities and just being here can be a life-altering experience. An estimated 8 million people live in this vast, rambling metropolis, the self-styled cultural melting pot of Asia and economic capital of Thailand.

It is home to the magnificent temples of Wat Pho and Wat Arun, the colourful markets of Pak Khlong Talat, Chinatown and Chatuchak, the fabulous architecture and art of the Grand Palace and Wat Phra Kaeo. Here, steel skyscrapers stand alongside ancient temples, huge western-style malls compete with traditional open-air markets, and

you're just as likely to find a Starbucks on the corner as a Thai tea shop.

It is hard to remain untouched by a city of such contrasts and contradictions. Bangkok seems to be trying on the latest styles in search of its own identity. On one hand, you have the picture of modern prosperity. Skyscrapers crowd the downtown business core and a new skytrain provides mass transit for local commuters and foreign visitors. Shopping malls are American in character and brand names. Cell phones and dance clubs are the order of the day for the young, hip and upwardly mobile. It is an image the Thai government is eager to

promote, especially since it is a 180-degree shift from Bangkok's other reputation as a hot spot for sex tours.

On the other hand, you have the more traditional Bangkok. A city where orange-robed Buddhist monks continue to carry out their ancient duties in temples and shoppers still haggle at morning markets, three-wheeled *tuk-tuk* taxis weave through traffic and narrow boats ply the old *klongs* or canals.

It is this Bangkok that can be most fun to explore, especially the markets – the Pak Khlong Talat flower and vegetable market, the traditional Damnoen Saduak Floating Market west of the city, the shop-filled allies of Chinatown,

the Indian markets in Phahurat.

If the clash of old and new is jarring to western eyes, Bangkok residents seem to take it all in stride, even though some of the challenges they're facing are serious. For one thing, the city is sinking at a fairly alarming rate of up to 5 cm a year. Maybe it's the rain – an average of 200 mm a month falls during the June-October rainy season. Maybe it's the massive amount of residential and commercial development since the late 1980s. And maybe it's just the growing tide of western tourists drawn to Bangkok's increasingly upscale list of hotels, health spas and restaurants.



ANOTHER EXTRAORDINARY challenge – begging elephants. Despite being officially banned from the city in 2000, *mahouts* (handlers) and their domesticated elephants continue to find their way into Bangkok. They amble down narrow streets selling bananas to tourists, who then feed the elephants. It is not a quaint traditional custom, but the result of a major social upheaval.

In the 1980s, over-logging virtually destroyed Thailand's forests. Worse, it led to devastating mudslides in rural villages. In response to public pressure, Thailand banned all logging in 1989. Villagers and environmentalists alike cheered the decision, but it threw thousands of domesticated elephants and their mahouts out of work. With little employment and not enough food to feed their 11,000 pound charges, many mahouts have resorted to illegal logging in border areas or begging in the cities. Both are dangerous. Elephants are regularly injured in traffic accidents in cities and by landmines in remote forests.

Thai people have a remarkable knack for retaining their own traditions while absorbing the practices of other cultures. This is one of the reasons for Thailand's multicultural character; it also explains a little known fact. Thailand has never been colonized by a foreign power; not the British, French, German or American. It has been invaded enough times – by the Burmese, the Khmers, the Japanese in Word War II – but the invaders never managed to stay. In their own quiet way, the Thai have fiercely guarded their independence.

That isn't to say the country's history has been peaceful. The last half of the 20th century was marked by internal fighting. In the years after World War II, Thailand was rocked by one military coup after another. Democracy was finally established in 1979, and a decade of prosperity and political stability seemed to put the country on a firm footing. Then in 1991, the military unexpectedly swept back to power and it took a bloody civilian revolt to reinstate the democratic government in 1992.

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20 | Fall 2004



SCANDAL AND CHARGES OF government corruption plagued Thailand through the 1990's. The official currency, the *baht*, crashed in the 1997 Asia economic crisis. Even today, with a democratic government and growing economy, Thailand faces tremendous economic, social and environmental pressures – from poverty to Muslim separatists in the southern peninsula and continuing environmental degradation of its forests and beaches.

Through all the years of turbulence, the one constant in the Thai political landscape has been the monarchy. The Kingdom of Thailand is a constitutional monarchy ruled by King Bhumibol Adulyadej (Rama IX), the latest in the Chakri Dynasty established in 1782. King Bhumibol came to the throne in 1946 when he was just 19 years old. Today, he is the longest reigning constitutional monarch in the world.

