

CONSTRUCTING “THAINESS” WITHIN INTERNATIONAL FOOD SPACE:
THAI GASTRONOMY IN FIVE-STAR HOTELS IN BANGKOK

Miss Niphatchanok Najpinij

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy Program in Thai Studies
Faculty of Arts
Chulalongkorn University
Academic Year 2011
Copyright of Chulalongkorn University

บทคัดย่อและแฟ้มข้อมูลฉบับเต็มของวิทยานิพนธ์ตั้งแต่ปีการศึกษา 2554 ที่ให้บริการในคลังปัญญาจุฬาฯ (CUIR)
เป็นแฟ้มข้อมูลของนิสิตเจ้าของวิทยานิพนธ์ที่ส่งผ่านทางบัณฑิตวิทยาลัย

The abstract and full text of theses from the academic year 2011 in Chulalongkorn University Intellectual Repository (CUIR)
are the thesis authors' files submitted through the Graduate School.

การสร้าง “ความเป็นไทย” ในพื้นที่อาหารนานาชาติ:
ศาสตร์แห่งอาหารไทยในโรงแรมห้าดาวในกรุงเทพมหานคร

นางสาวนิพัทธ์ชนก นางพินิจ

วิทยานิพนธ์นี้เป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษาตามหลักสูตรปริญญาอักษรศาสตรดุษฎีบัณฑิต

สาขาวิชาไทยศึกษา

คณะอักษรศาสตร์ จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

ปีการศึกษา 2554

ลิขสิทธิ์ของจุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

Thesis Title

**CONSTRUCTING “THAINESS” WITHIN
INTERNATIONAL FOOD SPACE: THAI
GASTRONOMY IN FIVE-STAR HOTELS IN
BANGKOK**

By
Field of Study
Thesis Advisor

Miss Nipatchanok Najpinij
Thai Studies
Professor Siraporn Nathalang, Ph.D.

Accepted by the Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Doctoral Degree

..... Dean of the Faculty of Arts
(Assistant Professor Prapod Assavavirulhakarn, Ph.D.)

THESIS COMMITTEE

..... Chairman
(Associate Professor Suchitra Chongstitvatana, Ph.D.)

..... Thesis Advisor
(Professor Siraporn Nathalang, Ph.D.)

..... Examiner
(Associate Professor Sunait Chutintaranond, Ph.D.)

..... Examiner
(Assistant Professor Carina Chotirawe, Ph.D.)

..... External Examiner
(Professor Supang Chantavanich, Ph.D.)

นิพนธ์ชนก นางพินิจ : การสร้าง “ความเป็นไทย” ในพื้นที่อาหารนานาชาติ: ศาสตร์แห่งอาหารไทย
ในโรงแรมห้าดาวในกรุงเทพมหานคร. (CONSTRUCTING “THAINESS” WITHIN
INTERNATIONAL FOOD SPACE: THAI GASTRONOMY IN FIVE-STAR HOTELS IN BANGKOK)
อ. ที่ปรึกษาวิทยานิพนธ์หลัก: ศ. ดร. ศิราพร ณ ถลาง, 180 หน้า.

วิทยานิพนธ์นี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อวิเคราะห์กระบวนการการสร้าง “ความเป็นไทย” ในพื้นที่อาหาร
นานาชาติผ่านศาสตร์แห่งอาหารไทยในภัตตาคารไทยซึ่งตั้งอยู่ในโรงแรมห้าดาวในกรุงเทพมหานคร

งานวิจัยนี้ได้เลือกภัตตาคารสี่แห่งซึ่งตั้งอยู่ในโรงแรมห้าดาวในเขตธุรกิจ กรุงเทพมหานคร ได้แก่
1) ภัตตาคารสีลาด โรงแรมสุขโขทัย กรุงเทพฯ 2) ภัตตาคารน้ำ โรงแรมเมโทร โพลีแทน กรุงเทพฯ 3) ภัตตาคารศาลา
ริมน้ำ โรงแรมแมนดาริน โอเรียนทอล และ 4) ภัตตาคารสไปซ์ มาร์เกต โรงแรมไพร่ซีซั่น กรุงเทพฯ ทั้งนี้ภัตตาคาร
ทั้งสี่แห่งที่เลือกมาเป็นกรณีศึกษานี้มีชื่อเสียงและมีความโดดเด่นแตกต่างกันไป

งานวิจัยนี้ใช้ระเบียบวิธีวิจัยหลายวิธี ได้แก่ การสังเกต การสังเกตอย่างมีส่วนร่วม การสัมภาษณ์ การเข้า
เยี่ยมชม และรวมถึงการใช้ข้อมูลเอกสารที่ได้จากแต่ละโรงแรมเกี่ยวกับประวัติและการจัดการระบบอาหารของ
โรงแรม ในการวิเคราะห์ งานวิจัยนี้ใช้กรอบความคิดชื่อว่า “วงจรทางวัฒนธรรม” ของนักวิชาการชื่อ สจวด
ฮอล ในการวิเคราะห์กระบวนการนำเสนอศาสตร์แห่งอาหารด้วยปัจจัย 5 ประการ ได้แก่ การนำเสนอ อัตลักษณ์
การผลิต การบริโภค และกฎเกณฑ์ ในพื้นที่วัฒนธรรมอาหาร

ผลของการวิจัยพบว่า “ความเป็นไทย” ได้ถูกสร้างผ่านลักษณะสามประการ ได้แก่ ประการที่ ๑ ลักษณะ
ทางกายภาพของสถานที่และบรรยากาศที่นำเสนอด้วยศิลปะสถาปัตยกรรมแบบไทยไม่ว่าจะดั้งเดิมหรือร่วมสมัย,
ประการที่ ๒ ลักษณะการบริการแบบไทยที่ใช้บุคลากรที่ให้การต้อนรับด้วยกิริยา มารยาทแบบไทย และประการที่
๓ วิธีการผลิตอาหารไทย ซึ่งผู้วิจัยพบว่า ค่านิยม ภูมิปัญญาไทย และวิถีความเป็นไทยบางประการได้ถูกเลือกมา
ใช้ในการนำเสนอศาสตร์แห่งอาหารไทยด้วยวิธีคิดและวิธีปฏิบัติที่แตกต่างกันไปในแต่ละภัตตาคาร

ผลการวิจัยยังพบว่า ภัตตาคารไทยแต่ละแห่งในโรงแรมห้าดาวมีวิธีการเลือกนำเสนออัตลักษณ์ของอาหาร
ไทย และ “ความเป็นไทย” ผ่านองค์ประกอบต่างๆที่เกี่ยวข้องกับการผลิตอาหารไทยที่ต่างกัน การผลิตและการ
บริโภคอาหารไทยดำเนินไปตามความสัมพันธ์ ความคาดหวัง ค่านิยม และมาตรฐานที่ได้รับการยอมรับระหว่าง
“เจ้าของ” และ “ลูกค้า” ของโรงแรม ในกระบวนการผลิตยังต้องคำนึงถึงระบบและกฎเกณฑ์ในการผลิตอาหารไทย
และ ด้วยความเป็นพื้นที่นานาชาติ จึงมีการใช้มาตรฐานสากลควบคู่ไปกับ “ความเป็นไทย” ในภัตตาคารไทย
ผลการวิจัยยังพบอีกว่า กระบวนการสร้างความหมายและสร้างความเป็นไทยมีความเป็นพลวัตสูงเพราะเป็นภัตตาคาร
ที่อยู่กับโลกาภิวัตน์ “ความเป็นไทย” ในศาสตร์แห่งอาหารไทย จึงถูกต้องจากค่านิยมนานาชาติอย่างต่อเนื่อง

สาขาวิชาไทยศึกษา..... ลายมือชื่อนิติ.....
ปีการศึกษา2554..... ลายมือชื่อ อ.ที่ปรึกษาวิทยานิพนธ์หลัก.....

##5080517722: MAJOR THAI STUDIES

KEY WORDS: THAINESS/ THAI GASTRONOMY/ INTERNATIONAL FOOD SPACES/ FIVE-STAR HOTELS/BANGKOK

NIPHATCHANOK NAJPINIJ: CONSTRUCTING “THAINESS” WITHIN INTERNATIONAL FOOD SPACES: THAI GASTRONOMY IN FIVE-STAR HOTELS IN BANGKOK. ~~THESIS~~-ADVISOR: PROF. SIRAPORN NATHALANG, Ph.D., 180 pp.

This thesis aims at studying the characteristics of Thai gastronomy and analyzing the process of constructing “Thainess” through Thai gastronomy in Thai restaurants located in five-star hotels in Bangkok.

Four Thai restaurants in five-star hotels in central Bangkok district (CBD) are selected as case studies. They are 1) *Celadon* at The Sukhothai Hotel Bangkok, 2) *Nahm* at The Metropolitan Hotel Bangkok, 3) *Sala Rim Naam* at The Mandarin Oriental Hotel Bangkok and 4) *Spice Market* at The Four Seasons Hotel Bangkok. Each of them has its own prominent characteristics and specialization.

This research uses a qualitative research methodology through observation and participant observation in the hotel’s culinary practices, interviewing key informants, as well as collecting documents concerning the hotel’s history and culinary management. The research applies Stuart Hall’s concept of the “circuit of culture” as the framework in the analysis of the process of Thai gastronomy. The circuit of culture is composed of five factors: representation, identity, production, consumption and regulation.

The research findings reveal that “Thainess” is constructed through three characteristics: firstly, through physical settings and an enhanced atmosphere with Thai art and architecture, both traditional and contemporary; secondly, through a Thai style of service by personnel with politeness and hospitality; and thirdly, through culinary practices. It is also found that Thai values, wisdom and Thai ways of life are selected and presented as the characteristics of Thai gastronomy in each restaurant.

It is found that each restaurant selects the identity of Thai food and presents Thainess differently through various components related to Thai gastronomy. Production and the consumption of Thai food is based on the relations, expectations, values and standards mutually agreed between the “hosts” and “guests.” The production process also concerns Thai culinary regulations and, given the fact that these Thai restaurants are in an international food space, international standard must then be implemented together with Thainess in the Thai food space. It is further found that the process of constructing meanings and Thainess is very dynamic since these Thai restaurants are situated in the context of globalization, thus, “Thainess” in Thai gastronomy is internationally negotiated.

Field of Study: ... Thai Studies..... Student’s Signature.....
Academic Year : 2011..... Advisor’s Signature

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Professor Dr. Siraporn Nathalang, my advisor, who has patiently supported and given me valuable advice and comments throughout my research. Additionally, I am grateful to my thesis committee for their suggestions and kindness.

I am also indebted to members of my family, particularly, my mother, who has inspired and given me her experiences on the practices and theories of Thai food as a “walking library”. Her strong passion for Thai food has welcomed many international chefs and food lovers from around the world have learned Thai food with her and several times she has been invited to present Thai food in national food forums. The international involvers with serious hunger of knowledge and insights of Thai food made me feel obliged to share this national diet with other people, especially those in the young generation who will be the transmitters of this intangible heritage.

My brother, as a monk, has spiritually supported me with views to mentally clear myself prior to undertaking any analyzing activities. It is fascinating that he could share many insights on Thai ways of lives, even on aspects of food, through his monkhood in the rural area for more than twenty years.

I owe the hoteliers of all the Thai restaurants studied gratitude for their willingness and eagerness in sharing their experiences, views and opinions on Thai gastronomy. Also, many thanks go to several international chefs who have visited these restaurants and shared with me views upon each place. Lastly, I would like to thank my colleagues who have worked patiently at the university on behalf of me with only few of my participations during my studies.

CONTENTS

	page
Abstract (Thai).....	iv
Abstract (English).....	v
Acknowledgements.....	vi
Contents.....	vii
List of Figures.....	ix
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Rationale of the Research.....	1
1.2 Objectives.....	8
1.3 Major Arguments.....	8
1.4 Conceptual Framework and Research Methodology.....	8
1.5 Literature Review.....	9
1.5.1 Anthropology of food.....	9
1.5.2 Food and socio-cultural context.....	15
1.5.3 Significance of Culture in the Food System.....	18
1.5.4 Thai food and gastronomy in a global context: the Dynamism	23
1.6 Definition of the terms.....	27
1.7 Significance of the study.....	28
CHAPTER II BACKGROUND OF THAI GASTRONOMY.....	29
2.1 Historical Background.....	29
2.1.1 Ecological Diversities and Gastronomy in Central Siam.....	29
2.1.2 Cosmopolitan of Thai Society and Thai Gastronomy.....	34
2.1.3 Continuity of Monarchy and Sophistication of Thai	37
Gastronomy.....	
2.1.4 Food in The Present Day	42
2.2 Regional Food: Its Meanings and Relation to Cultural	44
Environment	
2.2.1 The Central Plains.....	44
2.2.2 The North.....	48
2.2.3 The North-eastern.....	50
2.2.4 The South.....	53
CHAPTER III PROFILE AND BACKGROUND OF FOUR CASE	56
STUDIES ON FIVE-STAR HOTELS.....	
3.1 The Sukhothai Hotel, Bangkok.....	56
3.1.1 Physical Settings.....	57
3.1.2 Hosts and guests.....	58

	page
3.1.3 Celadon “ศิลาเคลล”, Physical Settings.....	60
3.1.4 Celadon, Divisions Involved.....	62
3.1.5 Celadon, Food and Menu.....	66
3.2 The Metropolitan Bangkok Hotel.....	67
3.2.1 The Physical Settings.....	68
3.2.2 Hosts and Guests.....	71
3.2.3 Nahm (น้ำ), Physical Settings.....	73
3.2.4 Nahm, Division Involved.....	75
3.2.5 Nahm, Food and Menu.....	80
3.3 The Mandarin Oriental Hotel, Bangkok.....	83
3.3.1 The Physical Settings.....	84
3.3.2 Hosts and Guests.....	85
3.3.3 “Sala Rim Naam”, Physical Settings.....	88
3.3.4 “Sala Rim Naam”, Division Involved.....	89
3.3.5 “Sala Rim Naam”, Food and Menu.....	91
3.4 The Four Seasons Hotel, Bangkok.....	93
3.4.1 The Physical Settings.....	95
3.4.2 Hosts and Guests.....	96
3.4.3 “Spices Market”, Physical Settings.....	98
3.4.4 “Spices Market”, Division Involved.....	100
3.4.5 “Spices Market”, Food and Menu.....	102
CHAPTER IV PROCESS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THAI	104
GASTRONOMY IN FIVE-STAR FOOD SPACES.....	
4.1 Representation.....	104
4.2 Identity.....	109
4.3 Production.....	115
4.4 Consumption.....	120
4.5 Regulation.....	125
CHAPTER V CONSTRUCTION OF “THAINESS” IN THAI	130
GASTRONOMY IN INTERNATIONAL FOOD SPACES	
5.1 Characteristics of the constructed “Thainess” in Thai gastronomy in five-star hotels.....	130
5.1.1 The physical settings and the enhanced atmospheres.....	131

	page
5.1.2 The service.....	135
5.1.3 The culinary practices.....	140
5.2 Factors determining the representations of “Thainess”.....	150
5.2.1 Administrators.....	151
5.2.2 Chef and team.....	154
5.2.3 Customers.....	157
5.2.4 International Standard and expectation.....	160
CHAPTER VI CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION.....	165
6.1 A summary of the research.....	165
6.2 Discussion.....	173
6.3 Suggestion for future Research.....	176
References.....	177
Biography.....	180

OF FIGURES

		page
Figure 1	The circuit of culture.....	11
Figure 2	Raw, cooked and rotten.....	19
Figure 3	Physical Settings at The Sukhothai, Bangkok.....	56
Figure 4	Exterior view of Celadon.....	61
Figure 5	Interior view of Celadon.....	61
Figure 6	Sample of Thai foods served and listed in the menus of Celadon.....	67
Figure 7	General physical view of the Metropolitan hotel.....	69
Figure 8	The physical setting and atmosphere at the Metropolitan, hotel.....	72
Figure 9	Outdoor dinning area at Nahm.....	74
Figure 10	Interior view at Nahm.....	74
Figure 11	Spicy pork with mint, peanuts and crunchy rice on betel leaves.....	81
Figure 12	Sticky Rice with Durian at Nahm.....	81
Figure 13	Massaman Curry Served at Nahm.....	81
Figure 14	Example of food in set served at “Nahm”	82
Figure 15	Dan Sweeney's work for the Oriental in Bangkok was part of an advertising campaign in the 1920s.	83
Figure 16	Hotel building at The Mandarin Oriental Hotel	84
Figure 17	Staff at The Mandarin Oriental Hotel.....	84
Figure 18	Interior view with Thai Classical dance at Sala Rim Naam.....	89
Figure 19	Exterior view at Sala Rim Naam.....	89
Figure 20	Thai foods served on traditional “Khao Chae”	92
Figure 21	Summer Rice or Table wares at Sala Rim Naam set served at Sala	92

	page
Figure 22 Thai cooking class at The Mandarin Oriental Hotel.....	92
Figure 23 Sample of Thai Foods recommended on “Sala Rim Naam”	93
Figure 24 Physical Setting at The Four Seasons.....	94
Figure 25 Private Lobby and board meeting room on top floor at The Four Seasons Hotel.....	96
Figure 26 Interior view at The Spices Market.....	98
Figure 27 Khao Soi noodle served in coconut cream-northern style, served at The Spices Market.....	103
Figure 28 Sample menu of Nahm.....	103

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Rationale of the Research

Thais are known for their local wisdom in improving on natural ingredients to make home-made food, dishes that fit to the need within the family. Thai food originated from a “home” context, where such context is situated within a larger agricultural space which gives rise to a variety of ingredients, ways of cooking, recipes and the reason for eating.

Thai food, and its meanings, has always been contingent upon the life of the people in each era. The history of Thai people from the early years until the present has many significance aspects of life connected with food. Circumstances suggest that food and food meanings have been influenced by the king, the way of life of the peasants, the religion and beliefs, the economy, the international trade, etc. Thai food is considered a national symbol that reflects the way of life, culture, beliefs and rituals of Thais and is also involved in many ceremonies, feasts and religion events.

Thailand is located in a tropical climate, with on-going cultural exchanges along the borders. The interactions of people within the land have physically and socially formed many notions about Thai food and its evolution. Both the land and the people significantly contribute to the ways of living. In the north, it is colder and there are jungles, so it is where sticky rice and wild herbs are key natural foods. While consumption of meat came together with people from lower land of China, coconut, shrimp paste and fish sauce were introduced later from various groups of people from the lower central plains.

Drought in the northeastern part has offered up insufficient food at times, although this has been mitigated to some extent. However, it is easy to see the

common form of sustenance. The food in this area is cooked spicy in order to be communal with the glutinous and heavy character of sticky rice and to temper the food scarcity. Such lack of food has forced the people to move continuously to larger cities to work. The people brought along foods, called *aharn esan* (อาหารอีสาน), which has been popularly welcomed throughout the country because of its simple, but tasty quality. There are many famous *esan* dishes which have been worldly recognized, such as papaya salad – *som tam* (ส้มตำ) – and *larb* (ลาบ) – spicy minced meat salad. Papaya salad has joined the top hundred dishes voted around the world for its taste and also its healthy benefit since it can be categorized as “raw food”, a popular trend for healthy consumption.

The greatest area for food and largely constructed Thai gastronomy is the central plains where, because of numerous canals and ample coastal land around the gulf of Siam, there is always moist ground from annual flooding. This region is compared to being the country's *ukhao unahm* (อุ้งข้าว อุ้งน้ำ) or breadbasket. Given the richness of the central to lower Chao Phraya delta, the last two capital cities, Bangkok at the present one and Ayutthaya in the past, shared in the use of natural products, as well as the formation of a civilization, both domestically and internationally, from ancient times until today. The prominent characteristic of the central plain are abundance and diversity of food, with sophistication; rice from paddies; herbs and fruits from orchards, such as coconuts; and fish and shellfish from the rivers and the seas. Above all, people and the food is woven sophisticatedly culture in this land.

The long coast lines along both sides of the southern region offer year round access to sea products and welcomed food cultures from the Muslim and Chinese people who settled their communities along these seafront regions. Humidity from constant rains in the south influences the food as can be seen from its spicy taste, which can mitigate the wet environment. Unlike in the central plains, where sugar is used in order to act as a linkage of the flavors and to create the preferred taste of the central plains, called *rot klom* (รสกลม), or round taste, southern cooking is dominated by the use of strong herbs, especially chilies and turmeric, without sugar. These sharp, hot and spicy flavors truly suit and benefit the life in such an environment.

Social interactions with values from the old days until the present have had a significant influence on the selection of ingredient and also the production of food. One of the most important inspirations of Thai people to cook their best is “merit”. Religion plays a significant role in viewing stages of life. Belief in karma and how life circumstances are constructed according to karma is meaningfully related to eating. For instance, offering food to the monks is stepping on the merit path and focuses on cleanliness and nutrition, rather than luxuriousness. Yet, in the mixing of beliefs – Buddhism, Hindu, Animist – it can be seen that some people who offered food to the monk or spirits believe that such food will reach sacred souls or loved ones who have passed away or even their own fruitful.

Bun (บุญ), or virtue, has been selectively applied by Thai people and their food from the ancient days. Virtuous food is concerned from the farm to the table in depended degree and context. For instance, it was indicated in “Three Worlds” or Triphumikatha, which is a classic work written by the king in Sukhothai times, in relation to Buddhism and Brahmanism, food offered to the monks can bring up to eleven merits if the food is mindfully penetrated according to the content in the text. For instance, cleanliness, good taste, aromatic, nice presentation are indicated with merit in degree. Such practices are still applied to cooking to make merit, as well as on non merit-making food activities, such as cooking for the family or selling in the market. With respect to food, more ritual can be seen in rural areas where life is still contingent on local wisdom.

However, the meaning of food has been ‘adapted’ and ‘adopted’ so that some of its meanings are unclear to the present generation, or are simply difficult to understand what the meanings signify.

Today, Thai food has become internationally famous. Many meanings are conveyed with Thai food overseas, especially food cooked for sale in restaurants. Yet such operations abroad are inevitably adapted from what is generally served in Thailand. The ingredients and methods of cooking are changed, no matter whether the owners are Thai or not. Even though Thai food and its meanings are slippery,

international diners still view the cuisine as one of the haute world flavors and therefore, it is in high demand.

Although Thai restaurants abroad emphasize and advertise their authenticity, for the most part they adapt to the dining customs. For instance, in higher-end Thai restaurants, the service follows Western style in that the meal is served in courses. Dinner starts with an appetizer, a soup or salad, then the main course of rice with several tiny savory dishes and ends with Thai sweets. A cup of coffee or tea, with *petit fours* in Thai style adapted from the French table to mark the end of dining, can be found in some luxury food spaces.

Originally, with respect to Thai food, the usual way is for the food, *kap khao* (กับข้าว), meaning ‘with rice’, to be brought out all at once with all of the dishes to be eaten communally among the diners. The entire table is covered with many plates of food, and the diners eat as they wish, in any order, with rice as the staple.

Such a different context is because of different values which may be far from the local perception of Thai tables. For instance, traditionally food served for the king and high-rank monks in some temples or on some occasions, is in a set for individual dining, but served all at once, not in courses. As for the king, this might be owing to the addressing of highest supremacy as well as to give utmost security to the king’s food. However, generally, for Thai home-meals, it is common to share the same set of food by all the diners.

Such a Thai food set is called *samrap* (สำรับ) and is what Thai people have learnt of types, numbers and decoration in terms of art. Kitchen matters, such as chopping and cutting the ingredients in spoon size or smaller, types of accompanied dishes, and many other factors is in accordance with the shared manner of the table. This not only supports the Thai notion of karma to refrain from killing, but it also suits the condition of people who live in hot and humid weather. As a consequence, presenting food in such a “classic” *samrap* not only suggests how Thai food is cooked and served, it also hints at the communal life of Thai people who usually reside within a family.

The task of pre and post cooking and manner of eating the meal is arranged with sharing and togetherness.

The international popularity of Thai restaurants is a phenomenon impacting Thai gastronomy in Thailand, as experienced diners overseas make trips to Thailand with an anticipation of Thai gastronomy through what they have experienced abroad.

Once the trip is over, and they return to their own country, these tourists bring back the flavors they accumulated in Thailand forming an expectation of Thai gastronomy in oversea restaurants. Accordingly, Thai food has evolved with globalization and the production of dishes has been fine tuned. It is general to experience new versions of famous Thai dishes, for instance, a dish called *phat kaphrao* (ผัดกะเพรา), or stir-fried minced meat with holy basil, being made without *kaphrao* because of its rareness, so sweet basil and bell chilies are replaced without changing the name of the dish. The French cuisine is a good example of how a dish could maintain its natural and cultural values. It is named differently if culinary practices, for instance the unavailability of ingredient, are compulsory to be changed. Such way can benefit gastronomy in two ways; firstly, the conservation of traditional practices and, secondly, the development and creativity of culinary practices as an art form.

Discussions of food are frequently based on experiences with food from public food spaces, since food is served more extensively in public spaces in Thailand. Restaurants, food shops, street push carts, frozen food from convenient stores and many forms of food vendors are places Thai people rely on to purchase food, more than home meals, especially in the big cities such as Bangkok and other urban areas. Even the food sold is taken back home, its public and commercial values entailed. Those foods vary in terms of types, quality, price, as well as culture.

From a cultural dimension, food shifts dynamically, no matter what attempts are made to resist transformation. Negotiation among identity of people involves in the food systems such as the association of taste from early childhood in confronting with dynamic flavors of food around the world experienced in later life. Food that

was commonly eaten when younger may be remembered when growing older, yet humans are tempted to try new food. Globalization, mass media, cyber space and tourism steers Thai food within a newly emerging context, both domestically and abroad. With a new way of life in the age of globalization and the emergence of mega shopping centers, hotels and restaurants, Thai gastronomy has changed dramatically. Thai food, at present, is also continuously influenced by foods of various countries, both from the Western and Eastern hemispheres, in which raw materials and cooking methods are applied to create new tastes and forms that are vividly much different. Applying Thai food to foreign cuisine has given birth to the well-accepted “hybrid” food, also dubbed “fusion food”. There is, therefore, an ‘adaptation’ of culture which allows the process of food consumption and production to be more responsive to various cultural meanings, which are partly a result of the media and the digital world (Yasmeen, 2006).

Once globalization and modern food ways are situated alongside, Thai food is produced according to its demands to serve vastly the global community. Values upon public and commercial spaces are gathered with technological support to modern practices of Thai food. While there are many more Thai dishes produced to serve the world there are a lot of repetitions of what could be commercialized. Then there are massive productions of “known” lists.

This mainstream food is then produced in massive process which contributes considerable numbers of servings but in a way it is also shortened the items in correlate to local demands. Such dedifferentiation in Thai food enabled from globalization with support of mass media and social networking. The demand from this mainstream practices are obviously seen influenced not only on the dining tables but also on the country’s agriculture. In many parts of the country, Thai farmers have to grow the same things to hurriedly feed their products into this modern food system.

Bangkok is the cosmopolitan center of the Thai nation, with every regional variation of Thai food to be found in its food stalls, cafes and elegant restaurants. It is not necessary to prepare meals at home since inexpensive cooked food can be found around the clock, in addition to semi-prepared food that is now readily available

(Napat and Szanton, 1986; Tinker, 1987, 1997). Eating out with friends and sometimes with family is considered to be a key social event which families once used to play this role. Some events suggest that one day “home-made” foods will become much more expensive than a plate of fried rice available in a top class shopping center.

As the cultural space of Thai food has changed to a more globalized and contemporary setting, cooking is subject to the contemporary cultural space and, as a result has to be changed, adapted, and transformed, so that the food meets the conditions of the customers and of the “contemporary setting”.

With respect to five-star hotels, which are the emergence of contemporary settings in Bangkok, Thai food has also arisen in a different way in the context of a new cultural space and time. Thai restaurants in five-star hotels have been designed and decorated to represent ‘Thainess’ to create a perception for the guest of Thai style. These are the places that welcome international visitors who have different levels of Thai food awareness, as well as degrees of satisfaction and expectation of the Thai food that they consume. Those guests come to visit Thailand and wish to experience Thai culture, including Thai food, and a five-star hotel is one of the places where international customers have the opportunity to have such experiences. Thai dishes served in five-star hotels have been refined and adjusted to satisfy the guest’s palate.

The contemporary settings which aim to present “Thainess” can lead guests to understand that Thai dishes offered in five-star hotels are authentic and original, although, in fact, they may not be so. The food process from the kitchens of five-star hotels comes from the negotiation of meanings about how the dishes should be prepared and served. However, since the characteristics of a Thai dish depend on what is cooked, for whom it is cooked, for what occasion, and where it is cooked, dishes can be refined and adjusted to suit all palates; although, the dishes have been negotiated in terms of their meaning to be suitable for contemporary settings and conditions.

1.2 Objective

1. To study the characteristics of Thai gastronomy as presented in Thai restaurants in five -star hotels in Bangkok.
2. To analyze the process of constructing “Thainess” through Thai gastronomy in such international social settings.

1.3 Major Arguments

This research will explore Thai gastronomy through various aspects variously presented in each of the selected case studies of the five-star hotels in Bangkok, e.g., the characteristics of ingredients, methods of preparation and cooking, serving styles, consumption patterns, the atmosphere, the constructed setting. It has been observed that although Thai gastronomy in five-star hotels share certain similarities, since Thai food in each hotel has to meet required international food standards for food safety and hygiene, each hotel also has to create its own specialization and identity in presenting Thai gastronomy. In this research, it is hypothesized that the characteristics of Thai gastronomy in Thai restaurants in five-star hotels in Bangkok is an outcome of the interaction between the expected international food standard and the constructed presentation of Thai food. It is also argued that “Thainess” is constructed through Thai gastronomy.

1.4 Conceptual Framework and Research Methodology

This research applies Hall’s (1997) conceptual framework of the circuit of culture in the analysis of the construction of Thainess through Thai gastronomy. The five factors consist of the formal and informal controls on culture, which are *representation* (the form with cultural meaning of cultural products), *identity* (the gained meaning of individual, organization, nation, etc.), *production* (the dominant meanings to the cultural products), *consumption* (the active using of the cultural products owing to the meanings) and *regulation* (the formal and informal controls of culture). These five factors will be the framework that will help clarify the process of constructing Thainess through Thai gastronomy.

The research uses a qualitative research methodology in collecting data in the five-star hotels. The methodology consists of the followings activities: a) in-depth

interviews of various respondents, such as five-star hotel waiters, five-star hotel chefs, Thai food cultural experts, and customers; b) observation of the presentation of Thai food served in five-star hotels; and c) participant observation in the Thai restaurants in each hotel.

To ensure that the research sites present an international food space in Bangkok, the researcher selected four fine Thai restaurants situated in five-star hotels located in the central business district of Bangkok as case studies: 1) *Celadon* (ศิลาแดง) at The Sukhothai Hotel, 2) *Nahm* (น้ำ) at The Metropolitan Hotel, 3) *Sala Rim Naam* (ศาลาริมน้ำ) at The Mandarin Oriental Hotel and 4) *Spice Market* at The Four Seasons Hotel.

1.5 Literature Review

1.5.1 Anthropology of food

Like other parts of Southeast Asia, Thailand is a snacking culture where several small meals per day are common rather than the “three square meal” requirement of Westerners. Perhaps this is the most logical eating pattern in a tropical environment. Thais are fond of repeating: *khon thai kin khao talot wela*, or “Thai people eat all the time!” It is a well-established cultural practice to eat out of doors, which results in a lively street and *soi* life. Leisure habits of Thai urbanites are focused very much around commensality in public places. “Have you eaten yet?” (*kin khao rue yang?*) is a typical greeting on meeting friends and co-workers (Yasmeen 2006 : 70).

There are many ways to understand food and its meanings. An approach that has been employed in recent writings on food culture is an anthropological view of how food in a particular society is understood, named, believed and consumed, as well as produced. The work of authors uncovering the meanings of food in this way

includes, but is not limited to, Atkinson, 1983; Fischler, 1988; Douglas, 1991; Cook and Phillip, 1996; Khaosa-ad, 1998, Beardsworth and Keil, 1997; Thompson, 2002, and Yasmeen, 2006. Food, according to an anthropologist, is not about an arbitrary object; food is not an item transformed for a biological purpose, i.e., to satisfy physical needs such as the 'hunger' of a human being. Rather, it is a way of life and a way of *being* in a social setting.

Anthropology looks at a context and a meaning-making process which constructs, and is being constructed, by 'culture' of a particular society (Yasmeen, 2006, Atkins and Bowler, 2001, Wenger, 1998, Beardsworth and Kell, 1997, Lave and Wenger, 1991, and Denzin, 1978). Culture is a critical thread that makes the anthropologist understand the meaning of food and especially the subject, as well as their identities, and the purpose of food consumption and production, as well as the discursive practice that gives rise to such meanings.

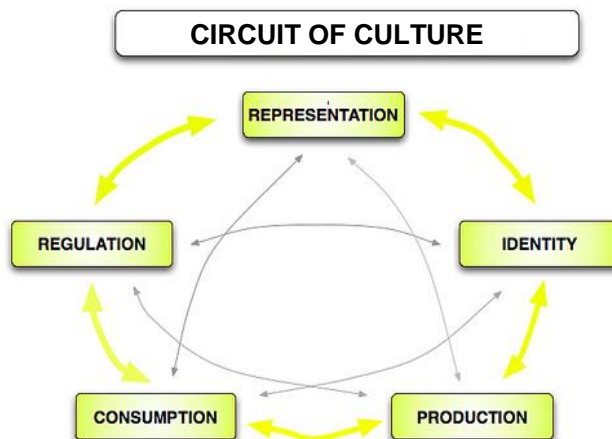
According to Hall (1997), 'culture' is difficult to define, especially in the human and social sciences. There are many possible ways of explaining culture. A traditional way of understanding culture is that it embodies the 'best that has been thought and said' in a society. It is the totality of great ideas, as represented in the classic works of literature, painting, music, philosophy, and, undoubtedly, food. Culture also refers to the widely distributed forms of popular music, published art, design and literature, or the activities of leisure-time and entertainment, which make up the everyday lives of the majority of the 'ordinary people'.

To many people, culture is also known as 'shared values' and the exchange of the meanings of these values between members of a society or group (Wenger, 1998). To state that two customers within a restaurant belong to the same culture is to say that they both interpret the meanings of dishes served in roughly the same way, and can express themselves, their thoughts and feelings in ways which will be understood by each other (Du Gay and Hall, 1996). This is the reason behind the quote above. The line *khon thai kin khao talot wela*, or "Thai people eat all the time!", is known and understood by Thais for what type of habit it is. However, when a foreigner reads this statement, he or she may interpret that Thais eat many meals a day. Therefore,

culture depends on its participants interpreting what is happening around them – how they *represent* them – that is the way meanings are constructed (Hall, 1997).

