



PN24 FOOD - Chef Kong Kongwuth's ideas and philosophy at Napha in Bangkok

Dal nostro corrispondente a Bangkok - 22 ott 2024 (Prima Notizia 24) At the Napha restaurant, a special two days with chef Khongwuth Chaiwongkachon, a full immersion in the Thai culinary tradition with an eye towards the present and the future.

In Bangkok, at the EmSphere big mall, GM Floor, NAPHA restaurant, a two-day catering event curated by an absolutely special chef will take place. For a clientele that is also particularly special. We meet the Thai chef Kongwuth Chaiwongkachon.(Kong Kongwuth), young and youthful in appearance, 36 years old, decorated with beautiful traditional Asian-inspired tattoos on his arms, married and father of a little girl. The location is NAPHA, a restaurant located inside a huge mall, recently opened to the local and international public, large enough to contain a city-within-a-city, in the heart of the Thai capital, Bangkok. Actually, NAPHA is more than a single restaurant in Bangkok. It is, in fact, a real, large project focused on traditional Thai cuisine and the Bangkok office called LOCUS Native Food Lab and is, therefore, a subsidiary of the original office in Chiang Rai. The modern reinterpretation of the "Lanna" tradition is also part of NAPHA's planning. In fact, it aims to offer a contemporary Lanna menu. "Lanna", in fact, stands for "North" in its oldest Thai diction. At NAPHA in Bangkok, special evenings are held monthly, such as those dedicated to Italian cuisine or wines, or to traditional Thai cuisine from the time of King Rama II. Thai cuisine, a bit like all Thai culture and people, seem to be based on the protection of their historical and cultural roots. Do you think this is a trend that still exists today? Rather than in terms of "protection", in the case of Thai cuisine and its cultural origins, I would speak of "proud". It seems to me to be a more suitable word, as there is no closure towards external cultural influences, on the contrary, Thailand's history has been permeated by this "cultural melting pot" perspective for centuries. What is your personal perspective, what is your underlying philosophy in your role as a chef? Personally I prefer to work in the direction of simplification, I'm not interested in over-building around and on top of a recipe. I am not particularly interested in deriving a Nouvelle cuisine version of Thai cuisine - or any other cuisine - nor am I strictly interested in obsessively defending the historical roots of Thai cuisine. As we have mentioned, for example when talking about Thai cuisine, the set of influences deriving from neighboring cultures is the very meaning of current Thai cuisine, therefore, how could one ever produce Thai cuisine without taking into account the influences it has received from the outside in Time? I don't have a particular interest in this direction. The discriminating element, what makes the difference, in my opinion, is the feedback from the customers, the pleasure that the customers show towards my dishes, towards my cuisine. I find it much more interesting to work in simplification, so I prefer to define myself as an "experience creator". We could say, therefore, in the case of Chef Khongwuth Chaiwongkachon that it is a Neoplatonic operation, that is,

as Michelangelo did with his sculptures, he "removes" from the material and searches for the form, he does not attribute the form to the material but "takes away" from matter to seek the essential, the form, in fact.

di Francesco Tortora Martedì 22 Ottobre 2024