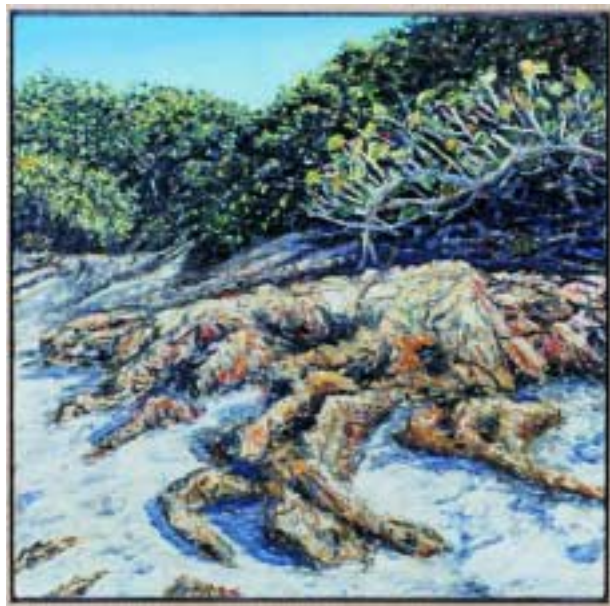
The Thai harbour great feeling for the Royal Family, and avidly follow the activities of King Bhumibol, Queen Sirikit, Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn, Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn and Princess Chulabhorn. December is a great month for royal watchers, as it features the annual Trooping of the Colour and King's Birthday Celebrations.

The Grand Palace is one of the most popular royal sites

on the tourist agenda, along with Bangkok's many exotic Buddhist temples or *wats*. Most visitors see Wat Pho (Temple of the Reclining Buddha), Wat Phra Kaeo (Temple of the Eternal Buddha), home of the most revered Buddha image in Thailand, and Wat Arun (Temple of Dawn), one of the city's most famous riverbank landmarks.

But there are many more. Wat Bowon Niwet is the official temple of King Bhumibol and the Crown Prince; Wat Trai Mit houses a huge 5.5 tonne solid gold Buddha; Wat Suthat is home to one of the country's most beautiful Sukhothai-era Buddha images; Wat Saket is known for its Golden Mount – and so on. It's important to remember that in Thailand, temples are sacred places; visitors who appear in unsuitable attire are turned away.

Bangkok is not all there is to Thailand, in a sense it may not even be the real Thailand. It is, however, the first and last stop for most visitors. It is a gateway to the ancient ruins of Ayuthaya, the mountain city of Chiang Mai, the island beaches of Ko Samui, Phuket and more. It is also an international city striving to find its place in the modern world. It is this journey that gives Bangkok its unrivalled energy and character. 🐼



Manana Dios Dira

CALM

REFLECTIONS

story by Beverly Fast

Marvin Swartz settles back in his chair and hugs his knee as he searches for words to explain his transformation from scientist to artist. “I think it was meant to be.”

“I think everything in life is to a purpose. You know, the theory that says it’s not up to you to make decisions, that there’s a natural flow of things. So I think it was pre-destined.”

Swartz is not one for woolly thinking. He chooses words carefully and takes pains to match meaning to intent. He may have left the practice of science behind, but its orderly way of thinking is still a part of his intellectual character.

A graduate of the University of Guelph – B.Sc. in Crop Science and Masters in Plant Breeding and Cytogenetics – Swartz spent 14 years in agricultural biotechnology. When he gave it all up in 1995 to become a full time artist, he says his friends and coworkers “questioned my sanity.”

Swartz had quietly nurtured a life-long interest in art, but his fortieth birthday seems to have provided the push he needed to move beyond the familiar confines of science. Then again, perhaps it was simply time to move on. “When I left science and moved into art, I was becoming dissatisfied with science in terms of a career and a

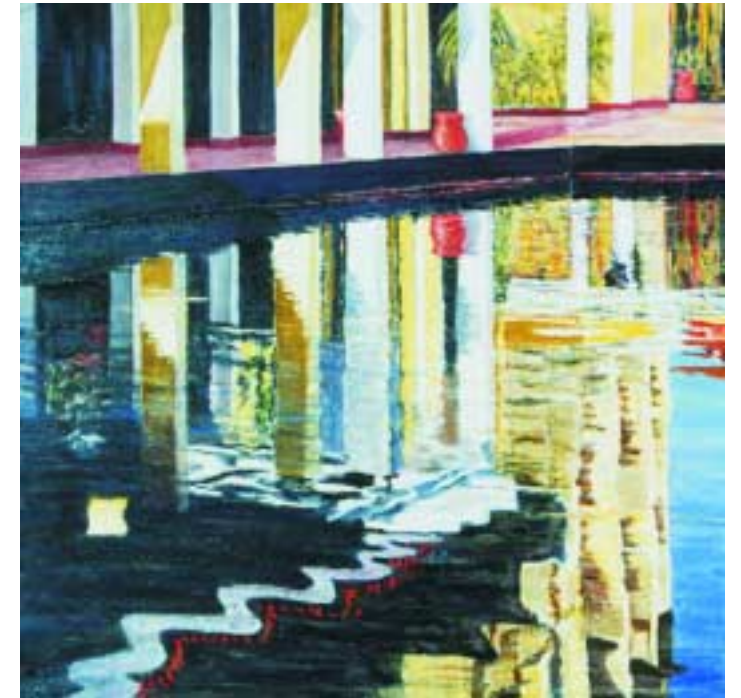
future. Art, for me, provided freedom of expression,” Swartz says.

From his first solo show in 1996, his leitmotif has been water. Swartz is fascinated by it. “Water is a very elusive subject. I have become intrigued with capturing images of reflections on a water’s surface.”