To understand the concept of food from an anthropological point of view is to understand how culture is a process and, most importantly, how the notion and the influence of ‘culture’ continuously (‘production’) and being used (‘consumption’) within a particular setting (‘regulation’) is governed by a number of ‘identities’. Food, according to this way of understanding, ‘represents’ the subjects, their identities, and the way these subjects provide ‘meaning’ to the concept of food.

Figure 1 shows the ‘circuit of culture’ and how the notion of ‘representation’ emerges as a result of how people in a particular society constantly ‘name’ and ‘understand’ an object. The sentence “Have you eaten yet?” [*Kin khao rue yang?*], based on the understanding of culture, suggests how the subjects within the societies provide meaning to eating behavior and how this sentence ‘represent’ them. To research food in this way, thus, provides rich information and knowledge for researchers, not only about food as a subject, but how it has been constructed and reconstructed by other subjects (and thus identities) and how ‘food meanings’ have become prevalent within contemporary Thai society.



Gay PD, Hall S, Janes L. Doing cultural studies: the story of the Sony Walkman. SAGE; 1997.

Figure 1: The circuit of culture

Hall (1997) suggests that ‘representation’ means the emergence of what people in a particular society constantly ‘name’ and ‘understand’ to be an object. The study of food, thus, provides rich information and knowledge for researchers not only about food as a subject, but how it has been constructed and reconstructed by other subjects, and thus its identities, and how “food meanings” becomes prevalent in contemporary Thai society.

An object represents ‘meanings’ that are culturally and spatially constructed. In our social and cultural system we, therefore, know about things via this process of meaning making and object ‘representation’. An object does not invent a word to call itself. Rather, it is our social and cultural system that ‘names’ the object. To many social and cultural theorists, these ‘names’ are referred to as ‘codes’ and they believe that they are highly significant to the knowledge, identities, and the way we know and learn things around us.

Food, therefore, represents what is ‘edible’. We call an object ‘food’ and we immediately recognize that it is ‘edible’. Therefore, the word food ‘represents’ the meanings of objects that may possibly involve concepts of ‘nutritious’, ‘healthy’, or ‘junk’. When a mother tells her baby that an object in her hand is food and allows the baby to eat it, the word ‘food’ becomes not only a code for the object, but it represents what this object is all about to a baby.

Levi-strauss (1963, 1966, and 1970) and Douglas (1984 and 1987) suggest food is a cultural process. This also includes how one names ‘food’ and signifies to others that this object is ‘edible’. This is why some come to an understanding that *plara* (ปลาร้า) – fermented fish – identifies an object which represents ‘delicacy’, ‘delicious’, ‘good food’, etc. Alternatively, some may consider such word signifies an object which represents ‘raw/unhealthy food’, ‘bad smell’, ‘terrible taste’, or ‘bad food’.

The notion of ‘representation’ within this circuit of meaning introduced by Hall (1997) is critical to our understanding of food culture. This suggests how meanings are the belief of certain objects, which in this case is the concept of food,

including, but not limited to, its production and consumption, that which is culturally and socially constructed within a certain period of time and context.

To study food in this way is to study how food, as an object, ‘represents’ the social and cultural context in which it is situated. Food as culture then means the concept and the meanings of food constructed and re-constructed by people and their social and cultural actions with different purposes and identities within this circuit of culture. A study of food in this way is responsive to the anthropological way of research where ‘context’ and meanings that are socially and culturally made and negotiated are an important ‘phenomenon’ of the research. It is also helpful to elucidate how an object is known, popularized, communicated, believed, as well as influences the way people today eat and consume ‘food’.

In order to see how the circuit of culture works, we can use a dipping dish preferred by many Thai people, called *nam phrik long ruea* (น้ำพริกปลาร้า), as an example.

Nahm phrik long ruea was invented by Chao Chom Mom Ratchawong Sadap Ladavalva (เจ้าจอมหม่อมราชวงศ์ สดับ ลดาวัลย์) for King Chulalongkorn or King Rama V upon the immediate departure by boat. The recipe was reproduced from a composite of leftovers in the court kitchen, but the taste was known to be one of the ‘favorite foods’ of the king and the royal family. The ‘name’ of the food suggests that this type of food is consumed ‘on the boat’, and because of its history, it is considered one of the cuisines served in the court. Such ‘food’ is then perceived to be a royal dish.

Since the dish was created on short notice to be served to the king on his boat trip in a rushed departure, it was composed under two conditions. Firstly, in a hurry and, secondly, for the king so this court lady had to make it lavishly sophisticated. She found some leftover *nam phrik kapi* (น้ำพริกกะปิ), a common dipping sauce made from shrimp paste. This leftover dipping sauce was fried with oil to be hygienic for His Majesty. Colorful salted egg yolks, made in tiny round shape, were used to garnish the top of the dipping sauce, together with finely sliced pieces of pickled garlic to make it extraordinary. Moreover, since it was a dipping sauce, she applied

culinary practices according to the traditional table customs in which some additional food items would accompany the dish to render the proper art of Thai dining. Puffy fish and sweet pork were ready for her to select as paired flavors and texture following the regulation on such a contextual Thai table.

Later, this dish was popularized and reproduced among the royal ladies of the court. Commoners slowly learnt the taste and the dish has been reproduced until today. Its prominence based on the representation of court food has always welcomed reproduction on other food spaces. Besides, the simple culinary practices, the availability of key ingredients, the cooking technique, and the feasible composition of either the artistic or economic function of this dish enable the continuity of its production and reproduction. The dish may be cooked slightly different from place to place, but because it originated from royal court cuisine, it is frequently consumed and well accepted for dining in many types of food spaces. Representation of this food with exquisite decoration is the focus, especially, dishes served in hotels which are made with extreme amazement.

Refinement is crucial to Thai people in many aspects and, in this particular case, it can be seen in Thai dining with articulated beauty. It connects closely with values shared and exchanged among groups of people. The adaptation with extreme refinement in hotel spaces has been a construction of Thai gastronomy in order to provide the luxury flavors expected by their customers.

The study of food culture within the circuit of meaning helps explain how one dish 'represents' the name of the food, the belief in the method of cooking and consuming, as well as the hierarchy of food within a particular setting. However, because such representation is an on-going one and needs to be negotiated when the contexts, such as time, place and culture, are different, a study of how Thai food within the current context is known and consumed, and how some meanings are continued and discontinued, therefore, is significant in the present context of globalization.

1.5.2 Food and socio-cultural context

We give things meaning by how we *represent* them – the words we use about them, the stories we tell about them, the images of them we produce, the emotions we associate with them, the ways we classify and conceptualize them, the values we place on them. Culture, we may say, is involved in all those practices which are not simply genetically programmed into us – like the jerk of the knee when tapped – but which carry meaning and value for us, which need to be *meaningfully interpreted* by others, or which *depend on meaning* for their effective operation. Culture, in this sense, permeates all of society. It is what distinguishes the ‘human’ element in social life from what is simply biologically driven. Its study underlines the crucial role of the symbolic domain at the very heart of social life (Hall, 1997: 3).

Culture is an important tool for an anthropologist to understand the subject of research (Denzin, 1998 and Siverman, 1993). Culture is a key construct of a representation that symbolizes what is known to be ‘edible’, ‘not edible’, ‘nutritious’, ‘fat’, ‘lean’, ‘eating all day long’, ‘manners of eating’, ‘method of cooking’, ‘comfort food’ or ‘junk food’.

An interesting example of understanding food from an anthropological point of view can be demonstrated in the work of Suwanlaong (2006) and Thompson (2002) on their discussions of ‘betel nut’. The social and cultural context of Siam provides a ‘context’ which suggests how Thai people create meaning about betel nut and the way betel nut is known within the society. Betel-chewing is famous in Siam and Thai society. The following are reference from “Thai Food” quoted from the Sukhothai period by David Thompson found on stone inscriptions of King Ramkhamhaeng which took some fifty years to decipher:

When I caught game or fish ... When I picked acid or sweet fruit that were delicious and good to eat ... In the time of King Ramkhamhaeng this land of Sukhothai is thriving. There is fish in the water and rice in the fields. The lord of the realm does not levy toll [too heavily] ... whoever wants to trade ... does so ... They plant areca groves and betel groves all over this *muang* ... coconut ... jackfruit ... mango and tamarind groves are planted in abundance. King Ramkhamhaeng, lord of this kingdom ... plant ... sugar palm trees ...

Suwanlaong (2006) explains how this object was valued and became famous within Siam society and how the Siamese formed an understanding of this object as being ‘acceptable’ and ‘showing-off’ their financial power and social status:

... the consumption of the areca and the betel nut is enormous throughout Siam. A Siamese who is tolerably well off is scarcely ever seen without the nut in his mouth, and he is invariably attended by servants who carry a supply of the material, with all the needful paraphernalia, whose costliness depends upon the opulence and rank of the possessor. Among the nobles, the boxes are almost invariably of gold, and in the case of the very highest ranks, they are covered with diamonds or other precious stones, and are constantly in a state of passage from the hands of the servants to their masters, and back again when the want of the moment has been supplied (Suwanlaong, 2006).

Betel nut is not simply a plant, but a ‘symbol’. Learning about betel nut and betel-chewing helps one understand the society, their people and their ways of life. To the Siamese, according to Suwanlaong (2006), betel nut is not only about their social status, it also symbolizes ‘good health’, ‘enjoyment’, and ‘necessity’:

Betel-chewing blackens the teeth, which is considered a recommendation in Siam; it purifies the breath, and is said to preserve the tooth's enamel when used moderately and without an undue quantity of quicklime. The betel is such a necessary of life in Siam, that were the choice offered to a hungry Siamese of food, or his favorite betel, there is no doubt he would reject the first, and ask for the second in preference (Suwanlaong, 2006).

Thompson (2002) further provides interesting research on how to understand food from an anthropological point of view as well. In his writing, he mentions how people in Siam at a certain period of time believed that betel-chewing should be banned:

In the 1940s and 1950s, the government embarked upon a bizarre program of legislation designed to hasten the Westernization of the country – at least in appearance. In 1949, the country's name was changed from the exotic Siam to the more prosaic Thailand. The chewing of betel nut, a national addiction, was banned. Even more peculiarly, the government attempted to force public demonstrations of affection between the sexes, a strange and surprising piece of legislation, as the Thai have always been, and still are, reticent. Hats became *de rigueur* too (Thompson, 2002: 33-34).

An understanding of betel nut from an anthropological point of view is about the social life and 'social and cultural meanings' that are being 'represented' by an object. It is a sign of health, wealth and *being* Siamese.

Food is, therefore, 'culture' in itself. Uncovering meanings of food by means of culture, meanings of food and culture are strongly interwoven and inseparable. One informs another, and vice versa. The discourse of food appears to be the discourse of 'culture' and subjects and their identities within such discourses regulate,

produce and consume what is known to be the *concept* of food. This circuit of cultural meaning provides us with an in-depth understanding of what *food meanings* are all about and how they represent our past, present and future. This also suggests how people living in one context of time and space have a particular passion for the food they produce, serve and consume.

1.5.3 Significance of Culture in the Food System

There are several readings that provide an understanding of food and how food meanings represent one's culture. Fischler (1988) provides a clear explanation that food is not material and asserts that human identification of food involves complex cognitive processes. He refers to the work of Levi-Strauss who maintained that food "must not only be good to eat, but also good to think." Fischler (1988), commenting on the work of Levi-Strauss, said that an identification of food or its meaning has to do with 'thinking'. In other words, one needs to understand the place of food in the world and understand the world to distinguish, order and classify an element of which food consists.

To Fischler, one's understanding of food is not only about the 'material' or the process of cooking. To understand food from the process of transformation or what Fischler calls, the transformation, with physical and chemical modifications by applying heat to raw materials for the purpose of consumption may be inadequate. Though such a process of transformation suggests that there are changes in flavor, texture, and digestibility of foodstuff, which, in turn, reduces or neutralizes some potential toxins, food to Fischler is not only about this way of understanding.

Levi-Strauss (1963, 1966, 1970) and Douglas (1984; 1987) suggest the same thing as Fischler (1988), that a cuisine operates the register of the imagination. Looking at food in this way conjures and tames the dangerous forces of nature, but also of the super natural. Figure 2 illustrates this understanding.

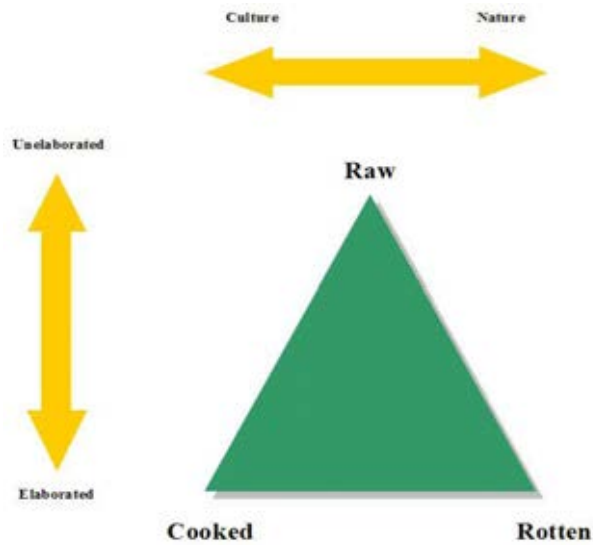


Figure 2: Raw, cooked and rotten

Levi-Strauss explores nature/culture relations on the culinary level. The act of cooking is perceived by Levi-Strauss as a type of anomalous category since food constantly crosses the boundaries of the categories of nature and culture. The raw category forms the basis for two elementary levels: cooked food, which is the cultural transformation of the raw; and rotten food which is its natural transformation. Thus, the cook is a type of culture agent who links the raw product with the human consumer. This could ensure that the natural becomes cooked and undergoes a process of socialization. According to the culinary triangle, cooking is, therefore, a language, and like any language, it has an unconscious structure constituted by binary oppositions.

Levi-Strauss maintains that culinary rites are not inborn, but rather acquire phenomena. The social convention of human beings determine what is food and what is not food, what type of food we eat and on what occasion. The human stomach can digest practically anything, so the distinction between edible/inedible is founded on a cultural rather than a physical basis. World cuisine is typified by a vast range of edible/inedible phenomena, which vary from place to place and from one period to another. Some of the food is exclusively suitable for men, some for women;

some is forbidden to children, some can be eaten only on holidays, and some is forbidden to members of different religious groups.

Levi-Strauss explains that there is a reverse relationship between the levels of cultural transformation and the social values attributed to various types of cooking. In fact, the hierarchical position of the boiled/roasted/rotten food is connected with the principle of maximum/minimum cooking. The less food is transformed, the higher its social status; for example, raw fish served as sushi is considered as highly prestigious. Food that has rotted, e.g., Roquefort cheese, involves even lesser human intervention, and is therefore considered of high quality.

Fischler (1983, 1988), similar to Breadworth and Keil (1997), emphasized that cuisine is not so much a matter of 'ingredients' or 'cooking methods', rather it is about 'classification' which gives meaning to the universe of what is food and what is not. Douglas (1984) further provides an example that explains why foxes and insects are not regarded as edible to everyone. The protein of either is as good quality as that of veal or beef. The classification of species that is applied here is apparently based on other criteria, perhaps "arbitrary" ones in the sense in which a code is arbitrary.

Choden (2008), Yasmineen (2006) and Thompson (2002) suggest that one method of classification of 'food' has to do with 'religion'. Food taboos, a favorite theme in anthropology, is used here to show that what is allowed in one religion may be a taboo for another. A good example is 'pork'. One religion seriously classifies food with any items of pork a taboo, while many other religions do not. Food stuffs classified as both edible and right to eat are then subject to rules of propriety and context. No food is, therefore, appropriate for everyone, at all times, in all circumstances, in any quality.

Thus, we can understand cuisine as the set of classifications of this type performed by a given culture and the rules associated with them, both those which regulate the combination of the elements defined and, more generally, those which

govern the whole set of practices and representations connected with the production, gathering, preparation, attribution and consumption of food (Fischler, 1988).

With the understanding of food from a classification point of view, Yasmeen (2006) suggests that an understanding of what is food is an understanding of language which classifies 'food' and this is correlated with Douglas in many of her writings (i.e. 1984 and 1987). To Douglas, food can be treated as a code, and the messages that it encodes are messages about social events, and about social relation, i.e., hierarchy, inclusion and exclusion, boundaries and transactions across boundaries. Fischler (1988) further describes that "while food may be seen as metaphor, a symbol or vehicle of communication, it is, above all, a life-giving substance, and a meal is a physical as well as a social event."

The constructions of meanings can safely take food in its place on the eater's body or not. There are variable elements within construal continuity. If continuity is indicated by structure, then the omnivore's paradox is not resolved by, for instance, the flavor principle which varies in the large extent. The whole culinary and so contribute to that construction of familiarity, in other words, the acceptability of dishes (Fischler, 1980).

It has been considered necessary to emphasize the similarities between traditional societies in order to bring out the contrasts with modern societies which are to be discussed. Traditional systems are characterized by patterns of local, relatively small-scale production. In addition, the division of labor associated with food production involves a relatively high proportion. Further, both distribution and consumption are linked to establish social relationships, in particular, those of status and kinship. Gifts of food are exchanged rather than sold. Choice is limited. There is little evidence of sharp differences in beliefs about dietary practices, possibly because food supplies are relatively uncertain and unreliable. There is one characteristic, that of nutritional inequalities, which appears to be relative to both traditional and modern food systems. However, it can be argued that such inequalities are structured and organized in different ways and are underpinned by quite different assumptions about who may have access to food and the conditions in which it can be acquired.

The modern food system evolved with industrial production for mass volume. The system is also connected with commerce and its related values in order to create transactions. Attempts to replace either labor or nature are possible with invested capital. Natural ingredients can be supplied without seasonal constraints given new technology. Consistency is the production of a modern food system in which people are concerned with different flavors for dining, such as short cuts, convenience, hygiene, prices, etc. A standard is then invented and is used to govern such consistent production of food. International standards are set since this food system is massive and covers the demands of the global market.

Food is one of the lenses used to view the place. Similarly, gender relations can be illustrated and understood better through examining food ways. To do so, there are three different strands to analyze Thai urban society: Gender relations, food systems, and continuity and discontinuity of food systems.

Informal food shops are life support system of the urbanities; providing food with a wide range of prices to all income groups.

The Bangkok foodscape, as explained by Yasmeen (2006), is a good example of the mainstream in which to explore complex gender ideologies not immediately understood by foreign views. A contributing stereotype leading to woman's dominance of food micro-enterprises is the view that women are better money-managers than men. Thai women are entrusted with the family purse and are considered more responsible than men in "getting things done". Related factors are the structure of rural Thai households as a "corporative kinswomen" giving female access to relative support in the running of small enterprises.

In order to define culturally meaningful ideologies of femininity and masculinity, the performance of food and related activities have been examined. Feminist geographers and others exploring "the geography of gender" have a particular useful contribution to make the exploration of *foodscapes*. As a gender activity, the daily courses of buying, preparing, selling and consuming, men and children (Bowlby, 1988, Charles and Kerr, 1988, Giard and Mayol, 1980).

Women entrepreneurs dominate the scales of cooked food and also play an important role as consumers. Men may play key roles as food suppliers, customers, and as co-owner/manager of the enterprises. Manderson, a writer from the 1950s, summarizes his perception of the role of Thai women that corresponds to the capability and necessity of the Thai female to execute her food enterprise in the social position of the peasant Thai woman as being powerful: she has long had a voice in village administrated affairs; she often represents her household at the village meetings when her husband cannot attend; she almost always does the buying and selling in the local markets. (It is so unusual for Thai males to do this that it elicits comment if he does).

To appreciate food culture is to refer to the history of Thai society and its development of how food meanings are constructed, used continually and not continually, understood and have an influence on many facets of people, including their social status, financial status, and their identities. The section below will outline such social development and how it gives rise to the notion of food.

1.5.4 Thai food and gastronomy in a global context: the Dynamism

There are many meanings of ‘gastronomy’, including, but not limited to, “the art of science, of good eating”, “the enjoyment of food and beverage”, “the enjoyment of good food and good beverage, in good company” (Gillespie, 2001). Many research articles suggest that ‘gastronomy’ is special and superior to cuisine and this is because of cost or quality of ingredients, methods of preparation or by the care and time devoted to the finished dish.

In European gastronomy into the 21st century, Gillespie’s list of contributors to the development of modern cuisine and gastronomy consist solely of chefs; almost all being owner-chefs of restaurants, almost all Michelin-starred, and all are authors of books describing and promoting their individual culinary style. Gastronomy is also an examination of terms of “good food” and “good wine” (or other beverage), and in those terms, suggest being related specifically to restaurant situations (Gillespie, 2001). In Brillat-Savarin’s interpretation, gastronomy is “the

reasoned understanding of everything that concerns us insofar as we sustain ourselves.”

Accepting gastronomy as the ‘reasoned understanding’, it follows that choosing and preparing food, eating and drinking must be accompanied by intellectual activities, by reflection on our choices, our eating and drinking, a conscious response or analysis. This understanding is implicit in Richard’s definition of gastronomy as the “reflexive cooking preparation, and eating of food” (Richardson, 2002, p.17). With this understanding of gastronomy, the scope of the study, therefore, extends to the study of the production and preparation of food and drink and how, where, when, and why food and drink are consumed. That is the knowledge required by, as assumed of, the gastronome’s sense of terms, which in his or her writing contributes to a wider understanding of food and drink, of customers and taste. This necessarily implicates the philosophy, belief, and values that influence gastronomic practices. These, in turn, are related to the social, cultural and historical aspects of food and wine matching, tourism and gastronomic writing. Extrapolating from Brillat-Savarin’s understanding of the gastronomic and all that pertains to it, the study of gastronomy today is related to “the production of food and the means by which food are produced; the political economy of food; the treatment of foods, their storage and transport and processing; their preparation and cooking; meals and manner; the chemistry of food, digestion, and the physiological effects of food, food choices and customs and tradition” (Santich, 1996a, 1996b).

Gastronomy is emerging in the context of globalization. This refers to the rise of global products and the global customer, the rise of global standards, and new competitors.

The Thai government through the Department of Export Promotion has tried to promote Thai food to the world in its aim to increase income to Thailand generated globally. Branding, called “Thai select”, is granted to Thai restaurants abroad if such restaurants qualified in the set scheme. “To encourage Thai restaurateurs to raise their quality standards so that they are at an international level” is one of the objectives of such branding.

Thai restaurants are able to make their fortune with Thai foods that are commonly known by foreigners. Replication of the often requested dishes is done with loose recipes, often with the excuse of a lack of ingredients. For instance, *pad Thai* is made with ketchup sauce instead of tamarind which not only alters the representation of Thai culinary, but also the distribution of Thai agricultural products is minimized. Many foreign diners are even able to detect such adaptation from what is cook in Thailand. As a consequence, there are attempt in controlling standard of the menu and the culinary practices.

The Office of The National Culture Commission worked in collaboration with Thai embassies around the world in researching 1,500 Thai restaurants located in different continents and reported their findings in Matichon newspaper on August 19, 1998 the top ten Thai dishes around the world. They are: 1) *tom yam kung* (ต้มยำกุ้ง), 2) *green curry*, 3) *pad Thai*, 4) *pad kaprow*, 5) *kaeng phet pet yang* (แกงเผ็ดเป็ดข่า), 6) *tom ka kai*, 7) *yam nuea* (ยำเนื้อ), 8) *moo sate* (หมูสะเต๊ะ), 9) *kai phat met mamuang himmapan* (ไก่ผัดเม็ดมะม่วงหิมพานต์) and 10) *panaeng* (พะเนียง).

These are examples of Thai dishes that have a long international acquaintance. There are other dishes on the lists, such as *som tam* and *massaman*, since Thai food has become more popular and more tourists are aware after traveling to Thailand. Appointed culinary institutes are helping in such standardization. These dishes are taught and Thai cooks tested before being granted a certification to work in a Thai restaurant abroad. “Thai Select” will be posted in front of a restaurant that passes many standards, including preparation of these dishes to inform foreign diners of their qualification as approved by the Thai government.

The rise of Global Products and Global Customers

Differences still exist among countries in terms of national cultures and political and economic systems, the needs of customers for cultures and services are growing more similar.

Similar customer needs and globally minded customers link economies because companies can produce one product for everybody, and anyone can buy anything from anywhere. Developing nations become more than sources of cheap production and become the sources of the greatest consumer growth.

Modern society can also be viewed as confirmation of the statement “culture is food and food is culture”, especially in urban cities, and the adaptation applied to food when values are generated globally. Thai people have an acquaintance with many modern concepts in producing food through factory process.

There are many foreign products Thai people has welcomed from the early days till present. Ham was mentioned by King Rama V regarding his trip to Europe. It is now pervasively welcomed into Thai households with supply from factories. Its emergence in the royal space offer its nice debut to Thai society as of its attached values. The baking of pastry was several times written in cook books by elites during the time of national reformation. Even though its practices need ingredients such as wheat, butter and milk and equipment such as baked oven which were rare and expensive for commoners during such time, bread and cake has been long popular among Thai people.

Even though the food culture can be constructed through how people physically live their lives, technological development is another key for food in diverse aspects. Air-conditioned rooms, for instance, have expanded food choices. More Thai people can enjoy dairy products and creamy food when they are in air-conditioned spaces. The digesting of heavy food is more efficient when consuming this type of food in colder environment. Moreover, the repetition of such intake is enhancing the lactic bearable of Thai people and diners can be free from stomachaches. Milk has been promoted generally for local consumption in great demand. Schools also provide milk daily to primary students. This is then one of the flavors that Thai people have gotten used to in the present.

Milk and related products is accepted by the new generation for use in cooking in a Thai kitchen. Evaporate milk, which is easy and convenient both in

purchasing, storing and using, is chosen to replace coconut milk to create a creamy texture in many dishes especially those produced in public food spaces. Apart from milk and cream, monosodium glutamate is used throughout the country and has become generic for public food preparation. Health condition of Thai people has been detected the different illness comparing between the consumption with concentration of local wisdom and modern system.

The Rise of Global Standards

Global companies aim to produce their product to worldwide markets with same standard and promote in concept that all agreed upon its values. For example, an AA battery can be purchased anywhere in the world and it will fit in various types of gadget.

As now, when products are introduced into the world market, there is increasing competitive pressure to save money by developing one product for everyone. Consistency in quality also has become a requirement for doing business in many countries. The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) in Geneva, Switzerland has developed a set of technical standards known originally as ISO 9000, now called the ISO 9001:2000 series (International Standards Organization, 2006). There are also environment protection standards known as ISO 14000. In 1992, ISO compliance becomes part of the product-safety laws in many European countries. Many large European multinationals, such as Germany's Siemens, now require suppliers to be ISO-certified. As a result, in order to do business in the EU, the pressure is increasing for the United States and other countries to adopt ISO quality requirements and standardization.

1.6 Definition of the terms:

International food space refers to a place where there is an international interaction and communication through food and drink.

Five-Star hotel refers to a cultural space where signs and codes of luxury and professional hospitality service are provided.

Culinary practice refers to a routine and belief of culinary among people within a particular cultural space. This includes the way they design the recipe and menu, as well as the process of cooking and presentation.

Gastronomy refers to the study of the production and preparation of food and drink and how, where, when and why the food and drink is consumed. This also includes the philosophy, belief and values behind food practices.

1.7 Significance of the study

1.7.1 To understand the characteristics and the process of Thai food and “Thainess” constructed and presented in international food spaces.

1.7.2 To contribute the aspects of Thai gastronomy to the studies with awareness on constructed values from a cultural lens, especially on the culinary practices which impact the socioeconomic sustainable food system.

CHAPTER II

BACKGROUND OF THAI GASTRONOMY

This chapter will present historical background in relation to Thai gastronomy and will also provide information regarding Thai regional food by analyzing its meanings in relation to the cultural environment.

2.1 Historical Background

Thai food and its meanings have always been contingent upon the life of the people in each society. The history of Thai people in Sukhothai, Ayutthaya, Thonburi or, in recent times, the Rattanakosin period, suggests how food and food meanings has always been influenced by the king, the way of life of the peasants, the economy, international trade, and foreign visitors.

2.1.1 Ecological Diversities and Gastronomy in Central Siam

The history depicts of many crucial aspects as capitals endorsed for evolution of Thai gastronomy in high extents. Ecological differences which support this idea of the nurturing of culinary practices can be seen from stone inscriptions in the Sukhothai period, as well as those mentioned by many accounts of foreign visitors in either the Ayutthaya or Rattanakosin periods. There are many natural products which are enjoyed today which can be identified in such references, especially tropical herbs and fruits. The trade data between Siam and the visiting merchants from around the world indicate some products might have been new in those days, but are common to Thailand today.

As quoted by Thompson (2002), in Sukhothai, regarded as the first independently established Siamese kingdom, the stone inscriptions ordered to be engraved by King Ramkhamhaeng hint at a political style that was implemented in those days that was family oriented rather than that which existed in the later eras

when the rulers were allocated power in a hierarchical society. This is why Thomson views Sukhothai as the ‘golden age’ of Thai civilization. Under its greatest king, Ramkhamhaeng (who reigned from 1279 to 1298), Sukhothai rapidly won the allegiance of numerous small kingdoms and principalities. The famous saying on the stone, ‘There is fish in the water and rice in the fields,’ is about the wealth of the land of Sukhothai. Thompson also quoted the part from the stone regarding available food which shows the foods that existed at the time of King Ramkhamhaeng:

“They plant areca groves and betel groves all over this *muang*
... coconut ... jackfruit ... mango and tamarind groves are
planted in abundance. King Ram Khamheang, lord of this
kingdom ... planted ... sugar ... plam trees...”

Such food has been in the ecology continuously, as well as in Thai gastronomy. As people travel around the world, there has been a steady exchange of food from the past until the present. Foods have come with the visitors and have been welcomed and rejected throughout history; as examples, food heritage from the Chinese and the Indians are two primary components in Thai gastronomy.

“Holy basil” has been ritually used in Brahmin temples which came together with the Indians, and then became popularly on Thai tables, along with many other Indian spices. Even though many spices were introduced first through Indian settlements, they were also used intensively through the adaptation of Arabian dishes which came afterwards. Noodle and the stir-frying dishes, with an increase of meat consumption, were introduced through Chinese culture.

Even chilies, which many believe are a native Thai plant, were newly introduced to the Siamese in the Ayutthaya period. Thai pepper was traded for chilies that were introduced by the Portuguese, and have been grown in Thailand since with extreme demand.

Many documents written by international visitors noted the nature biodiversities of Ayutthaya and Bangkok, which could be a reason supporting the

diversity of Thai gastronomy. These foreigners depicted Siam mostly in the area around the basin of the Chao Phraya River, with a picture of half land and half water which could be seen through the housing style and ways of life. The Siamese constructed their houses on poles above the water level, with the annual flooding having positive values to agriculture. Fish and shellfish were intensively used; fertile land enabled by the flooding yielded natural products and national development, including enhancing trading with many nations around the world.

Since fish were in large supplies, the Siamese preserved and stored them for year round sustenance. Fish and shellfish were preserved in a variety of ways as mentioned by visitors since ancient times. There were many groups of people in the central plains who constantly applied their beliefs to cooking with these abundant ingredients, with their legacy still greatly present. *Plara*, for instance, was created by the Mon who had long settled near the rivers and canals in this area, as mentioned in a book called “Nam Phrik” written by Kukrit Pramoj, a member of the royal family, a former Prime Minister, a writer, and a food guru. He indicates that food with *plara* could be traced of Mon cuisine. The Mon developed fish ingredients in composing with other dishes, such as sun-dried fish which could be a part of many other foods.

Gervaise (1988: 26) described the natural variety around the country and he stressed his views on water that positively benefited the prosperity of Siam. He wrote about a fish called “coboche” which was translated by San Komolbutra as snake-head fish or *pla chon* (ปลาช่อน). There were so many that they were dried under the sun to preserve them. The taste was good and was preferred by both Siamese and foreigners, especially the Dutch, who placed orders to export some out of the country. Gervaise wrote that it was as good as “Mayence ham”, a famous German food.

“Eight stripes” or *paet rio* (แปดริ้ว) is a name given to an area where the main products are dried fish. Fish from the river is neatly carved in stripes and dried under the sun. The river area is still dense with Mon communities and their way of life has continued. The fresh-water fish as treated by the ways of the Mon has been

absorbed throughout the country. Mon flavors have gained high awareness, alongside that of royal cuisine, as history has shown much participation of Mon families in the haute space.

Khao Chae, or summer rice, is a special *krung wang* (เครื่องว่าง) to enjoy during the intervals between the main meals, with rice served in cold and fragrant water and accompanied by several tidbits of fish and *kapi*, as well as assorted carved vegetables. This dish was created by the Mon and earned an haute honor when royal ladies from Mon families refined them within a royal context. The lady who is mentioned most for her special skills with food, especially this sophisticated set, is a royal mother named *Chaochom Sonklin*, who served King Rama IV and was the ancestor of the *Khalaseni* (กษัตริย์) family.

Apart from food from the rivers, sea products have also been the basis of Thai gastronomy. Gervaise expressed in 1989 upon his observation of Thai food, including shrimp paste, and quoted in Thompson (2002)'s book titled *Aharn Thai*:

“They mix with all their stews a certain paste made of rotten prawns, called *gapi* in Thai ... which has a pungent smell that nauseates anyone not accustomed to it. It is said to give meat a certain zest which whets the appetite ... so that to make a good sauce in the Siamese manner salt, pepper, ginger, cinnamon, cloves, garlic, white onions, nutmeg and several strongly flavored herbs must be mixed in considerable quantities with this shrimp paste. At banquets the dishes are served all higgledy-piggledy and in no particular order, with fruit and rice in vessels of gold, silver and porcelain” (Gervaise, 1989).

This quote shows *kapi* was negatively received by the writer; yet, in reality, *kapi* is preferred, and used intensively and in a variety of uses in Thai

gastronomy. *Kapi* is still commonly seen today in Thai culinary practices. The stew referred to might be curry which is important to include *kapi*. Precooking *kapi* by grilling in advance is often mentioned in many old cook books to give “good” taste, with such “good” being learnt naturally by Thai people of its existences.

Kapi is a Southeast Asian flavor on any coast line. It has been admired throughout the regional sub-continent as this ancient ingredient has been long enough with these countries for the people to be familiar with its offending smell, yet totally tasteful flavor after being cooked. The long relationship between the Dutch and the Indonesians, as well as various foods from Indonesia, including shrimp paste, which is called “*trashi*”, made it so that these two nationalities enjoyed Thai *kapi* without hesitation.

