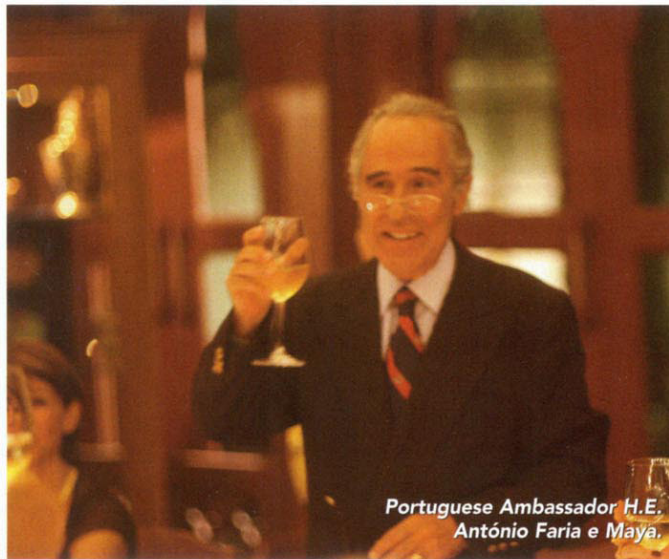


THE PORTUGUESE CONNECTION

A wine dinner celebrates the Portuguese influence on Thai cuisine.



Portuguese Ambassador H.E.
António Faria e Maya.



THE PORTUGUESE CAME TO THAILAND in the 16th century as traders and no one knew, least of all the traders themselves, the far-reaching effects they'd have on the cuisine of Thailand. Even today the Portuguese influence is not only discernible but also strong. The heat factor in Thai cuisine is owed entirely to the Portuguese: they brought the chilli to Thailand. And though Portuguese cooks go easy on the spice, Thais took to it with gusto really spicing up their cuisine. And that was not all, Thai cooks borrowed a lot from the visitors and even today on the streets of Thailand the influence is strong. The humble *kai yang* for example echoes the Portuguese *Piri Piri*. Some perhaps, may dismiss that as a coincidence but similarities are there, plus both cuisines rely heavily on grilled foods and seafood. And then there are the desserts.

Traditional Thai desserts which use eggs can be traced directly to the Portuguese traders. It was the Portuguese who introduced eggs to the Thais resulting in *foy thong*, 'golden threads' (*fios de ovos* in Portuguese), *thong yip*, 'pinched gold', named for their colour and the way they're formed, *Thong Yod*, and other desserts made with egg yolks cured or cooked in syrup. These desserts remain in forms recognisable even today in Portugal.

The Portuguese also introduced the Thais to a primitive form of oven baking which has resulted in *Khanom Kai*: a batter of eggs and sugar baked in a cast iron pan with ridges (like Madeleine). The resultant *Khanom kai* is very popular even today and features



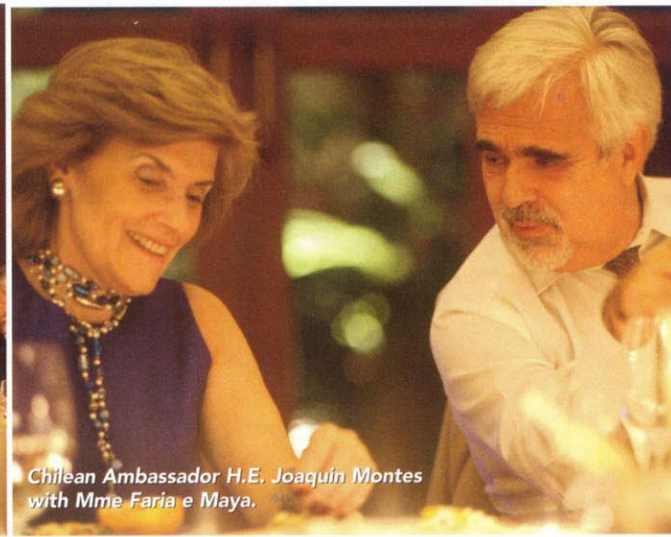
prominently at street stalls.