This reflection and distortion of images is explored in many of his paintings – particularly his Definitely Not Saskatchewan works, the moniker the Saskatoon resident has given to a series of canvasses inspired by various holiday visits to the tropics.

“The act of painting brings me intense joy, the feeling of being alive.”

“With these works, it was the architecture and the water that interested me. The architecture is actually strange, because I don’t normally incorporate man-made objects in my work. But the reflections in the water really interested me,” Swartz says. “Because the water was moving, there was also an element of abstraction. I haven’t done that much abstract work, but it’s an area I’d like



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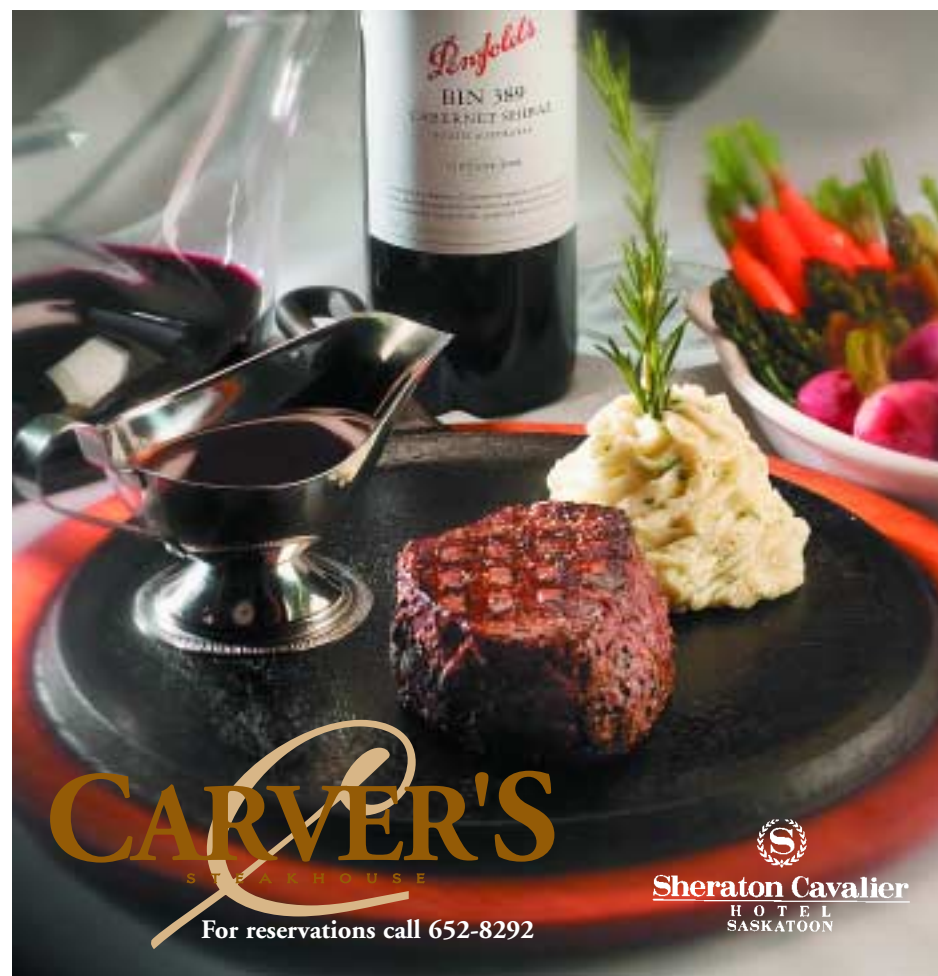
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to move into, and water lends itself to producing images that are abstractive.”

Swartz veers happily between the scientific and expressive modes as he delves deeper into the art of his art. “Because of the qualities of water in terms of diffraction, transparency and opacity, it’s a very complex subject to work on. It offers limitless opportunities.”

“For me, a painting should be peaceful. I can’t paint depressing scenes, it has to be uplifting.”

He pauses, then adds, “and water has a very calming effect on individuals. For me it has almost a meditative quality. There are times that I was painting and I would lose consciousness in terms of time and place. I would go into another world and I would be watching myself painting, watching my hand hit the paint and go on the canvas. I’d be removed from it happening but also watching it happen. It’s a really strange experience, yet that’s when I do my best work. It’s almost like an altered state, you’re totally focused on the canvas. It’s a form of meditation.”

In recent years, Swartz’s interest in meditation has blossomed into another career direction – he is one of a handful of Thai Yoga massage practitioners in western Canada. If the juxtaposition with artist, and before that scientist, seems odd to anyone else, it makes perfect sense to Swartz.

“There’s a positive energy that comes from painting and there’s energy happening in Thai Yoga massage, because you’re working with energy lines in the body. It’s internalized energy, while in painting, it’s externalized and visual. Painting is a mental and creative release, Thai Yoga massage is a physical release. But there’s energy in both activities, and they’re both uplifting.”

At 50, Swartz continues to paint and practice Thai Yoga massage. View more of his work at www.uvisions.com/swartz.