Even though frequent mentioned is made of its notorious odor, the demand in Thai gastronomy, even in this globalized time, has not been minimized. This is because one of the key essences of *kapi* is that in many dishes, once cooked, it gives the dish a less fishy flavor and, on the contrary, positively enhances aspects to the food. It could be compared to using blue cheese, with its unpleasant smell, in European cuisine. Blue cheese contributes a round taste to the food. It has been suggested that Thai curries are based on common notions of various international cuisines.

Kapi is also an ingredient in many other dishes. There are many Thai specialties made with *kapi* which is pounded with other herbs, such as garlic, chilies and a few other basic ingredients. These dishes are called *nam phrik* and act crucially in *samrap*, served along with vegetables. *Nam phrik kapi pla too*, or shrimp paste with mackerel, is a good example of what Thai people have grown up with and which is often served on Thai tables, no matter at homes or in food shops. This dish is rarely served in Thai restaurants, especially fine dining spaces, yet there are a few adapted dishes with *kapi* that can be found with grander garnishing, such as *kapi kua* served at *Sala Rim Naam*.

The pounding of herbs, especially the key ingredients, chilies, garlic and shallots, is basic to many dishes. *Kapi* is usually added to the pounding then furthered with some more particular ingredients and finished with seasonings. Such herbal bases contribute to Thai food's medicinal characteristics apart from the flavor significance. It has been maintained until present.

Nam pla (น้ำปลา), or fish sauce, a fermentation of fish, salt and sugar, is one of the key seasonings. The salty, brown liquid is a general seasoning for Thai food. While Westerners often season their food with salt, Thais typically use this key sauce. It is usual to see a small saucer filled with *nam pla* on the table as a condiment.

“Chili paste”, or *namphrik phao* (น้ำพริกเผา), is composed of high quality shrimp paste, dried chilies, dried shrimp, garlic and shallots. Before pounding, all the ingredients are grilled or roasted in accordance with its name “*phao*” or grilling, included grilling the shrimp paste; then tamarind paste and palm sugar are added. This paste is very crucial in Thai gastronomy as it structures the intense flavors to whichever dish it is added, such as *tom yam*, spicy banana blossom salad, stir-fried seafood with curry powder, etc. Today, such paste has high international demand and many international companies based abroad produce it with less authentic culinary practices owing to the scarcity of ingredients; for instance, chilies are used from Mexico instead of Thai chilies. While this makes for competition, such adaptation could potentially misleading consumers regarding Thai gastronomy.

2.1.2 Cosmopolitan Thai Society and Thai Gastronomy

Diverse groups of people have come to live in the area of present day Thailand as a result of victories over various enemies. Several groups of people situated throughout the kingdom and nearby borders, the Khmer, the Shan, the Mon, etc., have lived together applying and sharing their skills and labor to the land. The Chinese and the Indian came with different roles in society; while the Chinese focused on commercial lives, the Indian arranged bureaucratic tasks in Siam. All of them have contributed to Thai gastronomy with their diverse arts, as well as the introduction of various ingredients to Thai gastronomy.

The water not only nurtured abundant food, but also provided access to and from the land. Values have been intricately shared among regional people and peoples from far continents, such as Japanese, Arabians and Europeans. The local people and the visitors made Ayutthaya a cosmopolitan kingdom through long relationships in continuous reigns.

The way Thais called many ingredients gives an indication of “foreign” introduction. This can be seen in many fresh products called *thet* (เทศ). Such terms were given to suggest the sources of non-native natural products, such as *krung thet* “เครื่องเทศ” for spices, *makhuea thet* (มะเขือเทศ) for tomatoes, *man thet* (มันเทศ) for potatoes. This is evidence of ecological exchanges that came with the foreign visits. Similarly, many other ingredients without such designation have been found to have been brought by visitors, such as holy basil, as mentioned earlier.

The settlement of the Chinese has played a significant role in Thai gastronomy, as seen by *Pad Thai*, the stir-fried noodle dish. Consumption of large animals, such as pork and beef, to symbolize wealth was adopted by Thais from the Chinese and has slowly loosened the belief in committing sin. Tofu, pickled radish, ginger, clear soup, are of Chinese origin. Chinese seasonings with bases of soybean, such as light or black soy sauce, fermented soybean and oyster sauce, have been blended with Thai foods. Chinese and Thai dishes frequently have share their highlights in constructing Thai gastronomy, such as noodles served in coconut milk based curry-like soup, called *khao soi* or *mee krob*, crispy noodles in which Chinese introduced ingredients, fermented soybean paste, pickled garlic, garlic chive, are combined with *somsa*, a local orange which can be compared most closely to a mandarin orange.

Muslims, according to Thompson (2002), not only shared their spices, but also played a big part in showing their foods with botchery skills. These meats were shared in Thai gastronomy, together with fish, poultry and some kinds of amphibian.

Moreover, bread was introduced by Muslims, not by Westerners. *Nan* bread was introduced earlier and is still consumed today with chicken or beef green curry served with *roti* (โรตีส), a kind of thin bread. The version of green curry is made spicier than the usual in order to enhance the bland texture of the bread. However, *roti* is most often seen in snack version infused with sugar. Ayutthaya is one of the provinces where today Muslims and their food culture can be found.

The Westerners found their lives in Ayutthaya were not too difficult. They could survive by dining according to their own preferences and also with support of the Siamese, especially from royal patronage. They managed to obtain wheat to bake their bread, as well as provisions of other food and wines. Banquets were arranged in King Narai's reign to welcome all nationalities with a great amount and variety of international food set on tables according to international values, such as using tableware and decoration. Golden and silverware, including refined table clothes, were mentioned both for the volume and quality at a function hosted by King Narai.

Such a cosmopolitan atmosphere lessened to some degree when the Europeans stopped visiting and trading. They returned later at the beginning of the Rattanakosin period as a consequence of the Burney Treaty under King Rama III or the Bowring Treaty under King Rama IV. King Rama V implemented and maintained diplomacy among many European countries in order to keep Siam safe from colonization; accordingly "civilized" concepts according to Western countries have come since then with Thai gastronomy constructed in those former times widely exposed to Western concepts.

Later, after the people's revolution during the reign of King Rama VII, industrialization brought together further Western concepts, and the modern food system was started. Technology has opened wide the world for the trading, tourism and many others aspects have been dynamically as of the globalization in present day. Dynamic Thai gastronomy today is the consequences of complex and diverse meanings influenced by globalization.

2.1.3 Continuity of the Monarchy and Sophistication of Thai Gastronomy

While there are many new concepts there are tensions accumulated values from the past negotiated along. Siam has never been occupied by a Western country, and has been consecutively ruled by monarchs. Faith and beliefs have been taken care consecutively in applying on Royal food, which has become a special character of Thai gastronomy. Cooking is highly inspired by sophistication constructed from ways of life in continuity with values contribute from monarchy.

The two values that have been intricately woven and which support the uniqueness and extraordinary refinement of Thai gastronomy are royalty and Buddhism. Meanings inspired by these two values have influenced all aspects of Thai gastronomy.

Absolute monarchy started from the Ayutthaya times with skillful persons, such as artists from varied groups, sharing their expertise to work together, especially for the monarchy. These art forms were paid more attempts made in offering to the divined king. The value of paying the highest respect for offering to the king has been implanted in Thai people until the present day. This is a crucial aspect that has inspired Thai gastronomy to be sophisticated and unique.

Laborious works of art in several forms, included food, in royal spaces has been possible as there are many people with trained skills. Women, in the old days, were deemed to be good housewives if trained in the palace. Therefore, many ladies from families with relationships to the palace were sent to polish their values. While many of them returned to their homes, many stayed for good, such that their refined skills have been more than enough, both in terms of numbers and also quality, for the production of royal cuisine.

The art of lives through foreign visits was also shown first from the top part of society, which was the palace. Later, it was blended with common lives through the turnover of these ladies either because of their age or marriage.

Curry, for instance, generated its flavor from the Moors who were associated with royal trading. King Narai enjoyed their foods so much that he asked

Muslim chefs to cook in the royal kitchen. The ancestors of these Moors can be traced to the Bunnag family, members of which have served the king in each reign. Their specialties, especially spices, were combined with several local herbs and coconut cream, to make several types of curries, seen in *mae krua hua pah*, the legendary Thai cook book written by Tanpuying Plian Paskornwongs who married a Bunnag noble who served King Rama V. Her daughter, Chaochom Manda Pitt, later promoted to Tanpuying, was also one of the king's ladies. Nowadays, Tawana Ramada Hotel, situated in Bangkok on a road named after their ancestor, is owned by this family and offers Thai foods using their ancestor's recipes.

There were many European who came during the Ayutthaya period, especially in King Narai's times, where the arrangement for their food and drink was made both by themselves and with the help from the king. Thai food was regarded differently by these Westerners, with some enjoying it and some not, although various kinds of fruit were positively mentioned.

Many Thai desserts can be attributed to Maria Guyomar de Pinha, a lady of mixed international ancestry, Japanese, Portuguese and Bengali. She was married to a Greek, who served as the first counselor to King Narai, named Constantine Phaulkon. Consequently, egg yolks and baking are ingredients and a technique that have been implemented in the Thai dessert kitchen since then and there are a lot of golden-color desserts served on auspicious occasions since the color represents wealth to Thais, and thus they have kept producing and reproducing these desserts.

The food culture with royal influence from Ayutthaya was transferred to the Thonburi and Rattanakosin periods. As the Thonburi period was quite short, *Chaofah Chantavadee*, who served under these two periods in royal kitchen, provided consultancy on matters regarding the royal ceremonies.

Among many nationalities, the Chinese have continuously migrated to Siam. Their food culture has been blended within both royal and commoner spaces. Graipakorn (2012) mentioned in his studies about food trading in Thai society from

the past that Siamese peasants and Chinese people were most of the food vendors in the Ayutthaya times and early Rattanakosin period.

The boat song, as quoted below, written for a beloved lady by King Rama II has contents showing food and diverse biodiversities. *Prasrisuriyentramatra* was respected as a great guru in Thai gastronomy, which can be seen by the compliment of her Thai food competency mentioned in the introduction of *mae krua hua pah*. *Prasrisuriyentramatra* was a daughter of a Chinese migrant who was married to King Rama I's sister. The influence of Chinese food can be seen in a snack similar to the Chinese dumpling called *kanom jeeb Thai*. Rice flour replaced the wonton wrapper and the stuffing was made a little spicier and steamed. The values of this royal food refined the dumpling with delicate lines which were compared by king when he wrote the poem to the fashion of elite women called *pha chip thawai* (ผ้าจิบทวาย) style.

From this same boat song, there are many more foods that can be detected with cosmopolitan values. The following is a part of the poem quoted by Thompson (2002). Mentioned of *Massaman* refers to the Muslim introduction of spices, *latiang* and *sankaya* refers to the Portuguese introduction of the use of egg yolk:

<i>Mussaman geng gao dtar</i>	Massaman curry is like a love
<i>Horm yii raa rot rorn reng</i>	As peppery and fragrant as the cumin seed
<i>Chai dai day gleun geng</i>	Its exciting allure arouses
<i>Reng yark hai fi fan haa</i>	I am urged seek its source
<i>Latiang kit dating norng</i>	Latiang is like the pillow on which I dream
<i>Norng dtiang tong tam meung</i>	And to the heavens from which I rise
<i>Lot tang chan chorp gon</i>	Yet upon my dissettling return
<i>Yorn yark nit trar kit naep norn</i>	I find close comfort only with you
<i>Sankaya nard tang kai</i>	On the grains of rice, shows its fallow
<i>Ben nai mai kleuap klang</i>	Silent sadness all too clearly
<i>Jang war jao sao soek leua</i>	Broken, like my heart, for the love of you

Another great time for Thai gastronomy was during the reign of King Rama V, which for many reasons positively reinforced the evolution of Thai gastronomy. Firstly, the king had a true passion for food which can be seen from the letters he wrote during times away from his palace and the country. His experience and passion for gastronomy during the visits to many European countries were shared through letters with the Queen and consorts, as well as his daughters. His craving for native food was frequently mentioned in the letters. The king also wrote some European recipes once he returned to Siam. In fact, he was not the first person to add foreign foods to Thai cuisines, as this had started after the Bowring treaty in the time of King Rama IV, his father.

The princes who were later sent to different countries for studies also brought many flavors back. *Chaopraya Paskornwong*, an elite member of the Bunnag family, for instance, came back from England with many books of Isabel Beeton, a renowned lady during Victorian times. She wrote many books regarding domestic care for guiding British women on transition in society to the modern days, such as “Household Management” and many cook books. With a similar intention to guide Siamese women, the wife of *Chaopraya Paskornwong*, *Plian*, was the first Thai lady who inserted values of Thai gastronomy alongside her recipes.

She referred to her teachers and her faithfulness to them which could hint at the succession of these recipes from former times, as well as the values related. Her cookbooks led other royal ladies to share publicly their household competency; however her books were more prominent, especially with respect to the suggestion of traditionally ways applied to Thai tables for different persons, space and time. Many books were later presented as “*tamrap*” or recipes only. The court movement in food was a rivalry that marked each lady’s prominence.

This is furthered by the opinion shared by the king’s brother, *Somdet Krom Phraya Damrong Rachanuphap*, that the reasons why the king had so many wives was because each family wanted to be the king’s relative. Since the king had a passion for food and cooking, how good a woman was seen was through her food skill as these ladies used food as a way to please the king. They spent time trying to create

the best from each kitchen as a way to please her husband. The foods they created were sought after to be reproduced and become iconic representations of a good wife in later periods.

Apart from *Tanpuying Plian*, *Prachaoboromwongther Praongchao Yaowapapongsnid* was another important lady who was King Rama V's daughter. She implemented her knowledge of Thai medicine, learnt from her grandfather who was a personal doctor of the king, to her cooking skills.

Her food was highlighted for its medicinal values in combination with the general Thai gastronomy as practiced during those days. *Khao khwan* (ข้าวขวัญ), for instance, was made from simple ingredients with keys flavors to stimulate the appetite, but was garnished in triangular shape to compare to *Sumeru* mountain. It was specially made to offer to the king when he was sick and did not have an appetite.

Members of her family, *Snidwong*, later founded a school for girls called *Saipanya*. The book mentioned earlier entitled *Tamrap Saiyaowapa* was made for distribution at her royal funeral. This book has two hundred and fifty-four recipes shared from many *Snidwong* ladies and relatives. The princess's herself contributed fifty-three dishes, included dessert items in this book. The book was popular among many Thai women after being issued. The school has played a crucial role in transferring food knowledge with royal meanings through the female students.

Momluang Terb Xoomsai is one member of the *Snidwong* family who was an alumnus of *Saipanya*. *Tanpuying Maneeratana Bunnag* wrote in the forward page about Rattanakosin dishes 1982 for *Momluang Terb* that she had refreshed the measurement in cooking again after what indicated formerly since *mae krua hua pah* was launched. She translated many recipes to English and published then internationally, making Thai food easier to understand in international food spaces.

King Rama V's decision in enslave offered the expertise on Royal foods in greater blending with the commoners. There were officers who had to leave the palace and many noble's homes and went to work independently. Many of them

made their lives selling foods. *Chao wang* (ชาวกวัง), palace people, was used for advertising superior differences in their public food places.

More exposure to royal foods by commoners was made with the prestige of these public food spaces. Firstly, royal food was shared officially in schools provided for girls, such as primary schools, finishing schools, vocational schools, etc. Ladies with a background in royal cuisine and royal values were permanent and temporary teachers in these schools. Even though the curriculums did not certify them to work, the ladies who graduated were applicable for those days context in having her learnt insights for serving the family instead. However, this was limited only within the high society rather than the middle classes.

Secondly, the royal ladies participated in charitable events. They shared their food expertise in order to raise money. They also received invitations from both academic places and commercial spaces to demonstrate or share their views on Thai gastronomy. Thirdly, they joined food networks broadcasted on televisions, especially under invitation from Khun Chai Thanadsri, a famous food reviewer. He, himself part of the royal family, was famous for his food expertise. His work included the granting of recommended sign posted on food places under a brand called *shell chuan chim* (เชลล์ชวนชิม).

2.1.4 Food in the Present Day

After the people's revolution in 1932, Thai gastronomy moved from domestic to more public areas. Selling food has always been a career which found mostly Chinese entrepreneurs. Many high rank ladies joined the food businesses which were formerly owned by commoners. The demand for food in public spaces rose because of social change. Work and private hours were set and separated as people had to work outside of their homes. Modern society also allocated mind spaces of people for leisure activities to mark the end of their working hours. The middle class, formed of government officers and Chinese merchants, became clientele of these leisure spaces and food shops in various typologies.

The schools mentioned previously altered their curriculums based on the social conditions. The curriculums at this stage were created with a mixture of values to modern food systems more than for the household. Home economics classes were mixed with diverse classes as there was demand for kitchen staff in many commercial food spaces, included hotels. Nutrition, Western food standards and mass cooking were inserted into what remained of Thai gastronomy. The graduates received certification and finally a Bachelor's degree. There were many school girls who graduated with degrees and entered the work place with their food knowledge.

In fact, as researched by Graipakorn (2012), public food spaces have served people outside their homes since the Ayutthaya times, but were not so many. Chinese merchants and female peasants were food sellers, both of ingredients and cooked foods. More food shops came after development and commerce had moved from the water to the land after the Bowring Treaty was signed in 1855. Markets were moved to the land along the roads. Fifty-seven shops selling rice and food called *khao kaeng* (ข้าวแกง) were registered as mobile food vendors around Bangkok, along with other food shops, such as ten noodle shops, fourteen stir-fried rice vermicelli shops, two boiled rice places, three *kanom jeen* or Mon style rice noodle.

The changing of economy which makes people finds difficulties in living sustained life. Values have been more contingent on the city than on rural areas, including values of food. Modern trade and capitalism enabled Thai people to become more reliant on food in public with the help of industrial food. Rural laborers have moved to the big city for work and have brought their food, especially Esan or Northeastern flavors. Their spicy foods are not only shared at homes and food shops around Thailand, but they are preferred by foreigners, such as *som tam* and minced meat salad, or *larb* (ลาบ). *Som tam* has even gained popularity with international voters being the 14th ranked among national dishes because of its healthy and uniquely fresh and acute taste.

Tourism has come with the emergence of jet airplanes. Thai food was ready to be served to international visitors in many hotels. Rice Kitchen was among

the very first Thai restaurants opened abroad. It was owned by elites from the Bangkhunbhrom palace; so it can be seen that Thai food made its initial presentation to the world with royal aspects.

From 1959 to 1975, during the Vietnam War, also known as the Second Indochina War, Thailand was filled with American troops on leave. American food and eating culture, such as hamburgers and ketchup, became evident. Thais began to commercialize their cooking to provide food services to the Americans. This marked another ‘cultural meaning’ to the way Thais cook and the meaning of Thai food as well.

Thai food has been continuously influenced by foods of various countries, both in the Western and Eastern hemispheres, in which raw materials and cooking methods have been applied to the original recipes so as to create new tastes and forms that are vividly much different from the original Thai aliments. Applying Thai food to foreign recipes has given birth to “Fusion food”. There is, therefore, an ‘adaptation’ of culture which allows the process of food consumption and production to be more responsive to various cultural meanings, which are partly a result of the media and the digital world (Yasmeen, 2006).

2.2 Regional Food: Its meanings and relation to the cultural environment

This section will illustrate the understanding of ‘food’ to the understanding of culture. Each part of the country will be represented by its regional food. The major purpose of this section is to show how food meanings are constructed within each region of Thailand by its geographical meanings.

2.2.1 The central plains

Thai food has been constructed in the central plains through different factors. The flourishing of Thai gastronomy is the interplay of both the abundance of natural resources and civilized arts and sciences which have developed on the central domain of the country.

Geographical aspects of the central plains are beneficial for the yield of a variety of produce. Many canals and rivers offer various kinds of plants: rice, vegetables, fruits, fresh water fish and shellfish. These products have been made to serve Thai culinary practices in a core role or as a type of seasoning. Thais have learned to preserve water products and use key flavors for long periods, especially in the central plains where there is a high volume of food supplied from water. Such products include *kapi*, *plara*, *nampla*, soy sauce, etc.

There are more seasonings, as well as more flavors, created in the central plains because the land can produce diverse products. This diverse culture plays a crucial role in producing such flavors up to their different values and work well in terms of more choices for culinary practices. So the above salty flavors have taken turns in constructing Thai gastronomy with art. Other flavors have also been variously selected from nature and similarly applied. Sweetness is typical of the central plains, following the choices given by the nature, with palm sugar and sugar cane being used in culinary practices depending on the type of cooking.

A similarity may be seen between the central and the south where coconut trees are pervasive. Therefore, both palm sugar and coconut milk are products usually served around the two regions. However, at present these flavors are shared around the country. It is not that rare to find a preference for flavors from the central plains to be admired by people from other regions, even if not as popular as in the original place. For instance, sweetness in greater amounts is consumed in the north and northeast, yet it is not predominant, especially in private food spaces. Acquaintance of tastes from different regions can be detection in the nation's commonality in terms of the rising of dedifferentiation.

It is seen traveling of ingredients is the act of physical and spiritual connected in producing foods for the nation. Festivals and ritual ceremonies are created for human participation for ways of life, especially for agriculture. These events are constructed to link people and nature to sustain each other. There are many traditional events in relation to the production and the eating of rice, such as prayers for *mae phosop* (แม่โพสพ), or the goddess who protects the growing of rice, pouching

ceremony, stirring *chao yakhu* (ข้าวยาสุ), or the making of young rice product, etc. Sections in society from peasants, nobles, the *sankha* and the royalty, and even group such as animists, are delegated responsibility to nurture the production of rice, including sustaining this crucial sustenance, as well as other dietaries.

Apart from rice, there are many Thai dishes that have been carried together with values constructed and consumed without border. The flavors are shared with the moving in and out of people for ages. Especially with the grand culture of Bangkok, Thai food migrates together with people in spontaneous welcoming. Soups and curries are among them.

Soups and Curries

In composing the real meaning of spiciness, Thais fulfill such meanings with not only chilies, but also with various herbs which contribute acute and strong tastes. These are usual paired as basic ingredients in many dishes, such as soups, curries, and dipping sauces. The natural resources in the central plain are embedded in the composition of such meanings.

Tracing the traveling path of chilies, they were introduced by the Portuguese in the Ayutthaya period and have gained increasing popularity since then. Siamese had used black pepper seeds before, which were one of the famous exported items from Siam to other countries. It acts also on evolution of Siamese culture as this plant is one of the products led the advents of internationalities and their values alongside.

With the advent of chilies can be seen the lesser use of pepper seeds in Thai gastronomy. Boiling is a good example of chili use because the usual Thai soup is based on chilies, assorted acute herbs and seasonings, fish sauce and lime juice. It could be considered that such is the basic syntax of Thai spicy soup, such as the classic dish called *tom yam* (ต้มยำ), or spicy soup, made with fish or shrimp or any shellfish and meat with natural fresh herbs, such as galangal, lemongrass and kaffir lime leaves.

In fact, before chilies arrived, Thai spicy soup was made with pepper seeds as in a famous soup dish called *kaeng liang* (แกงเลียง). It is a peppery spicy soup with lemon basil and seasoned with *kapi*. Once the flavor of chilies fully gained its popularity, chilies replaced pepper seeds and most of the spicy soups are now based on chilies, such as *tom yam*; *tom khlong* (ต้มโคล้ง), a soup dish with the smoky flavors of charcoal grilled ingredients, such as grilled chilies, grilled herbs and grilled fish; *tom ka* (ต้มข่า), or a soup that is *tom yam*-like, but coconut cream is added to the cooking.

Today, Thai people and chilies are intimately connected. Diners find that they can increase the degrees of spiciness within their own preferred sense once they have tried chilies. On the contrary, it is harder to minimize spiciness once one becomes familiarized, which could be proven through Thai food and Thai people. Chilies are grown throughout the country and produced in multiple varieties. However, to highlight Thai gastronomy only with chilies is a misperception.

Coconut cream is an example that shows how Thai people in the central plains know how to temper the sharpness and strength of chilies with other ingredients. With respect to boiled dishes in former times, before the arrival of the Persians, it is believed that most were clear soups generally like *kaeng liang* and *tom yam*. Curry is the adaptation of how local people in Ayutthaya wanted to have Arabian dishes in Thai style. The paste of chilies, herbs and *kapi* were added with spices brought by the Indians and the Persians. Coconut milk replaced cow milk or goat milk cooked altogether with meat and vegetables. As the consequence, the roots of Thai curry can be traced to either India or Arabia. Southern cuisine also produces various curries from flavors that traveled together with these people in the ancient time.

Because of coconut's creaminess and slight sweetness, coconut milk and cream added during the cooking of curry is aimed to temper some of the sharpness and acuteness of the chili paste. Yet the creaminess of fresh coconut will not decrease the freshness of the blended herbs.

The preference of the curries has spread outside the central plains, such as to the north and even to the northeast, where is less likely to be physically enjoyed of food with heaviness. Thus, it is contextually enjoyed such as in very lighter texture or in the absent of coconut cream. For instance, the cassia curry which Thais call *kaeng khee lek* (แกงขี้เหล็ก), is based on red curry paste which involves the use of chilies, assorted herbs and shrimp paste. While, believed to be the food of the Mons, *kaeng khee lek* is cooked with coconut cream and seasoned with *plara*, yet it is made to endure the hot climate in *Esan* without coconut cream, even though the people in this dry area decided to maintain *plara*.

2.2.2 The north

Today a lot of people have the misperception that Northern people generally prefer sweet foods more than people from other parts of the country. This is understood through the food in tourist spaces which are mostly owned by people from Bangkok and serve the tourists. However, in private food spaces, Northern food is generally milder than food from the central areas, but not as sweet.

King Rama V once wrote a letter to one of his wives, *Prarachaya Jaodararasm* (พระราชชายาเจ้าดารารัศมี), a princess of Chiangmai politically married to him who later left her royal mansion in Bangkok to return to Chiangmai. His letter included *kapi* as a gift sent from him. This letter suggested that *kapi* was quite new up north at that time. The king made a specially delivered of this ingredient to her with significant meaning. There might have been many other ingredients with their attached values brought to the north with central plains connection, including palm sugar, the sweetness from Bangkok.

Khao Soi

The neighboring regions played significant roles in adding values in the construction of Thai gastronomy. The north, where the Northern culture called *lan-na* (ล้านนา) is embedded, could be viewed as the mixture of groups of people: the southern Chinese, the Shan, the Laos, etc.

Khao soi (ข้าวซอย), egg noodles served in curry-like soup, came with a group of Muslim Chinese called the *Hor* (ฮ่อ). The traditionally *Hor* style is light animal milk with special egg noodles and beef or chicken. *Chuan chia* (จวนเจี๋ย), which is a kind of spice popularly used in Chinese food, also can be seen in *Hor khao soi*. It is dominantly used of spices but the tourist ones are rather sugary. Another one is Shan style which was also received from the *Hor*. Previously, the Shan made *khao soi* without coconut milk as it was very rare up in the hills where they were situated. Today, coconut milk is used in both of the two mentioned types of *khao soi*. However, values have been arranged into *khao soi* with tourism promotion and then less different can be seen between these two types.

Larb

Larb is a dish in which the ingredients can mark its food culture. This dish is enjoyed in the northern parts of the country, as well as in the northeastern areas. Northern *larb* is very complex as it has a particular paste with at least fifteen ingredients. *Malaeb* (มะเลห์) and *makwaen* (มะคว่ำ) are two necessary spices which create the unique aromatic smell for Northern *larb* since these two plants cannot be grown in Bangkok and any other downward areas of the country.

Nam Phrik Noom

Nam phrik noom is a good example showing that Thai people throughout the country have to have a dipping sauce at every meal. Even though the Northern people eat less spicy food than the lower parts, they enjoy chilies and easily grow them. *Phrik noom* is a kind of bell chili which has less spiciness than common chilies. It is grilled then pounded together with garlic and seasoned with fermented bean called *tua nao* (ตั่วเนา). Since the sea is too far to produce *kapi*, and beans are abundant up north, people make use of beans as a primary seasoning, which can be seen in Myanmar and its foods as well.

When considered the majority of the central area's various kinds of dipping sauces, *kapi* is added to the pounding of chilies and garlic. Many provinces in Thailand's northern part use almost the same ingredients, yet prefer seasoning with

tua nao. It is common in the rural north for people to have *tua nao* together with the biting of *phrik noom* with warm sticky rice for breakfast.

Both *kapi* and *tua noa* share a similar culinary purpose, which is to add a meaty texture and salty flavor to the dish. Even though these ingredients have an offensive smell, it is a way to supply protein to the local people who consume less animal meat and milk.

Mieng

Mieng is a word that Northerners call tea. It is a typical way for enjoying life by chewing fermented tea leaves and smoking. Tidbits, such as rock salt, sweet coconut and ginger are wrapped in tea leaves and chewed. The tannin produced from the fermentation gives the tea a slightly sweet, bitter and sour taste. This tea chewing habit energetically motivates northern people individually and socially since it moves people for getting together. Hosts also welcome their guests to share *mieng*.

The addictive part is not only the flavors of these tidbits, but the conversation that arises during the chewing, and many times tobacco is rolled and smoked along. However, after the chewing of *maak* (หมาก) in the central plains was banned because of its dirtiness to teeth and floors, the north also realized as such and has slowly refrained from this culture, first in city. However, it is still common to see vending of this fermented tea for *mieng* in a lot of fresh markets around the north.

Thompson (2002) suggests that in the older days, when people spent more times in the private spaces, many homes always had some kinds of “*mieng*” to serve which depicts how domestic spaces were like and were important during the older days. It is also shown of how the networks of social intercourse are constructed out of the working relation context.

2.2.3 The northeast

The northeast part of the country has many disadvantages for agriculture, even though there are some rivers and rains, but the land has no capacity for absorption of enough water year round. Moreover, the temperature is averagely

hot. Even though, people make attempts at growing rice. Their preference staple is sticky rice, but the lower part of the region producing very good jasmine rice exported throughout the world.

With such difficulty towards sustenance, many of the people have migrated throughout the country where they perform labor work during the off rice season, returning to their homes during the harvest times.

Such scarcity of food can be found in their cuisine, which is simple in terms of the rare use of meat, but not simple in terms of tastes. It has been proven through its popularity as the world has voted for three northeastern dishes in top fifty world dishes. These dishes are *som tam*, *larb* and *nam tok* (น้ำตก) or sliced meat salad. The last two dishes are quite common today in this drought land as technology provides for enough supply of various meats at affordable prices.

Som Tam

Som tam is good evidence of how people live in simplicity in a very dry land, as well as how they can adapt their lives in such rareness. The ingredients that compose *som tam* are not the only depiction of such adaptation. The food can be cooked without intervention of fire is another way. Shredded green papaya is the key composition in this salad and to it is added tomatoes, fuzzy eggplant, or locally called *ma-uek* (มะขี้เึ), wild olive, or *makok* (มะกอก), and tomatoes depending on what is mostly easily gotten from their paddy fields. Chilies and garlic supply the tastes, alongside seasonings, such as fish sauce, lime juice, sugar and *plara*. They are simply pounded together, with all the seasonings all poured at the same times into the mortar.

Sugar is not compulsory, but fish sauce and *plara* are very important to *Esan* people. *Som tam* is made very strong, spicy and salty, including *plara's* odor, to be enjoyed with more and more sticky rice in order to keep them laborious and fully full in longer hours. If made too sweet, it will overwhelm and suppress their appetite. This simple food seems to be so very common, but to *Esan*

people it is important such that their frequency in consuming is more than their physical preference.

When *som tam* was shared around the country, it was adapted, such as the Bangkok version which is less spicy, but a little more sweet and without *plara*. Products from the central plains are also added, such as dried shrimp and toasted peanuts.

Larb Esan

Larb is a good example of *Esan* people applying spiritual meaning to their eating. This dish is shared with the northern part of Thailand, with *Esan* people having their local version.

To endure the higher climate, *Esan* people do not use oil for cooking *larb*, just a little stock instead. Any available meat is minced and cooked over a low heat. To create a meatier texture to a lesser volume of meat, toast sticky rice is pounded and added. Shallots, spring onions and coriander make up the fresh parts of the salad. Similar to *som tam*, *larb esan* is characterized by sharpness, freshness and acuteness to allow more consumption of sticky rice and sharing among people who dine together.

Larb is soundly means 'luck', so it is consumed on auspicious events or ceremonies, such as marriages, entering a new house, or ordination of a son. *Kanom jeen* is also served at these auspicious events because *kanom jeen* is a kind of noodle made from rice and its white color and long shape are connected to longevity. The dish is served for this same value throughout the country, only its dressing is depended on each part of the country. The *Esan* version makes *kanom jeen nam yah pa* (ขนมจีน น้ำยาป่า) which is cooked quite spicy with a clear broth and no coconut milk, but with *plara*.

To look at either *larb* or *kanom jeen nam yah pa*, even though they are already made with special value, *Esan* still show how they simplify their way of life.

2.2.4 The south

The long coast lines of the southern areas are beneficial for sea products. Moreover, the rains brought with the yearly monsoon offer green areas, rain forests, inlands with several herbs, plants, including rice. The seas welcome cultural exchanges with many foreign visitors from the past. Today, tourist promotions of sun, sand and sea has tremendously increased the sharing of values around the world. Food is among such values that is shared.

Thompson (2002) makes clear, with respect to Southern food culture, that the south of Thailand can be regarded as two distinct areas: the low-lying provinces in the deep south and those to the southeast of Bangkok. The division between Buddhism and Islam pervades the culture of the south today, with 34 percent of the population of south Thailand being Muslim. In the Isthmus of Kra, the majority of Muslims live on the seaboard, while most of the Buddhist Thai live inland and are farmers. Various feasts reinforce the Muslim community: to celebrate marriages; to mark important moments in life, such as naming ceremonies, births and deaths; and religious occasions, such as the Prophet's birthday, and especially the day after Ramadan.

Massaman

Massaman curry shows the diversity of this country with the repertoire of its cuisine and people. *Massaman* curry is a contribution from the south of the country where the biggest part of the Muslim community has historically been. Not only the using of meat in regular, but the use of larger piece of meat, also reveals that meat is common to eat in this part of the country. Muslims are not allowed to eat beef or chicken if such animals are not killed complying with halal procedures. Thompson (2002) views that along with the migration to the country, these Muslims brought this culinary skill with them. They were among the first butchers in the central plains, mainly catering to their own community, but also to others.

The spices are carried along with their skills upon meat cooking. This dish and many curries that use similar spices, such as coriander seeds, cardamom, cassia, cloves and cumin, suggest Muslim and Indian origins. *Massaman* curry is now

a firm favorite with Thais, including those living outside this religious community. The legendary boat song written by King Rama II with reference to *massaman* curry shows such diversities since the ancient time. The king referred to each dish with a sweet comparison to his affection for his lover. The interested points are the tracing of foods between the Rattanakosin and former periods. Many items are continually available today, but many of them remain only in name.

