

Signature Dish



H Bistro at Hansar Samui in Fisherman's Village is known as one of the best fine-dining establishments on the island.

The signature dish (we'll get to what it is shortly) is superb. And that's what you'd expect from one who's been private chef to His Majesty, the King of Jordan. Executive Chef, Stephen Jean Dion is Canadian, and aside from this acclaimed position, he also worked in Canada and throughout Asia before joining Hansar Samui at its opening on Samui, in June 2010, to head up H Bistro. So diners arriving for an evening of culinary indulgence expect to dine like royalty – and that's a lot of pressure to put on a chef, but Stephen takes it in his stride.

We visited H Bistro on a gloriously breezy day to chat to Chef Stephen about his latest signature dish. The restaurant, positioned to take advantage of the breeze as well as the views, has a contemporary 'Africa meets Asia' feel, like the rest of the resort, with black slate, wood, steel window frames, warm wood chairs with comfortable stone cushions and a high ceiling with slowly oscillating ceiling fans, creating a modern colonial look. The comfortable seating and unrushed atmosphere invite you to linger longer, and take in the glorious view of boats bobbing in Bophut Bay, and further out to Koh Phangan.

The signature dish arrived for our tasting, and Chef Stephen enthusiastically described it, detailing each component – and here you have it: Stephen Dion's signature dish at H Bistro is 'Murray grain-fed lamb cutlets with lamb shank filled pasta pockets, Robiola foam, and a pommery mustard jus scented with spear mint' (1,150 baht++). The name is a mouthful, but so is this full-flavoured dish.

Chef Stephen explained that the lamb is from Victoria, Southern Australia, free range and 30 days grain-fed to provide tenderness and juiciness. And this is not just a theory, as the

lamb was indeed tender and juicy as promised, and two succulent and well-sized cutlets arrived balancing on the plate amid an artistic display of accompaniments.

Drizzled down the cutlets was a frothy 'Robiola foam'. Robiola is an Italian soft-ripened cheese of the Stracchino family. It's from the Langhe region and made with varying proportions of cow, goat and sheep's milk. This fine cheese is used for the foam, as well as in the pasta pockets.

Balancing on a twirl of cannellini bean mousse was a fat pasta pocket, packed with a delicious filling made from slow-braised lamb shanks cooked in red wine at 60°C. Once cooked, the shanks are shredded and combined with the Robiola cheese, creating a super tasty pasta pocket, with a creamy, rich texture, yet not too heavy.

The two cutlets rest on a jus of pommery mustard and spearmint, scented with rosemary and cumin. Says Chef, "It's basically a lamb jus, and then we incorporate spearmint, Edmond Fallots pommery mustard, and add a hint of rosemary and cumin. This ready-to-eat sauce complements the lamb and pasta pocket, yet isn't overpowering."

An unusual addition to the dish is black garlic from Tibet. Black garlic is 'sweet meets savoury', a perfect mix of molasses-like richness and tangy garlic undertones. It has a tender, almost jelly-like texture with a melt-in-the-mouth consistency similar to a soft dried fruit. It's as delicious as it is unique. "As garlic is always well associated with lamb, I put a somewhat different twist on it", says Stephen.

