

INSIDER'S GUIDE:

BANGKOK

DISCOVER THE PARTS OF THE THAI CAPITAL THE LOCALS
LIKE TO KEEP FOR THEMSELVES

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY
CHRIS SHALXX



STREET EATS BANGKOK'S FOOD SCENE IS BEST EXPLORED THROUGH ITS SIDEWALKS STALLS AND ROADSIDE RESTAURANTS. THESE FIVE ARE LOCAL FAVOURITES

Khao Gaeng Jake Puey This photogenic stall in an alley just off Chinatown's main thoroughfare is perennially packed, and for good reason. Nab a seat on one of the tiny red chairs and order their signature *kaeng kari*, a yellow coconut curry served over rice, topped with sweet pork ribs and Chinese sausage.

Muslim Restaurant People come here for the food as much as for the Old World ambiance, because the interior of this

legendary Islamic Thai restaurant hasn't changed since its opening in the 1940s. Only served on Mondays, their fragrant *mutton biryani* is worth the trip alone. As is their crispy *roti mataba*, a sinfully delicious pocket of beef and spices.

Soi Polo While you'll find a full range of *Isaan* classics at this friendly sit-down joint, it's their *gai tod* (fried chicken) that has locals salivating at the mere mention of it. Crispy on the outside, tender within, and loaded with heaps of fried garlic – it's easy to see why this restaurant often has queues in front.

Thip Samai The fiery woks at Thip Samai only serve up one dish, but they do it really, Bib Gourmand-level well. Expect long queues for their iconic *pad thai*, a smoky noodle stir-fry made with eggs,



tofu, prawns, and an assortment of toppings (chili, peanuts, bean sprouts) that can be added to your liking.

Kor Panich Have you really been to Bangkok if you haven't tried its signature dessert? *Khao niaow mamuang* (mango sticky rice) can be found in malls and restaurants around the city, but Kor Panich in Phraeng Bhuthorn remains the go-to shop for those in the know. Pick one of the fresh mangoes on display in front of the store and ask the staff to slice it up and pack it with sweet sticky rice and coconut milk.



ABOVE_from left: Muslim Restaurant's delicious spread. Tucked away on side streets is where you find the gems.

NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH THESE THREE NEIGHBORHOODS SHOW YOU A TOTALLY DIFFERENT SIDE OF THE THAI CAPITAL...

Chinatown This neighborhood is a two-for-one deal: come for the clamorous markets, gilded temples, and gritty Old World atmosphere, stay for the cutting-edge cocktail bars and inventive food concepts that have recently popped up in its historical shophouses. To experience the district in its full glory, arrive right after sunset. This is when Yaowarat Road turns into a gigantic neon-lit foodcourt (seek out **Nai Ek** for peppery noodle soup and **T&K** for a seafood feast) and Bangkok's creative crowd starts filling up bars like **Rabbit Hill** for Hong Kong-brewed craft beers; **Jing Jing** for boozy ice cream, or the cluster of new establishments around Soi Nana: **Teens of Thailand** has some of the city's best G&Ts; cocktail bar **Ba Hao** brings a touch of 1920s Shanghai, and **TEP Bar** pays homage to traditional Thai culture.

Thonglor Glitzy bars and restaurants might pop up around the city at breakneck speed, but trendy Thonglor remains the undisputed epicentre of Bangkok's cosmopolitan appeal. Also known as Sukhumvit Soi 55, Thonglor and its adjoining alleys are peppered with contemporary Thai restaurants (**Soul Food Mahanakorn**, **Supanniga Eating Room**), fine-dining darlings (**Canvas**, **Bo.Lan**), and award-winning cocktail bars (**Rabbit Hole**, **Just A Drink Maybe**, and **J. Boroski Mixology**). If you're short on time, head to concrete-clad **The Commons** on Soi 17, a community mall housing outposts from some of the city's most exciting restaurants and retail players.

Ari A stroll around Ari's leafy lanes is the perfect antidote to the frenetic streets downtown. Located in the north of the city, this largely residential district lures savvy travelers with its quaint cafés, sleek boutiques, and buzzy restaurants. Worth seeking out are **Calm Spa**, a mid-century modern stunner offering stress-relieving massage treatments; **Tokyo Bike**, where the city's fixed-gear hipsters get their fix(ie); and **Kamakura** for well-priced, Japanese quality shirts. Hungry?



THIS PAGE_from below: A cocktail at Just A Drink Maybe; Eating al fresco in Chinatown at Khao Gaeng Jake Puey; The iconic interior of the Iron Balls Gin Parlour



The stalls around Ari's BTS station are known for their high-quality street fare – or visit **Salt** for European comfort food; **TacoChela**, where Danish craft beer meets Mexican grub; or **Phed Phed** for ferociously fiery Isaan cuisine.

BANGKOK TALKING NIGHTLIFE KINGPIN SANYA SOUVANNA PHOUMA SHARES HIS TOP CHOICES FOR A NIGHT OUT IN THE BIG MANGO...

What does a perfect night out in Bangkok look like? “It starts at **El Mercado**, an al-fresco affair with big tables and fantastic Mediterranean food that's made for sharing. Order some bubbles, fresh seafood, and cheese and you're off to a great start. Next, hit up **Thaipioka** for fruity cocktails in a pared-down setting.



Their **Longan Carré** (longan bourbon, cognac, vermouth, chartreuse, and bitters) is especially great. Then jump in a cab to the sino-chic **Sing Sing Theater** to dance until the wee hours of the morning.

What's Bangkok's most underrated nightlife district? “Quiet **Suan Phlu** and its surrounding streets are packed with quaint little bars and restaurants. It was put on the map by **Smalls**, a funky low-key hangout where you can brush shoulders with the city's top chefs and the occasional Hollywood celebrity passing through town – but recent months have seen a slew of new spots pop up: **Cactus** (mid-century modern rooftop hangout), **Cagette** (French deli) and **Sawaan** (Thai fine dining) are all worth the trip.”

You can drink one cocktail in Bangkok. Where do you go and what do you order? “I'd head to **Iron Balls Gin Parlour** for their signature gin 'n' tonic, made from Iron Balls gin and Fentimans light tonic. It's a perfect way to beat the Bangkok heat, and the gin couldn't be more local: it's distilled right here in the city.”

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