The work of *massaman* by court lady marked the identity in exclusive on this dish. Today, it is broadly accepted by the world community and was recently voted by international web surfers who organized this vote by a website name “CNN go” as the best food of the world.

Sour Orange Curry

This curry is a boiled soup made extremely spicy without coconut cream and seasoned with the sour flavor of tamarind paste. A unique key is no sugar is added. The central plains have one similar famous curry without coconut called jungle curry, or *kaeng pa* (แกงป่า), which is hot and intense. However, Southern people have many more hot dishes, included *kaeng lueang* (แกงเหลือง) as simplest in the cuisine’s repertoire, which reflects many Thai conventions as it is made from boiling a paste in water along with fresh vegetables.

Firstly, the paste is made in a heavy granite mortar and pestle. Each home has one, meaning each home is prepared to invest the time to make their own pastes, which implies a pride and economic self-reliance as they do not have to depend on access to a distant market. Fish can be caught in nearby canals and vegetables grown at home. These ingredients and practices accord with Thai Buddhist conventions where meat was eschewed and fish and vegetables and are preferred. (Thompson, 2002)

Most curries in Southern cuisine are boiled and are generally fish-based with a sour ingredient; the prevalent seasoning is hot, salty and sour. An incendiary yellow turmeric curry uses fish (whole or fillets), boiled, grilled or deep-

fried, with various vegetables, such as bamboo shoots, cucumbers, heart of coconut or pieces of pineapple. The Buddhists of the region use coconut milk and cream. Familiar red and green curries appear, but with Southern traits. Red curries are often made with small dried chilies plus a few fresh yellow chilies and always include red turmeric and often a larger proportion of shrimp paste.

Green curries are made much hotter, using extra chilies and peppercorns, usually white; farther to the south, in Muslim regions, black pepper is sometimes added as well. The Muslim community of the south has different culinary preferences. They use only a little coconut cream, preferring stock, ghee and, surprisingly, yoghurt. Most Muslim curries are boiled, quite thick and redolent with cardamom and cumin. Seasoning depends on the province: in Pattani and Yala, the seasoning is hot and salty, but it is a little sweeter in Trang, on the Andaman Sea. Beef, mutton, goat and liver are stewed in complex yellow and *mussaman* curries.

From a review of the above, the followings points can be observed. By uncovering the meaning of food, one can uncover the meanings of culture which is not limited to a belief or a ritual, but also to geographical locations, the agricultural, and in many cases fishery, conditions, ways of living, and civilizations.

- Food and culture develop an interwoven relationship. ‘You are what you eat’ and ‘eating food is knowing food’ can suggest how food in each region ‘represents’ lifestyle, behaviors, economic and social situations of each region.

- Food is not a material object (Fischler, 1988, Hall, 1997). Rather, meanings of food are discursively formed by a relationship that one has with the food system (Breadworth and Keil, 1997). Several dishes which are made to be consumed are not about what food is, but about ‘classification’ (Fischler, 1988, Douglas, 1975) and how a cultural process transforms nature to what is believed to be consumed (Murcot, 1982 and 1995). Understanding food, therefore, is understanding the identities of whom we are and why we eat (Yesmeen, 2006).

CHAPTER III

PROFILE AND BACKGROUND OF FOUR CASE STUDIES ON THE FIVE-STAR HOTELS

To uncover how “Thainess” with relation to Thai gastronomy is presented in Bangkok’s five-star hotels, four hotels have been selected as case studies in this research. The main criteria for selecting the hotels to study are the characteristics of the Thai restaurant located in that particular hotel. Such characteristics deemed important to the study are their physical appearance, the food served with the related practices and the service for customers. The selected five-star hotels are:

1. The Sukhothai Hotel, Bangkok
2. The Metropolitan Hotel, Bangkok
3. The Four Season Hotel, Bangkok
4. The Mandarin Oriental, Bangkok

Each of these places will be explained in detail regarding, general physical profiles of the hotel, the hosts and the guests, the food venues, and the culinary practices.

3.1 The Sukhothai Hotel, Bangkok



Figure 3: Physical Setting at The Sukhothai, Bangkok

The Sukhothai Hotel was established by a French American architect who came to Thailand. Mr. Edward Tuttle, unlike usual tourists, viewed and perceived the scene of ruined bricks at Sukhothai national park from a different angle. He spent time in Sukhothai and researched its history in order to construct his idea to revitalize “Sukhothai” in the form of a hotel.

3.1.1 Physical Settings

The Sukhothai Bangkok is located on South Sathorn road which is one of the busiest areas in Bangkok. The hotel is owned by a Hong Kong based company, with sister-hotels in Singapore.

The designer selected crucial parts of the Sukhothai kingdom to be shown in the hotel space, such as the look of an ancient Thai place with elite values built with contemporary style. The brick ruins are seen in the form of decorative items, such as pagodas floating on the water; dull and rustic metal intensively used in diverse forms of either furniture or show pieces; clay and stone wares reproduced uniquely, etc. The lighting system is also a key that offers a mysterious atmosphere in which natural day-light is arranged inside to blend with the tone of earthy shades in the halls. By night, the lighting system is kept intentionally dark. Such spaces are viewed as ancient and its calmness and serenity is manifested together with elegance. Moreover, according to the arrangement for a peaceful atmosphere, the designer allocated spaces for limited numbers of people, such as a low-rise building and vast green and water areas.

A lot of guests decide to visit this hotel as they like the feeling offered through the decoration and the architecture. The Sukhothai Hotel was chosen as one of the top 10 boutique business hotels by London-based online newspaper Guardian Unlimited, as well as many other organizations. Being listed as one of the top boutique hotel suggested that it is preferred by the guests who do not really like a busy life.

Even though located in the Bangkok CBD, the guests are generally privacy seekers, no matter how busy the city is just a few steps outside the fence; the hotel is successful in presenting a resort-like atmosphere in the city through the layout of comparatively low rise-buildings and quite extensive spaces of green and ponds in Thai contemporary styles, both interior and exterior to the hotel. Decorative items have been selected with an attempt to make this hotel encapsulate their visitors to feel some touches of the former capital city.

As studied from the hotel's internet website, even though the permanent structures were designed by a foreigner, some Thai artists assisted in the work in supporting the atmosphere, such as the design of staff uniforms and flower arrangement.

Such a combination of features, the antique look and the sense of serenity, contribute to the satisfaction of the visitors, even if they have few curiosities on how authentic is the name, "The Sukhothai". The hotel's designer may have anticipated the expectations of the hotel's customers correctly; that what they pay for is largely a hideaway place with proper privacy more than a hunger of real tastes of the old kingdom.

3.1.2 Hosts and guests

The hosts

The hotel is not only owned and designed by foreigners, the staff is international. Even though there are only a few non-Thais, all of them are positioned in the executive ranks, especially the board director team: General Manager, Marketing Directors and the Executive Chef, some of whom have been in Thailand for many years.

From the beginning, there have been many Westerners, especially from European countries, taking turn in these particular positions. The rest of the "host" team is made up of Thai hoteliers who have come from many parts of the country. There are a few members of the Thai staff in higher management, but most of them

are ranked from middle management to level entry. The front desk and the food and beverage unit have frequent turnover at both the management level, as well as the staff level.

The guests

This hotel is visited mostly by international guests who can afford the luxurious prices. They focus more on “satisfaction” than the “price” when making their transaction with the hotel. Because there are numerous hotels in Bangkok providing comparatively the same types of product, rooms and food for people away from home, then satisfaction is not really based only on physical standards.

There are many factors convincing of transaction which vary for each group of visitors. The data shows a shifting number of customers, both their nationalities and types of classified groups: business people or tourists. Previously, there were higher number of business persons from European countries, especially British and Germans. Additionally, there were also outstanding figures of business men and female tourists from Japan. The hotel has had to hire a Japanese sales-person as there was always a need to handle both the selling and the servicing for these Japanese guests.

However, at present, there have been tremendous changes since there are now more Asian visitors from China, Singapore and India. They used to be almost zero in the customer mix during the beginning years of the hotel. Business trip-makers have continually visited the hotel, but in decreased numbers, while holiday makers are increasing. However, the later type, even though they are tourists, do not come in mass. These individual tourists, with a lot of self-help on trip planning through the internet and guide books, choose this place according to the production of values in advance of their arrival.

The Japanese and Chinese usually carry along guide books with scripts of texts and pictures indicated where to dine and what to eat. These suggestion notes are made by a writer of the same citizenship as the visitors and are written in their

language. In particular, Japanese females mostly spend their leisure time less off tracks.

The mixture of Westerners in decreased numbers shows that some of them are revisiting guests; many of them are expatriates and a few first time visitors. Corporate and diplomat expatriates come for either work or to visit and often act as the local referees. Throughout their stay, they are familiar with Bangkok enough to make food choices on different places.

3.1.3. Celadon (สีลาดล), Physical Setting

Apart from the Thai restaurant, *Celadon* (สีลาดล), there are seven more outlets providing different food and beverages. There is an international restaurant, Italian restaurant, tea room, bar, etc. The guests can ask for special arrangement for their dining, such as ordering food together with their business meeting or with parties on special occasions in the hotel's function rooms and yard or even outside the hotel. *Celadon* is a Thai restaurant with "Thai Family Food" style, with the setting divided mainly into two parts; the service hall and the kitchen.

Dining Area

The dining area is a space of two annex *sala* (ศาลา), a kind of Thai style construction. The restaurant is named after a type of gray-green colored ceramic. This stoneware was found buried around the Sukhothai ancient site. Reproduction of celadon ceramic has been placed on the floor of this Thai food space to reflect its name. Celadon is also used for making tableware, plates and bowls to accentuate the name of this stone and represent the space as a Thai restaurant. The glass wall and high ceiling provide a very spacious dining hall. Guests can enjoy having food with a view overlooking the lotus pond that surrounds them. The nearly identical *salas* have been set side by side as two compartments or twin dining halls that can accommodate more than hundred people indoors, with more seats in open-air terraces. Either *sala* can be allocated for private group separated from the other.

The wooden tables and chairs with arm-rests are designed to accommodate communal dining, with the layout of the tableware including napkins set between the silverware (fork and knife), specially made antique-like, stem glasses, and decorative items such as the small vase of lotus or orchid flower and a tiny lamp. The tables are generally arranged in Western style and some tables may provide for limited surfaces such that it is inconvenient for sharing foods according to the Thai communal concept in which the food is in set in the center and shared by all the diners having just individual plates for rice.

This space is used as the hotel's outlet for lunch and dinner. It is also often requested for events such as engagements and wedding ceremonies as requested by many local guests who admire the atmosphere of this Thai style house.

As quoted in the hotel's website, *Celadon* is one of Bangkok's most celebrated Thai restaurants, serving authentic Thai. It has been voted as the 'Best Restaurant in Bangkok' by Travel and Leisure magazine.



Figure 4 : Exterior view of *Celadon*



Figure 5 : Interior view of *Celadon*

The kitchen

The kitchen is situated behind the twin dining halls/*sala* and produces food mainly for *Celadon*. Sometime this kitchen has to cater Thai food with particular neat skills for special events, such as parties or meetings, but this is usually taken care of by a different team.

The air-conditioned kitchen is fully stationed with industrial size-equipment and utensils. It is quite small and compact, yet the layout of the kitchen is tuned for flow and control of food safety and hygiene, as well as speed according to the limitation on commercial food spaces applied globally. A store room for fresh and dry ingredients is found in an annex. There are posts of scripted rules and suggested information for related food – practice circumstances.

The chef noted that since there are more Asian guests, especially Chinese, requests for freshly prepared fish and seafood has increased. Live fish and other expensive live shellfish are kept in a basin and wait for an order. The reason for having these fish and shellfish live is that it fits a better code of professional conduct to cook them fresh.

3.1.4 Celadon, Divisions Involved

Viewed from the top

During the course of this study, there was a transition between the former Vietnamese Executive Chef and the new Australian chef who was recently been appointed to the position. There was also a transition of the Thai Chef who supervises the gastronomy process at *Celadon*. Chef Vera had been at the restaurant since the beginning of hotel, more than fifteen years, until his retirement. The new chef, Chamlong, is a 33 year-old Thai with food experience in many aspects; he grew up in a food family and has worked in several international food spaces, included during his early years at *Spice Market* in The Four Seasons Hotel. His dynamic character is owing to his confidence formed through working at local and international food spaces, all at the “five-star” level, including in Middle Eastern countries. Cultural diversity learned from there makes him view “guests” with more understanding.

Both of the two Executive Chefs are foreigners who do not dominate their Western food values on Thai gastronomy. On the contrary, they do not hesitate to share their comments with Thai chefs in order to proceed with “Thai” ways in culinary practices. Apart from their focus on guest’s satisfactions, they are carried

along the concepts of slow foods influenced from the western world also to Thailand. Therefore, they support the team on trying various local ingredients. They also understand the necessity of establishing an outstanding characteristic in using rare and local products to accentuate the specialization of *Celadon*, such that once they attempted to use local flowers for cooking Thai foods, but it was not really popular.

It can be seen that many Thai restaurants provide almost the same choices of Thai food. These items are also the ones usual seen on menus of Thai restaurants abroad. Their availability is expected, as well, in many fine dining food spaces such as in five-star hotels.

Even though the chefs have tried to offer specialized food, these food lists are still offered because of the request of guests. Chef Chamlong did not make sharp changes of food lists; on the contrary, he maintained them as he viewed they match the anticipation of the guests. However, he changed the garnishing on the Thai food for a more modern presentation. The use of celadon wares has been minimized and more white wares are used to give a high focus on the food. Key Thai ingredients are added to compose the garnishing of each Thai dish.

Chef Chamlong is working on introducing a new service to create some specialization on this space by providing private Thai dining in a Thai herbal garden located behind *Celadon*. This space is newly constructed and planted in an exotic and private atmosphere.

This intensive, internationally experienced chef views that his international experience needs to be shared with his staff. He has enjoyed his success and would like to share it with the younger cooks under his supervision. He perceives no limitation in terms of human potentiality, either by gender or age. He has assigned every staff, who once used to be assigned only to a particular food station, to rotate to different standpoints. Female cooks also need to be in front of the fire stove and bear the heavy pan, while the males have to be able to refine the food with hand skills.

These men and women are examined twice a week on their performance in keeping consistency in flavors, decoration, portion size, etc.

These executives play a significant role on Thai gastronomy at this space as they always are the dominators in giving information as to what to do or not to do. Yet the guests are important as much as them.

Services: Front of the house

The services are the interactions between the staff and the guests. The staff on the host side needs to welcome the guests formally with effortless and convincing Thai and international manners. The guests will enjoy their experience if they receive good service according to what they have already set as their expectations before arrival. To do so, the hotel has trained the service staff, which is sometimes also called “floor staff”, not only in the manners but also the language, knowledge of food and beverage and cultural diversity. As referred to in a hospitality context, this group is categorized as the “Front of The House”. Many guests evaluate how good a hotel is by judging the performance of this staff.

As the markets have shifted and there are more Asian guests and more tourist groups, this staff has to balance the customers comfort zone among different groups of the guests, especially when they have visitors from different cultures and backgrounds.

The floor staff is made up of comparatively young people, 8-10 males and females per shift. They all wear Thai contemporary dress attended for all the visits of the guests to the restaurants. Many of them are university graduates with Bachelor’s Degrees and have worked with other hotels before. The service staff is supervised by both Chef Vera and another foreign supervisor, who acts as the Food and Beverage Director.

Kitchen: Back of the house

There are 24 young Thai men and women working in two shifts inside the domain of the food production. While Chef Vera exercised his management in a very casual family manner, it made his work rather inconsistent. The staff generally called him *pa* (พ่อ), or father in Chinese, and performed their work with a sense of guilt control to avoid reprimand. Chef Chamlong has implemented work rules under a “hotel standard.” Since then, the staff is reprimanded and receives punishment if they go against the set rules. The staff may get extra rewards if they perform better than the standards.

Since they are averagely young, they are not really capable with food skills polished from long experience such as is needed for some complex Thai food and many Thai desserts. They are trained to do some carving of vegetables and fruit, but not preparing desserts. These items are time consuming so that it was decided to have them supplied from outside food shops.

Many of staff would like to go abroad to work, not only to earn money, but for the value added and esteem of their professional lives, especially when Chef Chamlong inspires and builds potentiality for them. They have a positive opinion about being an international chef. Values related to Western or other international food spaces are concerned and attempted. The hotel standards are highly concerned and memorized by the staff more clearly than values generally implemented in Thai culinary practices.

The staff who work in the kitchen and in the dining areas view their work space as more than just the physically set border. The tasks assigned to them set them emotionally separated their mind space apart. For instance, the kitchen team, called “the back of the house”, is contextually signifies their personality, rights and interaction with other teams rather emotion oriented. Some of them feel a little inferior to their colleagues in the “front of the house”. Since the kitchen staff is set in a place with limited human interaction, they are happy to work in their comfort zone,

the usual work condition and usual team. The leader has to be competent with communication so that they can, firstly, make clear orders with the team and, secondly, be the person who can speak for them in case of problems.

This can be compared with *Scala*, the Italian outlet, where the cooks perform their duties in the dining area in front of the customers. The cooks in *Scala* tend to be more confident and dare to speak out.

Stress in the kitchen is usual visible, especially in peak hours. The mature staff seems to be able to handle the stress better than the younger members. Many of these younger staff cannot bear the circumstances and are not reluctant to leave the job. The kitchen staff then has frequent vacancies and there never seems to be enough workers. This is a shared phenomenon among many food spaces, as well as in the four restaurants studied here. As a consequence, training is always routinely taking place in the kitchen.

3.1.5 Celadon, Food and Menu

Since the beginning, Thai food served at *Celadon* has been strongly presented as choices of Thai food generally served at private homes. However, the ingredients, the portion size, the decoration of the foods are different, such as bigger cuts of meat, better choices of imported seafood with attractive coloring of vegetables, fruits and flowers for garnishing. The styles applied to such decoration are much more beautiful when they are presented together with all the factors, such as the plates and the specially designed cutlery. However, if presented alone without the celadon factors, the food shares some similarities with fine Chinese restaurants.

There once were limited choices of common foods as referred to of those top ten menus, now there are more common dishes for local people and called “single dish” or *ahan chan diao* (อาหารจานเดียว). They have long been together with Thai tables throughout the country yet not really been seen in the tourism spaces. They are probably not only Thai foods but they are various foods represented of living together

among Thai, Chinese, Muslim, Mon, including regional foods such as more local and rural food such as *Esan* foods, *Lanna* foods, etc.

It was considered too challenging to offer these foods at five-star prices, as well as it was once thought they were too common to be served in this luxury space. The economic recessions from 1997 until the present have, however, offered the economic flavors to diners and most of these dishes have been accepted. As such, “street foods” and “comfort foods” can be found in five-star hotels, for instances, a bowl of noodle soup or *kuaytiew nam*, a dish of stir-fried meat with holy basil served with fried egg or *phat kaprao kai dao*, and *larb*. In order to do so, local and rare ingredients must be available to the diners which some of the items found challenging for the urbanite’s tastes.



3.2 The Metropolitan Bangkok

Established in Bangkok in 2002, the Metropolitan is one of the hotels under the COMO group, owned mainly by a Singaporean business woman, which

concentrates on business lifestyle. Apart from eight hotels and resorts worldwide, there are health based business properties, as well as “Club 21”, a leading brand fashion merchandizing famous for urban values.

The company focuses their specialization on their operations and management, both for the hotel and resort businesses and the fashion business, according to their philosophy, which is to provide responsible living and the representation of a “luxurious wellness retreat”.

The Metropolitan Bangkok is located on South Sathorn Road and was established with the same philosophy as set for its main corporate entity. The hotel is located in close walking distance to many big and luxury hotels nearby, including The Sukhothai Bangkok, The Westin Banyan Tree and The Dusit Thani.

3.2.1 The Physical Setting

It was very challenging in 2002 when the hotel started in term of location, where there was already a density of hospitality businesses. This hotel needed present very sharp and unique characteristics since there were a lot of existed well-known hotels nearby. The set philosophy has been accentuated and perceived by the visitors with sharp differences from others. Both the accommodation side and the food and beverage side were produced with a “new” trend in spaces where people gather outside their homes as a phenomenon. The structure of the hotel, both the exterior and interior areas, reflects not luxury, but on the contrary, extreme minimalism to offer the guests a feeling of getting away from frustration.



Figure 7: General physical view of the Metropolitan Hotel

Accordingly, the hotel can be perceived as “avant-garde”. This hotel uses an architectural edge to differentiate itself from the usual hotel construction. The primary character is the minimalist style. Such look represents this space through its emptiness by using less decorative items, fewer colors, fewer lines, less glittering or ornaments; however, the space is very bright and light, plain in dimension and even the number of staff is minimized. Entering the hotel, the building shows less similarity to a leisure place. The box-like structure and a few trees placed in urban style; while not too trendy today, it was very new in 2002, the year the hotel was established.

The hotel focuses on precise markets to avoid competition with other hotels. The management is aware of the set strategy allowing a low chance to fulfill the house. As for the concept, although it may be understood by their specific group of customers, such a concept may be far from the majority of people, again by those 10 years ago. As a consequence, the ambience of the hotel is very private and is strongly welcomed by “privacy” and “trend” seekers.

Because of the restricted land, the hotel utilizes the space with limitation. There are 191 rooms and three food outlets, a very small function room, but without a yard. The small number of rooms and small function room was designed on purpose to control the amount of customers. They wanted to be sure that the hotel was a safe and private place for their famous guests whom the hotel welcomed under category “the priority”. So far such loss of opportunity has not been a hindrance; on the contrary the management still keeps minimizing the exposure of publicity, instead letting word of mouth do the work for them.

One of the restaurants situated at the hotel is called “*Glow*”. It is selling the concept of “purify” and agreed worth for both the hotel and the customer to transact in such space. The restaurant has a concept of natural, intensive food to give healthy flavors of “powerful” food to the guests. Rare ingredients and special techniques used for cooking are specially designed to heal the body than to please the emotion. *Glow* not only focuses on organic ideas, but the serving ways strongly present art in which the visitors feels a natural embodiment to represent a purified process. The use of heat and usual culinary practices are exercised in limitation.

The limited group of customers enjoys the process of purification of the body by being embodied the food and themselves rather than general diners. As a consequence, the enjoyment through the taste produced is of less concern than the healthy appearance. For instance, squeezed green grass served in a tiny glass may not taste delicious and the price is very high, but such food seriously cures the physical side of eating.

From an interview with the hotel personnel, it was learned that the customers mostly have occupations related to art with shared lifestyles, such as entertainers, designers, media and writers. They enjoy receiving “luxury” service, but it is more interested when it is paired with their “trendy” meaning. Their “trendy” service is detected of urban and healthy essence. Unlike other hotel marketers who have to try their best to fill up the hotel with guests, the team here works to keep updating the dynamic flavors of their tiny and limited group of customers. Visitors

are drawn through the hotel's unique schemes, as well as the word of mouth of customers.

The management has applied this concept to its operations which is represented by several contact points between the host and the guests. The hotel spends a very low budget on mass media for market exposure, but relies on the social networks of their guests to spread news of the hotel. Even with the club, the hotel sets a specific atmosphere by screening the preferred guests by allowing only the membership to enter. Money, according to the interview, is not the criteria for being a member of the bar, rather individual persons must possess qualified indicators according to the hotel's scheme to be invited to be a member and to maintain his or her right to use the space.

There are three food outlets in the hotel. The first one is Glow, the main dining space. "The Met" is the club serving the night life. Their settings are furnished to contribute an agreed value good to be with atmosphere for the particular group of customers. This is the second branch after one in London from where it inherited its fame, so people are drawn to this bar because of the "London" connection as well. Cy'an was the third restaurant, initially serving foods with Mediterranean and Moorish influence. This restaurant later was sharply altered to become a world renowned Thai restaurant, *Nahm*, which has presently taken over the place where once Cy'an was located.

3.2.2 Hosts and Guests

The Hosts

The hotel is not only owned and designed by foreigners, but the architecture is Japanese and the staff on the executive level is foreigner. The initial operational team consisted of very high profile personnel. Many of them graduated with Master's Degrees from abroad. They applied for their jobs as they were enticed by the name of this fashionable hotel and wanted to be a part of the trendy crew.



Figure 8: The physical setting and atmosphere at the Metropolitan.

The service concept was formed and trained differently from the conventional hotel operations. The appearance and manner presented by the staff is intended to make the service of this space ‘avant-garde’. For instance, the uniforms they wear look simple, consisting of a white shirt and black trousers, but specially designed by a Japanese designer who is globally famous for his contemporary work. This communicates a sense of trendy as intended if the visitors are aware of such style. The interaction between guests and hosts are somewhat too modern for the Thai context of welcoming, even though in the hospitality area. So far, the staff has not been expected by their guests to perform with a highly polite manner the same as other hotels. The contribution of “well being” is more significant and focused for host and guest interactions, according to main hotel’s concept.

The construction and design of the hotel projects a somewhat “cold” atmosphere to the visitors. The staff in the general areas of the hotel provides, similarly, a “distance” welcoming. Such conduct and operation has not been judged right or wrong, but mostly contextually agreeable that there is reason to visit but not enough to revisit.

Such designed concept was worth the attempt as it was precisely communicated the message to their guests. The word of mouth scheme to attract

people to stay and dine at the hotel was successful at reaching the trendy markets. However, the guests visited came to enjoy the excitement of the social phenomenon, but did not really take such concepts as significant so as to make definite return.

However, *Nahm* is set emotionally distinct from the other features of this hotel. The staff is trained with a total different mindset being Thai hosts in this Thai restaurant.

The Guests

The hotel staff explained that their customers who stay overnight are foreigners who do not really come in groups. They are a combination of individuals who work in the art industry, such as performers, music entertainers, writers, etc., and some small numbers of tourists, especially young people who plan their trip without the assistance of a travel agent. As with what happened to The Sukhothai Hotel, the numbers of European customers has continually declined, with an increase in Asian guests, such as Singaporeans and Chinese from Hong Kong.

The space and its concept is the reason of the limited visits; the clientele, soon after, view the place as no longer “trendy”. Very trendy places usually end their fashionable span in a short time as the customers who look for such values are always looking for “new” social flavors. As well, there are many other choices of hotels in Bangkok which offer differences. It can be seen that while visitors on the accommodations side are decreasing, there are more visitors to dine at *Nahm*.

3.2.3 *Nahm* (น้ำ), Physical Setting

Dining Area

The sister hotel, the Metropolitan in London, was the first place where *Nahm* introduce Thai ‘traditional’ flavors to the world. One obvious thing in common between these two sister settings is that they have been decorated with unlikely Thai art and have been designed with Japanese architecture. There are a few more “things Thai” seen in the Bangkok branch, but very little at the London branch. The setting

may not be key factor of this world awarded restaurant. The name of the chef owner, the food and his book named “Thai Food”, has long been known, even before the award was given in 2002.



Figure 9: Outdoor dining area at *Nahm*



Figure 10: Interior view at *Nahm*

The success of *Nahm* expanded when “Michelin”, which is the world famous award given to restaurants with one to three stars for its food and service, awarded the restaurant a star, the first star for a Thai restaurant, both domestically and internationally. The fame of being the first star awarded to a Thai restaurant drew attention and placed the Thai table in a higher and wider spot. Many foreigners who may not have accessed Thai foods for some reasons have lowered their barrier now that a Thai restaurant has been offered this global award.

As noted above, *Nahm* is physically designed with fewer motifs connected to the Thai concept. Looking at the structure alone, one cannot tell exactly what type of food will be served here. The chef and a lot of people working here also agree that the atmosphere of the restaurant visually portrays Thai space in a lighter degree as compared to other characteristics.

The chef and his Thai partners have worked out the ideas with the Japanese architecture. The chef was terrified the first time he saw the space being developed. He and his partners agreed that there are combinations of Japanese art

integrated into Thai's. Furthermore, the space looked too formal and was unable to contribute to the feeling of eating at home as was his aim. The chef, himself, would have preferred to make *Nahm* in Bangkok have an ambience as far from a tourist or business environment as possible. However, the space is difficult to fix and rebuild, so he has to reconcile this circumstance and work harder to achieve his intention.

The Kitchen

The kitchen space is designed in the same way as Western kitchens. All the stations are built with stainless steel equipment to keep easily clean and to be hygienic for cooking. Only the dessert and fruit station has been kept away in a separated area far behind the main kitchen. Traditional Thai music from an electronic player is turned on in the dessert room, but not in the main area. There are fewer females than males. Women prepare and cook more of the appetizers, dipping sauces and salads. Desserts are cooked by both genders. The rest of almost 16 staff is made up of young Thai men, with some foreign trainees on an every day basis. These young men bear the heavy rush and heat in the area called the hot kitchen. The chef has also set a special station in a connected area called “relish”, which produces several *khrueng chim* (เครื่องจิ้ม) or dipping sauces and the assorted pairings.

3.2.4 *Nahm, Division Involved*

Viewed from the top

The prize given may not be reflected through the physical appearance of the restaurant's setting, either the one in London or the one in Bangkok. The success of the restaurant relies a lot on the chef and the cooked foods. David Thompson, the chef, is the person who founded *Nahm* with his long accumulation of in-depth knowledge and experience in Thai cuisine. As a young Australian chef who came to know Thailand by accident, he was fascinated with the different flavors of Thai food that he could not identify through his experience with Western cuisine with which he had worked for a while.

Later, apart from his practiced cooking, he traveled around Thailand meeting a lot of people from different regions, different generations and ethnic backgrounds to learn Thai food from different angles. He has attempted to learn Thai language by accessing Thai scripts of foods, especially old books. He has studied Thai and Thai foods through history and has tried to figure out the development of its culinary history.

Many of his “fans” are those who not only eat his food, but also have his books. Many of them follow the recipes in his book to cook Thai food at home. He is slowly becoming a ‘Thai food’ icon to Europeans and Australians. The Thai government, either through the Tourism Authority of Thailand or the Thai Trade Promotion, has often worked with him to promote tourism and Thai food.

With respect to the success of David Thompson, it is important to mention his long term companionship who has worked with him for a long time. Thai born in a food-vendor family in Bangkok, Mr. Tanongsak Yodwai, or Khun Dong, as his partner is another key to this success. He is very insightful regarding Thai foods and dessert. He usually views food with an artful combination of a patriotic mind with which he has tried to present his interpretation of and appreciation, not only for food, but also for the staff.

Nahm and its fame in Thailand bear a lot more “controversies” regarding Thai food and the space when it relocated to its culinary land mother in 2010. There are many foreigners who like his Thai food and fewer disputes so far than when the first *Nahm* started in 2002 in London, where the Michelin award was gained. Chef David Thompson and his Thai food have been critique positively and negatively, although such criticism has been made more against the chef than the food.

There have been more international diners than Thai people who have experience the food and service at *Nahm* since its location in the luxury space is a place where a limited number of Thai people can afford the price. At the beginning, apart from general diners, there was a lot of press and many food reviewers visited on

a nightly basis. Among these guests, many of them were not new to his culinary ways as they had visited his restaurant in either Sydney or London before, although some of these international visitors may not have ever tasted his food, but had learnt of him through the media, as well as his Thai food books.

However, with the appearance of a blond Caucasian, his reputation has suddenly invited questions of “authenticity” upon his Thai food, questioning as to why, as a foreigner, he could master Thai gastronomy very successfully. One article criticized his statement in which he claimed that he had revitalized Thai food. This article upset both Thai people and even foreigners who were curious about such a bold statement. However, the columnist who made such criticism has never visited his restaurant. Such controversies have been reproduced by different media. There are people with reputations regarding Thai food who have been interviewed to share their opinion regarding this issue. The more news, the more controversies have been publicly generated. Such a scenario seems to be beneficial to the restaurant in terms of business, but not the chef’s works of art. He was pretty upset and had to step away from his space for a while before getting back to work and continuing his gastronomy the way he intended.

Yet, so far his restaurant has never been less busy and, at the middle of 2012, was voted one of fifty best restaurants around the world, the only Thai restaurant on the list. A lot of diners visit his restaurant to enjoy the conversation regarding the food served along side their dining experience. The food served at the table always pleases the diners alongside of other considered necessary to dine in this space.

It can be seen that at either the London branch or in Bangkok, where both restaurants are affiliated with The Metropolitan brand, his foods draws “nostalgic” hungers to try. The diners may not be able to tell whether the food is authentic or not, but the foods and the other characteristics of the dining spaces are obviously depicted of processes handling with respect and intentions which can rarely be seen in other restaurants.

Services: Front of the house

The staff side is a very crucial part when the tangible factor of the space in the dining areas and the decorations represented a blurred destination and may be far from what foreign customers expect. Accordingly, the staff has been carefully recruited and trained. While visitors find the outside spaces of this hotel “cold”, they feel very welcomed by the polite and “warm” atmosphere in the way usually associated with Thais.

If the applicants had worked with other famous restaurants before, this was considered an advantage. Some of the pioneering team used to work with The Mandarin Oriental Hotel, The Sukhothai Bangkok, and many other leading hotels. The earlier teams were specially trained to be excellent hosts who were good for service, communication and were very patriotic minded. Training sessions occupied every day of their first month during the pre-opening period. The classes alternated in terms of theories and practices to set their mind with *Nahm's* long-term orientation. They learnt Thai food in a cultural context, Thai history, beliefs, the performing arts, etc. Traditional performing arts were introduced to these young men and women purposely to shape them to embody the values and naturally express being ‘Thai’.

Even though in the real operation, they wear contemporary dress, shirts and pants, they have to display trained manners; their walking steps should appear as if they are wearing old style Thai pants called *chongkraben* (โจงกระเบน). They have to speak English with polite Thai verbal and none verbal. They have to be competent to be able to explain all the food offered with details of the ingredients and details of each dish that is served together and complement each other. Since they had prior experience with other food spaces at the same level, the staff does not find maximizing their foreign customers’ satisfactions is difficult, but delivering service with an in-depth Thai concept has been very challenging.

Additionally, the supervisor of service at *Nahm* in London came to Bangkok to train them on the service standards which had been successfully

implemented in Britain. The training covered all the service procedures, included knowledge on wine specially selected to pair with Thai foods and an emphasis on way to serve rice with its informing of its field. Above all, they have been trained to be aware of the “tastes” expected by foreigners and provide the service accordingly. However, if any customer satisfactions break the values set upon culinary according to Chef David’s concerning they have to follow David’s rules. The staff has to provide service according to traditional ways rather than to such customer’s request.

