



***Mondo - Ailati Resto and the human tale of Ruggiero Papeo: a young soul cloaked in deep professional experience conveying the flavors of Italy in Thailand***

**Dal nostro corrispondente a Bangkok - 15 lug 2022 (Prima Notizia 24) Opened in 2019, defying the dark age of Covid, the Cucina**

**Italiana Ailati Resto restaurant now shows an intimate and welcoming face of Italian-ness in Bangkok.**

I suddenly, albeit gently, find myself in front of a veritable stargate: on this side, I see before me ravioli, in fresh pasta, in basil sauce, fragrant fresh cherry tomatoes and stracciatella cheese. Next to it is another a plate with bruschetta made with pane-pizza, Prosciutto di Parma and Mozzarella. On the other side, beyond the window, is the frenetic, ever-living energy of Bangkok's busy, populated Charoen Krung Road, a long ribbon of asphalt that is drawn along this District of the Thai Capital, Khwaeng Silom, Bang Rak. We are just a few meters in front of the Saphan Taksin stop of the BTS, the skytrain that towers over and through Bangkok. And all this while pleasantly conversing with a fellow countryman, Apulian by origin (he is from Barletta), Ruggiero Papeo, the deus ex machina of Ailati Resto where one can fully immerse oneself in the aromas and flavors of Italian Cuisine, in an intimate, soothing, cool atmosphere, colored with sage green and shades of forest green, exposed red bricks, vaults with wooden beams also exposed. The location is arranged on two floors, the upper floor is accessed by a spiral staircase made entirely of wood, designed in an absolutely creative and innovative way. Outside the venue, there is also space to enjoy food or the more classic "Italian aperitivo" that in Bangkok is soon becoming a real "must" of the cosmopolitan daily scenario typical of the Capital of the Kingdom of Siam. After coffee, pizza, spaghetti, linguine with seafood, red wines but also Prosecco more recently, now the very Italian "Spritz" is making more and more room in the Bangkok scene. "The original building structure is very old -Ruggiero Papeo reports- and had all the characteristics of the local architectural styles of past centuries, now surrounded or replaced by modern and contemporary construction that define the current look of the whole of Bangkok, a face where ancient traditions and more driven modernity coexist, We tried to transform this structure into a relaxing, cool but at the same time cozy and intimate place. That is why we have chosen classic furniture, Chippendale-style armchairs, wooden chairs in colors in tune with the mood of the whole environment, even the dishes follow the same line of thought, they are made of artistic ceramics with colors that welcome various shades of green and tobacco, just to give a feeling of familiar harmony and Mediterranean conviviality." When was Ailati Resto born? It opened in 2019 and immediately had to face the Covid hurdle, with the lockdown and all the restrictions that were enacted nationally and about the city of Bangkok specifically. Closing and opening hours, the hours of alcohol mixing, when to be able to keep open, when-instead-we had to close altogether because the lockdown in its harshest forms was enforced. It was a

pretty dark time. Today we are slowly coming out of it but there are not a few traces that all this has left not only in the economy but also in people's minds and psyches. Before the Covid, getting out of the house, seeking relaxation, being together with people you want to spend pleasant time with, listening to live music, enjoying dishes even different from one's usual tradition, was a typical trait not only in Thai tourist resorts but also here in Bangkok, the house was a kind of waypoint, where to get ready to go to work or where to come back in the evening to go to rest. Outside the home, Thais used to feed themselves, enjoy music and shows, go to parks, attend public events. Covid has profoundly marked this whole version of Thai collective and individual living. Today, one is more reluctant to go out, in the dwelling that had become a place to seek safety from the spread of the Covid, now between streaming movies, dedicated channels, the delivering of foods that bring everything to your doorstep in a very short time by ordering them with apps, the home has turned into the daily safe haven. Now, something is slowly changing, the desire to live together, to be with others, to experience sociality that has been severely restricted is returning. How long have you been in Thailand? I came to Thailand somewhat by chance, now I can say that I have been living there for ten years. In Italy I had cultivated very different professional experiences, I had -for example- founded the first wedding car rental company, LoveCar, a company that soon became famous, in Puglia it was in great demand, the first to have a limousine. To give a figure, before I came here to Thailand, I had done 280 weddings with my LoveCar service in 4 months. With my car rental company, we had also established cooperation with the nightclubs in our area to safely escort young people coming out of the clubs. One day, I found that I was practically working most of the time to pay taxes. Between accountants, tax preparers etc., the Italian bureaucratic apparatus had become particularly oppressive. So, after a time spent working and existentially in San Martin, Caribbean, where my father could better cure his psoriasis, an ailment that afflicted him, where I had started a watersport-related business, and because suddenly the local government concession had expired, I was faced with a new opportunity, which was to move to Pattaya and experiment in the restaurant business. My father had been in the textile business for 40 years, more specifically, in the T-shirt business. In general he always looked for places with sunshine where he could take care of his health. I had a little nest egg and decided to take an opportunity that was offered to me in Pattaya, which, at the time, I didn't even really know where it was geographically located, actually." Has Thailand, in these ten years, from your perspective, changed a lot? I have changed a lot in these ten years. In my view, Thailand has not changed much in these ten years, it is rather static. Rather, I would ask myself, how much has Italy changed in these ten years. And the answer certainly is, "A lot." Viewed from here, from abroad, it seems paradoxical to me that the average Italian does not realize how much Italy has been lost, impoverished, weakened, and how much it has lost of its identity, an identity that was strongly recognizable in past decades. Wage levels that have remained static in a world that -all around- is rapidly changing. Today, an Italian earns less throughout the West and correlatively pays more for gasoline, gas, daily living, has taxation that has become increasingly high and oppressive in the face of daily living that has become increasingly difficult, with wealth and well-being increasingly poorly distributed. And the network of services offered-School, Health, etc.-has been increasingly fading and weakening. This

used to be our forte, more accessible services, a more decent standard of living, hopes to be nurtured. Today young people are moving away from Italy and taking all their intelligence, freshness and vibrancy to other nations. Ailati Resto, Bangkok 1495 Charoen Krung Rd, Khwaeng Silom, Bang Rak, Bangkok 098-350 1304 BTS Silom Line Saphan Thaksin Exit n. 3

*di Francesco Tortora Venerdì 15 Luglio 2022*