

Phuket Gazette

ANDAMAN Edition

Special supplement

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Best of Phuket 2011

AIRLINE Copy

Best of Phuket Awards 2011

The Gazette's 'Best of Phuket' Awards imply no losers. These are accolades, not trophies. The awards go to businesses and individuals brought to our attention by Gazette readers and editors for standing out as Phuket special assets – people and places we'd be happy to introduce to a friend, a tourist or a potential investor, just as we are doing here.

BUSINESS AWARDS



Warning: If you sit in it, you're probably going to buy it. And the car you like is probably in stock.

Acumen

Auto Express

With the world economy in crisis, Auto Express had the foresight and moxie to expand from Bangkok into the Phuket market by tempting buyers with a wide range of cars priced from 3 to 30 million baht. That the new business is welcome here, there can be no doubt. Their showroom is always chock-full of premium motors – Mercedes, Porsche, Audi, Lexus, Rolls Royce and other delights which appear to be rolling out to buyers at an astounding pace.

Acumen: "Keeness and depth of perception... especially in practical matters".

The investors seemed to spot an appetite that had perhaps long existed in Phuket, but had gone undetected. Then they had the savvy and the courage to acquire and lug an enormous inventory, perhaps in recognition of the fact that many purchases of vehicles like these occur on impulse. "We'll order it for you" wouldn't be good enough. The buyer wanted to sit in it... feel, smell, imagine... and own it – now.

Those wishing to experience this chain of events might start with autoexpress.co.th.

Brand Phuket

Thanyapura

"Ambitious" is a good word to describe Thanyapura, the massive complex containing the Thanyapura Sports and Leisure Club, the Phuket International Academy Day School, the Thanyapura Mind Centre, two locally branded hotels and a superb California-style restaurant.

The sprawling complex is thus home to a very unique mix of wide-open green space with state-of-the-art facilities for education, sports, arts, wellness and hospitality.

The Thanyapura community adds facilities that enhance very substantially the value of Phuket as a place to live, to visit, to meditate and obtain piece of mind, to educate children and to stage major events.

Laguna Phuket

In recent years, no other organization has consistently promoted the Phuket brand better internationally than Laguna Phuket. A destination in itself, Laguna has proved a master at hosting events large and small, and at promoting its own, made-in-Phuket brand worldwide. In doing so, the group has added inestimably to the essence of Phuket, the goodwill of the island, and the value of its brand.

Laguna's success in brand building has been achieved in large measure through events like the Laguna Phuket Triathlon, the Ironman 70.3 Asia-Pacific Championship and the Laguna Phuket International Marathon.

This beachside, 'lifestyle village' sets world class standards for other Asian hospitality entrepreneurs to match.

Twin Palms

It seems that Everything the Twin Palms hospitality group touches turns to gold. Their Twin Palms resort on Surin Beach continues to boast one of the highest room occupancy rates in Asia.

First-class and consistency are the trademarks of their various food and beverage operations on the west coast, including the Oriental Spoon, the island's benchmark for Sunday brunch, the Catch Beach Club, Bake and Flame. They also throw the island's biggest annual free party for locals and visitors as a classy 'thank-you' to Phuket.

This is yet another home-grown brand that has brought an abundance of quality – image and substance – to Phuket.

BEST
OF PHUKET
AWARDS
2011

Today's Awards go with our best wishes, and in the knowledge that we've almost surely missed at least as many Phuket stand-outs as the 27 presented here. Readers are thus encouraged to continue to contact us with their recommendations for 'Best of Phuket' during the coming year.

– Gazette editors

SERVICE AWARDS

Hospitality



Nuttaphat ('Phat') Nithattarachai

Company: Twin Palms / Bake / Flame
Position: Operations Manager

Khun Phat, 37 and a Phuket native, has been with Twin Palms since the resort opened in 2005.

She is the manager of the Cherngtalay branch of Bake, one of three in the Twin Palms chain of bakeries. She also pitches in at Flame, the new Twin Palms restaurant adjacent to Bake. She wins a Gazette service award for her friendly demeanor and dedication to both her employer and her customers. Visit her at Bake. You'll know her by the signature speed and efficiency with which she works.



