



Mondo - Da Noi Bangkok: more than a fine Italian restaurant. It is a story in the making

Dal nostro corrispondente a Bangkok - 22 apr 2022 (Prima Notizia 24) Interview with Tullio Ferri, partner of the restaurant Da Noi Bangkok, located in the center of the Thai megalopolis and capital, through whose human and personal story opens a real novel made of fascinating pages.

Tullio Ferri welcomes you with his intense gaze, clear eyes and a build that smells of sport lived in a way that is anything but casual. "I'm sorry, but do you have sports in your family, do you play sports?". "Yes, I practice swimming. I just came back from an open water competition, five kilometers, a rather tough race. But I did very well." Fifty-one years old, married, two daughters, Tullio Ferri is today the deus ex machina of a restaurant that to call such is rather reductive, it is "Da Noi", located in one of the central hearts of the metropolitan fabric of Bangkok, the Thai capital, not far from Sukhumvit Road and from the stop of the BTS SkyTrain light rail line, in a megalopolis that appears progressively and increasingly cosmopolitan as one gets to know it. A colleague who works for a famous restaurant guide in Italy, one day explained to me: "You see, when I visit a restaurant and then write my review, I look at two factors above all: the first is the one for which I generally avoid restaurants-pizzerias, because it often happens that one of them is bad. The second element to which I pay particular attention, as soon as I enter a restaurant, are the bathrooms". At "Da Noi" the bathrooms are not only clean and perfectly maintained, but above all they are furnished with a very special taste, taps, bathroom ceramics, even the floors recall the atmosphere you feel when you come home, a house furnished not in an improvised way but with style. Black and white tiles, exposed copper piping, books (in Italian) dated and collected with a string; upstairs the bathrooms are furnished with two pairs of shoes affixed above the toilet, a pair for men and a pair for women. A room for receptions, a larger room for private or corporate parties. The walls of the entire room, from the ground floor to the upper floor, are decorated with paintings by authors that are changed every month or every two months. A real Modern and Contemporary Art Gallery that can be enjoyed on sight. Outside there is a swimming pool with a relaxation area and a refined atmosphere, elegant but not in such a way as to inspire reluctance or fear. An elegance that welcomes you peacefully. We also ask you: how did you end up here in Bangkok? What brought you here? Actually, I haven't lived in my city of origin, Rome, for a long time. I come from a family engaged in the textile industry, my father pioneered a textile manufacturing business in Pakistan in 1955, joining his brother who had opened that business in 1951. I have been working in this field for twenty years in Bangladesh, which is known to be the third largest textile production centre in the world. With my wife Simona Lepri, we have worked intensively in this field in Bangladesh. After 1998, we set up on our own, creating from nothing a company specialized in the manufacture of sweaters, until we had 1,800 people in the company. At a certain point, however, we realized

that we had a lot of work ahead of us that was difficult for the two of us to do on a daily basis. And then, there is another element to consider: all around us, the industry was evolving strongly. This meant that we had to commit an ever-increasing amount of capital in the direction of innovation and in innovating tools, machines and the entire industrial production apparatus. A third partner, who contractually would have taken over the entire company if my wife and I had decided to exit, investing about 10 million Dollars, came into being permanently in front of a real historical watershed and that ended up having an absolute relevance also for my family: the terrorist attack of July 1, 2016. The attack in Dhaka where twenty people died -at the hands of Islamic extremists-, nine were Italians, weren't they? At that time, I was President of the International Club, actually, it was a structure that had all the familiarity of the community of foreigners that gathered around us and brought all the warmth and variety of cultures of origin. Well, the Italians who died - precisely because of this intimate atmosphere we had created, because of that place where we had all been frequent visitors for some time - were friends, people we knew well, whom we had learned to respect, but above all with whom we had always shared hopes, aspirations, projects, anxieties and also moments of carefree joy, of happy and light-hearted celebration. I remember very well the anxiety of waiting to know the names of the Italians who had fallen under the terrorists' torture, an infinite pain and a deep sorrow. We decided to leave Bangladesh. We returned to Italy, continuing to travel back and forth between the two countries. In the meantime, the girls had reached the ages of 12 and 7 respectively. So after a time of commuting and some temporary residence in Italy, we considered moving to Bangkok. My wife, in smartworking always continued to follow her main activity as a consultant for the textile industry. In March 2020 she practically managed to catch the last flight from Dhaka to Bangkok before running into what was the first lockdown from Covid in Thailand. A tragic moment as well. How have you experienced what I often call the Covid Age? The time of waiting? For my wife Simona, it was possible to continue her work as a consultant remotely. In my case, however, I "engineered" myself in various ways. I learned, by intensively snooping also via the web, how to make cheese, just to give an example, coming to produce soft cheeses, finding in a short time of research even the rennet and buying it via web on Lazada. I -along with others- continued to think of our home as I was used to in Bangladesh, when I was President of the International Club of Dhaka, we hosted up to fifty people. From this experience was born the idea: let's open a restaurant? With two other members, amidst a thousand difficulties, we started this new experience, we opened the restaurant and in only three months, we reached the optimum of full and assiduous attendance. At that moment, only three months after the opening, another epoch-making event occurred. You mean the Bangkok lockdown? We closed, we had to close because of the lockdown and when it came to reopen, nothing was the same. The numbers tell us that, after the parenthesis of the second and third Covid wave, which then became Omicron, today it is much more difficult to scrutinize and analyze the flow of customer numbers. In our case, we are talking about a clientele that, although coming from various corners of the world - especially Japanese because our restaurant is located in a slice of metropolitan area historically inhabited and lived in by Japanese - is particularly open-minded, attentive to the quality of ingredients and knows well the fundamental characteristics of Italian cuisine. To our client you cannot serve an approximate

wine, you cannot serve a carbonara with cream, because in a moment, he understood if you are respecting the history and the soul of Italian Cooking or not. The photos of the competition at sea, the screenshots of the dialogues on the occasion of the attack in Dacca, a coffee of a well-known Italian brand, the face that lights up when talking about his daughters and their future education that will most likely take place abroad and not in Italy. Tullio Ferri's existential and human story is truly surprising. Da Noi Bangkok, 269, Sukhumvit 31, Sukhumvit Rd, Klongton-Neu, Wattana Bangkok, Thailand 10110 Tel.: 062 471 6431 Website: <http://danoi.co/>

di Francesco Tortora Venerdì 22 Aprile 2022