The Smooth Handling 2005 Jaguar XJL

story by Charles Renny

If you happen to be a bit of a gear-head, the opportunity to get one-on-one driving instruction from one of the world’s best drivers is not something to pass up. I jumped at an invitation to attend the North American introduction of the All Aluminum Jaguar XJ Long Wheelbase luxury sedan in San Francisco, where Sir Jackie Stewart, three time Formula One Driving Champion, was in charge of the solo course.

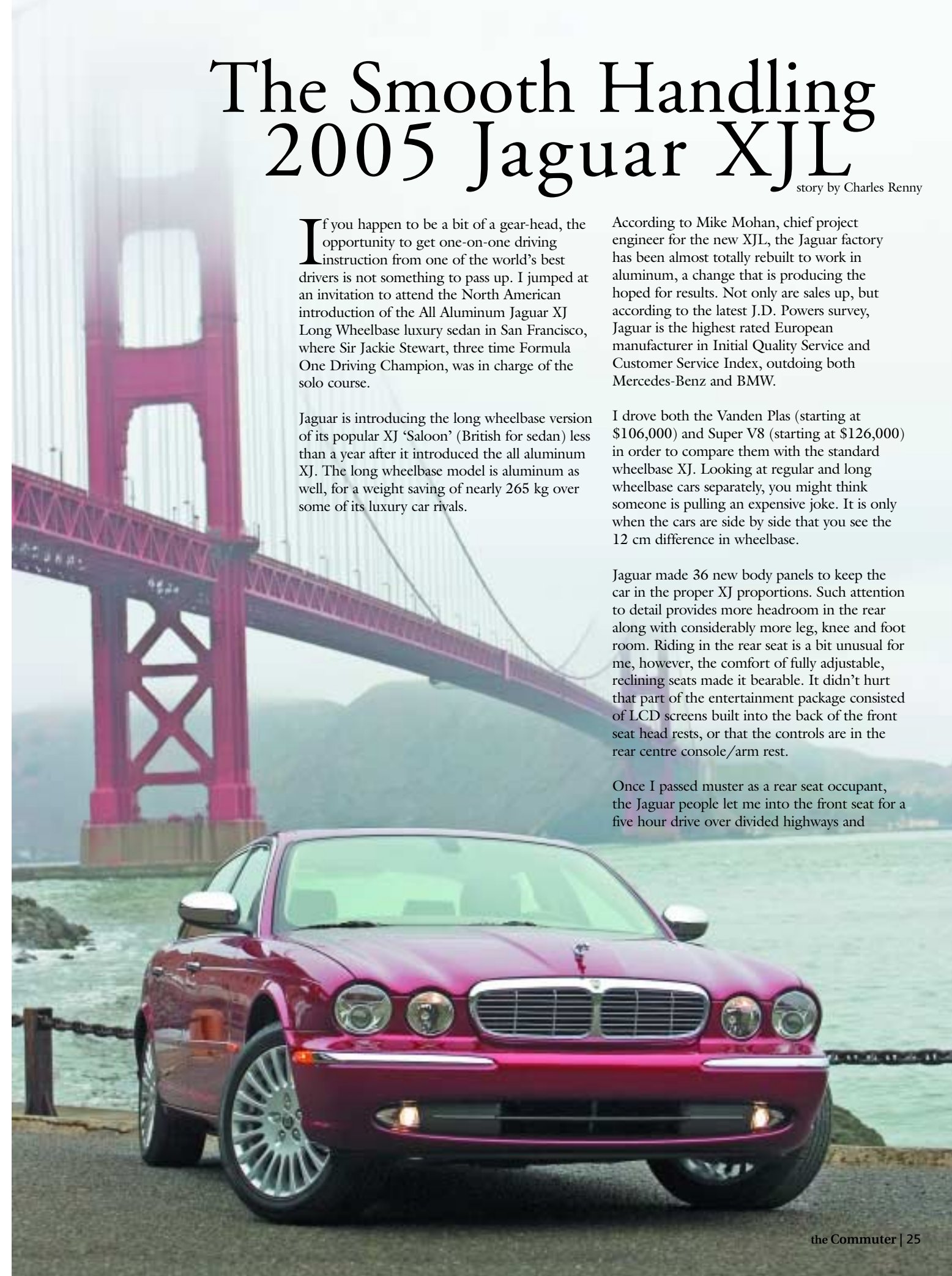
Jaguar is introducing the long wheelbase version of its popular XJ ‘Saloon’ (British for sedan) less than a year after it introduced the all aluminum XJ. The long wheelbase model is aluminum as well, for a weight saving of nearly 265 kg over some of its luxury car rivals.

According to Mike Mohan, chief project engineer for the new XJL, the Jaguar factory has been almost totally rebuilt to work in aluminum, a change that is producing the hoped for results. Not only are sales up, but according to the latest J.D. Powers survey, Jaguar is the highest rated European manufacturer in Initial Quality Service and Customer Service Index, outdoing both Mercedes-Benz and BMW.

