

Full of Eastern promise

By *Andrea Coppin*

The enigmatic gaze of Far Eastern statues look down over an ornate gateway that beckons to a flight of stairs beyond, leading below into a Siamese garden. This leaves visitors in no doubt whatever that, for the best part, Grantham has been left behind and that a new experience is opening up. A winding pathway leads to the Siam Garden Thai Restaurant, a place of delectable expectations. Your welcome is sincere and beautiful in its honesty; greeted as you are individually with that timeless charm of the Thai people; a simple bow with hands clasped out of respect.

The restaurant is elegant, spotlessly clean, and spacious, with a number of tables overlooking the garden landscaping, just as if you were in a Thai house set in a leafy glade in a far-off land. Within moments of taking your seat, exotic aromas begin to excite your senses, and, if you've never eaten Thai food before, you quickly begin to realise that you're going to be in for a treat. Couple this together with well-chosen imagery and décor from the Far East, and a courteousness that is seductive in its charm and you have the ingredients for perfection.

One look at the menu also tells you that you're in for something different. The names of dishes are written phonetically to aid with Thai pronunciation, although, through a detailed description of each dish, you know exactly what's on offer. Clever use of a grading system for the spiciness of your choice is shown simply by using one, two or three small pepper symbols to indicate, normal, medium or hot tastes. Having said that, if there's a particular meal you fancy which is indicated as too hot, the restaurant will tone it down for you. Even if you want to customise your meal, as we did when we ordered duck, the restaurant was happy to oblige our request by removing the skin prior to cooking. Nothing it seemed was too much trouble.

Thai food has a quality all its own. There's little by way of Indian cuisine to compare it with, and Chinese food doesn't come close either. Suffice to say that it's instantly pleasurable and in the case of the Siam Garden beautifully presented.

There were four in our group, and each of us had different starters. The soup allowed every taste bud to experience a work out, whilst the delicate prawn spring rolls with attendant spicy dip was heavenly and bursting with flavour.

Our main courses were varied too, as we each had our own preferences. This section of the menu is extremely wide ranging, with an incredible choice of cooking options to



tempt you. The flavours in Thai food are subtle but definite; sauces don't overpower the taste of the meat and vegetables on offer, but they do change it in ways that are exciting and mouth-watering. It's easy to see that this is achieved with practiced skill. There's no sense of a single taste, rather each mouthful seems to release something new. There's no doubt about it; Thai food is interesting, for all the right reasons.

We were so bowled over by our first two visits that I booked a table for Richard's birthday on April 15th. It was the perfect way to round off his special day. We're confident that you'll get as much enjoyment out of it as we did. Bon Appetite, or whatever it is they say on old Siam.



Siam Garden

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