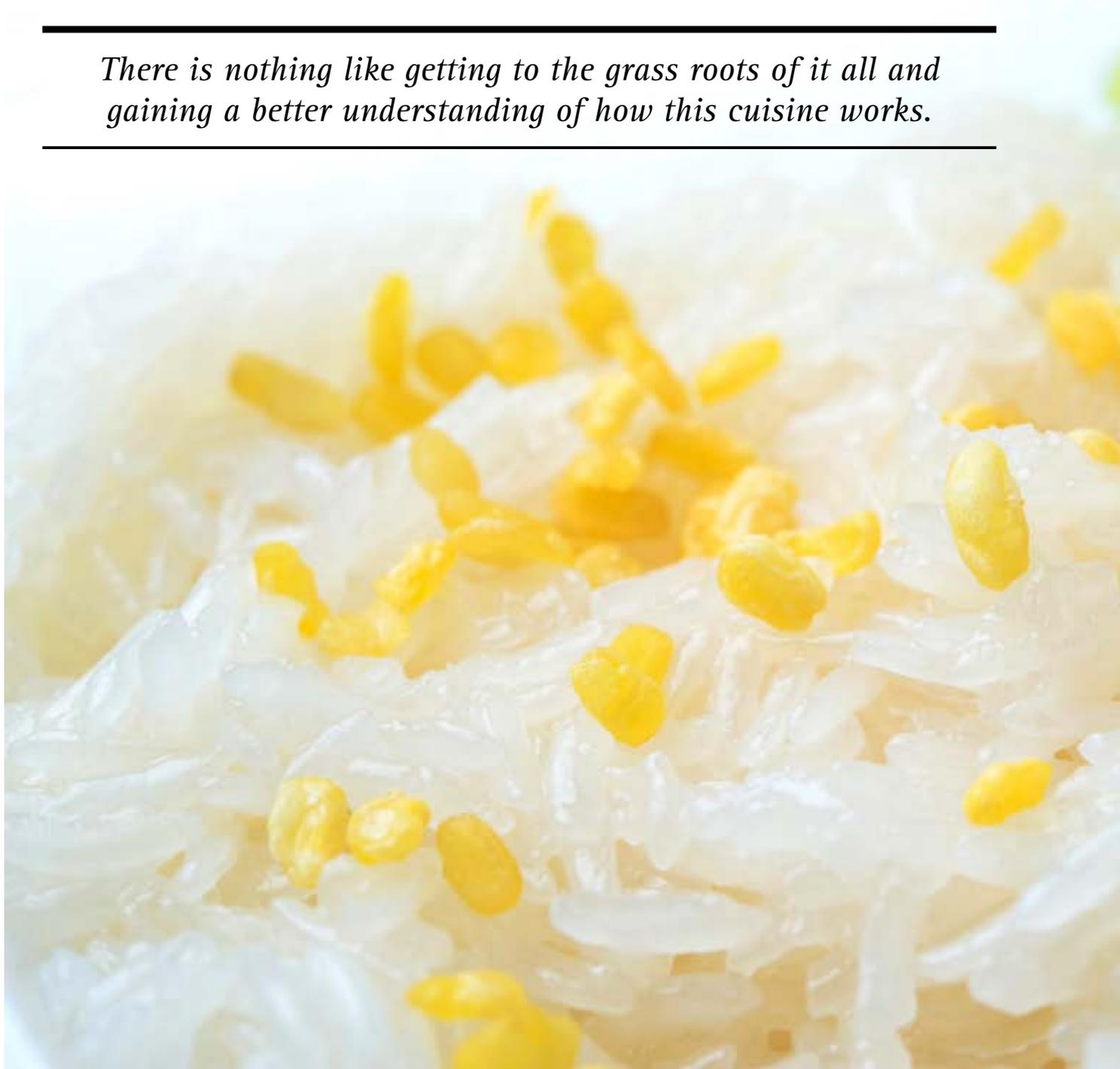

KOH-M

GET SAM-UI!!

STORY RICHMOND BLANDO

There is nothing like getting to the grass roots of it all and gaining a better understanding of how this cuisine works.





It has been a few days already, my skin is tanned, my body has been twisted into a pretzel and I am on a first name basis with street vendors.

I have biked around the island, walked into temples and most importantly eaten as much of the Thai cuisine as I could. I asked the people at Hansar Resort if there are some other things I could do, they were eager to suggest their private cooking classes and I immediately jumped at the idea. So I got a schedule the next day and chose three dishes I can try to learn (emphasis on 'try').

Food is a huge part of experiencing the culture when you travel. And when you return home after a trip, there is nothing like having a dish from that region, full of flavors, textures, and smells to transport you right back to your travel experience. So in a way, food memories are a type of souvenir from your travels that you can experience again and again back at home! What better way to reminisce about your travels than to be able to cook authentic meals from the destinations you have visited.

That's part of the reason why I have always wanted to take cooking classes while traveling, especially here in

Thailand; because who doesn't like Thai food?

I've always thought it to be funny when you pay a fee for cooking the food you eat, but you can't really equate value for cost. Now the only way this would become worthwhile is if you take home what you learned and go beyond the experience of the class but to own the skill and to keep on practicing.

WHAT SHOULD I LEARN TO COOK?