I drove both the Vanden Plas (starting at \$106,000) and Super V8 (starting at \$126,000) in order to compare them with the standard wheelbase XJ. Looking at regular and long wheelbase cars separately, you might think someone is pulling an expensive joke. It is only when the cars are side by side that you see the 12 cm difference in wheelbase.

Jaguar made 36 new body panels to keep the car in the proper XJ proportions. Such attention to detail provides more headroom in the rear along with considerably more leg, knee and foot room. Riding in the rear seat is a bit unusual for me, however, the comfort of fully adjustable, reclining seats made it bearable. It didn’t hurt that part of the entertainment package consisted of LCD screens built into the back of the front seat head rests, or that the controls are in the rear centre console/arm rest.

Once I passed muster as a rear seat occupant, the Jaguar people let me into the front seat for a five hour drive over divided highways and





country roads. On multi-lane highways, you don't have to do much except change lanes, for that the Super V8 is the cat of choice. When I put my foot down things happen much quicker than in the normally aspirated Vanden Plas.

On the two lane, twisty back roads, the combination of long wheel base and weight reduction meant that I really didn't notice the extra length, except in the tightest corners. Even at that, the reworked steering box made sure I didn't miss a beat.

Back at our base, Jaguar laid out a solo course to highlight improvements in handling and braking. Our course consisted of an acceleration section followed by a quick stop. From there, it did a couple of quick lefts and rights, topped off by an increasing radius turn. A short transition area to shed off some speed was followed by a long serpentine course with a stop at the end.

Jaguar brought in Sir Jackie Stewart to give the 20 journalists a benchmark. Stewart chauffeured us around the course and gave us pointers on speed control, how to make best use of the stability control package and other driving tips.

When we were turned loose on the course, the ease with which Stewart had demonstrated how to gently move the steering wheel became a clownish pantomime of elbows and hands, not always moving in a co-ordinated manner. For me, the nose pushed out in a gentle understeer when trying to go faster around some corners. In the transition areas, the tail stayed put with little or no intervention from the stability control program.

Fortunately, these moves are not required on the street, even if the car is capable of doing them. The thinking behind the course was to show that the Jaguar XJL is more capable than most of the people who will drive it. 🐾



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fitnessfile

By Andrea Michaud

Get Moving this Fall

FOR MANY OF US, SUMMER IS FILLED WITH BARBEQUES, outdoor events and weekends at the lake. With fall here, it's time to get back to class, get back to the 10-hour workday and of course get back to happy hours at your favourite watering hole. But don't forget to include workouts as a part of your weekly routine.

The average person may not really love working out, but there is good news for anti-gym types. Local gyms, fitness facilities and leisure centres have pumped up their exercise and fitness schedules with a variety of more stimulating activities. Check out some of these alternatives for fall fitness.

The Basics: Breathe, Stretch, Unwind

Stretch, relax, inhale, exhale. It may sound simple but with proper technique you will not only break a sweat, you will clear you mind as well. Focused stretching and breathing are the basic techniques for strengthening your core – abdominals, lower back, thighs and gluteus maximus. These basics form the foundation for yoga and Pilates, which are becoming increasingly popular.

Shake it Up

Dance is another unique way to shake up your fitness routine. There are a wide variety of programs available from ballroom to belly dancing, flamenco to swing. Many of these classes help develop proper body posture and isolate muscle groups that can tear up the dance floor while generating plenty of sweat.

Back to the Basics

Basic circuit and strength training allows you to work every major muscle. Gyms have certified trainers available to set up programs and teach you proper techniques using free weights and machines. There are also ladies only facilities designed specifically for circuit training workouts. These facilities promote a simple, inexpensive, "in and out in 30-minutes" trend using resistance machines, running in place and jumping jacks – all in a friendly, supportive social setting for women.

Fashionable Fitness

Ever spotted a co-worker sitting on a bright, oversized plastic ball claiming it aids in proper posture? They may look funny but they're right. The stability ball and other fitness accessories are progressive fitness devices. Exercise bands, Body Bars and the Bosu dome increase resistance and enhance physical strength and balance while reducing the risk of injury.

These are just a few ideas for changing up your fitness routine. Whether you choose an old fashioned barbell or a Pilates class, there are enough alternatives to help you enjoy working out this fall.

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THE EVOLUTION OF BIG QUILL RESOURCES

Not too many people know what potassium sulfate is, unless of course they happen to live near Wynyard, Saskatchewan. Wynyard is home to Big Quill Resources, Canada’s largest producer of potassium sulfate.

Potassium sulfate, or SOP, is produced through the combination of sodium sulphate, extracted from the water of Big Quill Lake, and potassium extracted from potash. It is used mainly in agricultural fertilizer and industrial applications such as the manufacture of gypsum wallboard and plaster products and as an additive to drilling mud used in oil and gas exploration.

Big Quill Resources was established when a group of employees and local investors purchased an SOP pilot production facility from the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan, which had been exploring potential value-added uses for potassium chloride feedstock. The two companies continue their mutually beneficial relationship today.