The staff has learned a lot about what is “Thai” that relates to their work in Thai food. They shared that working with *Nahm* has inspired them to be aware of their cultural heritage and their identity being Thai. They have developed a sense of being patriotic as if they are joining the army of a food unit and are fostering the country through their career. All of the pioneer team are able to sing the Thai version of the “Impossible Dream” which is a royal composition of King Bhumipol, called *Kwamfaan Un Soongsud* (ความฝันอันสูงสุด) which is the very first lesson in the training. They shared that this is the first time they have been aware of Thai food and their root to this much degree.

Guests can order food in two ways: firstly, picking preference choices from the menus; secondly, to order a set of food the chef has arranged. Whichever way, the chefs design the food to be served nicely and to compliment each other as a good *samrap* in Thai table or communal way. However, appetizers are served before the full meal as in the Western way to begin the dining with small savory bites while waiting for the full meal. The *samrap* is referenced from *Mae Krua Hua Pah*.

Apart from the arrangement of dishes served together, the taste of the food strictly adheres to how the taste is supposed to be. If any foreign guest asks to lower the spiciness of a dish, the waiters/waitress will offer different food to replace that dish. The policy is to try to maintain the culinary practices and let the foods speak for the quality. One of the service staff told a story of a guest who requested fewer chilies on her food and no matter how the staff tried to convince her, this

customer still insisted. The chef continued to cook according to the recipe, but the guests made a complaint. Thanongsak came out from the kitchen to meet this guest to say “welcome to Thailand” to her.

A greeting by the chef is preferred by the guests as he is famous and Western people usually admire the accompanied with chef’s conversations even if it is a matter of words. From time to time, the chef has to leave his busy scene in the kitchen to greet the customers. He himself seems to be uneasy to be in the dining space and to act such a role.

The kitchen: Back of the house

In the kitchen, there are people from diverse multi-cultural backgrounds. The team is filled with domestic and international staff and they have different food backgrounds from different regions. The “Thais” mostly graduated from universities with some technical knowledge and skill. There are frequently students and graduates from The Oriental Hotel’s cooking school. The kitchen staff on average is young and very dynamic, but they are also very skilled.

The staff in the kitchen typically stays a comparatively short period because of the long hours and stress, particularly since the customers are always in peak numbers. They, in general, have very special skills and gifts of this art at a good level. The food is cooked with care, love and a very conservative concept of pride and respect. This can be seen from the Thai dishes served.

3.2.5 *Nahm, Food and Menu*

The Thai food served here, as told by Thanongsak, is in the way of *pu-di* (ผู้ดี), by which he means a well-mannered person. To Chef David Thompson, he has attempted to present the Thai ways of life he admires to the world. So he has highlighted the concepts which dominant Thai food in an old style, such as in the complexities of flavors, delicate ways of preparation and cooking, emotionally

interacted, freshness, variety, etc. The various food provided is from the culinary tables of the elites, the local, the ethnic groups, the fine dining, and the street styles.



Figure 11: Spicy pork with mint, peanuts and crunchy rice on betel leaves **Figure 12:** Sticky Rice with Durian at *Nahm*



Figure 13: Massaman Curry Served at *Nahm*

“Rare” ingredients and in-season food, if needed, has to be supplied to the kitchen no matter how high of the prices. *Somsa*, a special type of lime that produces an outstanding perfume, is supplied daily. Even though it costs about 45 baht a piece, this is paid for its rarity and unique taste. “Durian” (ทุเรียน) may be offended in other hotel spaces, but chef present it very respected that the values of

Durian are welcomed curiosity here. *Plara*, *plakem* or salted fish, even *maengda* (แมงดา) or water bug, have been positively welcomed which is far from its usual rural image when they are chosen by David Thomson to be cooked and served.

David's food is full of ingredients answerable to the insight seekers or the nostalgia hungers. Each food he cooks has been researched to fulfill the characteristics of several country aspects added to the flavors according to Thai culinary practices.

Example of food in set served at *Nahm*



Figure 14: Example of food in set served at *Nahm*

3.3 The Mandarin Oriental, Bangkok

Among the four hotels studied, The Mandarin Oriental Hotel has had the longest existence, since 1876. The hotel was started by two European friends who anticipated more foreign arrivals to Siam who might require social lives according to the values from where they came. In the beginning this hotel was “the getting together” place for multinational people and Thais with an international environment to experience in a leisurely sense.

It is believed by some historians that this hotel was started earlier, yet for some reason the shareholders are happy to mark 1876 as their opening date. The hotel has welcomed many important people and hosted crucial functions from the old days, which sets this space apart from the others and marks the pride of the people who work there.

As found in the hotel’s website on its legacy, on 17 December of its official opening year Mr. Allen, the Oriental’s manager, welcomed a very important guest. His Majesty, King Chulalongkorn arrived with his entourage to assess the ability of the hotel to host royal guests. His Majesty was so impressed that he decided to host Crown Prince Nicholas of Russia, who became Tsar in 1894, at the Oriental in April 1891.

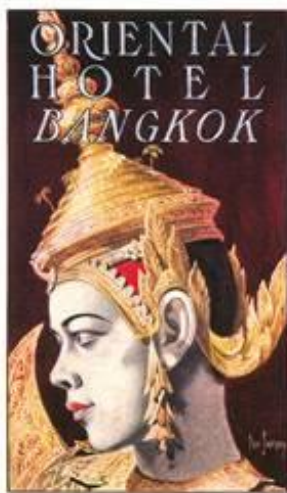


Figure 15: Dan Sweeney's work for the Oriental in Bangkok was part of an advertising campaign in the 1920s.



Figure 16: Hotel building at The Mandarin Oriental Hotel



Figure 17: Staff at The Mandarin Oriental Hotel

This long term establishment has helped to construct the strong foundation of the hotel's prestige and image among many hotels in Thailand. The uniqueness of this hotel is the quality of service which is world renown and awarded regularly from the past until the present.

3.3.1 The Physical Setting

It can be seen that the construction and the tangible elements, including the exterior and interior decorations of this hotel, look classic, especially given its establishment by the Chao Phraya River for more than a hundred years. The hotel has been refurbished from time to time in order to keep welcoming look of the hotel at this old. However, it has kept a majority of the characteristic of the colonial style.

There are many luxury rooms with elegant and beautiful design, especially the various types of suites. Many of these rooms, as well as the restaurant, offer a view of the Chao Phraya River which is used as a main attraction of this hotel.

The physical setting is carefully taken care of to produce a Thai environment that cannot be easily copied since many of these decorative items have earned prestige values on both its antique conserved and developed and, most of all, they have served many well-known persons from the old day until the present.

There are forces for changes in which the Oriental have to turn itself dynamic as their groups of customers have been socially altered. The changing of the service styles are contextual; space and time.

So far, no matter that the prices set here are the highest among many of the five-star hotels, this is the hotel where a lot of people prefer to visit. The reason most of the people want to be at the Oriental is its fame for the quality of service that cannot be found elsewhere.

There are seven restaurants at The Oriental, all of which are famous for their food and service. It is said even though French food could be found easily in Thailand, the best French food is served at the Normandie. This is the very luxury space that welcomes a lot of famous people who really need their presences of themselves to be viewed being there and, at the same time, to be private. Accordingly, the restaurant is very spacious and designed with an understanding of class and the association of celebrities and politicians to the royal family.

The hotel occupies land on both sides of the river, just opposite to each other. Most of features, the accommodations, many of the restaurants and function rooms are in the main building on the Bangkok side, but the intensive Thai motifs are placed on the other side. *Sala Rim Naam*, the famous Thai restaurant and the cooking school, as well as spa area, are reached by boat service or by the road.

3.3.2 Hosts and Guests

The Hosts

The long establishment of this hotel, as well as its achievements in the service industry, owns a lot to Mr. Kurt Wachtveitl who managed the hotel from 1967–2009. He had a European background, both with respect to his birthplace and education. He is married to an elite Thai lady, which contributed to his values regarding Thai people in general and also the polished values regarding Thai nobles, and which correlated to values regarding this hotel space.

He was persistent in maintaining a mature staff in combination with younger staff members in order to ensure a continuity of the rare skills in maintaining the satisfaction of customers at an individual level. The norms of the hotel were constructed on the basis of a small community as if they were a family rather than work colleagues.

His clear understanding of host and guest interactions with respect to how genuine, sincere services should be provided relied on blurring the gap between the back stage and the front stage. The knowledge and experience of all the staff members is important, as well as their cool demeanor. The staff tends to express convincible good host if frustrated on any circumstances. The hotel has to help them in constructing themselves openness with values of being good hosts. The script of the hotel standard in the narration of quality and satisfaction is learnt more productive with constructed culture and environment through sharing like family. His plan included not only the spiritual side, but also financial reciprocal benefits such that there is not frequent turnover of the staff as with other hotels. As these staff have works and lives in correlated values.

As a consequence, “people” are the strongest point of this hotel in achieving a lot of compliments and rewards from several sources: domestic and international customers, many organizations and the press. The exceptional service quality of the hotel owns a lot to the exceptionally great and unique hospitality process that has been developed during the long-term of its establishment. Many returning guests share their views that it is like visiting back home. The staff usually greets the guests by name, sometimes the customers are even recognized just by their voice when calling. The services are prepared exactly as each customer prefers. The guests are greeted, if the staff is not aware of their name, as *khun pu ying/ chai* (คุณผู้หญิง/คุณผู้ชาย) or Madame/ Sir to address not only the title of the customer, but more important to show that the staff themselves have a readiness to offer their services.

Each department has its own power tier where executives are appointed in formal ranking, but cluster centric in a family-like working atmosphere. Even though today he is retired, Mr. Wachtveitl legacy has been carefully preserved by the present General Manager, Mr. Jan Goessing. He has attempted to learn more on the historical aspect of this hotel and has invited academic teams to look for key information of this establishment during its early years so that he can apply the significance contextually into the hotel processes.

The staff counts and arranges themselves as elder or younger according to seniority which is the Thai way of giving respect. Positions are in tiers or levels and the more senior members have worked their way up first. The management supports the leadership by adding on the lacking ones such as training and studying.

The hotel has invited a university to develop curriculums specifically for their staff. The hotel business courses are offered for a Bachelor's Degree is granted to the potential and accredited staffs with good performance and long term with the hotel. The instructors come to teach classes in the hotel. The schedules are set in advance to avoid the peak working hours. The students pay half of the tuition fees, the rest is supported by the hotel.

The transfer of supervision, responsibility and agreed power are top down, but accompanied with seniority among kinship. Such processes develop a staff with very kind and positive attitudes, yet are very intellectual. They can maintain and maximize the quality of services very contextually preferred which can be called "professional". The staff members willingly present the inferiorly attentive but look far from "pathetic".

The Guests

The "Mandarin" brand also another suggestion upon social relations of people who mostly stay on their away from their usual luxury lives. "Mandarin" in Bangkok also focuses on travelers rather than ones with business.

It is not only the hosts who dictate the accepted quality, the voices from the customers are even more crucial. Management frequently spends time with the guests to hear their comments and above all the preferences they have when they are away from home. However, such demands may not necessarily be tangible or addressed obviously. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the executive to hear and listen of the customers carefully, then put their interpretation into practice.

Given the higher price charged by the hotel, the benefits received from the transactions are even more subjective and intangible. The bed is just the product, but the key that is purchased is the benefit received for that bed. While the common hotel may offer “safety, convenience and cleanliness”, the more luxury hotels are expected to provide more value. The prices strongly communicate a bed with social values, as if such bed is the same one a king slept in before.

The guests prefer a staff that is good at offering concern and consideration. A staff member who had stayed in his position until retirement was requested to come back to work because there were a lot of requests from the guests to have him prepare their eggs every morning without the need to order. The returning guests were always recognized by him and were provide exactly their particular preference for cooked eggs. Such recognition pleases the guests to feel they are important persons of this space.

The hotel has welcomed many important icons from around the world: royalty, superstars, world renowned artists, writers, painters. The choice of such important people is reassuring to other guests who may not be concerned with prices barriers.

3.3.3 *Sala Rim Naam* (ศาลาริมน้ำ), *Physical Setting*

Sala Rim Naam offers a wide selection of restful Thai dining by the river, both open air and indoor at this throne-hall like structure. After 23 years of operation, the restaurant underwent a major restoration in 2007 which cost 80 million

baht. Guests can dine on high tables or sit on pillows at low tables in the glittering, bronze-trimmed, teak and marble main hall, and they dine on finely crafted Thai dishes. Authentic Thai cuisine is served with the accompaniment of classical music and traditional dancing from different periods in Thai history.



Figure 18: Interior view with Thai Classical dance at *Sala Rim Naam*



Figure 19: Exterior view at *Sala Rim Naam*

There are also supporting features, such as function rooms, a Thai cooking school, Thai cultural programs, etc., in the surrounded area. The meaning of the shows and related Thai stories and illustrations of Thai items on the stages are expanded in folders, such as the actors and actress in traditional dress and the musical instruments.

3.3.4 Sala Rim Naam, Division Involved

Viewed from the top

Executive Chef, Mr. Norbert Kostner, and Executive Thai chef, Vichit Mukura, are both famous chefs. Chef Norbert is the first chef who has really worked with royal projects in a deep sense so that he views the positive impact on the broader Thai society. This is not only to supply the hotel spaces, he also spends his time and his insight in gastronomy devoted to the development of the production and promotion.

He might not be involved as much with the Thai food space, but he has provided reliable assistance in supervising the Thai food by the Thai chefs for almost thirty years. Chef Vichit is one of the iconic Thai chefs in the food industry. His weekly food shows on televisions invite more Thai people to the space.

According to the hotel's culture, he regards Chef Norbert as more than a boss and felt compelled to work under his eyes, even though he has freedom on the Thai culinary practices. He is treated this way by his staff as well. Seniority is an important matter here and is transferred with ways interacted. Senior cooks are securely worked in the kitchen with arrangement on proper work load in order to maintain their accumulated expertise for sharing the younger generations. Dynamic and vibrant food events are initiated from time to time to share different perception of food to the staff.

Service: Front of the house

The service staff at this restaurant, as explained above regarding the hotel's norm and culture, is naturally service minded. Their courtesy and manners are polished to minimize the constraining of commercial characteristic on site. They are trained to embody sympathy and caring for others in a natural manner.

As observed on-site in the role of a customer, the welcome on my visit was very impressive. When they saw I was jotting notes, a table was brought without having to make a request to make my writing more convenient and the server politely asked if my sister would want her brand name bag on spot from others. When the wind from the river died down and my friend started to make light waves of her hands to fan her face, electric fans were moved to blow the wind to our faces in a friendly direction to our hairstyles, without the need to request.

Such thoughtful offerings from the staff made me feel compelled to give my compliments to them, which I realized many of their guests also do. Such satisfaction received can foster the gastronomic process very strongly, even though

could not be eaten as food served. Such endorsement is for example when do not really agreed on food values but too guilty to complain.

Kitchen: Back of the house

The kitchen space of *Sala Rim Naam* is constructed in the ways a good commercial kitchen should be. The stations are set for cleanliness, speed and a convenient flow of process.

The remarkable point is the mixtures of generations of staff, with a lot of young students on training sessions. “OHAP” is the academic part of the hotel established to provide courses to people who want to be hoteliers. Theories are taught together with practice which takes place at the hotel. The staff members are quite often recruited from these students, which is beneficial in terms of their qualifications that are built up directly at this space.

Thai gastronomy quality in terms of culinary practices in this kitchen is very high, yet the food flavors are frequently swayed from customers’ expectations. The customers usually make their own assumptions on such flavors as the food is produced for international consumption.

3.3.5 *Sala Rim Naam, Food and Menu*

Thai food served at this restaurant is served with stunning looks of its compost on table. The tableware was specially made with benjarong style ceramic. The list of food on the menu is not too tourist oriented. There are icons of one to three chilies to hint at the spiciness level for foreign diners.

It might be too much diversity that the food has to be cook in moderate tastes. However, to Thai people, the food is too moderate and to many persons with an acquaintance with Thai food, it seems to look for some more characteristic on the food than just palate received. Freshness and aromatic sense is a little missing, even though the kitchen is supplied with a lot of good and fresh ingredients from reliable suppliers.

The recipes have been developed in house with the expertise of the chef and his team. Some events that support the embodiment of Thai food culture are held for the staff in the kitchen with the help of some other divisions, such as the Thai cooking school and the Thai cultural class where ways of Thai lives are expanded upon during these activities. Such activities help the staff learn culture and history first hand before they share their learning with the customers. This is a wise way to impart Thai values and products that can be shared with appreciation.



Figure 20: Thai foods served on traditional Table wares at Sala Rim Naam



Figure 21: Summer Rice or "Khao Chae" set served at Sala Rim Naam



Figure 22: Thai cooking class at The Mandarin Oriental Hotel

Sample of Thai Foods recommended on *Sala Rim Naam*



Figure 23: Sample of Thai Foods recommended on *Sala Rim Naam*

3.4 The Four Seasons Hotel, Bangkok

The Four Seasons Hotel is part of one of the very big international hotel chains. The first owner, a Canadian company, started the business during the 1960s at the time when people started to travel in groups, a tourism trend called ‘mass tourism’. Logistic of them back and forth is made by mass transport systems. Numerous massive hotels and resorts provided general products for a lot of people arriving at the same time. So there were a lot of rooms and many big restaurants. The buffet style was mainly the way both the hotels and the guests felt “OK”, as they have to serve a lot of hungry customers in a short time.

The Four Seasons introduced the concept in a different way by provide service away from home to travelers who might need slower, nicer, more luxury service than the common hotel.

The company has tried to maximize the quality of service at the luxury level and has communicated their characteristic style to international travelers who look for luxury when they are away from home. Until 2007, the chain was owned privately by two billionaires, Bill Gates and Prince Al-Waleed bin Talal of the UAE, yet the main concept still concentrated on “luxury”.



Figure 24: Physical Setting at The Four Seasons

The Four Seasons in Bangkok was established in 1983 and slowly expanded to the natural tourist sites in Chiangmai, Chiangrai and Koh Samui. A company named Minor International, a leading hospitality business with a lot of food chains and hotels in Thailand, shares all of The Four Seasons properties in Thailand with the key shareholders.

They represent their values for vacation seekers. However, they are different from visitors to The Mandarin Oriental Bangkok, both in age, nationality, career and social status. Young rising executives of smaller companies are the primary guests. There is a mixture of Westerners and Asian customers, although the latter are increasing.

The hotel is situated on a very busy street in Bangkok called Rachaprasong road and is set side by side another hotel, The Grand Hyatt Erawan, a hotel chain from North America.

3.4.1 The Physical Setting

Being located in a very busy area, the hotel is constructed as a high-rise building and some features are placed on higher floors, such as the function rooms and the pools and garden.

The ground floor is reserved for the four food outlets which are Madison (American-style steakhouse), Shintaro (Japanese), Biscotti (Italian) and Spice Market (Thai).

The hotel is aware that primarily business customers are their key revenue producer. Such customers visit many times so there are special arrangements for them, such as preferred rooms being kept for them. Moreover, such rooms are often physically altered in order to suit the needs of a particular guest when they are promoted to a higher position. The working tables are small, but more luxury items are added to the room.

Since most of the guests are comparatively young, business persons, as well as some individual world travelers, then the food spaces provide less formal concepts but are more dynamic and casual. The Thai restaurant called “Spice Market” is included in the space where the notion of a market is applied with flavors expected from a five-star hotel.

The economic crises and social changes offer more of a mix of Asian tourists who do not share the same values as the Western clientele. A new secluded lobby and business areas have been developed on a higher floor to provide privacy check-in service and business rooms for small meetings with key customers which is separate from the groups of tourists.



Figure 25: Private Lobby and board meeting room on top floor at The Four Seasons Hotel

3.4.2 Hosts and Guests

The hosts

The hotel has hotel standards which are generally implemented in any of The Four Seasons properties around the world. As well as it is shared their concepts among none Four Seasons but under same company properties.

The management and staff are afforded diverse experiences by offering staff rotation around the world. Once they return, they can share their international insights with their colleagues.

This Bangkok hotel has a very mature staff in general. Many of them have been with the hotel for a long term. Some of them are new, but the hotel offers them to leave if need and welcome back again. The operational staffs interact in the very family with each other. Even though the space is designed to give satisfaction to visitors, the service providers may not avoid stress and could not express at all. The longer experienced staff here tends to cope with these matters very well. The hotel executives have provided recognition programs as best as they can to minimizing staff turnover and foster a friendly environment for the guests.

The majority of the recruited staff has been trained from vocational schools that have curriculums for tourism and hotel studies which are more practice

oriented than theory. While the younger team are mostly university graduates, there are some staff members at middle management with language and hotel skills from foreign studies.

The hotel has attempted to improve skills with training for the teams. There are training sessions on a monthly basis and it is strict for them to attend the training sessions. Staff members evaluated with good performance are rewarded with trips alone or trips to work and stay with a Four Season Hotel abroad.

Similar to many international chain hotels, the executive team is foreigners, including the executive chef. However, no matter how many foreign executives, the company prefers to maintain a friendly environment such that they view this space as a village where the General Manager's role with respect to their staff is closer to that of a village headman than the usual GM.

The guests

Along with the hotel's direct competitor located right next door, The Grand Hyatt Erawan, The Four Seasons serves primarily a business clientele. However, more top administrators stay at The Hyatt, while more junior staff and middle range administrators stay at The Four Season. Having more juniors is perceived as a benefit by The Four Seasons as they have a longer time to establish and keep a relationship and loyalty with their young customers who in the future will be executives.

There are other important guests as well. They are Thai customers who spend time and money in large amounts such that they can dominant the policy and rule on the hotel. They are nobles, celebrities and politicians who frequently visit the hotel on a daily or weekly basis.

These are clients who can lead the following to the spaces by many affordable persons. Many of them reside nearby the hotel and if they cannot come themselves, they ask the hotel to cook and send them food at home instead.

3.4.3 “Spice Market”, Physical Setting

The hotel guests often spend time at *Spice Market* to mark their visit to Thailand. However, there are many choices for Thai food outside the hotel space. Some are fine dining restaurants and some are common food spaces, but in general with enough quality to draw a visit. So there has been a decrease in the number of customers.



Figure 26: Interior view of *Spice Market*

The decoration reflects a general atmosphere of Asian culture and looks rather like a shop house in an old style market in Thailand, with the combination look of Thai, Indian and Chinese way of life. There are about 120 seats set among various spice stands, rice in brown bags with tools for measurement, bottles of fish sauce and other seasonings, similar to the scene in a fresh market.

The contemporary surroundings suggest spaces where one can find not exactly Thai food, but also similar cuisines such as Chinese and Muslim. What has been thought by the management of the hotel to construct these meanings is relatively the same phenomenon seen pervasively in Thai cuisine nowadays. The food consumed and purchased, no matter for home or public spaces, or even in the convenience stores, is a mixture of blended cultures of people living in Thailand. For instance, having stir-fried food such as “*Pad Thai*” may not been questioned as to whether one is consuming Chinese cooking heritage.

The setting visually signified at *Spice Market* is the reflection of Thainess seen nowadays in Thai society. However, the setting has been arranged in the realm of commoner ways. In many luxury spaces, Thai restaurants are produced to negotiate the meaning of “expensive” values with the meaning of “Thainess”. As a consequence, most of the time Thai gastronomy in five-star food spaces reflects the same story. However, *Spice Market* uses a “market” concept to communicate with their customers who are looking for a more casual dining experience.

The market concept is an issue agreed good value foods to have in Thailand especially by foreigners. The street food in Thailand is often part of the quest of international visitors. Many negative meanings associated with street food has changed. Inappropriateness, which was once found, together with “dirtiness”, devalue of housewife, etc are perceived from different angles. Cheap prices do not necessarily mean cheap values, but means more about the quality of the offering, agreeable trueness and authenticity. Old women or old Chinese with their established food sold on the street may offer better food than a modern woman who has more the identity of a working woman than a good cook. They replaced and overcome the former notorious meanings of street foods which considerable bad tastes of “Taste”.

So with anticipations or just a coincident, the decorations at *Spice Market* is full of “tastes” which are preferred by a large number of people, especially international visitors who intend to come and experience the “tastes” of Thailand.

Even though the styles perceived at *Spice Market* are not elitists, the meaning of “Thainess” with respect to market-like can be seen in the negotiated process versus the meanings usually considered important to be encapsulated in five-star dining spaces. These are the meanings understood by international standards which make this space desirable. The “tastes” of people around the world, such as the furnishing for the dining tables and the allocation of space between the tables, are blended to create ambience. “Privacy” is of concern for guests who pay the prices of a five-star hotel and is accepted among international guest as a promised value for their transaction in order to receive pleasure during the dining time.

Yet, such privacy should not divide the diners from the social function. Being seen by others and seeing others are also important issues for such food spaces to make these international diners feel/ be aware/ recognize themselves and their connection with the human world. Being part of this space is seen enormously enjoy from the scene, from the people nearby even sometime more important than the foods they come for.

Buddha images and *nang kwak* (นางกวัก), the female figure with the posture of calling-waving hand, are set nearby the top part of the restaurant's entrance. However, the existence of such symbolic beliefs may not be the same values as seen in shop-houses, as such meaning is more in terms of decoration.

3.4.4 “Spice Market”, Division Involved

Viewed from the top

The executive team frequently meets and makes assessment of their performance, including the food process. Newly introduced food or big cycle menu changes are always made by the Thai chef and shared to obtain many opinions no matter whether any particular person is Thai staff or not, or is working with food or not. The concerns are with the hotel's standards which focus on the look of the food and its hygiene. Costs do not much matter if such productions are very good and marketable.

The key persons the hotel pays attention to are the prolific Thai spenders who visit on a daily basis, as mention above. Their preferences have to be maintained permanently on the menu, no matter what.

Chef Supanut Khanarak, or Ann, is the Thai chef who has been with *Spice Market* for almost five years. She has been asked by the administrator to maintain those items preferred by important guests; otherwise she has a good level of freedom to create items to add to the menu.

She has learnt that dishes that seem too simple to her, but are seen intensely at tourist spaces, are another untouchable. The Thai items commonly known at common food shops are not necessarily simple to *Spice Market* clientele and need to be maintained.

Apart from her mother, Chef Ann has been influenced by how to cook Thai food by David Thompson, the chef owner at *Nahm*. She worked with him during her studies in Sydney and, once she had finished the course, she came back and worked with Cy'an (later replaced by *Nahm*) at The Metropolitan Hotel. She has adopted techniques and flavors from Moorish and Mediterranean cuisines at The Metropolitan to combine with the Thai food she has learnt through her experience working with Chef David. She has worked mostly in kitchens with international practices.

Service: Front of the House

The staff at the Thai outlets has been with the space many years. Even though there are not many return customers, of this small group of people are big spenders whom these staff needs to address with proper service. The staff does not need to wear Thai dress; on the contrary both males and females wear Western black jacket and pants. However, there are a couple of staff members who wear Thai dress mixed in with the others. The staff has a natural sense of service and is able to provide a balanced service of not too attentive and not too private. The operational staff wears Thai contemporary dress, both males and females, but the senior staff wears black jacket and trousers, both genders.

Kitchen: Back of the House

Most of the food available on the menu was established by a senior Thai chef. She was there from the beginning days until she was over sixty and finally retired. She was the one who gave her expertise shared with many key persons of other food spaces, such as the former and the present Thai chefs at *Celadon*. They all had worked with this female food mentor before.

Even though Chef Ann was not trained by her, Chef Ann has produced her culinary practices in a mixture of her own ways. The difference has been that the management style which the staff under her supervision has to be more dynamic. She was in conflict with the team and was asked by the company to temper her values in the kitchen learnt from the international style. The more strict she was, the more she had problems to solve. She was specially designated to attend training in “anger management”.

The outcome was good for her as she applied such training to her work and interaction with her staff. She now finds it easy to be with her team and to have them work better for the restaurant. Her team is all females and the hotel intends to keep this rule to maintain the characteristic of Thai foods in which the company is more confident of the process being handling by women only. It is said that her kitchen is the inner space of the palace where males are forbidden like bad sin.

3.4.5 “Spice Market”, Food and Menu

It is sometimes her responsible to provide food for functions such as parties or meetings, but not too often, since it is too tough for her team. Apart from the usual cooking for the customers, she has to provide Thai cooking classes upon the request of a guest. She also has to go to other properties, domestic and international, to share her expertise with Thai foods. There are sometimes joint food promotions with that hotel or sometimes just regular trainings for others in the same chain.

As absorbed from Chef David Thompson, she loves to research aspects of food and present her food with what she has learned. The diners at *Spice Market* may not admire the way she has tried to reproduce yearly food events, such as food from the past or “Mon” food. The numbers still show the same top five or ten dishes which have been available for a long time, even before she arrived.

The food is made not as strict as the old ways practiced by David Thompson at *Nahm*. Chef Ann has some short cuts, such as using ready made pastes, bought preserving items, some dessert, etc. Looking at her food, there is some of the

spirit similar to the food seen at *Nahm*, as well as many dishes that are slowly and sophisticatedly treated from scratch.



Figure 28: Khao Soi at The Spice Market

It can be seen from these four luxury restaurants that these hotels share some features, especially with respect to the constraints of being tourist spaces. The important features are to offer a place away from home, with safety and security being primary factors. The room and the food offered are core products, but the social relations values have been selected to present each particular space with specialization. Permanent features are compulsory and rather permanent, but the intangible benefits received from the features of each place are seen as being more dynamic and in tune with flavors focused from such socialization of human from time to time.

CHAPTER IV

PROCESS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THAI GASTRONOMY IN FIVE-STAR FOOD SPACES

This chapter will present the process and characteristics of Thai gastronomy in Thai restaurants in five-star hotels. Thai gastronomy will be analyzed through each of the five factors of Hall's circuit of culture: representation, identity, production, consumption and regulation. Although each factor may not be totally independent of each other in a given context, in this chapter, each factor will be analyzed separately by focusing on its special action on the synergized processes of constructing "Thainess".

4.1 Representation

According to Hall's model, representation is usually the sum contributed from the actions of the rest of the factors dominating each other among the circuit. Owing to social dynamism, the outcome can flow back to the circuit several times and emit different representations. It is suggested that Thai gastronomy is more a plural rather than a fix meaning. Interactions of people through time have yielded a diverse set of values good to dine as shown through the past. Thai gastronomy has been expressed by several "sense makings" from the past until the present. People and spaces are highly involved in the shared meaning.

Representations of Thai gastronomy in this research are seen through food as a center of human activity in hospitality spaces. Hall suggests that representations of things going on rely on language, including people and symbols, which convey the meaning. Thai gastronomy has relied on several key points: the Thai people involved in food ways; the ingredients, with the intensive use of herbs, spices and seasonings; the way the food is served; and the beneficial aspects of the food.

As explained, gastronomy covers not only the food and the dining activities, but also human relations embedded in society. Since today food scenes take place more in public and Thai food rests more on commercial relations, meanings represented have become diversified. Selected values from many food spaces have become blended and are constructed based on the process of each gastronomic characteristic.

Hotels are spaces, in today's concept, for transactions between hosts and guests upon agreed values. Thai gastronomy is situated among such values and has been processed with continued process. To represent identity perceived Thai restaurant is attempts in parts. Thai gastronomy is presented through the physical setting, food and the services, to welcome foreigners, their primary guests, to a place where they can believe with some senses that they are in Thailand.

Most hotels try to represent Thai gastronomy with the physical structure as its most concrete message. Even though this involves high investment, the precise representation through such a tangible aspect will last and is worth the attempt to make a precise expressing of a Thai restaurant. Luxury or some style is involved when it is a five-star hotel.

For instance, *Celadon* at The Sukhothai Bangkok Hotel, being named after the celadon ware buried at Sukhothai ancient sites, such celadon ware was specially reproduced for this hotel and is primarily used as decorative items such as tableware, ceramic for the floor, etc. The outside of the building is built with an architectural design from the central plains. Wooden houses in "A" shape float in a lotus pond and herbal garden. This contemporary style may not be analyzed for its authenticity by their guests, but can impart a sense through its tangible side which is the overall ambience felt by the foreign visitors that this is a Thai space having values for which they have traveled.

The convincing representation through physical settings usually depicts Thai gastronomy in obvious level if the intangible parts are also applied. Therefore, there

are many other tangible items in accordance with the core concepts of the space alongside the intangible items. Service that highlights a feeling of warm welcoming by the host to the guest is important. Thai hospitable style is arranged along with the gastronomic process. Yet, international standards dictated by multinational expectations, such as the table arrangement and the sequence of food served, minimize the cultural shock.

Dining on high tables has been welcomed in Thailand long enough to be commonly viewed as proper dining in regular Thai restaurants. The tables are designed to present Thai style, but the size is European ergonomics. As well, the arrangement on the table reflects a combination of Thai and international table manners. For instance, celadon ware is primary used on the table, together with silver, glassware along with a knife or chopsticks in some occasions. The tables are set with the readiness to serve in Western style with a sequence of food courses.

Apart from certain types of stone and wood that are typically designed to be identified with Thai art, there are other decorative items related to Thai lives. Silk, cotton, rustic metal, and white lotuses are often chosen to highlight the ambience. The staff costumes and grooming in traditional dress designed specially by famous Thai designers concretely represents the gastronomic process. The appreciation of any Thai restaurant can be enhanced to a higher degree when the features complement the emotional benefit.

The most important intangible is a hospitable welcoming. The world visits Thailand expecting to experience Thai ways of life, especially this notable side of “Thai hospitality” which has been globally admired.

The atmosphere contributed by the physical settings at *Celadon* is aimed to give a feeling of serenity and calmness in correlation to the hotel’s overall concept. The staff acts similarly. There are several positive manners for which Thai people have been admired since the ancient times, including kindness, friendliness, politeness, “sanook” and fun. These positive manners are represented in accordance

with the main theme of the hotel. The “Thai smile” is particularly selected for the welcoming and addressing to be “Thai at first sight” throughout the visit, from greeting until farewell.

Thai people in these present days with different context embedded would enable Thai people live the life with different values. The manners portrayed by Thai people in the hotel space are a strictly arranged process starting from recruiting a qualified appearance, attitude and ability. The staff is trained in skills and ability to make sure they properly express the language, gestures, and manners of Thai people and the concepts of Thai dining. This is aimed to match the quality of service with the expectation of each space’s clientele. Even though the back of the house team, which is the kitchen staff, do not have direct contact with the guests, they also need to apply the same process as the service staff, but, of course, with more concern for their cooking skills.

