



Bistro for Beloveds

H Bistro's 'Dining Under the Stars' takes romantic evenings to new heights.

If you've ever been to a typical bistro, you'll know it's a fairly humble kind of eatery. The word itself, bistro, turns out to be Russian and means 'quick', and legend has it that Russians in Paris would call out to the cook to be quick with the food; they were hungry and couldn't wait. It was therefore an early version of fast food, with hearty stews typically being served – anything to satisfy the appetite.

Fast forward to today's world and a bistro might still be that simple eatery serving up tasty food or it might be quite the opposite – a restaurant focussing on fine dining. At H Bistro, it's the latter and you'll find it's a top-notch restaurant, albeit with a modest name. But once you're here, you certainly won't want to hurry your meal – this is a romantic place to savour the quality and creativity of the cooking, which is of the finest kind.

H Bistro is now in its fifth year, and has a cachet for excellence. You can find it at Hansar Samui Resort & Spa, which is along the beach at Fisherman's Village – head along the beach road westwards and you'll soon come to it. If you're approaching from the ring-road, take the small turning just next to Anantara Bophut Resort, some 600 metres after the traffic lights at Bophut as you head towards Nathon. Follow the road till you get to the resort.

The bistro is open all day, as it's part of a resort, and also offers some highly romantic options when it comes to evening dining. And the most romantic of them all just has to be their 'Dining Under The Stars', a flame-lit meal for you and your beloved, right on the beach itself. Your table is not only decorated, but is placed inside a four-post gazebo, making the setting even more luxurious.

The beach here faces north, and some seven miles across the sea, the island of Koh Pha-Ngan rises from the water. As night comes, the island's hills steadily darken while its coast is marked by a necklace of lights. To your right, you'll see more lights, those of Fisherman's Village and Choeng Mon. The glittering evenings are delightful but are made even more bewitching by the vast array of stars right overhead. If the night's cloudless, you'll find yourself gazing up at infinity itself – surely the most romantic accompaniment for any evening's dining.

The staff are extremely attentive and you'll be well-looked after; they're very discreet but always seem to know just when you need them. They are relaxing presences in themselves, and will only add to the quality of your evening. The courses, meanwhile, arrive just when you're ready for them – few resorts are this good at

timing, perhaps the waiting staff are all chosen for their intuition! There are a good many others working behind the scenes, notably the chef, of course. And here you're in excellent hands.

It's not every day that the person who cooks for royal families, political figures and other dignitaries, but the chef in question, Stephen Jean Dion, used to be private chef for no less than the King and Queen of Jordan. He spent two years with them, and as you can imagine, his skills had to be top-notch. You can rest assured that he knows how to make your dinner a truly wonderful experience.

His style is French-Mediterranean, and he cooks the kind of food he grew up with, but at the highest and most delicious level possible. He's from Montreal and has always had a love of cooking; he started training as a humble apprentice when he was just 18 years old and fresh out of school. He worked at one of Canada's most famous restaurants, Les Halles, in Quebec, before setting out for Singapore and Malaysia, and then to the prestigious Hilton Naitert where he was chef de cuisine. It was from there that he seized the opportunity to go to Jordan and work for the King and Queen there. Afterwards he returned to Thailand, and following stints at top restaurants in Bangkok,

Hansar Samui were quick to see that he would be a major asset.

For 'Dining Under the Stars', Stephen's creativity comes to the fore. Not just any old menu will do if you're aiming to make a memorable romantic dinner. As you can imagine, many a chef might come up with a great menu, and then just repeat it time and time again. But for Stephen, as a true professional, being innovative is necessary if you're going to keep on pleasing your guests. So the romantic menu changes on a regular basis. You can come back the following month, say, and eat something quite different – but still every bit as good. (Check out the resort's website for details.)

At the time of going to press, the first of the starter dishes consisted of pan-fried scallops en cappuccino, Scottish langoustines, celeriac, and Schrenkii caviar. This was the lightest of dishes, with every smidgen of it filled with flavour. The same applied for the rest of the dinner, which consisted of another five courses.

Mains were a beautifully cooked Scottish label rouge salmon with squash spaghetti, Peruvian asparagus, pickled ginger and coriander juice. This was followed by slow-cooked lamb rump, with cipolini, onion puree, pimentos, baby leek, Chambertin cheese with grainy mustard and

Kampot pepper juice. Each of these two dishes was an amazing medley, where all the separate ingredients complemented each other perfectly. It was followed by an equally wonderful dessert, an amber caramel mousse with fleur-de-sel ice-cream, cacao tuile and gooseberry.

These are just a few examples of Stephen's creations, and diners are consistently delighted by what he's able to do. And when it comes to a romantic evening under the stars, Stephen and his team are sure to exceed your expectations, and provide a wonderful time for you and your companion.

Dimitri Waring

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

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2014
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A holiday or a visit to Mövenpick Resort Laem Yai Beach Samui would not be complete without sampling the food at The Terrace. Nestled on the beach, this majestic open-air restaurant affords diners a perfect view of the spectacular sunset over Laem Yai Bay and the distant islands.

This epicurean dining nirvana serves up the finest catches from the sea so our guests can feast like kings. Pay homage to our speciality – the royal triumvirate of lobster, tiger prawns and oysters.

Indulge yourself with a journey of culinary discoveries at Mövenpick Resort Laem Yai Beach Samui. The Terrace perfectly blends a selection of Thai classics with international dishes.

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"The Wedding Maker"

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