



Tomato and Broccolini



Pumpkin custard and Raspberry soufflé



by Aisha Edris

Pix by Nihal Chandrakumara

The mouthwatering smell of fresh herbs was all around, instantly inviting the guests to take a tiny glimpse of the delicious Thai food which was specially prepared to Sri Lankans at the Thai Food Festival held recently at Colombo Hilton. It was impossible for us to ignore the heavenly meals which were prepared exclusively from fresh herbs and vegetables.

# 'Food from heaven' the Thai way



Special sea food salad with green mango



For many years, I have been wondering what the secret was behind the beautiful Thai women, whose ages, I could never guess. It was explained to me by Conrad Hotel, Bankok's Chefs, Inthira Phumpajitr and Nipa Rangpae, that the secret behind Thais' youthfulness are the healthy fresh herbs and vegetables that they consume. Unlike many of us in Sri Lanka, Thais do not add chili, saffron, Masala or any sorts of curry powder to their dishes. They use the natural flavour of herbs, vegetables and meat to enhance the taste of the dish.

### Divine Thai food

The eye-catching, colourful meal not only gives life to a hungry body but also refreshes the eyes of the person. When we entered the "Spices" restaurant beautified with the colourful Thai salads of different varieties, fruits and vegetables were on the menu.

The spicy green mango salad with peanuts, caters to the local taste buds even though it does not have chili powder or the usual pepper powder that we Sri Lankans use to spice our dishes.

Nipa Rangpae demonstrated to us the method of preparing the delicious green papaya salad, a famous Thai salad, with raw papaya strips, beans, dried shrimp powder, dhal, tomatoes and green and red chili and as well as garlic.

The ingredients are mixed with tamarind water and salt and then it is swiftly mixed in clay pot. The delicious salad has mixed tastes of sweet, sour and spicy that are requirements of the typical Asian taste bud.

Meanwhile, the chicken Satay dipped in peanut sauce was one of the main attractions of the food festival. While, the world famous Thai sea food soup, Tom Yum, with shrimps easily delights a famished food lover.

A meal is never complete without a sweet dish to end a delightful feast. We were invited by the two chefs to taste the traditional Thai sweets which are not made out of sugar or chocolate but with fresh pumpkins, mangoes and coconut milk. In Sri Lanka, we use coconut milk for our main meals. But, very rarely do we use it as a sweetener. However, in Thailand, as explained by Chef Inthira Phumpajitr, most of the Thai sweets are made out of coconut milk.

The delicious coconut jelly is made out of coconut milk with natural flavours, while the sticky mango rice which is a bit similar to our traditional milk rice (kiribath) is a delicious sweetener.



Inthira Phumpajitr and Nipa Rangpae



Coconut Jelly



Cucumber



Green papaya salad



Paper Beef with Sun dried tomato



A plate of Chicken Tikka Masala

## Chicken tikka masala 'invented in Glasgow'

India's top chefs have warned Scottish MPs to keep their hands off the rights to chicken tikka masala.

The MPs, led by Mohammed Sarwar, claim the dish was invented in Glasgow in the early 1970s and now want official European Union recognition through a "Protected Designation of Origin". It would put Glasgow's chicken tikka masala on a par with Parma's Parmesan cheese or French 'Champagne'.

The move is based on the claim by Ahmed Aslam Ali to have invented the dish at his Shish Mahal restaurant in Glasgow. "We used to make chicken tikka and one day a customer said 'I'd take some sauce with that, this is a bit dry' so we cooked chicken tikka with the sauce which contains yoghurt, cream, spices,"

he said.

But his claim has been dismissed as "preposterous" by Delhi's leading food historians, although its exact origin remains unclear.

Zaemuddin Ahmad, a chef at Delhi's Karim Hotel, which was established by the last chef of the last Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar, said the recipe had been passed down through the generations in his family.

"Chicken tikka masala is an authentic Mughlai recipe prepared by our forefathers who were royal chefs in the Mughal period. Mughals were avid trekkers and used to spend months altogether in jungles and far off places. They liked roasted form of chickens with spices," he said.

Rahul Verma, Delhi's most authoritative expert on street food, said he first tasted the dish in 1971 and that its origins were in Punjab. "Its basically a Punjabi dish not more than 40-50 years old and must be an accidental discovery which has had periodical improvisations," he said.

Himanshu Kumar, the founder of Eating Out in Delhi, a food group which celebrates Delhi's culinary heritage, ridiculed Glasgow's claim. "Patenting the name chicken tikka masala is out of the question. It has been prepared in India for generations. You can't patent the name, it's preposterous," he said.

Himanshu Kumar, the founder of Eating Out in Delhi, a food group which celebrates Delhi's culinary heritage, ridiculed Glasgow's claim. "Patenting the name chicken tikka masala is out of the question. It has been prepared in India for generations. You can't patent the name, it's preposterous," he said.