Studies of several five-star hotels have shown that art forms applied either tangibly or intangibly mostly depict different degrees of civilization of the Ayutthaya kingdom. *Sala Rim Naam* at The Mandarin Oriental is a good example of where the physical aspects have been taken partially from the royal concept. A luxurious physical setting, like a throne hall, is seen in combination with the royal temples and residence of Ayutthaya monarchy. “Sala” may suggest a small place, however this “sala” is built as a massive structure situated on the Chao Phraya River and is admittedly a Thai place. The palace style of *Sala Rim Naam* represents a welcoming to a different atmosphere as compared with the *Celadon*. While *Sala Rim Naam* highlights the values of “grand” and “luxury”, *Celadon* offers “privacy” in conjunction with its particular historical theme. Both of these restaurants effectively signify the intended spaces with Siam values.

Thai gastronomy at *Sala Rim Naam* presents the Thai hospitable mind that is closest to being genuine. Apart from the physical circumstances obviously seen, the attentive mannerisms of the staff complexly express warm hearth and empathy, as well as a hint of the sacred and mysterious Oriental land in the foreigner’s perception.

The process of food, generally called culinary practices, that can be seen from these spaces, is very dynamic as it is contingent on the various preferences of food values. While social changes always challenge the hotel's performance, the values selected and applied upon this characteristic is surfing of the on-going changing. As a consequence, the hotels primarily tend to signify Thai gastronomy according to their clientele's perception. Thai food, as seen frequently in international spaces, is then reproduced in order to represent Thai gastronomy.

Thai food in tourist spaces echoes back and forth between Thailand and other countries. Tourists form their expectations about Thai restaurants abroad based on dishes experienced and remembered from Thailand. The Thai food offered in these other countries also drives anticipation to some degrees when these international people make a trip to Thailand. Most Thai dishes are similarly ordered along the lines of the ten popular Thai foods outside off Thailand, as researched by the government.

With respect to the food offered at *Sala Rim Naam*, while the dishes overlap the top ten dishes as voted internationally, some dishes are significantly special to indicate traditional Thai gastronomy. For instance, spring rolls are made smaller and thinner with a whole prawn stuffed inside, called *patad lom* (ประทีดลอม). To represent the five-star practice, they are neatly made and less greasy than the usual spring rolls as the thinner shape not only prevents oil from being absorbed, but they are also articulately beautiful. Moreover, this is a step away from its Chinese origin. At *Sala Rim Naam*, *kapi kua* (กะปิคู่) is a dish that chef Vichit has selected to present traditional Thai food and is proudly used to welcome foreign guests and is one of the dishes which the chef always wants to recommend.

“Kapi kua” is one of the best selling apart from many well-known Thai dishes. Kapi has been positively enjoyed by Thai people and why can it not be so for the foreigners. Good food is about taking good care of

the process as well as a good selection of ingredients. Taking care of customers is also important. We use icons from one to three chilies to mark the spicy level. The staff would assist also on guiding what it is and what should be paired or accompanied.

Additionally, refinement in garnishing can be seen taken from royal Thai food. Most frequently seen is the carving of fruits or vegetables to complement the food set. The triangle shape of a food set refers to Mount Sumeru and is seen in auspicious ceremonies, but not as much as once in the past. *Benjarong* wares also are another way to identify a Thai restaurant. Such wares not only cost a lot, but involve serious care by the staff which is not only having money to continue the service this style. Such representation relies on accumulated expertise more than money.

Above all, it is about what would be preferred by the guests or not as well. As a consequence, such representation is mostly seen in food spaces where their diners are comparatively tourist or spectacle anticipation than the simple food lovers especially those created values from postmodernism.

4.2 Identity

Identity, according to Hall, can have multi-faces. The identification of a cuisine by the diners can be the sum of several factors, including the setting and food. However, in the present context, the food, including the ingredients and garnishing, will be the focus of the analysis in the identity construction of Thai gastronomy. In this case, Thai food, through its taste, aroma and eye appeal is highly identified with the identity of the land that has produced it.

Thailand is situated in **a land with natural potentialities** for producing food products. Rivers, canals and coast lines are the main sources of food, either the fisheries are directly nurtured high yielding of various herbs and fruits. Rice is the main staple which has been served on the Thai table from very old days. Thailand and

neighboring countries, such as Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, Malaysia, Indonesia and Philippines, share many fresh ingredients, such as *kapi*, which is one of the main seasonings of Southeast Asia.

The land has also naturally welcomed foreign products. Chili is a non-native plant, brought by the Portuguese who came in the Ayutthaya period. Even though chili varieties in Thailand are numerous, yet they are more limited than those in the father land in South America. However, the land embraces their qualities very well so that Thai chili offers a different sensory experience for both the palate and the nose. Various types of basil have been introduced by Indians. Lychee was brought by Chinese merchants before Rattanakosin times. More fresh products are now being grown and farmed as a result of globalization, such as cows, rainbow trout, dragon fruit, strawberries, etc.

Garnishing of food on plates is different from space to space. The food itself, how is the ware like, what would it be to look on every dishes when served them side by side with rice and most of all who will be the diners are all in concerned on how to present them. The colors and shape of foods when displayed altogether are calculated in higher concerned with higher classes. Therefore, the colors and shape of tableware, as well as the decorative items on the table, such as the flowers, are contextually designed. The most important part is the color of the cooked food. Since there is a high use of vegetables, then green is carefully placed with other colors. It is more sophisticated when food is decorated and served in elite spaces.

Apart from rice, there are three important components indicating the characteristics of Thai gastronomy; firstly, the various **herbs** and **fruits**; secondly the proportionate of **spices**; and lastly, which is quite outstanding compared to the others, the **seasonings** which contribute what can be accepted through both the tongue and nose.

The fragrances of fresh herbs, the aromatic or pungent nature of the spices and the orchestra touch of seasonings can be combined in eight different ways: sour,

sweet, nutty, salty, spicy, bitter, pungent and neutral. Betel chewing or *Mieng Kham* (เผือกคัมน้ำ) is the best example of herbs and seasonings being applied to contribute many flavors in one bite.

Curries are also composed of three main ingredients. Curry pastes are made by finely pounding several herbs and some particular spices and most important, with *kapi*. The curry pastes are cooked with coconut cream/ milk and seasoned with fish sauce, palm sugar, tamarind pastes, etc., depending on the type of curry. While the coconut cream naturally contributes an oily texture and creamy touch, the freshness from the herbs in the paste temper and balance the dish. Toning down the creamy touch of the coconut is traded for “nutty and sweet” flavors.

Kaeng liang (แกงเลียง) is a kind of spicy broth which is believed to be the former format of Thai soup. The paste is a mixed with pepper, instead of chilies, and garlic, shallots and *kapi*. Chili has taken over and is seen in most of the soups today. The base of the soup is frequently mixed with garlic and at least one spicy ingredient, such as chilies. Additionally, many herbal ingredients, such as galangal, lemongrass, etc., can be added. Fish, *kapi* or bean paste is selected and added dependably. An adapted style soup, such as *kaeng khae* (แกงแค) up north and *kaeng ya nang* (แกงย่านาง) in Esan, can be seen. Sometime *khao bue* (ข้าวบิ๊อ), or pounded toasted rice, is added in order to give a meaty texture.

A common paste is the mixture of garlic, shallots and chilies used in a hot soup of fish and herbs. Such common pastes are made more intensely, spicy and stronger, if galangal, lemongrass and kaffir lime leaves are cooked together. Such spiciness then captures the whole picture, and a lot of people believe, is representative of Thai food.

Turmeric is another key herb intensively used in Southern cuisine, in addition of the ingredients described above. One of the unique characteristics of Southern food is then the yellow color and the more fragranced taste enhanced by turmeric.

Researchers experience with foreigners in Thai cooking classes provide an outside-in view that international people even the close countries identify the freshness from herbs in foods are Thai's. They rarely know exactly what galangal is and perhaps cannot tell the difference from the ginger. Once they smell and taste these herbs, they usually share their fulfillment of Thai dish's realization.

The spices, when compared to the mother cuisines from which they came, Indian and Persian, are used less intensively. There are various types of spices used with Thai food, including coriander seeds, cumin seeds, cinnamon or cassia bark, mace, nutmeg, clove, cardamom. Most of these have Indian heritages, such as the curries. "Massaman" curry is a good example showing the many types of spices put together in a curry. The rest of the curries in Thai cuisine have a shorter list of spices than those in "massaman".

Yet, there are many more lists underneath these three essences that Thai people do not really know about. Because of constraints on food in public spaces, they are disregarded and have not been transferred its advantages on same values as ever. Younger generations who spend more time in public and value public food then conform to the continuity of Thai foods without this character. "Satay", which Thai learnt from Nyonya cuisine in Malacca where spices are a primary product, is no longer worth to invest money and time on spices since the powers of buying do not regard them. Yet, spices are much more positive upon westerners than Thai customers.

Seasonings are the savor composers and combined from natural products as well. Among the eight savors that exist, there are sub flavors underneath some particular main savors. Sourness, for instance, could be obtained from lime, tamarind paste, green mango, or some fruits, such as oranges. Saltiness can be added using *kapi*, fish sauce, salt, fermented fish, dried fish, dried shrimp, fermented nut, or the Chinese sauces, such as soy sauce and oyster sauce. Most of the time saltiness also produces a fishy taste which usually can be offending to the taste and smell. Therefore, some balancing is needed and sanctioned technique from know-how on

herbal temperance. It is naturally more enjoyed by visitors from the Oriental world than Westerners, even with the cooks or chefs.

Flavors constructed by adding herbs, spices and seasonings are penetrated with precise measurement and long treatment to accentuate their aromatic smells. “Balancing” is also highly regarded to contribute harmoniously to the flavors. It is unacceptable to “overpower” any of the three key identities of Thai food.

Balancing is also obtained by contrasting. Binary savors are used in such balancing. *Saep* (แซ่บ-tasty) has been invented to break the rules of such balancing when there is too extreme a mixture of spicy, strong, salty and sour. This acute savor has been blended with mainstream Thai food when Northeastern food came together with laborers to Bangkok and many big cities with a density of tourists.

These “Esan” foods have gained a slow welcoming and changed their identity from being very cheap and common, now rising up in prestige. *Somtām, larb, khao neow*, etc., are furthered meaning and have fewer connections with *luk khao neow* (ลูกข้าวเหนียว) or Esan people, laborious based, these dishes are now served in luxury food spaces around the world. Accordingly, *saep* is now differently conveyed.

Rice and the accompanied dishes, called *kab khao* (กับข้าว-with rice), is typically served on Thai tables, especially at proper meal times with no rush, no matter whether for the rich or poor. A proper Thai meal is a set of rice and at least two accompanying dishes. Since rice is quite neutral, then the other dishes need to be flavorful, and at least a small portion of fish sauce, lime juice and chilies is served. However, one complete dish has been invented for urban lives where people have less time and economic constraints to dine within such contexts. It can be seen that seasonings are in high demand in the production area or the kitchen. Seasonings are also important in their role as condiments on the dining table and are added based on the individual diner’s preference.

The accompanied dishes intensively use vegetables and a small proportion of meat. The meat is sliced in small single pieces and completely cooked. Most of the meats are smaller animals, such as fish, shellfish and chicken. Pork and beef are used more in Chinese influenced foods. Big pieces of meat, such as rack of lamb, spareribs, veal, *foie gras*, are very Western compared to Thai gastronomy.

Fruits and desserts are also present on the table. Rice, banana and coconut are used in sweet dishes. Egg yolks and rice flour/ sticky rice flour/ tapioca flour and arrow root flour are frequently seen in desserts. Jasmine water and the candle scent is the dominant aroma. A sweet taste is mostly obtained from palm sugar, sugar cane and toddy palm sugar and some sweet fruits. Thais mostly enjoy desserts to be served not only at the end of the meal, but several times a day.

So in order to produce Thai food, rice and *kab khao*, using these three proper components, the cooks have to spend some time to experience and develop an understanding of the sensory explained through the products available on land. Most of all, since Thai food relies very much on natural products, then seasonality and availability of foods are important.

These three identified components of Thai food have been developed mainly from the land, with refinement and specializations produced by the people. This human intervention makes these similar natural features evolved with evolutions enhanced by the values people regard on them (This human sanction to nature could be better explained under the consumption.).

Carving of vegetables and fruits and the folding of banana leaves into shapes is quite limited and rare to see on general dining tables, even in hotel spaces. Decorated and carved vegetables and fruits with refined art are not seen on plates, but perhaps in a special area for display. There are attempts in not to spend times for carving but showing implication of Thai art either through the style of dish or slightly decorate with existed edible material on such dish. Many five-star hotels today have designed their placing of ingredients in upright positions.

Water is traditionally served and alcohol, especially wine, has been invited to the Thai table in limited spaces. However, water is served in a taller goblet glass than is usual for Thai people in common use.

Many five-star hotels update their menus with foods according to the seasons, especially fruits, such as mangosteen, marian plum, etc. These foods are mostly offered as a promotion highlight because of their scarcity.

Food at *Nahm* is rigidly identified with its contribution of sensory elements, in contrast with the hotel theme which is a very modern space. Even for the jasmine rice served, owing to its “jasmine” name, the aroma is enhanced and handled from the kitchen to the dining table with a very perfume smell.

The location with its culture entailed also gives nations the production of identification. People from the old days until the present have always tried their best to produce sufficient supplies of foods. Agriculture in Thailand reflects both technical improvement and many cultural activities to cultivate the land for better production. “You are what you eat” then not only conveys scientific significance, but also cultural identification as well.

Class establishments, religions and beliefs, the visits of foreigners from the past until the present, the harmonious dwellings of people from different groups of ethnicity are all shared values of Thai gastronomy. Foods are then the means of identification of a people and their surrounded circumstances.

4.3 Production

Production of Thai gastronomy will be investigated in two aspects: firstly, the thought and the wisdom of how the food should be processed and, secondly, the practices in food production. Production of Thai gastronomy is the investigation of people in the food space with their perception as a part of the cooking process, as well as the food, and the service.

The production of mind is the active transferring of knowledge and know-how of Thai food. This can be referred to as “the raw and the cook”, the famous theory of Levi-Strauss. The productions of mind are set on nature to defy of its edible stage. Humans have placed multi-frames of edible meaning to such natural products.

People manage to apply some actions regarding meaning to “cooking” the raw and even the rotten to fulfill successfully the meaning “edible”. Nature and culture are, then, not too far apart in the offering of *kapi* and *pla ra* which transferring its natural to cultural food forms with agreeable in Thai food production.

Even cooked foods are seen with different values around the world. While colder temperatures offer Westerners the opportunity to eat almost raw foods, this is prohibited in hot and humid countries such as Thailand. Raw meats are carefully prepared with enough heat and are cook properly to offer clean and safe food to dine. Very well cooked meat loses its natural flavors and has a tougher texture. It is then necessary for a better quality of dining that the meat be seasoned with a lot of flavors to compensate for the natural losses.

One more benefit yielded from the land is that there are multi-biodiversities for flavoring. These tremendous nature products create multiple choices for Thai people to astonish their foods artfully. Thai people always flavor their foods, even those who do not really know how to cook. They produce their own preferred taste by adding the condiments at the dining table.

However, at the hotel space, the food is produced base on accumulated cultural views. The views of good or bad foods are discursively contextually. If one steps back to local views with religious beliefs, *pla ra* is one of the products that originally came from a belief not to kill. The Mon people applied their meritorious mind to the food they produced, so dead fish was gathered with the yearly flooding during the rainy season and then preserved.

Since the gastronomic process in five-star hotels is “guest” oriented, there are set ways for production, either for the food or the service. Standards of cleanliness and consistencies are the keys controlling the food and service.

Frequency of transactions identifies the production of food and services. The reciprocal transactions are not included on commercial food spaces which is arbitrarily necessary on host side to see figures on the profit. The hosts have to welcome their guests with their commercial feasible or more when produced on five-star hotels. This could be seen when the two factors regulation and production in Hall’s circuit of culture worked together.

The set rules are referred to as “professional” conduct. Any meanings improvised apart from such regulations are failed from being professional. The welcoming of too friendly or too indifferent mannerism, for example, devalues a good host at five-star spaces. No matter how good the food at home is, it cannot be reproduced without permission from the head chef.

The popularity of any restaurant can be attributed to the staff working at these spaces as well. Values identified from this public food space on them with meaning of professional. The related values, such as culinary practices, are consumed and regulate their ways of working in longer terms, no matter international or local concept. The staff members at successful spaces tend to continue such production as fix values which will influence other food spaces.

The young cooks first grasp food safety and hygienic schemes to represent their competencies. This can be seen at *Celadon* when an exotic herb from Esan was introduced by a foreign chef, but was negatively received. A dispute developed among the staff in connection with the herb being “*lao*” in a negative sense and not deserving to be served for rich international guests.

It can be seen in many public food spaces today that Thai food is produced based on similar lists. Such lists are produced from mainstream foods mostly from the

central plains with a mixture of some famous local foods. These ordinary lists are repeated in five-star hotels, but with refinement. For example, *tom yam kung* is mostly refined through the type and size of prawn used. While generally bite-sized shrimps are cooked with *tom yam kung*, sizable river prawns are served in five-star spaces and the garnishing makes the dish look elegant.

Therefore, Thai gastronomy in five-star hotels is an echo of repetitions that have been agreed are more commercially feasible than the search for natural variety and local culinary practices. Yet, the higher and complex demands anticipated from diverse customers have been decided by the management team to be produced along with the gastronomic processes. Specializations are promising on spaces. The satisfaction of the clientele is detected and memorized on an individual level. Five-star food spaces are looking for the production of satisfaction by individual guests which is called ‘personal touch’. As a consequence, details are memorized, such as personal preferences and religious dietary constrains, even the preference of seats, by the staff and by the use of computer systems to welcome the guests the next time.

This suggests an unstable standard beneath the set standards and can be seen as an opening to slippery values in producing Thai gastronomy. There are attempts from the host side to negotiate and request if absolutely uncorrelated to set standard. Such as the request for a tempering of the spiciness by guests, which may not be able to be accommodated accordingly. Designations using one to three chili icons along with the food name on menu and polite explanations from the staff on this matter are seen as a hotel’s attempt to cope with this problem.

Among these four restaurants, the one that produces Thai gastronomy differently from the rest is *Nahm*. Thai food produced at *Nahm* is placed the values as much as those admired on domestic spaces. The cooks are supported by the chef to promote local wisdom and a long history in culinary practices, yet under his supervision and permission. The service staff is allowed to say “no” to any order that devalues what should be represented with Thai food. The menu of items exist more on domestic food spaces than those that echo from tourist food spaces. Technologies

have been adopted for production to enhance the process rather than to minimize it. Short cuts are looked down upon with a negative sense of professional code of conduct.

Nahm production is rigidly undergone with the recipes especially one with specific belong recipes. Moreover the ingredients must reflect exactly Thai ingredients, even the seasonings. If the dish is a stir-fried dish with Chinese influence, Chinese produced sauces would be used to season. There tends to be a pervasive use of many sauces in Thai cooking, but it is not the *Nahm* style, especially oyster sauce. Such sauce is produced and presented more as Chinese food.

A production of other space but not on *Nahm* is the cooking of food in overlapping of Thai food in tourism spaces. He has selected Thai food from many places that he views have substantial Thai values, such as some food with a royal context, some from peasant life, such as jungle curry, some from diverse group of people, such as *kanom jeen* of the Mon, etc. The Chinese food he chooses must be locally created, such as *tao kua*, a kind of salad made by the Chinese in Songkla province.

Nahm has provided food in accordance with the types of food and recommended accompanied dishes as suggested in *mae krua hua pah* of *Thanpuying Plian Paskornwong*. Chef David has such a mindset when creating menus and he also serves the food in communal Thai style. Only *krung wang*, which can be closely compared with either appetizers or snacks, is served singly to begin the meal. Two to three items are served for diners to assuage their hunger while waiting for the whole set to be cooked and served. Unlike other places, Chef David would not want the guest to eat the soup detached from the set, as the common taste of Thai soups is not designed to be eaten without other food in company, or at least with rice.

Moreover, he is quite strict with what needs to be served with each dish, especially the relishes for *nahm phrik*. For instance, when he makes *nahm phrik* following ML Kukrit Pramoj's recipe, the assorted ingredients usually mentioned in

his writing will be provided no matter whether a particular fish, small orange or even rose apple.

The production of “service” at *Sala Rim Naam* is remarkably different and unique. A lot of hotels produce genuine hospitality by a written script and enforce consistency by rules. The years of establishment are a condition and limitation on achieving such quality of service. The Mandarin Oriental Hotel, and its operation in Thailand for more than hundred years, offers long experience and best practices. The repetition of such success is cultivated in the sense of culture rather than the arbitrary trade of thoughtfulness of mind and labor.

Many restaurants choose shorter processes on sites or establish good relationships with suppliers to undertake the processes for them. The investment in keeping up good quality from suppliers is expensive and increases the cost for the hotel. The alliances to do these surplus jobs are carefully selected. Items that take longer to produce, such as readymade curry pastes and refined Thai desserts, are ordered instead of made in house. Many of these supplied items are made in mass quantities so it is inevitably some non-fresh items are added and even preservatives used.

4.4 Consumption

“Food consumption reflects, deflects, incorporates, redefines and transforms social relations between self and other – Thai and Westerners, urban Thai and rural Thai, elites and nonelites, different regions and ethnic group, and between generations.” (Walker, 1991: 26)

According to Hall’s circuit of culture, the concept of consumption signifies the consumption of values and meanings. With respect to Thai gastronomy, which is related to Thai and the diversity of the people, Thai food is produced and consumed with various meanings. Food, as mentioned by Walker above, is selected and applied differently in five-star food spaces.

The meaning of a “proper” meal is consumed in order to produce and reproduced on every day lives. Humans have based “nutrition” as basic to defy proper food. Thai gastronomy, similarly, is concerned with properness as well as cleanliness. It is dealt with more meanings to defy proper in present days. However, properness in term of “taste” might be subjective and too difficult to be reproduced. Imagination is applied and that opens up easily for food to be improvised rather than to conform to authenticity.

For instance, even though there is a certain culinary syntax, in practice it would be difficult for a cook to interpret precisely the contents of a letter written by Queen Swangwattana to Princess Jonjittanom. She wrote to thank her for some food cooked and offered by the princess that was produced with the right flavors. *Thuk Pak* (ถูกต้อง), or right to the palate, was expanded with delicious and round tastes to refer to her preferred flavors and explain that the food did not taste overly sweet, overly oily and overly spicy. The princess must have been very happy to receive this complementary letter from the queen. Readers of this letter might wonder how excellent the princess must have been at her cooking because in this letter the queen made a note that she herself could not perform on such a stage. Such proper “tastes” can be found in a hand written letter posted in front pages of a memorial book of *Princess Jongjittanom*. However, the reproduction of food according to this letter would be difficult.

In the old days, it could be divided easier into two primary meanings: domestic and public food. However, globalization in the present day, with the help of technology, offer blurs the meaning between the two. Food and the meaning of food is consumed from the outside and is borderless, welcomed into homes and produced dynamically meanings furthered.

“Transactions” made for foods and dining are significantly important to set these two spaces apart. Mostly food cooked for the family is a reciprocal exchanged

without commercial conditions, while Thai gastronomy is commoditized either as food or service.

As a consequence, Thai gastronomy in hotels is largely depended on profit and loss to be happily consumed by the guests and promptly endorsed. Since the space bare two key representations; first as leisure oriented, the tourism constrains are related in high extent in order to make Thai food are far from their routine activity. Secondly the spaces are luxury restaurant, refinement is then are focused for production and representation.

Lash and Urry (Dodd, 1999) view that consumption is based on symbolic values. While Thai food is a core product of these four restaurants, the symbolic values of Thai foods have been investigated and applied to the food offered on the menu. Since the food is obtained from somewhat the same sources, the consumption of these related symbolic are depicted of similarities especially lists of foods.

Each restaurant has to make distinctions from other food spaces which are mostly by style rather than the list of foods. The attempt to identify differences is concretely seen in the physical setting, ranged from styles applied to the buildings to the table arrangement.

That is what obviously can be seen at *Sala Rim Naam* where the meaning of what is the best and exclusive are borrowed from royal cuisine. The place, the food and the service are interpreted from the consumption of the elite and processed on to the production loops. Such consumable values are produced for their upscale diners with the exclusive meaning of special and grand which is rarely accessed by others.

While at *Nahm*, Thai gastronomy is based on history and local products. The consumption of chef on Thailand in general with a mixture of numerous groups of people, the diversities of Thai foods that are consumed and presented are different from *Sala Rim Naam*. Chef David, who was first impressed with Thailand by Thai manners and, even though from different classes and education, to him Thais have well polished manners. He learned that “suphap” (สุภาพ) refers to this character and he

has always placed “suparp” on the Thai gastronomy at *Nahm*. Thai gastronomy on the verge of well manner not the Royal on food, on place and on service are refinery produced and depicted.

Spice Market is different from the two places described above. Social change and constructed values in a less formal dining setting are the main consumed values in this space. The guests are younger and their live are more casual and “sanook”. The market-like structures of the dining space and the menu with lists of Thai food generally available at food shops or push carts are dominant features. The service is the only thing that can be called not “market” style at this five-star hotel restaurant.

Casual foods consumed on this spices market is one of the production of world economic crises. As well as the computer and online systems which shape human detach from physical organization. They increased of “free lancers” plus with the reason of economic static enable free themselves from formalities including of food and places they enjoyed. These foods created a while and are called comfort foods. They are overlapping with street foods in more intense of styles and much better quality yet without class entailed. For instance serving of papaya salad and sticky rice with couples of qualified grilled meat in one nicely look set is comfort food. It is actually the same lists found on street but more five-star qualified.

However, in order not to be too much like street food, the customers can consume Thai gastronomy with high class production. Also, there are twice yearly attempts by Chef Ann to provide Thai foods from different angles than what she usually offers on the main menu. These include special Thai food, such as “Mon foods”, “Maekrua Hua Pah Legendary”, etc.

The well blended aspect of Thai and Chinese people in Thailand, which is reflected in food around the country, can be seen at *Celadon*. Apart from general Thai food, such as *Pad Thai*, chicken green curry, *som tam*, etc., there are a lot of stir-fried foods. The ways to make Thai food at this luxury space luxurious to the guests is to make the food concretely with portion and size especially with a substantial size of

meat or seafood. The team consumed such ideas of food lists as family foods and then share to general public food spaces around the country. It is then admittedly Thai foods on such ground.

The dynamic social interactions also offer Thai foods into fashion terms and frequently seen impact on the work of chef as well. The meaning of “pleasure” from the Western table with wine and food pairing could speedier the transactions on these Thai food spaces. Gastronomic processes are altered by such Western influence. Water is served, shared with wine. Thai food then has to be tailored to suit the compliment of pairing with wine. *Samrap* set of food is served in a sequence in order to allow for more than one type of wine to be paired and each course is served with a different wine.

The act of industrial production gives positive meaning to “short cuts” with the help of machines, but neglecting times and human attempts by labeling “outdated” They spend less time and effort on the preparing and cooking processes, but which allows more time for the characteristic that can be seen by the eye, such as the garnishing of the dish and components of the tableware. This may serve eye appeal, but render “taste” to the palette in a lower degree.

Consumption with forced of commercial values could even challenge the food space of royal-like at The Mandarin Oriental Hotel. *Sala Rim Naam* is asked once a year to organize a special food event for many big Thai food entrepreneurs to consume the values produced at this dominant food space. A wine company owned by Thai people attempts to share values of wine as paired with Thai food. The space and expertise of *Sala Rim Naam* are used to welcome the guests with a set menu of Thai food served in sequence style. The list of wines is set and Thai food is then created in order to compliment the wine successfully. In order to do so, each dish selected has to be not too acidic, but either salty or nutty. The sourness of *tom yam* is then toned down and *foie gras* used to make it nutty and creamier. For the three flavor sauces that dress deep-fried fish, or what is called *Pla Sam Rod*, again *foie gras* is used to lower the sour savors and welcome the wine. Many Thai guests, who are

mostly restaurateurs, enjoy such pairings and many do not really consume the invented concept.

It can also be seen from the choices of the food made for this event that the chef is asked to pick a sample Thai food from the mainstream for adaptation. A chef at this level would know that there are many kinds of Thai food that can be paired with wine without a lot of compromises. *Khao chae* is rice specially served in fragrant water and accompanied with assorted slated foods, the repertoire of which can be nicely matching with wine; yet the process of production of this food is too complicated and is difficult to be included on the mainstream menu. Foods with simple process that are commercially oriented are then selected to pair with conditions at general Thai restaurants.

There are remarkable similarities, except at “Nahm”, that Thai gastronomy if spot with mainstream lists worldly aware there are almost the same lists of Thai food offered in menu. Even some rare dishes such as “Khao Chae” and some refine desserts are found in special items yet all of them shared.

4.5 Regulations

Regulations are both mind set and script set in which “to do” or “not to do” with respect to Thai gastronomy. The mind sets are norms developed to regulate the productions. The hotel with international standards is highly concerned and scripts the rules and regulations for the staff to follow.

Thai food relies on natural ingredients to a great extent as the food uses herbs, fruits and many fresh ingredients intensively, which is an outstanding identity of the gastronomy. The seasonal availability of ingredients has a large impact on the continuity of traditional production. The world has a higher demand for Thai food, but given the limitation of fresh ingredients abroad, Thai food has to be altered because of the limited choice of ingredients.

Gervaise and many foreign visitors in ancient days gave their negative opinion on the food. Thai food to them was over seasoned. This might be owing to geographical differences. Western preference is meat cooked juicy at lower temperature and for a shorter time. Cold weather allows meat to be enjoyed in such a way. While in Thai cuisine, because of the hot and humid conditions, meat is handled with care of temperature and time in order to make sure of food safety. Thais, in general, find rare steak is not familiar and Westerners find that Thai cuisine renders meat too tough and tasteless. The natural tastes of fresh products, including the seasonings, then are used to compensate for the missing parts which are negated by the use of high temperatures. Cooking temperature is a regulator in the production of food. Cultural ways, aesthetics and sophistication are artfully adopted and adapted in flavoring for each Thai dish.

However, the modern food system is impacting culinary practices in the use of less fresh ingredients. The modern life finds easy ways to season Thai food. The industrial productions are supplying the replacing choices for such demands. It is very beneficial for commercial food spaces to have a consistent supply and predictable cost which is provided with these replacement ingredients which have a long shelf life. The more consumptions on public spaces offer acquaintances of the factory products and finally commonly routine on broader spaces. Such industrial products then further decrease the demand for fresh products and finally they are slowly disappearing from farms or even the local natural environment. The feedings of ingredients from factory are taking over broader food places and even homes.

One impact on culinary practices is that such industrial production makes life too easy and cooks apply less creativity in seasoning their food. Natural products are overlooked in making their food sumptuous. Monosodium glutamate and many factory-made sauces have lead Thai foods dedifferentiate. The consequence is that diners slowly adapt their Thai taste with an industrial grounding. Thai gastronomy is challenging of the losing values accumulated with contingency to culture and history.

Food safety and scheme applied on international food spaces around the world also shortened the list of Thai food that can be produced in these spaces. In order to provide food with fermented fish seasoned should have process and ways to answer the customers properly.

Frequent negotiations between localization and globalization are circuit-like produce yes and no consumptions. Higher world population but less food, together with global warming and material lives, create food scarcities that are forcing the world agenda to rethink the shortages of sustenance. Food is increasing in price and becoming a world economic problem.

While industrial foods, such as genetically modified foods and many ready to eat meals, are invented to make enough supplied, but there are anti of former concept and attempt to treat nicer to environments and last their physical supplied as long as and as natural as possible.

The later groups point out the harm caused by industrial foods, such as damage to the soil, water and air. Human diseases resulting from diets are another problem which also impacts national spending for hospitalization from eating disorders. The “slow food” concept has been introduced for slower the hurried lives for materialism. Foodways are studied with care for the environment and human health from the farm to the table, even so far as the garbage.

This concept can be correlated with King Bhumibol’s philosophy of sufficient economy in food and living. With this rise of pro local, international and local meet, in Thailand it is provoked of positive values on many food spaces, as well as at hotel restaurants. Organic ingredients have been used by these restaurants for a long time, especially The Mandarin Oriental Hotel. These four restaurants have long been supplied with organic foods from royal projects which could be a strong point for promotion.

Yet materialism and hedonism are also part of these hotels in order to present the spaces for high class socialization. Local foods are still limited in the offerings to their guests as the hotels have to address the matter of ingredients for producing and consuming of class. There are not all guests with such concepts conveyed; however, it is also important to be aware of diversity in these international spaces.

As a consequence, the hotel standard is set for values shared by everybody, or at least those that are acceptable. If there are any pro local customers sharing the spaces, such standards may make them finish their meal and leave quietly without complaint, but this does not really impact the hotel's financial risk.

Mainstream foods, as mentioned earlier, are produced with international values, as well as a fixed awareness of "Thai" food. Chef Ann from *Spice Market* shared that she had to give up the introduction of foods from parts away from tourist sites since she received many guest complaints about the absent of *Kai Pad Med Mamuang Himmaphan*, stir-fried chicken with cashew nuts. The customers want to pair their understanding of Thai food to their frequent experience with mainstream food. The repetitions of such lists, then, regulate Thai gastronomy to a large extent.

Thai food and its identity with super refinement and complex processes is being minimized because fewer people have the knowhow and skill. Older Thai cooks and chefs are now mostly retired. Since the job is stressful and tough, unlike cooking at home, many of them even asked to retire early. There is now younger staff in transition, yet they are regulated with new values and have less refined cooking techniques. Recent generations who have joined the team are mostly the production of public food spaces. There are a few younger staff members who want to follow the traditional ways rigidly, but the administrator does not allow them to do so as it is too laborious and cost intensive to continue the traditional ways. There are no credible authorities giving advice to the younger generations on these circumstances as in former days when any of their mothers could have made suggestions.

Kin dee mee suk (กินดีมีสุข) or “eat well to live well” can be interpreted differently. It is portrayed with medicinal benefits with the right to physical and spiritual needs, rather than hedonistic only. Social interactions and values synergized like circuit are enhanced Thai gastronomy with beliefs, economy constrains for human embodied. These interactions on the wings of globalization suggest that human should rethink the meaning “Kin dee mee suk” to be more generous to humans and nature rather than only pleasing one’s thirst. It is once embedded on Thai culture on food and Thai lives until Thailand is included in global community.

In conclusion, Thai gastronomy manifests the cultural processes. There are keys factors in negotiating meanings from the old days until the present. Globalization offers a dynamic phase of change with respect to various values which could either negatively harm the sense of good living according to local wisdom or create a new world concept to return to a life with less industrial input.

CHAPTER V

CONSTRUCTION OF “THAINESS” IN THAI GASTRONOMY IN INTERNATIONAL FOOD SPACES

This chapter will provide an analysis of how “Thainess” is constructed through Thai gastronomy in international food spaces. Thai gastronomy of the four case studies will be contrasted and compared.

