

Web Flavors

Five savory sites explore the best eats in Bangkok and beyond by **Alisara Chirapongse**

Word-of-mouth buzz is often a better gauge for judging service-oriented businesses, like restaurants, than advertising, PR or reviews from snooty newspapers or magazines (except of course, *BK's*, which you can always rely on). To find some off-the-beaten-path grub, ditch your clipped articles and pocket sized food guidebooks and go online for some first-hand reviews written by real deal food fanatics who feel compelled to share their opinions with the world through their blogs and websites. So if you want another source of reviews with personality, visit these sites and learn where you can find the yummiest treats.



ENJOY THAI FOOD
www.enjoythaifood.com

The dish: Part of the Paknam Web Network, which is devoted to promoting Thai culture to the world, half of www.enjoythaifood.com is a food blog, and the other half is a primer for Thai cooking, offering recipes and cooking videos from real street vendors and stalls. On the home page, you'll find a blog, revealing the latest food finds, with some insight into the Thai eating culture.

The flavor: You won't find scoops or reviews of Bangkok's newly opened swanky fusion restaurants here, as the site is strictly devoted to the street. What you will find is the lowdown on food vendors, where to find food markets and how to make your favorite traditional Thai dishes. "Basically we want to make it easier for people to enjoy the great range of Thai food offered on the streets," says Richard Barrow, the owner of the website, "There is no point in paying 200 baht for a plate of *phad thai* in a restaurant when you can buy a possibly more delicious version on the street for only 25 baht."

In short: There is a great list of easy recipes for common Thai dishes that is a great resource for foreigners who want to explore the culinary world of Thailand, as well as for locals who only know how to make an omelet (if that).

JUP'S PINTOH
www.jupspintoh.com

The dish: Jup's little online lunchbox packs in a lot of goodies for foodies. Though not updated daily, this blog still serves as a peek into the quintessential Bangkok eating experience. There are little anecdotes and personal accounts along with Jub's reviews, which offer vivid descriptions, giving readers the chance to practically taste the food she has eaten and written about. Her personal touches are funny and her writing style is easy to read.

The flavor: "My passion grows stronger each time I discover a new eatery or taste amazing food," says the self-proclaimed foodaholic. So she HAD to get a blog going. Her tasty and humorous touches also provide important details such as prices, pictures of the dishes and her opinions of each dish. And at the bottom of every post there's the relevant contact information for your convenience.

In short: The blog is great for people who love to read, as Jup's reviews are detailed and informative. If you're not looking for any restaurant in particular, the site is still an excellent guide about new interesting places to eat in Bangkok.



REAL THAI
realthai.blogspot.com

The dish: This is one enticing blog, starting with its spicy "Real Thai" logo at the top. This food blogger is a professional photographer as well as a writer for *Lonely Planet* and the *Bangkok Post*, but the author of this blog, Austin Bush, relies more on images to show his love for food, "To be honest, I don't really enjoy writing very much, so I tend to emphasize photos on my blog."

The flavor: Through his travels, Austin has been exposed to a plethora of flavors, but he still thinks that Thai fare is the tastiest, "I can hardly imagine a better place in the world to do a food blog than Thailand." Standard entries are a mouth-watering image followed by a brief but descriptive take on the dish or featured restaurant.

In short: Austin makes all of your sidewalk favorites look appetizing with his skilled photography along with his written anecdotes. If you're a fan of hole-in-the-walls, then you'll love this blog.



Hungry?
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BKK MENU
www.bkkmenu.com

Their selection of restaurants is a little bit on the high end of the price spectrum, but this Thai online food guide is comprehensive enough to help you decide where to go for dinner. The site's restaurant database categorizes by cuisine and food types (grill, seafood, bakery, etc.), which is convenient, and the site also offers recipes and food tips. If you like what you see here, you can subscribe for a BKKMenu Privilege Card, so you can get discounts at selected restaurants.

WHERE TO EAT BANGKOK
www.wheretoeat-bangkok.com

This guide, well known in its book form, goes online with its directory of Bangkok's top eateries. The list of restaurants isn't as comprehensive as other online food guides, but this site is easy to navigate. The site also offers useful details with its restaurant listings such as details about parking options and whether reservations are necessary, and the site offers reviews from fine dining options to unassuming soi stalls.

FOOD BY PHONE
www.foodbyphonebkk.com

Too lazy to go out, but sick of home-delivered Pizza Hut, with its extra cheesy crusts? You can get Bangkok's fine restaurant dishes delivered to your home with Food By Phone. Choose from Indian, Chinese, Italian, Mexican or more... the choices are quite vast. You can order online (or, obviously, by phone: 02-663-4663). They also deliver such non-food merchandise as DVDs, magazines and health supplements.

CHEZ PIM
chezpim.typepad.com

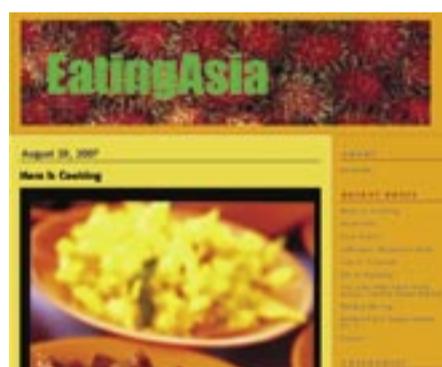
The dish: A celebrity food blogger? Pim is a Bangkok-born and California-based professional enthusiast of the culinary arts, as food writer, food photographer and cook. She has taken her foodie ways online, and she's had her entries featured in the pages of *The Guardian*, *The Washington Post*, as well as *Food & Wine* magazine.

The flavor: Pim's delicious posts bring together flavors from around the world. Her blog, however, focuses on fine cuisines such as those found in five-star hotels or at hip up-and-coming urban restaurants. Her almost edible photos and fun-to-read reviews will keep you clicking on new pages and may entice you to travel to the places she describes, based just on the pixels you see on your screen.

In short: Gluttonous globetrotters with money are pretty much the only ones who can afford to enjoy these places offline. However, if you're a food lover, either as a consumer or as a chef, you will benefit from her encyclopedic knowledge of fine cuisine. And Thais will appreciate the worldly culinary perspective from one of our own.



EATING ASIA
eatingasia.typepad.com



The dish: Another great combination of yummy images and delicious narratives, Eating Asia is the "blogchild" of Robyn Eckhardt and photographer David Hagerman, whose love for Asian culture and cooking have earned them recognition both online and offline.

Though they are based in Malaysia, you can still get their perspectives from other Asian countries such as Thailand, Vietnam, Hong Kong, and Shanghai.

The flavor: Eating Asia really explores authentic Asian food. You won't find recommendations about expensive cuisines here; instead, you can glimpse slices of various Asian cultures through the blog's coverage of simple, traditional dishes, new and interesting finds as well as coverage of Asian street food. The blog is also easy to navigate; posts are categorized by country.

In short: If you love Asian culture as well as food from the East, and you have no problem exploring the back streets to find the best dishes, then count on Eating Asia as an important resource. ■