Chonlada ('Tack') Meesopha

Restaurant: Boathouse Wine & Grill at the Boathouse resort
Position: Waitress

Khun Tack, a 23-year-old from Loei province, is a recent and very promising entry into Phuket's hospitality world. She joined the Boathouse resort in Kata as a trainee in 2008. A recent graduate of the Prince of Songkla University's Faculty of Hospitality and Tourism, she is now a waitress in the resort's renowned Wine & Grill. She stands out with a winning smile, excellent English and an unmistakable wish to please.



Tawatchai ('Nok') Ukhsuwan

Restaurant: Les Anges at Royal Phuket Marina
Position: Assistant Manager

Khun Nok, 34 years old and a native of Songkhla province, has worked at Les Anges since the popular restaurant opened five years ago when he joined as a bartender.

He says that providing service is the kind of work he enjoys most. We believe him.

Have lunch or dinner at Les Anges today, then go back two weeks from now. There's a good chance he will have remembered what you ordered today.



Ponboon ('Ying') Nueakhiao

Restaurant: 'Into Thai' at the Evason resort
Position: Captain

Khun Ying, who has worked 11 years at the Evason, is 36 years old. The Suratthani native joined the predecessor hotel at this location in Rawai, the Phuket Island Resort, as a trainee in 2000. She says she loves working in Food & Beverage and that the part of her job she likes most is taking care of the resort's many return guests.

A Gazette editor who recently dined (anonymously) at 'Into Thai' told us that this F&B professional is "the best".



Wichayada ('Tha') Inroung

Restaurant: Anantara Phuket Villas
Position: Senior Housekeeping Supervisor

Khun Tha, age 40 and from Suratthani, was a member of the 2008 pre-opening team at the Anantara. Her colleagues say that she is a very hard worker and a good team leader, and guests note that she is genuinely service minded.

The resort's senior management confirms the reputation. In October of this year she was voted 'Employee of The Year' for 2011.

SERVICE AWARD

Public Service



Sgt Maj Hatthaporn recovering at Phuket International Hospital. Photo: Janpen Upatising

It is not often that a local police officer achieves widespread public admiration and respect for both job performance and selflessness. But this is what occurred within a matter of hours on June 12 this year when Sgt Maj Hatthaporn Tongkhaobua fought off armed robbers in a gun battle in front of the Alpina Nalina Resort in Kata.

The two robbers, already wanted by police in Cherngtalay for a series of motorbike thefts, died in the gunfire and Sgt Hatthaporn spent many days in hospital, followed by a month at home, recovering from multiple bullet wounds.

The modest officer told the *Phuket Gazette* that he still struggles with mixed feelings about the experience.

"I feel proud that I was able to perform my duty as a police officer, but I also feel sorry for the two dead. Even if they were thieves, they were still people," he said.

ENVIRONMENT AWARDS

Marina Phuket

Most developers in Phuket still start the building process by razing every square inch of the land with bulldozers and clearing off anything that shows even the slightest hint of green. But in terms of respect for the environment, the Marina Cottages resort on Kata Beach was more than two decades ahead of its local competitors when it started building 22 years ago.

Resort owner Somchai Silapanont knew that natural beauty was, and would continue to be, a major draw for Phuket. He preserved at least 70 percent of the coconut plantation on which his cottages were built, and the resort remains today as an incredible seaside botanical garden, despite the dense development at its gates.

This property is a showcase of a man's foresight and understanding of how value can be built, not by going with the flow and razing nature, but rather by defying the trend.

Gazette readers are encouraged to visit Marina Cottages to behold non-threatening development at its best. While there, enjoy a meal at their 'On the Rocks' restaurant where the sea will be within a couple of meters of your elbow. Marinaphuket.com.

Evason Phuket

Evason Phuket & Six Senses Spa's environmental program is an excellent example of how Phuket resorts and lodgings worldwide should conduct their business operations – with an environmentally friendly conscience.

Under the watchful eye of a full-time Environment Officer, the resort follows the Green Globe 21 Company Standard, focusing on energy efficiency, water management, waste management, social commitment, protection of natural surroundings, air quality and, quite uniquely in Phuket, noise control. Sixsenses.com.

RESTAURANTS

Luxury (1,200 baht and up)

Phuket is a culinary paradise, with what could well be one of the widest ranges of foods, prices and dining styles in Southeast Asia. The island's menus offer everything from a tantalizing Thai lunch for 50 baht to sheer opulence at several thousand baht per person for Euro-dining with fine wine.

