



Mondo - One of the gems you can discover in Bangkok: Coastiera

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24) Interview with the general manager of Coastiera, a high-end Italian restaurant location that brings prestige to the good name of Italy in Bangkok and Thailand.

Giacomo Malagese explains the concept of Coastiera and recounts the human heritage and ideas that accompanied the recent birth of this true experience of the senses that is Coastiera. Coastiera's motto, inscribed in its logo, is "Love Life" One of the gems Bangkok gives to those who really want to explore it, Coastiera, a location that calling it a "restaurant" might be rather restrictive definition. One must first delve into the Ploenchit area, not far from the BTS skytrain station of the same name, arrive at the tall building of 140 Wireless where at Ground Zero is the first big surprise, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Store Thailand. A museum area where you can actually admire but also buy Art objects depicting some of the most famous works of Modern and Contemporary Art transferred to everyday objects, such as may be travel bags, watches, necklaces, rings, colorful and refined stationery items at the same time. At the entrance, there are also two Steinway quarterstaff pianos, one white and one black, the black one playing automatically, guided by a tablet, scores of classical or pop music revisited in a lounge key, such as some rearranged Beatles songs. Watching the keyboard playing itself, imagining the fingers of the invisible pianist performing those scores, is a hypnotic spectacle, one that fascinates and leaves a wide ecstatic smile on the face of those who visit this crisp and artistically rich and purposeful venue. On the upper floors of the tall, wide building are numerous offices, crowded with office workers and advanced service industry figures who well portray the spirit of a megacity increasingly immersed in the modernization processes that characterize Thailand and the entire arc of Southeast Asian countries. At Level B, descending through a spiral staircase, you reach the Coastiera. A reception desk that looks like the front office table of a museum, paintings by an Italian Author reminiscent of the stylistic features of early twentieth-century Italian pictorial art, Fattori being one of the first names that come to mind. Everything is sophisticated, ultra-modern marbles and chairs arranged in a circle in this large circular entrance area at the base of the large marble spiral staircase. Giacomo Malagese, originally from Pitigliano, is anticipated by a broad, bright smile, introduces you to the interiors of Coastiera; you enter, thus, an Italic world transplanted to the heart of Bangkok. Thirty-seven years, a good 15 of which were spent in Thailand. But how did you get to Thailand and why did you decide to live and work there on an ongoing basis? The first time was a vacation trip with my brother, who now lives in Australia and is interested in Enology. From then on, I cultivated and implemented the idea of staying here in Thailand and living there as well as working there. And my professional experience has always been in the restaurant and adjoining sectors, I have also been a bartender, waiter, worked with Limoncello, with Garibaldis, with L'Opera, L'Oliva and other Italian restaurant locations here in Bangkok, all the way up to management roles, given my long experience in lower level roles.

Chef, Andrea Ortu, originally from Cagliari, is also a longtime resident of Thailand, now living and working here for seven years. He previously worked at Bottega Di Luca here in Bangkok. This kind of diversificate experiences allows us today, to better interpret our professional role and better understand what the issues and needs of all the professionals involved in this big family what Coastiera is currently. When was the Coastiera experience born? Coastiera officially opened on February 25, 2023. My colleague Andrea and I, were hired by a group of local entrepreneurs working in different sectors and already having other experience in the Food & Beverage field as well. The basic idea, the concept of Coastiera-whose name is the anglicization in the form of a play on sounds of Costiera in the sense of Costiera amalfitana-is to focus on the high quality of products, which in our case are all entirely imported from Italy, recreating the festive atmosphere of a restaurant/club that would allude to a certain atmosphere of Italian, Mediterranean Dolce Vita, with live music, dancing and other performances offered to the public. In the presentation of your Cuisine, have you chosen a particular strategy, in the visual rather than in the settings or in the type of recipes? Our Chef is Sardinian, therefore, the soul of our cuisine is typically Italian understood in its broadest sense, including through the various declinations of the regionalizations of dishes but always within a fine dining setting. Great attention we have also devoted to the range of wine offerings, our wines try to give a worthy representation of all the Regions of Italy. Our clientele is avowedly mid- to high-end, and for this reason, the high quality of the products immediately became one of Coastiera's cornerstones. The products, I repeat, all imported, in case they are not Italian, at most they are from the Mediterranean area. In any case, the origin of the products, wines and our ideas are Southern Italian. Have you chosen to stick to the original recipes or are you also interested in making changes or more contemporary conceptual interpretations? Here at Coastiera, we can say that we have always preferred to be traditionalists. A few times, some customers from international backgrounds have asked us for some personal preferences, in the sense of variations, such as introducing cream in the ravioli sauce with a mushroom and truffle filling, well, we have always declined. The clientele that increasingly frequents restaurant locations in Thailand, especially in a city as cosmopolitan as Bangkok, increasingly comes from India, China, as regulations in granting entry visas are gradually being lowered, without neglecting to mention the Japanese clientele, which is always very present in the Bangkok metropolitan area, as well as the ever-crowded flow of international clientele that comes from all over the place to the Thai capital and for the most diverse reasons. It may happen, therefore, that different cultures ask for different variations or interpretations of the proposed recipes to bring them closer to the tastes of their own personal and cultural experience. From this point of view, we prefer to defend our Italian identity, with its peculiarities and its most recognizable elements, now all over the World. One of the aspects often emphasized when dealing with foreign entrepreneurs investing in Thailand is that of different cultural perspectives and interpretations, which is why there can often be some misunderstanding. Here, in the context of your work, how do you manage to relate to Thai collaborators and employees? Here at our place, we conduct a briefing every day before we get to work, this is the moment when all the elements are offered so that we can adopt a common strategy in the professional activities involved in our daily routine. The moment every aspect is exemplified and clearly

explained, each employee feels that he or she is part of a team and actively cooperates in every step of the work process. Thais generally have a calm disposition, we Italians are more passionate, often getting nervous even about an element that to a Thai may seem really minimal or excessive. Here at Coastiera, we have 30 employees, including professionals who are engaged in the administrative offices.

di Francesco Tortora Lunedì 16 Ottobre 2023

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