In addition to successful strategic alliances, employee and community support are at the heart of Big Quill’s success. CEO Roger Nupdal explains, “Our employees have responded in a positive way to the many challenges we have faced over the years. We give them credit and thanks.” The plant employs a full time compliment of 21 staff from the local community and anticipates increasing this to 26 in the near future.

Big Quill Resources produces SOP at a purity level of 98% making the company strong competition for other SOP manufacturers in North and South America and Europe. Its competitive advantages include the natural source of sodium sulfate offered by Big Quill Lake and an ability to customize production to create the kinds of value-added products customers want.

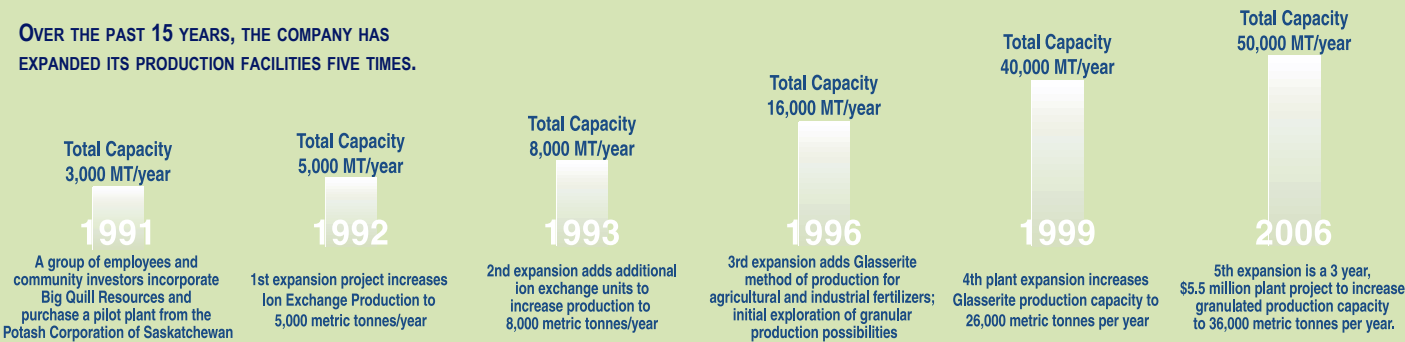
A strong outlook for SOP markets has motivated Big Quill Resources to invest in its production facilities. In 2004 Saskatchewan’s leading venture capital fund, Golden Opportunities, invested \$2.8 million in a plant modernization and expansion project valued at \$5.5 million over three years. The expansion will allow the production of a value-added granular form of SOP that is quickly becoming known as the best on the market, due to its high level of purity. Over the past 15 years, the company has expanded its production facilities five times. The current expansion, which is projected to be complete in 2006, will increase production capacity to more than 17 times the original 1991 capacity.

THE FUTURE LOOKS BRIGHT FOR BIG QUILL RESOURCES. Backed by expanded production facilities, the company continues to explore new

fertilizer niche markets. Nupdal credits the support of Saskatchewan’s leading venture capital fund with making the future brighter. “Golden Opportunities Fund’s investment in Big Quill Resources will allow us to modernize and expand our production facilities so that we can respond to the needs of our customers and continue to lead the market in high quality potassium sulphate products.” The ability to produce SOP to custom specifications allows Big Quill to attract customers from around the world who want to develop new product lines. Market leaders have already approached Big Quill for custom granulation of SOP.

Golden Opportunities Fund, Saskatchewan’s #1 selling labour fund, is one of the top performing labour funds in Canada. Golden Opportunities is proud to be a major shareholder in Big Quill Resources. Together with the Fund’s other investee companies, Golden Opportunities Fund is creating Opportunity in Saskatchewan for thousands of Saskatchewan shareholders, workers, their families and communities.

OVER THE PAST 15 YEARS, THE COMPANY HAS EXPANDED ITS PRODUCTION FACILITIES FIVE TIMES.



Discover Thai Cooking

Thai food is so much more than spices. It’s a complex blend of flavours...

and chilies are optional.

story by Noelle Chorney

When I think of Thai cooking, one particular dish comes to mind — *Miang Kam*, or “Tasty Leaf-wrapped Tidbits.” A plate of lettuce leaves is surrounded by chopped peanuts, toasted coconut, pickled garlic, shallots, chunks of lime, hot chilies, dried shrimp, ginger and cilantro. Pick up a lettuce leaf, place a bit of each ingredient in the centre, top it with peanut sauce and enjoy a fresh and eclectic flavour treat.

The lime provides a burst of sour; the chilies are hot; the dried shrimp are intensely salty and the peanut sauce is delightfully sweet. Herein lies the key to Thai cooking: finding the right balance of hot, salty, sour and sweet.

Keo Chantevone, owner of Keo’s Kitchen in Saskatoon, learned that balance at a young age while helping her parents. She instinctively knows what is needed as she tastes her dishes. Western cooks will likely need recipes and years of practice

to help them create the flavours that Keo can achieve after a lifetime of training.

To Steve Driver and Rusty Penno, executive chef and sous chef at Boffins Club, Thai food is spiciness, limes, coconut, curries and simple and satisfying stews. Rusty often works Thai influences into his menus, which include a popular Asian menu served at lunch every Thursday.