The prices shown under each of the three restaurant categories here are indications only, and are based on an average three-course meal, including service and taxes. The prices exclude beverages.

The pricing gap between the high end of our 'Popular Mid-range' listings and the starting point for 'Luxury' establishments reflects a dearth of restaurants with offerings in the 800 to 1,200 baht range.

Mom Tri's Kitchen



Lovers of fine wine and dining are never disappointed with the spectacular views at Mom Tri's Kitchen. Reservations are a must at this restaurant, with its extravagant Wine Spectator Award-winning wine cellar offering more than 700 wines, including 16 choices by the glass. Their refined Thai dishes have made them famous, but with two executive chefs on staff, they also serve 5-star European cuisine. Mom Tri's Kitchen is located on a hillside over Kata Noi Beach. See villaroyalephuket.com. Tel: 076-333568

Silk Restaurant & Bar



Silk Restaurant & Bar is one of Phuket's 'not-to-be-missed' gastronomic experiences. Chef Oy takes fine dining to the top level, refining classic Thai dishes by giving them a royal, contemporary twist. The fine flavors derive from using time-honored Thai techniques and only the freshest local produce and ingredients. Overlooking Phuket's spectacular west coast sunsets, Silk Restaurant & Bar is located at Andara Resort & Villas on Kamala's famous Millionaires' Mile. More details at silkphuket.com. Or telephone 076-338777, ext 680.

Kabuki



Count on luxury lodgings provider JW Marriot to give us an opportunity to experience world-class Japanese cuisine. Billed as a 'form of Japanese theatre', guests at Kabuki are treated to sushi chefs showcasing their art behind a large counter. The big star is the end result. Fresh Teppanyaki-style Sushi! Kabuki has an up-market feel but is still affordable by Western standards. Kabuki is located on the lobby level of the Marriot resort complex on Mai Khao Beach. See jwmarriottphuketdining.com/kabuki/. Tel: 076-338000

Popular Mid-range

400-800 baht*

Wine Connection Deli & Bistro at Central

Great value and consistent, quality food makes the Wine Connection Deli & Bistro at Central a favorite of Phuket locals and visitors alike. Their newest outlet is a culmination of 12 years of work perfecting their popular Mediterranean style in Southeast Asia. 'Comfort foods', such as cheese and meat cold plates, salads, fresh pastas, pizzas and grilled meats, and 700 varieties of wine and imported beers fill their menu. Wine Connection Deli & Bistro is located at Central Festival Phuket, 1st Floor, Plaza Zone. See wineconnection.co.th. Tel: 076-307064/5

Kan Eang at Pier

Kan Eang at Pier is a local culinary institution, having served locals and visitors on Chalong Bay for over 30 years. This restaurant's lovely seaside ambience, 'off-the-dock' fresh seafood and scrumptious local Thai favorites have helped make it a famous Phuket venue. Lobster, oysters, crab and prawns are on the daily fresh sheet, all served in a choice of styles to suit anyone's particular taste. Kan Eang at Pier is located on the Chalong Bay pier.

See kaneang-pier.com. Tel: 076-381212

Lim's Restaurant & Bar

On Phuket island, Lim's is where the hip and groovy 'kids' (of all ages) hang out and nibble 'Modern Thai' cuisine while sipping tropical cocktails and fine wines. The atmosphere is sophisticated and relaxed, tucked into a hillside setting of tall trees and lush vegetation. Co-owner Daniel Bosshard acts as the consummate host, touting the restaurant's latest

menu and wine additions. Lim's Restaurant & Bar is located above Kalim Bay, just a five-minute drive from Patong Beach. More details at limsphuket.com. Tel: 076-344834

La Gaetana

No other eating establishment in Phuket lives up to its authenticity like the charming and intimate Italian bistro La Gaetana. Guests can easily imagine owner Giovanni Ferrara's mama slaving away in the kitchen to create their home-style Italian classics.

Giovanni is the heart and soul of this family-run establishment, personally attending to the gourmet needs of each and every guest.

Stylized like a small, rustic Italian café, the ambience is cozy and comfortable.