The chapter will present two main points of analysis: firstly, the characteristic of constructed “Thainess” in Thai gastronomy in five-star hotels and, secondly, the factors determining the representation of “Thainess” in the gastronomy.

5.1 Characteristics of constructed “Thainess” in Thai gastronomy in five-star hotels.

Interactions between those who travel from a far away culture to have social meanings with the local people on the ground are always interfered by fantasia. The gap between reality and invented interactions is a process depended on the visitors. First time visitors tend to look for the image of “Thainess” they have formed, somewhere before, through their experiences with pictures or stories. Thus, the hotels with these visitors have to provide easy access to such decoded imaginations by providing concrete Thai motifs: buildings with interior and exterior structures that look very Thai; traditional performances such as music and dancing; a staff that always smiles and is polite with conventional dresses; a menu of Thai food commonly global aware. “Thainess” is constructed for the purpose of welcoming them to the destination and to detach them temporarily from their routine world.

MacCannell (1973), as cited by Urry (1990: 9), called “staged authenticity” that the backstage is constructed in a contrived and artificial manner in tourist space. Each Thai restaurant has to maintain their representations with specializations in

comparisons with other fine dining restaurants. “Thainess” is placed along such presentations on the values gazed for transaction of the particular visitor.

Visitor’s accessibility to “Thainess” needs only a light degree of “Thainess”, while others need very outstanding, hyper-real authenticities in order to be pleased on their visit. Flavors consumed on individual person from production of modernists, contemporaries, postmodernists, and all of the three above regulate five-star spaces to reproduce and represent “Thainess” in different aspects.

The strategies used in the construction of “Thainess” by the four luxury food spaces studied have three primary characteristics: 1) The physical setting and the enhanced atmosphere, 2) the services and 3) the culinary practices. Distinctive characteristics and strategies used in each hotel will be described in the analysis.

5.1.1 The physical setting and the enhanced atmosphere

“Thainess” objects are important to synergize to represent the meanings of definite destination away from the visitor’s home. Hotel administrators make heavy capital investments to research notions to confirm the right decision that are made in applying “Thainess” to their Thai restaurant. It is more concrete and quite worth the effort since many customers visit a restaurant though its appearance, especially when such decisions are made through the media and digital sources. Published materials about the property signify the message to be conveyed using splendid displays of art that are taken from expectations of the customers. Effective physical spaces maximize the emotion appeal and make the visitors want to consume firstly even before the food.

To do so, characteristics of “Thainess” are adopted, adapted, and presented in the setting and atmosphere. Wooden houses, some parts of temples, some particular shops, Thai outdoors motifs such as exotic gardens, canals or rivers, as well as many other aspects, are selected to be adopted and adapted with an exclusive style. These objects then have to be correlated to the emotional anticipation

of the guests. “Thainess” situated in five-star spaces thus speaks of selected values, such as serenity with “noble” entailed.

“Big” and “large” and “grand” zones are intended to impress these high class customers in order to represent of well aware of customers’ identity. Therefore, the restaurants are generally situated in broader areas. The walkways, the room in between tables, the seating, even the tableware, are arranged for extreme comfort and convenience. The tableware is designed on purpose with details that signify the restaurant. The material used for the wares, even with many Western dominants, present “Thainess”, such as ceramics plates in white and blue called *Jan Lai Pak Chee* (จานลายผักชี) or five-color wares called *Benjarong* (เบญจรงค์), mostly seen before only on the tables of Thai elites. These items are specially made to order by the restaurants with specific details such as size, weight and color. Local flowers, such as orchids or lotuses, are frequently placed in the space.

The styles in which deliberately communicate with only affordable groups of visitors. As a consequence, selected “Thainess” motifs in these five-star spaces are full of prices which tangible and intangible “classscaped”. Constructions or art pieces situated on the spaces may be “real” antiques or reproductions of extremely refine craftsmanship in order to represent the values in which limited rest for class quests. The class identifications are aware on such spaces.

In *Tourism Gaze*, John Urry states that socialization in tourist spaces is the spaces of preferred “gazing” which includes what to gaze and what want to be gazed. The space of a five-star setting signifies a socialized class and group of people. “Taste” is related to social space and influences on Thai gastronomy could be supported by the meaning of “taste” shared by Somrak on his interpretation through language. “Taste” is value constructed with firm relation with “leisure” activities (Somrak Chaisingganonond, 2001: 63). Participation on the space is gazed with class as well.

The cases studied of *Celadon* and *Sala Rim Naam* are two restaurants that best explain “Thainess” as portrayed in the space where separate lives of visitors from their usual contexts and lives with limited social relations.

However, the guests’ arrivals are completely actualized when both the physical and emotion conjured. Appreciation of art as viewed through their eyes and felt by their minds cooperated to promote the consumptions of “Thainess” on these stages, however with a few concerning for further evaluations. Therefore, the physical setting may first welcome the customers, but needs strong support from other characteristics on site during their socializations of these spaces.

One more critical point is, above all, the space has to make the foreign visitors feel “at ease”. International standards are then in place in order to limit the culture shock between the hosts and the guests, as well as among the multi – international guests themselves. The basic arrangements upon this characteristic are “sets” which ensure the guest’s security and safety. The level beyond such physical needs is also emotionalized on grounds of international spaces.

The physical setting that best explains how “Thainess” is prominent can be seen in the case of *Sala Rim Naam*. The degree of “Thainess” is applied through intensive tangible items seen from the first step into the front of the restaurant until reaching the width and the depth of the dining hall. The art represented is remarkable, having a sense as “haute” as royal Thainess, higher than commoners, at the same level as the elites. Situated by the Chao Phraya River, the guests have to travel by the boat to go to *Sala Rim Naam*. This scene is very much appreciated by the guests. The dining areas are divided into parts: the indoor area with a performance stage, the outdoor area with the river views and an annex with a wooden structure housing a Thai cooking school.

The moment one approaches the restaurant, the views of a grand throne hall in front already provoke a sense of “Thainess”, especially when the guests are transferred by boat across the river. Garlands of jasmine flowers are offered to the

visitors individually when reaching the pier. The staff, well dressed in traditional-style costumes, politely directs the way to the hall with the scene of a wide and calm river, exotic plants and the sound of Thai traditional music instrument, all attempts to “emotionalize” the foreigners to a place far away in an oriental land. The glittering gold sparkling from curvy Thai lines and the corbel of the roof top of the hall are depictions not far from icons represented by tourist promotions that successfully signify the “grand” sense of a “Thai” welcoming.

Entering the dining hall, there are two divided zones. One side is for floor seating, the other is for high tables. At the front-end of the hall is a stage used for a buffet line at lunch and which is converted in to a performance stage at dinner. The hall, with its decorations such as the glittering ceiling, the Thai style painting on the walls, partial wooden floor, is dominated with “Thai” motifs as if cloned from the royal spaces. Thai style materials and designs, cloths which function as Western table items, such as napkins that match the plates, are used in the restaurant.

The night shows consist of well trained performers from the National Fine Arts School. Their performance and costumes must be magnificent, especially for first time visitors to Thailand. Such entertainment not only promotes “Thainess”, but also “fantasy”, although the shows are somewhat against the guest’s anticipation of consumption of class values. The show tends to take away from the serene and private moment; moreover, it welcomes the attention of bigger and different groups of people to the socializations. Therefore, such entertainment may please first time visitors, but may not be a reason to please guests who prefer privacy and serenity. However, there are still very large numbers of people who are not first time visitors to *Sala Rim Naam*, but who love to be in this grand space to enjoy concrete “Thainess” to a high degree.

Celadon seems to have solved the problem of pleasing two kinds of guests in a better manner. This restaurant was built in the form of Thai twin houses. They are decorated beautifully in Thai ways, but not necessarily in “royal” style, instead toned down to the level of “elites” with agreeable high class. The space is

open and welcomes visitors with different values; ones who prefer to transact their special dining with privacy are welcome in one side, while other customers, such as the Chinese and the Indian diners, who love to be with a group, are set in the other house.

A space where street lives are represented is *Spice Market*. The designers have tried to express the experience of an old *Yaowarat* (เยาวราช) market situated in the area commonly known as “China Town”. There are items of dry ingredients, such as rice in rope sacks, spices, herbs, seasonings in bottles, sold in markets, rustically packaged and placed on the shelves and floor. The restaurant looks vibrant, yet not messy or dirty. The style does not really diminish the flavors in terms of class. Common-life motifs are exercised with contemporary style to present common spaces where Thai and Chinese families live together, representing a real situation in Bangkok. The distinct ambience invites the comparatively close groups of former spaces’ customers only rather those already familiarized with Thai atmosphere.

Nahm is the space with the least level of transferring “Thainess” through its physical setting. The decorations in the dining space could be wherever in Asia. A couple of red brick pillars set in the dining hall give a tiny hint of “Thainess”. However, the very high numbers of reservation on the waiting list at *Nahm* are significant to study further for other characteristics might be also influenced on Thai restaurants.

5.1.2 The service

A lot of foreigners melt easily to Thai destinations upon the first sight of Thai people who easily give a smile and their friendliness with a greeting of *sawasdee* (สวัสดี), with two hands raised in lotus position. The “submissive” hospitality can be observed by their “service” mind, such as providing help in a soft and gentle manner. Too shy to speak however prompt to provide assistances is recognized positively by foreigners. These are the intangible characteristics of general Thai people. They are one of the distinctive Thai gastronomy of five-star hotels.

While the physical constructions are convincing in the production of “Thainess”, the people who provide the welcome and the service as the hosts are of even more concern once the guests arrive. The physical constructions can be compared to the “hardware” and the people are the “software” in the execution of “Thainess”. Such “software” is expected to be updated and function effectively with mobile flavors of international visitors.

Throughout Thai history, the culture and norms of Thai people have long contributed a distinctive belief of “doing well and offering well” to other people. Such constructed values are significantly related to the strong support from nature. The abundant and fruitful natural-environment existed long before the rise of the population of over sixty million today. Thai people easily and promptly shared and compromised “foods” are always in the center in general grounds. Trust among people and welcoming strangers is understandable. The genuine welcome is to make visitors no longer strangers and offer them a feeling of safety with comfort.

However, the advent of capitalism and the sharply increase in the population, especially in big cities, have enabled trusts and shares on ground of modern trading. Hospitality and its highest values are now commoditized with constructed meanings for the tourist industry. Yet, the genuine values can still be uncovered by traveling around Thailand, especially to the remote areas far from modern lives. There remain many rural people who sustain their lives with traditional concepts who depend on each other as a community. Many of them are quite naïve and willing to welcome strangers without the thought of a commercial transaction. Some foreign, off the track, visitors experience such positive interactions and express their appreciation to the world. This phenomenon is regarded by foreigners as one of the most impressive characteristics of Thailand.

These remarkably hospitable minds are echoed among the visitors and ourselves through the works of the Tourism Authority of Thailand, Thai Airways, diverse service organizations, such as banks and department stores, as well as many organizations that have produced on-going of these values. An expectation of

“kindness” is then produced and consumed between Thais as the “host”, who want to give, and “guests” who want to realize and receive. The “Siamese” smile, for instance, is connected with “Thainess” characteristics composed Thai gastronomy.

To represent such “kindness” for others in public spaces where relationships are produced with commercial conditions, there are processes set to make sure such constructed values of Thai welcoming are not too emotional or abstract. Salaries are paid by the hotel to sway this intangible product to be up to the standard. Incentives, called “service charges”, given to offer better than qualified expectations, are paid by the customer to obtain their delight with the impressive degree of service received and the feeling of being welcomed.

This is quite a natural characteristic produced and has been accepted and admired worldwide; therefore, many Thai public food spaces feel it necessary to try to maintain these values and apply them with minimal interference from international concepts. There might be some “plus” in aspects of “tourism” by accentuating the “kindness” on the stage of constructed authenticity. The servers are arranged to dress, walk and talk in extra-special “Thainess”.

The case that highlights this concept is the *Sala Rim Naam* staff who perform with a very natural quality of service. The long term establishment of The Mandarin Oriental, as well as the long standing management team at the property, gives a high credit to their service excellence. Even though recently some of the long term management team has resigned, the legendary service has been cultivated and still strengthens the mind set of the active team members.

An interesting key point rests on the view of the former general manager, Mr. Wachtveitl, who was the “GM” for more than forty years. He himself, as Western born, recognized quite precisely what a foreigner’s expectation was of Thai hospitality. His managerial teams were mostly full of senior staff members who had worked there as long as he had. They intentionally maintained The “Oriental”

excellence which meant capturing the selected, good old things and delivering them properly to the following generation.

It can clearly be seen that quality of service is a factor relevant to values with ages based. The older and more mature the staff, the more stability there will be for achieving the promised quality of service. Offering good service is more meaningful to the seniors than the younger staff for many reasons. One of the most significant is the constructed experiences which the senior staff has had, enough to reproduce and represent in proper interactions. They can better cope with diversities in their international space and, above all, they are the model *in situ*.

Hospitality spaces often fill their team with younger staff to represent a vibrant and dynamic place. There is a high turnover rate of staff at such businesses since the younger ones struggle with their own immaturity and cannot bear the stress of service work. The consequences are that the good deed established, such as the norms and the specializations of such spaces, are often in turmoil. New staff must be recruited and learn their work mostly through written procedures on how to be a good server.

The production and consumption of such values developed at *Sala Rim Naam*, on the contrary, are transferring its legendary through real lives in situations. *Sala Rim Naam* and the Oriental have been frequently voted as one of the world best hospitality spaces. The key significance in achieving such awards on a year basis have highly alerted and saturated consumed by the staffs. The qualities are maintained through the human capital who transfers their knowhow to the younger staff. They know precisely when to address the guests by their names. The welcomed drinks are not just served, but tailored by recognition of the revisiting guest's preference. Even voices on the telephone, long before the assistance of today's technology, are recognized by the staff.

Once the service provided is appreciated, it does not only materially received, it is also the pride accentuate of the identity shifted. They are proud of being a professional “hotelier”, not a common “servant”.

However, “GM” Wachtveitl predicted the declined and lost of The Oriental’s heritage if a lot of the staff of his generation retired at the same time. He views of changing upon social constructions both within the hotel property and among the world phenomenon. The clientele are changing and newly produced world “tastes” will challenge the “Oriental” ways. The strong processes as explained above have been carefully established as he selected a group of “good” staff from middle management teams with high performance. He asked a university to establish two-level curriculums to foster and lengthen the “Oriental” legend with these key persons. The fundamental courses are offered freely for those who have performed successfully in their jobs, but who have not yet managed to have obtained a Bachelor’s Degree. The advance courses are set for those who are ready to be the leaders, with managerial insights furthered in classes. This Master’s Degree is for those who managed to pass their Bachelor’s Degree program.

Such values also conform to Hall’s circuit of culture when viewed on both related spaces; at the back and up front of the stages upon service performances. The higher salaries and the high service charges among hotels located in Bangkok are one part. Their pride of professional achievement that accelerates their performance significantly is another part. The more they repeat the more their spaces on the back and the front are overlapped. The representations of “Thainess” are then less of a pretense and less forced.

Such thoughtful interactions are coherent values of the smiling faces. Summary form many interviews from guests represent a shared feeling of “guilt” if they are unable to make a revisit or if they do not give a tip to show their appreciation. This can be seen from the monthly service charges and the awards received. They both produce outstandingly qualities up front. This is not only different from other hotel properties, it is also an aspect that cannot possibly be copied. The meaningful

smiles at this space are then a formed process similar to the cultivated norms and culture in a community learnt through the blending of generations in the back stage.

Constructed “Thainess” by “service” to represent Thai gastronomy is then important to coherent the human skills and “Thai” mind oriented to provide ways of Thai lives in acceptable genuine on five-star food spaces. Believing in doing well for others as a form of merit embodied in the work will make the staff be truly sympathetic, much more than scripts provided for them to follow.

5.1.3 The culinary practices

In order to explain what exactly Thai food is, many aspects of what is really consumed on Thai tables needs to be mentioned. These meanings are even more complex when Thai food is situated in five-star food spaces. To point out of Thai food with its existent on these restaurants is not enough. “*Pad Thai*” is an example of a famous Thai food, but was developed from Chinese noodles which were shared with Thai people.

It is then important to investigate the constructed meanings of Thai foods in order to look through many aspects related to humans and their dietaries. Chains of related foods can be focused upon from nature where fresh produce originates, human and the agriculture and their generations of these food supplies, the choices made on the right ingredients, the treatment of food in order to produce them in kitchen spaces, the dining activities where people gather and then post activities where the nature are effected by the like and dislike of their table activities. In short, it is the transfer of food from nature to the tables and back to nature again.

Observation and participation on site offers the investigations of how such food is produced and also carried along with “Thainess” depending on the space. To analyze the construction of “Thainess” through culinary practices, various items will be examined, including ingredients, recipes, cooking and garnishing.

Ingredients

Ingredients might be the most concrete item to explain Thai food as related to “Thainess”. There are five significant components to “Thai” ingredients: 1) rice as the staple, 2) the intensive use of herbs and vegetables, 3) the light amount or absence of meat, 4) the ample quantity of spices and 5) the variety of seasonings.

Rice is a primary staple throughout Asia. Thailand provides rice domestically and internationally, both in quantity and quality. Selection of rice is made based on the color, the texture and the fragrance. White rice has traditionally been more popular, but today wild rice or brown rice is perceived as a healthy diet. The fragrance is a guarantee of its quality, especially “jasmine rice” which offers a natural aroma like jasmine flowers.

“Jasmine” rice has been used significantly at five-star spaces until recently when the world developed “healthy concerns”, and now brown rice is substituted. Today, brown rice has gained its privilege on the Thai table, even in five-star spaces.

The intensive uses of herbs and vegetables

Since Thailand has land which provides for abundant green cultivation, there is, apart from rice, various vegetables and fruits from the wild as well as orchards. Many of these fresh products are medicinal plants, although termed as “herbs”. Having food with preventive and curative characteristics is highly recognized as one key prominent element of Thai food. This is also the transference of Thai wisdom through Thai culinary practices from generations to generations.

Above all, in addition to considering the healthiness of the food, such ingredients are used for the “taste”. It is agreed that Thai food is intense with natural savors and aromatics composed of fresh produce, such as galangal, lemongrass, kaffir lime zest and leaves, etc.

Many of them have been referred of flavors such as chilies and diverse basils. Foreign visitors brought along such flavors which were accepted and are now happily served, becoming a permanent part of the gastronomy. Chilies in extreme amounts may be seen from the outside as an identification of Thai food. However, Thai food, in fact, has many savors and does not need to be all spicy hot. Even many spicy hot dishes are strong with mixed layers of chilies and herbs having furious flavors. The sensations to the eye and nose can be strong, but are softer when tasted.

Many Thai dishes are composed with a density of vegetables. Coconut also plays a big role in Thai gastronomy, apart from green vegetables. Coconuts are multi-purposed in Thai culinary, with many parts being used from the very tips to the juice. The taste regulates one of the flavors produced by Thai food called “nutty”.

Rare or newly grown ingredients in Thailand, such as strawberries and carrots, are used in five-star food spaces. Some of these ingredients have become partially Thai since they can be grown in Thailand. However, they are generally used in limited ways and under careful circumstances.

In the cases of the food spaces studied, support can be seen at *Nahm* in highest degree in terms of the attempt to apply “Thainess” to the gastronomy by focusing on recipes, far different from the rest of food spaces. The recipes used at *Nahm* are various and from a mix of classes and culture groups. History and culture are analyzed before trying to cook any recipe. Since Chef David Thompson is not Thai, he has to work harder in order to capture precisely the “notions” produced by such dishes.

For instances, the recipes of *Tanpuying Plian Paskornwongs* in *Mae Khua Hua Pah* have been interpreted several times by this Australian chef. He has to look for identity of her and use her class to view for what this dish has to serve for? What were her values and the related society for which they were usually produced and consumed? Circumstances from social conducts and natural offering may bring along on to do or not to do in her times which related to her foods and to

representations of such dish. He has collected many other Bunnak family specialties apart from her recipes to compare their production and values. He has expanded upon his understanding of the Bunnak family and their power in older times by reading books for supporting information to his developed of such reproductions, such as the advent of Muslim families into Siam. He had even invited or visited Bunnak family members for advice.

Chef David has done similar research on other cuisines, including Chinese and Mons, so that the “farang” heritage is almost banned in his food spaces. He has spent time traveling around Thailand to be with commoners to learn their ways of lives and try their food. He views “straight forward” and “simplicity” as being tied to commoner food. Such foods are transferred in part and enhanced with style to refine the production. For instance, *kaeng pa*, or jungle curry, a hot and strong soup without coconut milk, has generally been made extremely hot and spicy. He was allowed to use a recipe of a Thai celebrity, Khun Kamala Sukhoson. This recipe has maintained the key characteristic commonly known for *kaeng pa*, but applied with a very high quality and technique to make this common food acceptable for this five-star food space, with no added ingredients or techniques.

The menu of food at *Nahm* is strictly produced based on reproductions of recipes that existed before or exist actively in Thai food culture. However, such food has to be sourced from domestic or public spaces where tourist values do not dominate.

Spice Market is another food space where recipes are developed partly from Thai ways of lives. There are yearly food promotions in which ethnic foods are presented for their relation to Thailand. This is the only space where once in a while during the year “Thainess” is represented to a higher degree. The main customers are not really prompt with associating with “Thainess” in concentrations than what they usually seen them echoed on general tourism spaces. However, the recipes used on primary services are developed with much of tourism gazing.

Cooking

An investigation of Thai traditional cooking utensils reveals the use of terracotta pots and mortar with pestle. Before socialization with Chinese people, Thai cuisine did not have stir-fried items. The utensils used for cooking on a fire were either skewers or earthen wares, both of which bared limited heat. Boiling with terracotta pots or grilling by being placed into wooden skewers offered a good variety of fresh dishes. Pounding with a mortar and pestle takes a long time and extensive labor in order to produce, especially in bigger volumes; however, such a process offers the reward in terms of culinary idealism.

Freshness is one of the keys sought when cooking Thai food. Even now, when kitchen utensils are more diverse and have better technique, freshness still plays a significant role in Thai cuisine.

The welcoming of foreign foods in Ayutthaya times contributed to the use of more kitchen utensils. The Portuguese brought in various desserts which have been developed and adopted and adapted until the present. These desserts need to be cooked with metal utensils, such as brass wok, bake oven and pans to produce Thai-adaptation versions of *kanom mo kaeng* (ขนมหม้อแกง), mung bean cake; *kanom kai* (ขนมไข่), egg pastry; *babin* (บ้าบิ่น), shredded young coconut soft cake.

It can be seen that Thai cuisine does not reject advanced technology. There are many advances using digital technology that are helping Thai cooking in five-star hotels. Some of them fit with Thai cooking processes and some do not. Such technology may be welcomed with hesitancy if freshness cannot be maintained. However, this is dependent on the spaces as well. If such cooking is grounded in domestic preferences, it is easier to apply “freshness” such as spending longer times pounding until no leaves shown even the small pieces. In public food spaces where mass volume is involved and there are time and labor constraints, blending machines or readymade pastes are superseded. Such short cuts are commercially well worth it, but culinary values and freshness are disregarded.

“Freshness” is also handled through the process in the kitchen. Many Thai dishes take longer to prepare and have a limited time on the fire. Such preparations involve cleaning, cutting, marinating, etc. Moreover, many of such preparations are equipped parts. For instance, in order to develop “*mise en place*” or the preparation of curry, there is the pounding of the paste, the squeezing of coconut milk and the gathering of the main ingredients, either the vegetables or the meats, not to mention the shopping time at the market in order to obtain all the ingredients.

Once the cooking takes place, in general Thai foods do not have to be too long on top of the stove. Even curries such as *massaman* and *khao soi*, the meat and some ingredients can be simmered ahead of time and then cooked with the other prepared parts when ready to be served. Longer pre-simmering of the meat prevents a longer time cooking in the coconut milk which can give an excessive amount of oil if simmered together too long.

The use of “short cuts” at public foods spaces are learnt with fewer hesitations in order to serve the purpose of consistency which is important at these tourist spaces. They also best serve the management in terms of investment in machines rather than humans. At hotel food spaces, cooks and chefs mostly turn-over their careers at the same level in other hotels, so they frequently carry along values of being “pro” through their “know how” in using short-cuts to reflect their managerial skills.

The production of standardization is consumed through industrial concepts and has come along with mass tourism. Even though these five-star food spaces aim to achieve the guest’s satisfaction on an individual level, many restaurants have to undertake mass production in their culinary practices. Ford’s principles in 1923 of standardization is seen along the process in order to be commercially and feasibly applied on hotel management. Boomer (1923) shared on his “how we fitted Ford’s principles to our business” that even though simplifications are applied significantly, it must not be manifested to the customers. The service should not be perceived of machine made but human.

Nahm, among the spaces studied, is the only kitchen that concentrates on longer processes in house. Jasmine flowers are daily brought and carefully scanned for chemical substances, such as pesticide and formaldehyde. They are cleaned and soaked overnight in order use the fragrant water on sweets. There are many food products that are bought by most homes for seasoning the food, such as *pla ra* or salted dry shrimps, *kung haeng* (กุ้งแห้ง), but which are produced from scratch at *Nahm*. “Short cuts” are rarely seen, even though there are both traditional and advance utensils available in *Nahm*’s kitchen. Stone mortars are in reach of hands, as well as brass woks; on the contrary, there are convection steamers for steaming and stewing at better levels than traditional steamers. Above all, the kitchen can produce in greater volumes for the same amount of time.

The time consuming processes and money spent on labor is higher than the average of other hotels, but the reward to *Nahm* is in successfully communicating the freshness to foreign guests. The meaning of “deliciousness” could be cooked and receive universally on ground of nature and fresh oriented.

Stated of the cooking which Thai spend more times on preparations, such preparations open for Thai to speak of art through delicacies and refinement applied on such preparations. The spectacle of food can be seen when art is applied magnificently in garnishing. However, when taste of good foods with careful preparations, they reflect on more than seeing them such as the way jasmine flowers and its aroma produced in Thai sweet items. Thai foods could signify smells more than those only on dessert parts, there are smells of citrus which can be from lime or more sophisticated, from *somsa*, the smoky smell of burnt charcoal, ample amount of spices, etc. The “round” flavors as mentioned produced on ground of “haute” cuisines is one of the end results of delicacies applied on preparations and cooking.

Since art upon food itself is appreciated through dinners and it evolves of chefs and cooks appreciations of art in high extents. Many food producers cannot

stay in their career without styles. So their personal “tastes” and the standards created in the spaces are negotiated to produce the agreed good “taste”.

Art and the availability of ingredients are opened for improvisations in Thai cuisine, as previously explained under the discussion of recipes. The classic case of improvisation is the adding of “chili jam” or *nahm phrik phao* to *tom yam* to create a new version of *tom yam*. They are both good in different ways, while the clear version gives off the aromatic fragrances of herbs, especially kaffir lime zest, the second version gives the whole picture of good taste. A newly improvised version is one using evaporated milk which produces flavors admired by younger Thais.

That is why improvisations are quite strict at five-star food spaces. There might be some experimentation by chefs and cooks who are challenged to uncover new concepts, like other art of lives. However, such experiments are kept to their leisure moments, not working times. They have to keep up with standards set by the chef and the agreed beforehand.

Garnishing of dishes

Art can be applied in even stronger degrees to make the food on plates more presentable to agreed good values. The set appreciation is designed focusing on customer preferences. Their “tastes” produced from social relations are concerned such as the groups of tourists may seek for surreal moments and the fantasia is then recognized on the tables.

The carving of fruits and vegetables was seen more in former days in royal spaces and has been slowly adopted and adapted into tourist spaces. It is now rarely seen since such craftsmanship is in limited hands. This art requires special skills and long term practice. A few people could access through such skills even with positive reciprocal payment for the art yet the lacking of key persons transferring of this “know how”, it represents in state of Thai art in different values. Moreover, the international food standard of five-star food spaces bans such items for dining. The

lovely pieces of vegetables and fruits are slowly disappearing from Thai tables, however the former gorgeous Thai food are accepted as Thai decorative items instead.

It is worth the attempt at the spaces where tourists are the primary visitors who will appreciate such high art. These styles can be seen on *Sala Rim Naam* to a higher degree and can also be seen at *Celadon*. Both places welcome tourists. However, in comparisons between the two spaces, this is much more classic looking at *Sala Rim Naam* where real craftsmanship is applied, while *Celadon* reflects a level of amateur skills and looks less precious.

The “postmodernists” may not need to see too many remarkable signs upon tourism relations and look for more reality with styles on their gazes. Lashley and Morrison (2000: 220-229) mentioned Baudrillard’s theory of reality that it is lead by hyper-reality. The blurring of authenticity is a consequence of attempting to make a restaurant filled with “extraordinary” ambience to welcome foreign visitors. There are many foreigners who make several visits to Thailand and perceive contemporary values situated in Thai society as well as in the food. Thai gastronomy represented at these contemporary spaces is then viewed to a less degree of super “Thainess”.

The Thai food offered at good family restaurants are placed as it is and served almost accepted on this luxury spaces if these Thai foods are presented for this group of customer. The qualified sets of tableware and utensils are made from high quality products, such as very light ceramics and real and heavy silver spoons and forks, but the visual style must be simple with minimal use of shapes and colors. The foods are only the actors and speak of art on their natural owns.

Postmodernism can be applied to these contemporary spaces. Among the four cases, *Nahm* and *Spice Market* are two restaurants that welcome people with a lower degree of hyper-reality. This can be seen at *Nahm* and *Spice Market* where white plates and real silverware complement food with natural vibrant colors that speak of freshness. No carving of vegetables and fruits garnishes the plates or are used as decorative items in the restaurant at *Nahm*. White plates were ordered specially

made in France in light weight and in family sizes. They were made under the supervision of Thanongsak to represent a food space having “modesty and politeness”. He applied his studies of food spaces of elite homes from around seventy years ago where high tables already occupied Thai dining customs. Western table manners were adapted to fit with Thai food and flavor of togetherness that Thais preferred during that time. Antique white ceramic wares were collected and he decided to use these simple white wares.

However, Thanongsak also consists of a little slippery idea of Thai styles which he could not get away from the grand traditional elite *benjarong* wares used nearby the white ceramic. These *benjarong* sets were made in limited editions only as he asked the artist who produces them to develop one type by type together with his consensus such as the dull colors and the figures he admitted. The reason Thanongsak had them made was to prioritize the food not the wares.

Supharp, as stated by Thanongsak with respect to garnishing, is to use only ingredients existed in the recipes. The cutting and trimming, the colors of the ingredients, the space set on wares are designed in terms of visual art values. The vegetables placed for serving as “*krung naem*”, or accompanied dish to temper and compliment the center dish, are highly seen of its freshness. Since serving foreigners, the arrangement is deemed to provide for their ease. The center dish and the accompanied dishes are arranged with a hint of togetherness. *Nahm* uses the server to carefully and politely explain how to maximize the enjoyment of such diverse orders to the customers.

Chef David develops set foods on the ground of art for eyes as well. When he designs the food composed in a *samrap*, the color of each dish when presented together need to be classically portrayed. The red or the green ingredients, even though they look fresh, cannot overpower the other colors.

Thanongsak, himself an artist who consumes art around Thai lives, reproduces the values of his works of art, such as in the decorations of a plate full of

fresh vegetables without carving but which expresses “Thainess”. While observing his works, he was asked what does this arranging stand for. He said that he is thinking of the highest point, the corbel and gable, on top of a church in a temple. The cut vegetables are curvy and wavy which stand on the plate with depth of spaces and nice shading.

Chef Ann at *Spice Market*, as trained by Chef David and Thanongsak before, represented that the garnishing she uses is dominated by these two mentors. Through the presentation of food for the eyes at these two spaces, one can see the linkage between them.

5.2 Factors determining the representations of “Thainess”

Constructed “Thainess” in Thai gastronomy is determined by stakeholders. There are several parties involved and also certain social construction that influence the perceptions of these stakeholders and their decisions on Thai food and dining. International standard and international expectations are also factors determining the degree of “Thainess”.

Globalization and the tourist industry constantly invites international visitors to Thailand. There are many reasons to welcome new comers and invite them to revisit Thailand. Several stakeholders are in related with the relations among these relationships in Thailand.

Studies focused on humans and their dining at five-star hotels, the people related to these luxury spaces, as well as their culture and environment, are involved in foodways. Interactions of hosts and the guests of values negotiate among many involvers resulting in the multi-facets of the culinary.

Globalization creates a chained effect in economic struggles around the world, especially in the Western world. The shifting of tourist indicates less Europeans and a rising numbers of the Asian tourists, especially Chinese visitors.

On the host side, similarly, the invested capital at these five-star hotels shows a higher share of Asian companies in the mixture of Arabians, Europeans and Americans, which formerly rested on European and American owners.

It is interesting to see at present where the hosts and the guests share their multi-diverse values as constructed in such a dynamic world at these five-star spaces.

5.2.1 Administrators

The owners and administrators not only have a great deal of capital, but they must have the style and taste since these spaces they manage are luxury hotels. The hotel is a space constructed for those “away from home”. Safety and security are the basic values embedded and, on top, there are layers of complex values of refined significances which produced the star levels.

Lashly and Morrison (2000) point to the “social domain” on hospitality that all the features are forced from social relations among humans. The complexities of the set products available at the restaurants are then the social phenomenon contributed from diverse parties at such spaces.

Along of meanings constructed from human relations on hosts and guests grounded, it is overlapping the commercial domain which situated of many units of people involve influence and affected. The company under the roof and the companies out off the hotel boundaries are influenced on performances of the restaurants in high extents. It is well recognized by many hotel management companies in setting up long term and close relationships with high contributors to offer senses of ownerships.

While partially the guests may look for some flavors to fulfill their insecurity when far away from home, there are “wants” they pleasantly seek for temporary own on the spaces. These sought values are involved with their pleasures upon their extraordinary days which could take them somehow away from their usual spaces.

The spaces then invest money to produce “fantasia” on top of the basic physical offerings. The spectacles invented have to represent “values” meaningfully as regarded by their dynamic customers in order to deserve a transaction. “Management teams” are hired by the owners to maintain these dynamic social desires, as well as to maintain and increase the produced values of the commercial domain.

Hospitality and service qualities one side and financial success on the other have to be balanced in order to represent their management skills and high “tastes”. It is important to highlight the space with a degree of “luxury”, yet hospitality philosophies are applied to make the customers less aware of the material transaction taking place between them. Arts and sciences are commoditized with attempts to actualize these stages of authenticities as close and subtle as spaces generated warmth and care through freewill.

Most of the five-star hotels targeting world travelers have a foreigner as the general manager. Long term executions are promising with the management than those who have been in shorter terms. Many of the long term GMs show their positive and good understanding of the values of their local staff. This “GM” has to manage with correct incentives to make the staffs produce their work and lives, backstage and front stages in positive and relevant for welcoming of others people in almost impeccable representations.