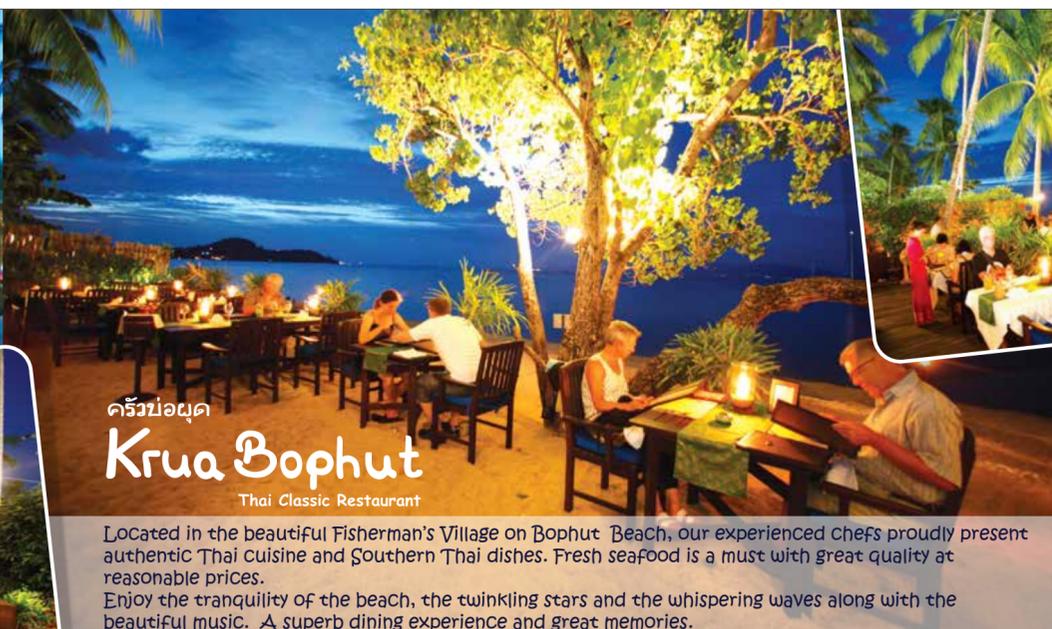
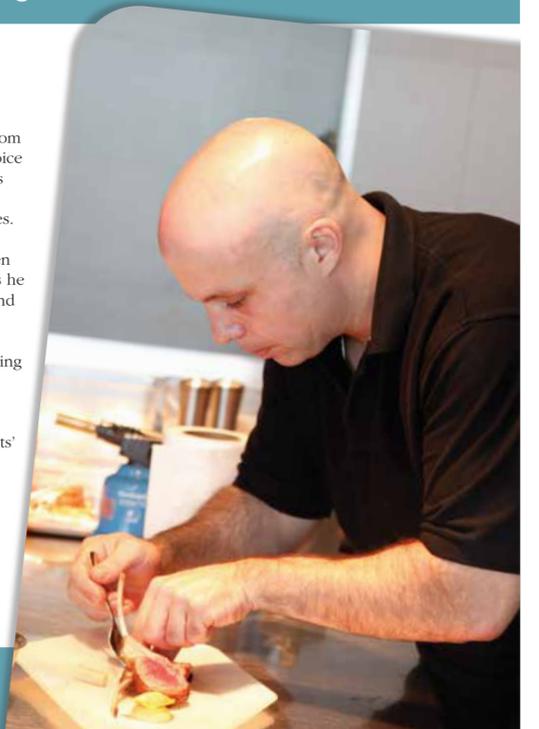
Well there you have it. Tempted yet? There aren't too many places on the island that serve lamb this well. An impressive wine list is on hand with a well-chosen selection of wines from the world, and the knowledgeable staff will assist with a choice to best go with your meal. And of course, the creative dishes don't stop with the lamb, and there's an equally inventive selection to suit all tastes, including a menu of Thai favourites.

Stephen doesn't rest on his laurels, and understands that even the best chefs need to keep learning and stay motivated. As he proclaims, "I have never stopped innovating and learning, and continue to do so regularly with the Hansar family, creating competitive menus, using the highest quality of ingredients from around the world while ensuring great value and instilling the Hansar philosophy in everything we do."

After sampling the fare at H Bistro, it's no wonder the establishment has made the list of 'Thailand's Best Restaurants' for both 2011 and 2012. So if you're after a truly special fine-dining experience, be sure to visit.

Rosanne Turner

For reservations or further information, telephone 0 7724 5511. www.hansarsamui.com



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Krua Bophut
Thai Classic Restaurant

Located in the beautiful Fisherman's Village on Bophut Beach, our experienced chefs proudly present authentic Thai cuisine and Southern Thai dishes. Fresh seafood is a must with great quality at reasonable prices. Enjoy the tranquility of the beach, the twinkling stars and the whispering waves along with the beautiful music. A superb dining experience and great memories.



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Free Parking!! Opposite the restaurant