Obviously there are a lot of parallels between Thai and Portuguese cuisine and so it is hardly surprising then that wines from Portugal would work well with Thai food. But it took Fin to explore the possibilities. The wine importer launched its first Wine Explorer event with the Shangri-la Hotel to look at the options. That evening seven Portuguese wines from Fin, were showcased; six of them matched with a six course Thai Set Dinner at Salathip.

The evening started with aperitif at the residence of the Portuguese Ambassador H.E. Faria e Maya. After the aperitif guests were transferred by shuttle boat to the Salathip Restaurant at Shangri-La. The six-course set dinner was specially created by Benjawan Wisootsat (of Fin) in cooperation with the Chef de Cuisine of the Salathip Restaurant, Tassanee Putkaew.



Shangri-La GM Gerard Sintes & Benjawan Wisootsat



Chilean Ambassador H.E. Joaquín Montes with Mme Faria e Maya.



THE WINES

Aperitif

2005 Douro Branco DO, Lavradores de Feitoria, Douro, Portugal: Light golden colour. Clean aromas, with light herbal and lemony scents. Good balance on the palate, showing tropical fruit in the aftertaste. It was matched with a selection of Thai and Portuguese appetisers.

DINNER AT SALATHIP

2004 Vinho Branco 'Tres Bagos' Douro DOC, Lavradores de Feitoria, Douro, Portugal. This blend of Malvasia, Viosinho and Sauvignon Blanc is very aromatic, with good fruit character (lime, pineapple) and some complexity given by the oak where Lavradores has fermented one-third of the Viosinho. In the mouth the wine is fresh, with an acidity that balances the alcohol. It is complex, full of flavours and has a very long finish. The wine was served with a selection of hot Thai appetisers: krathong thong, rhoom and spring roll with prawn.

2005 Tres Bagos Sauvignon Blanc DO, Lavradores de Feitoria, Douro, Portugal. Golden hues mark the first impression of this splendid wine. Its unique aromatic profile mixes together herbal, citrusy, and mineral notes, making for a second to none, ripe, Sauvignon Blanc. Well balanced in the mouth, fruity, tropical, notes pop out of the glass, in an

unforgettable experience. It was perfectly matched with the grilled tiger prawn and pomelo salad.

2004 Tinto Douro DOC, Quinta do Crasto, Douro, Portugal. Made predominantly from Touriga Francesca and Tinto Roriz grapes. Deep, opaque red in colour with aromas of intense berry fruit with subtle oak complexity. On the palate it is rich, full and concentrated, showing great depth of fruit with well-integrated American oak, good tannic structure and a firm, dry finish.

2001 Tinto 'Tres Bagos' Douro DOC, Lavradores de Feitoria, Douro, Portugal. Made from 70-year old Touriga Nacional, Tinta Roriz, and Touriga Franca vines, this 2001 vintage is an impressive effort. A beautiful bouquet of scorched earth, blackberries, licorice, and spice box is followed by a seriously endowed wine with an underlying distinct minerality, firm structure, deep ruby/purple colour and admirable texture. The chef presented a Thai inspired Piri Piri chicken with stir-fried cashewnuts and chillies. *Kai yang* would have worked too.

2001 Tinto Reserva Douró DOC, Quinta do Crasto, Douro, Portugal. A very approachable wine made from Touriga Nacional and Tinto Roriz grapes. Big and concentrated, showing the intensity of fruit that only low yielding, old vines can produce. It has a complex aroma of ripe berry fruit and well integrated oak. The wine was served with what was truly the highlight of the evening: grilled beef tenderloin with masaman curry sauce served with jasmine fried rice with saffron and raisins. The beef was succulent and the sauce a perfect foil.

1999 Late Bottled Vintage Port, Quinta do Crasto, Douro, Portugal. Following its philosophy of only bottling wines under its own label from the best grapes of the Quinta in exceptional years, the LBV 1999 was produced from hand picked grapes of the Quinta's 40 to 60 year old vines. This wine shows an intense, concentrated vinous aroma with plummy fruit. The palate is firm and well structured, showing good fruit depth. The finish is long, dry and elegant.

Usually an after dinner tippie, here the port did double duty as dessert wine and worked. The desserts on offer were: *khanom morgaeng, Foi Thong, luk-chup and thong yod.* ☘