Interested in exploring Thai food? It’s easier than you think. Keo, Steve and Rusty offer pointers on how to master the cuisine one step at a time.

Do the Homework

Rusty and Steve often refer to the internet for inspiration. Home chefs can find hundreds of authentic Thai recipes just by Googling “Thai recipe.” Two excellent sites are www.recipesource.com and www.thaifoodandtravel.com. There are also dozens of excellent books on Thai

cooking that will serve you well in the kitchen.

There is nothing better than learning about cuisine by traveling to its country of origin. Keo is heading to Thailand for a month-long research trip. Her homework will ultimately result in a new menu and even more authentic touches at her restaurant.

Find the Ingredients

Keo, Steve and Rusty all frequent the Eastern markets for many of their fresh ingredients. If you’re not sure what the ingredients look like, Steve recommends asking the storeowners to show you some prik (chilies), krapao (Thai basil), khing (ginger) and kha (galangal).

While some items can be substituted, Keo recommends using palm sugar or brown sugar rather than white sugar. She also insists that fish sauce, not soy sauce, be used when making curries.



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Be Adventurous

Home cooks can easily venture into Thai cooking. Grilled satays — skewered, marinated meats, often in peanut sauce — are easy and delicious party fare. While there are some ready-made products in supermarkets, Keo recommends against pre-packaged items because it may taint your view of how Thai food really tastes. If you take a little time to make it from scratch, you'll appreciate the difference. Keo's motto is, "Work like a slave, eat like a king."

When you go out to a Thai restaurant, tell the servers what you like or don't like and they can serve you food that suits your needs. Just because you can't stand spicy food, that's no reason to avoid Thai cuisine. Every dish can be served mild, medium or hot.

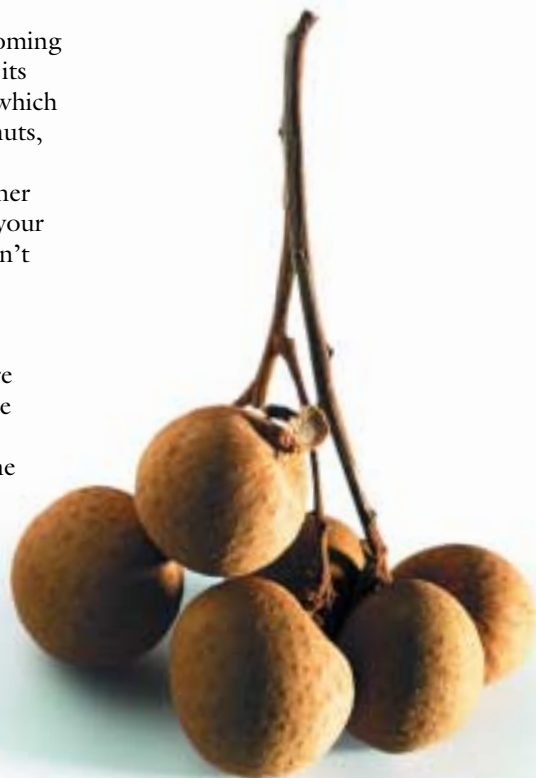
Why Thai?

It's good for you. Thai food is becoming more and more popular because of its fresh, healthy ingredients, most of which are familiar to western palates. Peanuts, lime and coconut are all universally accepted in North America. "Whether you're spreading peanut butter on your toast or on your chicken, who doesn't love it?" Rusty says.

According to Keo, Thai food has traditionally used lean meats that are grilled or poached — rarely fried. She uses very little oil; instead, coconut milk adds a little fat and flavour. The only deep-fried items on her menu are chicken wings and spring rolls.

It feeds a crowd. Thai food is an excellent choice for a family get-together or backyard barbecue. Individual grilled satays cook quickly and are easy to serve. You can provide the ingredients for lettuce wrappers and fresh summer rolls for a do-it-yourself dining experience. Giving guests the opportunity to design their own dishes also gives them a chance to try new things at their own pace. Enjoy! 🍴

Thanks to our chefs, Steve Driver and Rusty Penno, and to Keo Chantevone. When in Saskatoon, visit Keo's Kitchen at 516 33rd Street West for authentic Thai and Lao cuisine. Ph. 306.652.2533.



FRIED DIEFENBAKER TROUT WITH FRESH BASIL AND THAI CHILI SALSA

Ask your fish merchant to scale and bone, but leave whole, your fresh 1/2 pound rainbow trout or ask your favourite fisherman friends (like Ray from Boffins).

Basil Salsa

1 medium red onion (diced)
4 large very ripe tomatoes (diced)
4 Thai bird chilies or 2 ripe jalapenos (minced)
1/4 cup of rice vinegar
2 cloves of garlic (minced)
1 tbsp of Worcestershire sauce
1 tsp of sugar
10 large basil leaves (finely chopped)
salt and pepper to taste

Combine all ingredients in a glass or stainless steel bowl 1/2 hour before you need them.