Though it maybe such a daunting task to

choose from the selection, the first thing I had to consider is, if I can cook these same dishes at home, which meant the ingredients needed to be readily available. Thai dishes use a lot of ingredients like tamarind paste, coconut milk, Thai basil, and lime (to name a few), it would be difficult and a shame, if everything will be reduced down to a jar one finds in the supermarket, a "catch all" paste to capture the taste of a good Tom Yum.

Keeping that in mind, I chose to learn some of the simpler dishes, the **Tom Kah**





Kai (coconut chicken soup), Mango sticky rice and Green Papaya Salad, I kept it simple so I can etch in my memory while I cook them.

Hansar Samui has something unique working in their favor, which is having their own organic garden, which ensures that the meal you are about to learn deserves the best.

We started in the morning as the sous chef of Chef Stephen Jean Dion took us to the local market to shop for the proteins necessary for the task at hand. This in itself was a treat for the foodie in everyone as there was a moment when I was fighting the temptation to purchase things simply because they were interesting.

After that, we proceeded to pick other ingredients from the garden like mushrooms, lemon grass and Thai basil. We could only stay out there for a few minutes before the sun's heat started to intensify.

We proceeded into the hotel kitchen and I got to be part of the hotel's award winning kitchen, they handed me my apron and we began to worked back and forth on several dishes. Waiting on the steaming rice and then working on the coconut drizzle that we would use later on. We later on moved seamlessly to the preparation of the Tom Kah Kai's base. The salad came easily as we had to go by trial and error on the dressing, I had to be careful on this as not to feed my ego too much and claim that I can take spicy food, because I was reminded that I have to eat all these dishes myself.

After 2 hours of immersing in the kitchen heat and feeling the sweat on my brow drip, seeing the three dishes emerge from the individual ingredients was like hearing music come out of individual notes.

Thai Food will always be a quintessential part of traveling to Thailand, and I am glad I got a chance to see, smell and taste this first hand.

A HOLIDAY FILLED WITH HAPPINESS AND JOY

From checking in to checking out, I would have to nitpick really hard to say anything bad about Hansar Resort and Spa.

STORY RICHMOND BLANDO

The name Hansar is taken from the ancient Sanskrit language and translates to mean happiness and joy. The concept and philosophy of Hansar Samui is about living life in full color and finding joy in every moment.

It offers a luxurious, beachfront and spacious accommodation with unobstructed sea views from every room, and supersize private balconies and oversize daybeds for outdoor living and entertaining.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS:

When I arrived at night, there were little to be impressed by, however the following morning, I stepped out on to my balcony, I had woken up in a postcard, the view was spectacular.

I can see from my balcony a kaleidoscope of green grounds and swaying palms with the blue waters from both the infinity pool and the sea in the background.

THE ROOM:

The Sea View room (50sqm) had a large king-size bed (very comfortable) with the white of the bed linen contrasted against the timber that is a main feature of the room. The bathroom with its glass walls makes the entire space feel large and light, and features a sizeable stone rain shower.

Turndown service includes a red rose (that actually smells like a rose, so many don't) and chocolates, a nice touch.

THE FOOD:

The H-Bistro is located next to the beach, affording idyllic views from both indoor and outdoor seating.

Breakfast was your typical buffet or so I thought, guests have a selection of eggs (scrambled, poached, fried, three omelet options, Benedict) and pancakes and waffles made to order.

The dinner at H-Bistro brought the word excellent to a whole new level for me. I had been reading online about the special dinner the Chef has been known for and this is what I opted to have. It was a seven-course meal that was exquisite, from the onset of the first

course of the Seared Hokkaido Scallops with Black Truffle Caviar Pearls, the delectable Black Angus Cheeks that was braised to perfection and the way the Sous Vide Lamb Rump melted in my mouth.

THE LUXSA SPA:

This was a highlight of the stay, it was a fantastic experience that commenced the moment I walked in to book my appointment. The friendly and knowledgeable staff made recommendations and the only thing I don't like about the Spa menu is the fact that I can't order two items on the menu.



The treatment itself began with a floral footbath and gentle foot and lower leg scrub with a mix of sugar and essential oil. The massage itself lasted a full 90 minutes (not the case in all spas with some 90 minute treatments translating to only an hour of massage).

WHAT'S THE BEACH LIKE?

A sizeable beach that provides a good morning or late afternoon walk. The sand is quite coarse though compared to some other beaches in Samui. Which really makes the Hansar Swimming pool more inviting than the ocean itself. Sun-beds and umbrellas are set up on the beach in addition to around the pool.

THE FISHERMAN'S VILLAGE

The hotel is located minutes away from Fisherman's Village, featuring old wooden shop houses that are becoming fewer and fewer that are now home to trendy cafes and bars, beachfront restaurants, pubs, and shops selling souvenirs, plus the odd street food vendor. On a Friday evening, the street is closed to traffic and becomes known as Walking Street, attracting locals and tourists due to the vibrant market atmosphere and a chance to take in a wide selection of local arts, crafts and a

range of local street foods, many of which are difficult to find on restaurant menus.

There is a stream of hawkers selling everything from ice creams to sarongs wandering up and down the beach but compared to Bali, they don't try any hard sell techniques and a simple 'no thanks' sees them continue on.

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS:

Hansar has a growing and developing

organic garden and fish farm. It is noteworthy, as it is a corporate social responsibility initiative that sees the majority of produce being given to orphanages, the poor and local monks. Any that are sold, the proceeds are given to local charities, and when there is a real excess of any particular item it is given to staff who usually cook up a dish with it at home, which is then shared with colleagues at the staff canteen.