La Gaetana is located on Phuket Road in the heart of Phuket Town near Robinsons. Tel: 076-250523

Popular at local prices

50-400 baht*

Thammachart

Visitors love Phuket Town for its multi-cultural, eclectic mix. Thammachart Restaurant, or Natural Restaurant, embodies this unique town with its quirky multi-level seating areas dressed with waterfalls and Chinese antiques. They consistently serve some of the island's best Thai food and choice seafood specialties. Thammachart is located on Soi Phutorn in Phuket Town. Tel: 076-214037

Kota-Khao-Mun-Kai

Eating the traditional Thai dish Khao Mun Kai (Hainanese chicken rice, or chicken on rice) would seem like a relatively easy proposition with so many restaurants on the island. But don't try telling that to the local Thai or foreign residents as they know that people drive from all over Phuket province just to eat at this aptly named restaurant. The famous establishment, where a good lunch is unlikely to exceed 50

or 60 baht, is located in Phuket Town near the Robinsons department store. Tel: 076-212816

Laem Hin Seafood

This 'hide-a-way' restaurant is famous and well worth locating. The views from their over-the-sea patio at the edge of Phang Nga Bay are a big attraction, but the live seafood tanks with fish, prawns, lobster and crabs are the main reason Laem Hin Seafood has become such a busy eatery, especially on weekends. Laem Hin is located on a peninsula about a ten-minute drive north of Phuket Town. Tel: 076-238156

Uptown Restaurant

The Uptown Restaurant features fast food Thai-style at its best. Open for breakfast, lunch and dinner, this is a popular venue for locals who snack on an assortment of Thai specialties including Pad Thai, noodle soup and fresh spring rolls. The landmark is located at the front of Thavorn Grand Plaza on Phang Nga Road, near Robinsons department store in Phuket Town. Tel: 076-215359

Bang Pae Seafood Restaurant

Who better than Thai people to determine the best restaurants in Phuket? After sixteen years of operations, the Bang Pae Seafood Restaurant continues to attract throngs of Thais (and now local expats and tourists as well) to their family-run, fresh seafood venue. Bang Pae Seafood is located at water's edge in Bang Pae Village, 10 km from the Heroines' Monument, on the way to east coast Ao Por. Tel: 076-529059

Peang Prai

This small Thai restaurant is a local favorite for those searching for Phuket's specialized Southern Thai cuisine. Peang Prai's daily fresh sheet includes a delectable Hor Mok, a local style fish curry cooked in a banana leaf, and an array of Thai salads made to your personal spice specifications. This delightful place is located in a magnificent forest at Bang Pae Waterfall Park. Tel: 085-832 7439

Farang Restaurant

With two convenient locations in Phuket, Farang Restaurant continues to attract equal numbers of Thais and foreigners with their Thai approach to western food. Fresh creations from their kitchen include squeezed juices, pastas, pizzas, grilled meats and classic deserts like chocolate cake. Farang Restaurants are located on the Bypass Road, next to the Index Shopping Mall and also in Cherng Talay. Tel: 076-271049

Baan Suan Layan Restaurant

Baan Suan Layan Restaurant proves that people in Phuket often travel to remote locations only to eat outstanding food. Set in the jungle hills behind the Laguna complex, the atmosphere is unique with its beautiful waterfalls, tropical and orchid gardens, fishponds, peacocks and farm animals. But the main attraction is their refined Thai food at affordable prices. Baan Suan Layan Restaurant is located behind the Laguna complex, on the road to Naithon. Tel: 076-305566

Suay

Suay operates under the masterful culinary talents of Chef Noi, a seasoned international chef with Michelin-starred restaurant experience. He's moved out on his own to create a first-class dining experience without the 5-star expense. Guests can expect a stunning array of Thai and Western-style dishes fused with his unique Asian style. Suay is located on Takua Pa Road (near Rassada Road) in Phuket Town. Tel: 081-747 2424

Family Restaurant

The Family Restaurant is a bit of a misnomer for Phuket's finest Mediterranean eatery. Opened over ten years ago, they serve truly authentic Mediterranean classics, such as falafel, hummus and kebabs, homemade daily by the husband-and-wife team of Israeli expats Shicartzy Ovadia and his Thai wife Ben. Family Restaurant is located in Chalong on Viset Road, about a kilometer from the Chalong traffic circle heading toward Rawai. Tel: 081-787 3716

* Based on an average three-course meal, including service and taxes. Excludes beverages.