Method

Deep-fry or panfry fish in a large high sided pan with at least one inch of oil at medium high heat. Fish will be a deep golden brown and will no longer easily give when you press on it. (roughly five minutes a side)

Arrange fish on a plate or platter on a bed of fresh greens and spoon your salsa over the centre of fish and dig in. Here it is served with sticky rice (sweet glutinous rice) and three sauces or dips. Green papaya and peanut sauce, sweet plum chili sauce and a chili garlic sambal. Thai Food is supposed to be a social affair so throw away the utensils, grab a spot on the floor and dig in.

This recipe courtesy Executive Chef Steve Driver and Sous Chef Rusty Penno from Boffins.

Boffins offers cooking classes to its members on a monthly basis. Classes range from themes such as Asian cuisine, East Indian cuisine and summer BBQing to bread making, soups and stews. Guests are taken through the process of preparing items from scratch with hands-on training.

Classes are both entertaining and informative, with on- and off-topic discussions featuring a wealth of knowledge and kitchen lore shared by both chefs and managers. The finale of the class comes when everyone is seated at a large table together and returns to the kitchen with plate in hand to sample the foods that have been prepared.

For schedules and costs contact Ray Dulos at 249-5344.

www.boffins.ca



what's out west

WINNIPEG

Royal Winnipeg Ballet

Val Caniparoli's *A Cinderella Story*

October 20-24, 2004 – Centennial Concert Hall

The 1950s is the setting for Val Caniparoli's *A Cinderella Story*. This retro retelling of your favourite fairy tale features electric choreography and Richard Rodgers tunes, all arranged for jazz orchestra. Tickets at 1-800-667-4792. www.rwb.org

SASKATOON

**Premier, Saskatchewan's Wine, Spirits and Speciality Food Show
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Centennial Auditorium & Convention Centre

Sample new high-end wines, spirits, liqueurs and more, as well as delicious foods, at this popular wine and food fest. Tickets at 306-975-7797. www.saskcent.com

Amati Quartet

September 11 & November 13, 2004 – Broadway Theatre

The University of Saskatchewan Amati Quartet in Residence presents two fall concerts. The September program features Haydn, Shostakovich and Smetana; the November program Haydn, Dvorak and Debussy. Tickets at 306-652-6556. www.amatiquartet.usask.ca

Sundog Handcraft Faire

December 3-5, 2004 – Credit Union Centre

The largest event of its kind in western Canada features a juried market with over 170 artisans and artists. Entertainment, craft demos and multicultural food court add to the fun. Tickets at the door. www.sundoghandcraftfaire.com

REGINA

Lend Me a Tenor

September 15 - October 2, 2004 – Globe Theatre

The Globe's season opener is a farce-de-résistance that features a three-ring circus of chaos, mayhem and general tomfoolery as outrageous characters attempt to resolve a case of mistaken identity. Tickets at 306-525-6400. www.globetheatrelive.com

Canadian Western Agribition

November 22-27, 2004 – Regina Exhibition Park

Western Canada's premier agricultural show and marketplace features six days of grandstand entertainment, pro rodeo and one of the best livestock shows in the world, including beef, horses and speciality livestock. Tickets at 306-565-0565. www.agribition.com

CALGARY

WordFest, Banff-Calgary International Writers Festival

October 13-17, 2004 – Calgary & Banff

Alberta's hottest literary event and the third largest festival of its kind in Canada is back for its 9th annual outing. The line-up includes more than 50 artists over five days. Visit www.wordfest.com for updates on who's coming.

Calgary Winter Antique Show

November 12-14, 2004 – Round Up Centre, Stampede Park

The 6th Annual Winter show and sale features top antique and

collectibles dealers from across Canada. See country furniture, glass and china, antique jewellery, vintage collectibles, toys, rare and antiquarian books, more. Toll Free 1-800-667-0619. www.antiqueshowscanada.com

EDMONTON

Edmonton International Film Festival

October 14-19, 2004 – Old Strathcona District

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October 7-11, 2004 – Mount Paul Centre

This five day event is one of the most colourful and exciting family events to come to British Columbia's interior. 30 balloon pilots are expected to compete, plus another 10 flying for fun and some commercial balloons as well. See it all up close. www.aces-kamloops.ca

VANCOUVER

Norah Jones

September 27, 2004 – General Motors Place

Norah Jones continues to enchant audiences with her award-winning blend of jazz, pop and R&B vocal styles. Tickets at all Ticketmaster outlets: 604-280-4444 or www.ticketmaster.ca.

Vancouver Home & Interior Design Show

October 14-17, 2004 – B.C. Place Stadium

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VANCOUVER ISLAND

Eternal Egypt, Royal BC Museum

until October 31, 2004 – Victoria, B.C.

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7th Annual Clayoquot Oyster Festival

November 20, 2004 – Tofino, B.C.

Held in Tofino at the Tin Wis Conference Centre, the Festival begins with boat tours to oyster farms in Clayoquot Sound. Enjoy food and wine, great music, the slurping contest and Chef cook-off. Call 250-725-4222 or visit www.oystergala.com



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