A good example is the 40 years of consecutive employment of Mr. Wachtveitl at The Mandarin Oriental Hotel. The hotel had been long standing by taking turns of shares however the Thai shares are maintained by the same company even before or after the joining with The Mandarin chain. This is one of the famous international brands that invested only in luxurious hospitality spaces. Such brands offer value to customers who are not sensitive to prices, but very sensitive to quality. Their choice in staying at these types of hotels is made for both physical and emotional security.

Both foreigners and Thais recognize the ability of Mr. Wachtveitl in combining local values and the demands of international guests very well. His experience with Thai elites through his marriage gave him values of elite domestic spaces that could be used in the public spaces he supervised. His appearances and characteristics command respect while his charisma balanced the power to control and manage these diversities. His identity and the hotel's qualities synergized the remarkable class within. As a Western gentleman, he established his connections with many top foreign organizations. He exercised his own way in which makes these contributors feel guilty if not substantially support.

Mr. Wachtveitl is viewed through people in the Thai hospitality industry as the iconic GM. There are many hoteliers who want to follow his footsteps in both profit maximizing and the high respect from the staff. His successors consumed the values learnt directly and indirectly from him. They, both Thai and international people, are now positioned at managerial levels at hospitality spaces around Thailand. Mr. Meadow, who worked under Mr. Wachtveitl at The Oriental for years and who is now married to a Thai woman, has been the GM at several five-star hotels in Bangkok, including The Sukhothai Bangkok hotel at present.

The context of local and international combined as on this five-star spaces demand the views from the top in understanding of values from the both sides. International people with management experience at five-star hotels are important to acquaintance with local values and know how to select and blend international values on these hospitality spaces contextually.

The handling of "Thainess" by native managers, even though born with "Thainess", may not offer the precise anticipation of international "gazes". Moreover, it is skeptical to be involved in the level of native stakeholder, the negotiations between the international flavors and the local flavors are made with inevitable interferences of the later aspect. It may be positive for the cultural preservations yet it may be not the financial strengthened since the values are forced to be too static to be

with this dynamic context. That is very much concerned by the shareholders who invest.

In an interview with Chef Chamlong at The Sukhothai Bangkok, he shared his views on his decision to serve Thai food in sequences:

an individual bowl of soup is served in sequence after the appetizer dish is completed. The soup is later withdrawn when finished. It is the way foreigners could capture exactly “Thai food”. I have been with many international food spaces, both Thai and international restaurants, where I have learnt the best way to make Thai food captured its best, which is to serve one at a time. That is important and scripted by the hotel’s standards.

5.2.2 Chef and team

“Thainess” to a large extent, rests in the hands of chefs and the team. The constructions of “Thainess” in gastronomy are complex, long and warring processes, especially in the kitchen. These works of art are very challenging and easy self-esteem developed. Concentration on their work to make a good dish many times makes the chefs lack human relations skills and team understanding.

If compared with cooking at home, a housewife cooks for the whole family which is her domain of power. She cooks at her best and hopes every family member will enjoy. Mostly she has privilege and is positive of her best chores. However, she will be upset if her food is left untouched or criticized for its flavor, although this is not too complicated to fix and she can easily regain her position and identity.

However, it is not this easy in public food spaces if a cook creates the wrong tastes or values according to the set standard. This will impact on the stability of their career and the pride of their work if any single customer makes a complaint. Therefore, it is more difficult to gain natural “Thainess” without following the

standards. Even though they may be aware of non existed or not too correlated to Thai ways of lives, very few of chefs dare to venture outside the controlled standards.

One aspect that has served to minimize “Thainess” in gastronomy is the fact that the transference of “Thainess” through generations has diminished the ways of domestic lives. No one bothers to learn how to cook Thai food as when such skills were commonly transferred from generations to generations. Most meals used to be largely produced and consumed at home rather than in public. The knowledge of how to create “tastes” was developed mostly from local wisdom with less industrial interference.

Those generations are sharply set apart from the following generations. The followers today have to learn food from public places, even from learning institutions. From the four spaces studied, these chefs mostly studied with ones who had a high degree of local wisdom. They are successors of almost the last generations of those who used to live their lives with more times spent for food. The chefs share proudly that their mothers are behind.

Those foods may be reflected in different degrees yet at least these chefs have had direct experiences. However, younger staff members are the product of own public food spaces. The values transferred, mostly through these young cooks, are contrasted and compared with, also, public food spaces more or less.

Negotiation of the international standards are another lessons learnt through the generations. Pairing qualifications to the dynamics values on the spaces are circumstances these novices have to achieve. The specialized qualifications make them different. They all shared that they view that Thai food is important and needs to be made “correctly”. The rise of Asia and “Thainess” are aware important to make them different, however in order to be on the right track is still doubt.

The young cooks do not learn apart from the diner of the cook dish how their lives could impact the furthered foodscapes. Innovation is term giving them view

only the west than to look back on Thai ways of lives. The diners and their enjoyments on foods are only what these cooks have been industrially urged.

Many young cooks shared that they have learned from the schools and more on the work places to achieve food standards, advanced techniques and how the international people could be. Yet, they do not know how to expand their understanding of Thai food beyond the common menus which they have to make every day, not to mention what the taste of Thai food once was; even the names and ingredients are obscure to them.

The pride of this career is even greater when the identities of many chefs are recognized broadly by the public and have higher attention in the world now that Thai food has been accepted worldwide. That is why I witness the phenomenon of young cooks from many countries working with stone mortars and brass woks at “Nahm” in usual conducts. These trainees pointed of the way Chef David taught them to scrutinize Thai foods with rigid, tough, strong discipline, yet he is very informative and expands Thai food in different contexts.

Yet, there are meanings of gastronomy constructed in public with identities and privileges. Many famous chefs in the mass media in Thailand have to represent the values correlated to products in sponsorships of television programs and, with the support of such capital, they can be famous and make a fortune. The message for the audience are captured on Thai society with less attentions of “Thainess”. The programs and the iconic chefs with “modern” values in terms of being trendy and convincing for Thai people are mostly related to international cuisines and what can be produced for convenient lives. Modern living and short cuts are presented without concerning of capitalism behind and been consumed in different values. Cooking programs with in depth “Thainess” have limited audience appeal, but those shares with entertained contents; the chefs and foods as well as others have more sponsors and could be occupied on prime times. Thai food made with local wisdom is overlooked, while the ones made with some international concepts look more consumable on television.

The processes which take longer and the values are captured in meanings do not reward significantly in Thailand. Many cooks then look for chance to go abroad or if not then accumulate values on verge of Thai audience could accept. “Thainess” is then disregarded as meanings signified as such.

5.2.3 Customers

General guests

“Customer is king” is the rule for hospitality spaces in order to regulate the work of “hosts” when hospitality is based on commercial grounds and there is no longer “free will” interchanged. It works very well since every unit of money spent is shared 10 percent with the staff. The more spending the more service charges that can be shared. The visitors play a significant role in being the “king” for the staff.

Since the foreigners are the primary groups of customers, there are sub-groups of the visitors that the staff needs to make always anticipations of them. The staff is trained to have some understanding of the diversities and general background of these visitors in order to make precise predictions and above all to deliver services accordingly.

The expectations of customers are made compared with money spent the “gastronomy” is transacted. “Thainess” is also included in such transactions. A smile, *wai* (ไหว้) or greeting with *sawasdee ka/ krap* and politely attentive manner is standard “Thainess” that is sought. Usually customers of five-star places need more personalized services along with the proper addressing of the customer’s identities. For instance, the brand name bag carried by the customer needs to be recognized as much as the owners whom her name is addressed on her arrival. The seat is not arranged for this customer, her bag needs to be placed in a position where it can be seen.

Since the spaces are arranged for socializations and the staffs have to understand of “tastes” produced either from the host side to the guests or the values produced deem to be shared among these high class customers themselves.

The most difficult parts rest on the negotiations of the transacted values from two spaces: the dining table and the kitchen. Many orders made are compromised as set “customer is king” so “Thainess” related to Thai food and its culinary practices should be flexible, such as the “tastes”, the ingredients, the ways the food is served and the utensils applied. The customers mostly receive whatever is ordered. However, at *Nahm*, “Thainess” is set by regulations to a higher extent, notwithstanding the needs of customers. A requested for chopsticks made a chef burst out in anger and the guest’s request was refused. Since he did not serve any noodle dish to the customer, the *samrap* with rice is better eaten with a spoon and fork. Not to mention compromising “spiciness” when the customers ask that the food be cooked less spicy. Customers visiting *Nahm* will never receive as such. Other dishes will be offered instead. If the customers still resists, the answer from the host side will be “no”.

This is possible only at *Nahm* because of the restaurant’s world prestige, as well as the fame of the chef, can tolerate such tension. The rest of the studied restaurants easily complied with the needs of the customers for whatever they would want.

Special guests

Since these five-star hotels are shared by leading Thai families, these family and class connections contribute significantly to the dominance of “Thainess” represented. The Bunnak relations through marriage to Mr. Wachtveitl, makes their visits to the property quite prominent; as well, their comments are considered to have value. Their related classes were consumed the spaces as fit to their “being” with.

Situated nearby many embassies, diplomats and their social activities in public are commonly arranged by featuring of the pairing identities the hotels and the request organizations/ people.

The long patronages of such dominate groups have produced positive arrangements such as the “Thainess” equipped are formed on ground of necessities to have. Next, the values produced inevitably invite followers. Different groups of people, such as merchants with power, are driven to be also at such spaces. There are many customers who visit The Mandarin Oriental Hotel on the grounds of “once in a lifetime” in order to witness and to be witnessed. “Thainess” at this site then transfers its representations and offered for consumptions to whoever experienced.

The customers are seen as references for other customers to make their choices. This can be seen at The Four Seasons Hotel. Selected groups of customers with recognized family names are invited to have Thai food very often at *Spice Market*. Their return visit with friends and connections is promoted with incentives to have their visits be seen as much as possible. The exposures of their visits are publicized in newspapers and magazines. It was well worth spending as the spaces offered them identified themselves. The restaurants also enjoyed their social linkage after all.

This clientele actively visits and actively produces the values of “Thainess” as applied to gastronomic processes. Their comments are of high concern as policy influencers. A good case is the food offered at this space, as referred earlier, even though the main ingredient is seasonal, the name of the food is altered, as well as the recipe, in order to make this dish available year round. The hotel has shown how to negotiate “Thainess” between customers’ perceptions and the recipe. It is the way try not to mix up the recipes as much as the notion behind such dish.

Reciprocal interactions are attempts to make on hospitality spaces. However it is very contextually agreed. “Thainess” is another value which is very dynamic and subject to change. Customer’s consensus makes the business more

promising than the values applied with abstract wisdom on “Thainess”. Even the chef who has to “make to Thais” cannot really find “ways”/ “people” to verify the “Thainess”. “Make to order” is then inevitably implemented.

5.2.4 International Standards and expectation

The hotels are aware that, even though there are reasons to import international standards, what is the worth of traveling so far? “Thainess” is in tension with the challenging of being melted into the same cultural pot.

“One world” is developed among subs group of multi-faced identities. People have exposed themselves with others far beyond a la minute. The five factors as indicated in the circuit of culture by Hall independently signify each other. The meanings constructed and reconstructed at these luxury spaces are representative of the same circuits. The customer’s safety and security are always at need and they both need to be provided at these restaurants.

The customers carry along their expectations on the anticipation of “fantasia” because of the constraint of these hospitality spaces. Such fantasias are created to match the flavors of their clientele which their experiences are the sums of the circuits socially and culturally constructed.

In the former days of mass tourism, the sense of leisure was created by the industrial world from the West. Many Westerners invested to support world travel to many tourist sites. The Western companies made arrangements for Western people on their trips, with an understanding of values perceived in those days with their airlines and hotels. Such former arrangements contributed Western values that have been shared through these tourist spaces since.

The social constructions have challenged the hotels and their restaurants frequently and more dynamically in the advent of globalization. First of all, mass tourism had been denied and the food spaces especially at the five-star hotels have to reflect their readiness in welcoming “privacy” concern customers.

Next is the rise of Asia. The decline of Western tourists and Western hotel companies in the hospitality industry around the world has led to a remarkable change. Gastronomies are also a cause for this move as well.

It is very important to balance the remaining Westerners and the new comers from Asian. The Westerners, who are privacy oriented, are uncomfortable with sharing the values of companionships with too many strangers. The Asian guests who are welcomed on their uncommon spaces feel more at ease with a lot of their acquaintances.

Even the local staff that has been trained to be competent mostly from the Western rules of socialization, have to be more alert to cultural diversities and address the welcoming procedures accordingly. They have to change their views of their world and be more flexible. Department of Human Resources have opened the doors wider for dealing with these issues in order to prevent and minimize the frustrations of the local staff in handling new and challenging situations. Training courses are designed to provide an understanding of new circumstances and on how to provide excellent services. Private consoling is also welcomed into this very backstage.

Management teams are involved in the innovations. The three Thai restaurants, except *Nahm*, provide what they call “private” arrangements especially for the demands of guests who do not want to be with others. The head chef and their team will make a nice arrangement for production of meals limitedly only to this request at a place specially set.

Postmodernism and its fragmented flavors are also the hitting waves. There are many of these flavors that are too fashionable and do not last long, such as fusion foods, which are subject to emotion and are very subjective and have been produced with too much Western dominators. The interviews with by the chefs show that these fusion productions are too boring to be produced on a routine basis, but once in a while they are very responsive to their artful exercising.

Neither the foods with class are much in concern. The references to originality of local and commoner recipes are, instead, given regard. As with the food from the streets which once was seen as non-deserving at five-star food spaces, today “reality” is the value for such foods that represent positive meanings.

The economic crises offer more interactions of rich people and common foods. The version of street food at luxury spaces is then called “comfort food” which suggests good values in temperance of class.

One significant preference enhanced by social changes is healthy food. Classes as well as hedonism on culinary practices especially on food consumptions are focused on physical need based. “Thainess” as reflected by freshness and healthy constructs is very naturally correlated. The restaurants have to represent them outstandingly and sophisticatedly.

These recently accepted values are in circuit synergize on the genuine base of value good to consume. The characteristics related to the construction of gastronomy at these five-star food spaces make it important to balance the requests for flavors from different social domains. Even though the rising of flavors produced from postmodernism is recognized, the remaining flavors valued from the industrial times are still present. As well, the mixture of people in the sense of one world and yet in complex senses is in tensions.

It can be seen why many restaurants located at these luxury spaces are very dynamic. Because there are ones admitted and consuming and on the contrary there are refusals and look for their ways of “Thainess”. The restaurants then have to construct “Thainess” with innovations form of arrangement which some work and some not. “Thainess” is not purely free from adaptations, food culture likewise.

Thai desserts are another good case of international influence on five-star hotels with later changes on the common sweet shops. Thai culinary practices, especially with respect to Thai desserts, are an attempt at showing details such as

artful skills, laborious and times consuming processes. The hotels rely on selected outsourcing as the hotels cannot make any commercial gain having such special teams in house; even if the hotels can afford to have such a team, there are no longer persons with such skillful craftsmanship to hire since the transferring and development of these Thai culinary practices has been lost. “*Kanom Thai*” or Thai desserts have slowly faded into history since then.

Most of the good dessert shops are home style operations and the products are made in smaller volumes because of restricted resources. Their capabilities cannot meet many of the hotel’s restrictions, such as food safety, volumes or even financial standards. Only limited dessert shops can pass these screens. Once these limited shops are selected by these hotels, they can not only make a fortune through their five-star certification, they could even be the model of “tastes” produced for applied on values good to transact since then.

Mass-volume making inevitably opened for maximize their freshness through times with preservatives and technology sanctions. The egg-yolk desserts are an example in that they are too sweet because a lot of sugar is used in the process to make them last longer on the shelf. Thais now view such desserts more for religious purpose as the colors and the names represent auspiciousness rather than for eating.

It has been captured and paired with international standards for produce sets of values believed the good hosts on tourism spaces. The human are referred capitals and the services are commoditized and put into processes which could be produced with standard and consistency to contribute service excellences on the restaurants.

International standards influence the representations of “Thainess” as much as the “tourist” factors. Both of the two key influencers will be expanded on the following determinations.

These human characteristics are commoditized at the hospitality spaces. “Thai” nationals are recruited for their appearance as “good” Thai looking. The “Thai” mentality is investigated through processes sought for the “tend to be real” kind people. Interview questions seek to find the ones with a genuine thinking of others. However, English competencies are important to be able to communicate in these international spaces. The later qualification is negotiate the Thai characteristics in high extents as one who possesses qualified literacy mostly is non relevance to service oriented. This matter will be discussed later in the topic of international determinations.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents a summary of the research indicating the characteristics and process of Thai gastronomy and the construction of “Thainess” through Thai gastronomy in Thai restaurants in five-star hotels in Bangkok. The contribution of the research will be discussed as well.

6.1 A summary of the research

The objectives of this research are 1) to study the characteristics of Thai gastronomy as presented in Thai restaurants in five-star hotels in Bangkok and 2) to analyze the process of constructing “Thainess” through Thai gastronomy in such international social settings.

This research selected four Thai restaurants in five-star hotels in Bangkok as case studies with the selection criteria being prominent and fine dining places located in international food spaces. Another criterion was that each of the four spaces has shown its competency in Thai gastronomy in different ways: setting, atmosphere, service, food. All the restaurants are located in international five-star hotels in the central business district of Bangkok. The four cases are 1) *Celadon* at The Sukhothai Hotel, 2) *Nahm* at The Metropolitan Hotel, 3) *Spice Market* at The Four Seasons Hotel and 4) *Sala Rim Naam* at The Mandarin Oriental Hotel.

The research methodology involved using qualitative tools through observation, participant observation and interviewing the key-informants at the food spaces. Observation of the on-going process of the restaurant management, as well as observation at the dining halls and in the kitchen was conducted. Information about the background of each hotel was derived from documents and by interviewing the staff of each hotel, as well as data gathering from media such as their websites.

The research applied Hall's (1997) conceptual framework on the circuit of culture to analyze these public food spaces as cultural space where meanings are centered on how people connect to each other, particularly between the two primary groups: the hosts and the guests. They synergize the meaning of Thai gastronomy on these restaurants. Being international hotels, there is a density of international guests and some mixture of diversities upon the host side, i.e., both international and Thai staff.

The socialization of people at these spaces is in accordance with Hall's model that such socialization is an on-going process with constant mobility. This suggests fluidity in the meanings concerning the food and dining experience produced at the spaces. "Thainess" being processed and represented through Thai gastronomy in five-star settings is then also non static.

Since international spaces and globalization are embedded, synergizing the meanings in this cultural space is socially depicted of international interference on construction of "Thainess". Tensions can be seen in different degrees and at different point of the process. In the presentation of Thai food, even though there are some similarities among these four food settings, the interaction between the expected international food standard and the constructed presentation of Thai food negotiates the meaning of Thai gastronomy differently among the four cases.

The characteristics of Thai gastronomy in five-star hotels are the points of contacts along the process of constructing "Thainess". It is observed that "meanings" of Thai gastronomy are constructed by the prominent characteristics of Thai food, Thai people, and ways of lives which are all anticipated by international guests. Such "Thainess" is based on the sets of value of Thai gastronomy in these Thai restaurants.

Concerning the construction of "Thainess" with respect to the process of Thai gastronomy, it is found that each place has highlighted points of contact between the hosts and the guests which can be identified with three characteristics: 1) the physical setting and the enhanced atmosphere, 2) the service and 3) the culinary practices. Each hotel attempts to construct its own "Thainess" based on particular characteristics depending on

its own competencies and resources. As a consequence, their specializations are constructed differently.

The characteristics of Thai gastronomy are composed of both tangible and intangible “Thainess” features at each restaurant. Firstly, the physical setting and the enhanced atmosphere represents “Thainess”, both in interior and exterior parts of the spaces. This can be the furniture and decorative items, such as the dining table and chairs, the array of tableware, paintings, sculptures in the dining room and the location surrounded by gardens, lotus ponds or even with the Chao Phraya River. Thai classical performances or music is used to enhance the physical setting and give emotional access to the Thai restaurant.

The best case to support the construction of “Thainess” through the physical setting and atmosphere is *Sala Rim Naam*. “Thainess” motifs through art forms in Thai architecture have been selected to create an atmosphere in the restaurants in accordance of the anticipated values of the guests. Sets of throne hall motifs, for instance, are specially offered by the restaurant to express extravagance and grandness. Located in a five-star hotel, refined materials are crucial to be situated in the space to represent exclusiveness. International concepts are seen negotiating in minimizing spots, such as Western table manners provided at the dining tables where wares meeting international standards can be seen.

The next characteristic of “Thainess” is the service which is very intangible, but can be readily seen and appreciated. Repertoires of Thai mannerisms and etiquette for being hospitable hosts are recognized around the world. Each restaurant adopts these Thai characteristics to blend with international concepts when welcoming and providing service to the guest. The manners are mainly Thai oriented, but the procedures and the language spoken are blended with international standards of being good hosts. The service procedures are designed and scripted to keep the staff performance and behavior consistent according to the hotel’s set values. This service standard is implemented by a selection of qualified staff, through training, and enforced regulations, including the firing or the promotion of the staff. It can be found that long establishment and longer

experienced staff tends to offer proper and genuine hospitality with constructed “Thainess”.

Sympathy and care of safety and security for the guests is the basis for all such created service standards. Apart from standard rules, social values interpreted and selected from Buddhism are applied to achieve consistent care of the host towards the guests. It is believed that ‘being a good host is doing a good deed’, thus this is offered to the guests and is believed as a way to accumulate merit. The staff is spiritually enriched by their good deeds when working and taking care of the guests.

A service mind is what each restaurant has tried to apply naturally; therefore, each place always looks for natural service minded people to join the team. Even though Thai people, in general, possess such potentiality, often one finds emotional inconsistency. As a consequence, the restaurant’s standards are a way to keep such staff members on track with the agreed values. A place with a longer establishment and with a mixture of generations can usually encapsulate a more hospitable environment. It is more natural to learn and be coached by senior staff. The maturity and the long experience of seniors can emotionally endorse the younger staff as if working in a family. The constructed “ways” for providing service are then performed not a work, but as a part of life. While scripts of service procedures are designed for hosts with rather submissive inhibited, *Sala Rim Naam*, the space having the longest establishment among the four restaurants studied, is different. It was found that the service there is genuine because the service is based on norms formed from its sub-culture of staff relationships being like family.

Sala Rim Naam is also the place where service is offered very thoughtfully for the guest’s safety and security. With respect to receiving such help and care from this space, a guest at this hotel shared that they feel guilty if they could not make a revisit to the hotel in the future.

The last characteristic of “Thainess” can be seen through the culinary practices which deal with the food from the farm to the table. The research findings reveal an attempt of constructed “Thainess” ranging from the list of Thai dishes selected, the

ingredients, the preparation and cooking, the garnishing and the setting of the meal on the table.

It is found that Thai food at some of these restaurants reflect the same sets of values, that being values of urban food concepts, part of which is home meals from the central plains, some with Chinese influence, and some with a slightly Western domination. Industrial food production is seen also. However, while globalization sharing values from mass and ready to eat on this space, social constructions with values diversified also share fragmented meanings good to dine on these spaces. The rise of postmodernism in food culture produces food with sustainable lens, such as slow food and healthy food, which run contrary to industrial production. It is seen leisure based concept and produce value of Thai gastronomy in these five-star settings with less formality and be more casualty. Thai food from the unbeaten tourist track, such as from the streets or from the community far from big cities, and simple foods are welcomed more at these luxury spaces.

The present economic changes enable more experience with Thai food from commoners and some dishes with practical values have driven “comfort” food to be ready to be the ordered.

Nahm is the restaurant best representing Thai gastronomy through its culinary practices. The world awards, both the Michelin star and the international votes for being one of fifty world best restaurant, is one aspect that supports its food performance as viewed internationally. The customer visits are another part supporting its culinary practices. Since attempts seen among three major gastronomic characteristics, *Nahm* makes the most effort on culinary practices. The representation of Thai gastronomy through Thai food served speaks of its own nation with notions regarded to “Thainess” in obvious degree.

The chef has attempted to look for various values from an array of “good to dine” throughout Thailand. His attempts have been backed up with research on Thai history, classes, bio-diversities, cultural diversity, etc. Time and intensive labor is spent on the

process to achieve Thai culinary idealism and avoid any “short cuts”. Technology is only applied in the kitchen if it can promote the evidence of “Thainess”.

Hall’s concept suggests that the meaning constantly changes in the process of the construction of “Thainess”; thus, along with the international concepts, the meanings deemed for transactions upon values regarded from tourism circumstances are *in situ*. “Thainess” is created in swayed meaning in order to produce and present a degree of hyper-reality and leisure. Refinement of each characteristic is evident and offered to make the visit to such spaces special and memorable such as traveling to the ancient times of Thai gastronomy; space, people and food convinced.

Each of the hotels has attempted to create its own specialization to represent its own uniqueness. To establish such representations, there are important factors at work in the on-going process. Selected or disregarded “Thainess” depends on the independent working of the five factors in Hall’s circuit of culture synergizing with each other.

Hall’s concept of *identity* can be clearly seen in Thai food based on the ingredients and natural benefits to health and the mind. *Production* is based on Thai wisdom in the treatment of food from the farm to the table as exercised with care for the fresh contribution to the food, such as a seasonal focus of ingredients, preparation with minimized intervention from heat, garnishing for eye appeal with shapes or colors tracing the natural forms and a meal set with accompanied dishes which is not overpowering or too over-seasoning to alter the originality of nature.

Consumption has partially to do with Buddhism since to eat meat in large pieces has been seen as too omnivorous and should be minimized since Buddhism teaches not to kill. Thai people reflect discursively on the ways to have meat in smaller, sliced pieces. Heat and humidity that dominates year round in Thailand does not allow eating raw meat which is *regulated* by the Thai way to cook using proper time and heat. However, international concepts are challenging these notions and producing dynamic meanings apart from views along the lines of religion.

Representation of Thai gastronomy can last longer and be reproduced and represented if it responds and reflects the primary values of the people at these spaces. Social construction and relations contribute new shared values for restaurants to analyze its process. Regarding the ‘representation’ of these four restaurants, even though they have regulations from different angles and in different degrees, the spaces represent what is agreed are luxury Thai restaurants. As a result of globalization, the customers have more of an understanding of the values of Thai food produced from local grounds. Even though they may be first time visitors, the guests have some experience prior to their journey. The awareness of “Thainess” in better degree offers representation of Thai gastronomy with the rise of freedom to undergo with local values.

However, the circuit of culture is processed through each characteristic contextually. It is not the only circuit, there are arrays of challenging meaning of ‘good to dine’ and flown into the process like circuit also. Such meanings may not need to be reflected only in the culinary practices, they can also be seen in other gastronomic characteristic at the same time.

Research findings reveal that the process of Thai gastronomy also depends on the commercial aspects of the hotel. Fine dining restaurants rely on a high input of resources, including the capital invested in people and materials for production of gastronomy. A process that dictates too much labor and which is time consuming may necessitate the altering of the production emulating home cooked meals or from what was done in the past. This adaptation also made for stretching the international standard. The altered process in the space is contextually called code of professional.

In conclusion, Thai gastronomy in these four Thai restaurants is constructed with both similar and different aspects of “Thainess”. Such similarities and differences are also shown in different degrees from places to places.

All of the four Thai restaurants share the same circumstances of globalization. Since their customers are mostly international guests, then their gastronomic process have been linear with global trend than the local ones.

The art and science of Thai food, which here is called Thai gastronomy, is dynamically blended with international values. For instance, once royal food trend were among society, they had tried to achieve so called values on their gastronomic process. During the short term when fusion food was in trend, these spaces also made slightly tune with such flavors. For instance, Chef Ann at *Spice Market* shared that there are still a few fusion dishes on the menu. They are only to reflected of availability but not really deem for either production or consumption.

Now that postmodern has come and genuine value is preferred, *Nahm* pioneered such trend and later other food spaces made similar moves. In my opinion, *Nahm* has shown that “Thainess” can be accepted with only minor altering or not at all, in some cases, as proven through the international awards. Such prestige allows Thais to view their own culture. “Thainess” is then represented in Thai gastronomy in a more confident manner, even though such “Thainess” is a rural representation. Thus, during the time studied, the values set by Thai gastronomy at these four food spaces are similarly found tension resisted from local to global.

The rise of “Thainess” that has been attempted, as applied to the physical settings and the service, is similar among these four spaces. There are densities of motif trending towards central plains civilization depicted at these luxury restaurants. The architecture or local culture, either through the spoken language or mannerism and fashion, from other region is rarely represented. As well, with respect to the food consumed, except at *Nahm*, there are more lists of foods from urban areas, especially Bangkok, than food from other region. Some regional foods are found, but only if they have already gained some degree of popularity.

International concepts challenge the local concepts, but are complexly negotiated. Food safety and hygiene is forced to a higher degree, as well as standards to maintain the profit margin of the hotel. Therefore, the aspects of “Thainess” that can increase the revenue are allowed, such as the application of “Thainess” to the physical setting and service. The food, which is not only the highest cost, but also the highest risk to safety, is the toughest process. To maximize the value of fresh ingredients in Thai food, for

instance, is costly and complex given the fact that international standards and capitalism have reached the farm and particular ingredients are not as easy to obtain as before. Therefore, general restaurants may not be able to achieve, especially seasonal cycling fresh produces and their ingredients are shared in limited group.

One more aspect is that these luxury spaces are also spaces for leisure activity. As a consequence, “Thainess” applied to each gastronomic characteristic must please the guests having anticipated values; so in this sense it is rather a performance rather than “real Thainess”. Leisure spaces are a stage of set authenticity as mention by Urry.

Sharing the similar conditions with other three restaurants, *Nahm* has tried to let the natural value of the food and its local aspects speak for “Thainess”. Three of the restaurants, *Celadon*, *Sala Rim Naam* and *Spice Market* have spent their efforts on the concrete characteristics: the architecture and the service. Their Thai gastronomy, in terms of culinary practices, is sophisticated; yet what *Nahm* has done is to pioneer rigidly applied “Thainess”. Moreover, Thai values are seen dominating the international values at *Nahm*, such as the need to maintain tastes and other contributed sensory elements of the food according to traditional culinary values. “Host” may not need to be submissive once the food is decided to be as it is supposed to be.

Such similarities and difference are seen contextually among these four food spaces. Yet, this could also reflect broader Thai food spaces in many places. Since globalization is dynamically active in Thai society, Thai gastronomy as analyzed here can also be seen in other food spaces.

This research confirms the works of many authors that “food is about culture and culture is about food.”

6.2 Discussion

Food is the vitality of humans and has always been signified with meanings contextually in any given society. Availability of food indicates economic prosperity

of a society. “กินดีมีสุข” – *kin dee mee suk*, – “eat well to live well” – implies more than just an individual but also a family, as well as the nation’s stability. Gastronomy studies suggest the well balancing sciences to cover the meaning and state of “eat well to live well”.

Literature from the Western world has shown well rounded knowledge contributed from diverse sciences. Cultural and social lens have been applied to food studies and many pieces of research by Western scholars have been conducted regarding Thai food and life.

Gastronomy studies in Thailand

While Thailand’s national economy is closely connected with agriculture and food, there is a lot of research that contributes insights for food development. However, since food is viewed as beneficial to national revenues, development is based on commercial values. As a consequence, there has been cooperation with the academic side in producing curriculums with input from trading and manufacturing with international values.

Food studies are a topic in diverse curriculums, such as home economics, food sciences and technology, and hotel or restaurant management. So far, such curriculums have not really taken cultural contexts into consideration. All of them generally offer the students tools to keep food consistent with international concepts. For instances, cooking classes in hotel studies either focus on food management or food operation, theory and practicing, as well as focusing on guest oriented.

Home economics classes are obsessed with applying knowledge to establishing food standards and world schemes. The students learn a lot about food safety and hygiene which requires knowledge of science more than art.

It can be seen and understood that there are limitations to accessing old and local food wisdoms in food studies, since it has been found that Thai ways in dealing

with food in the old days were female centered. The scripts were not really signified in priority to patiently keep their excellences at home in written forms. Moreover, the natural transference through work and household chores has been interrupted by social changes. As a consequence, the ways and values of Thai culinary have been slowly lost. To explore and restore this wisdom is too difficult and may be too subjective to be clarified. It is more possible to produce knowledge based upon concrete values, so, instead, there are many classes conducted with measurable tools: home economy, hospitality and food sciences.

Food sciences and technology is doing a good job of producing values based on healthy diets. However, they are not yet combined with home economics practices in translating such healthy ingredients into recipes. In addition, there are many ingredients approved by the sciences, but since they are not domestic ingredients, they have to be imported from abroad. It can be seen that science and technology compel mass manufacturers to produce mass foods for global demand. Moreover, regarding food in socio-cultural aspects, food sciences and home economy have, so far, spent less time on sustainable food culture with a balance of environment and economy.

Thai studies and Thai gastronomy studies

In light of the above discussion of the status of food sciences, home economics and gastronomy studies, this research contributes to a greater understanding of gastronomic studies since the research produces an analysis of gastronomy within a socio-cultural context; in this case, how gastronomy in international food spaces is constructed by Thainess. Thus, this research exemplifies how food can be studied and analyzed in socio-cultural contexts; in other words, how culture can be taken into consideration in gastronomy studies.

Integration between food studies and Thai studies, thus, provides more meanings to gastronomy studies. Vice versa, as this research focuses on Thai gastronomy, it also contributes to Thai studies and to a greater understanding of the role and influence of Thai social and cultural values on the process of food production, specifically when studied with a gastronomy lens.

6.3 Suggestion for future research

Globalization has brought Thai foods to the world with quite haute meanings. Through my experience sharing the knowledge of Thai food in classes with international people, these foreigners perceive Thai food with positive values, such as Thai food being healthy, sophisticated and aesthetically pleasing. International people show their recognition of the value of Thai food, such as when they cook Thai food at home, or welcome friends to enjoy the refined tastes of Thai food or go out and dine in Thai restaurants. Many Thai social values are conveyed through Thai food in international settings.

Formerly, Thai food abroad was offered either in the form of Southeast Asian food in Southeast Asian restaurants in Europe or North America. Thai food was also served in Chinese restaurants, dominated by Chinese ways of cooking, such as oily stir frying. Views concerning Thai foods were found to be blurred.

It is interesting to see Thai foods located in international food spaces differently today. Thai restaurants located outside of Thailand have gained high popularity. Offering Thai food in public food spaces abroad is not limited only to Thai management. There are a lot of Thai dishes on the menus in international restaurants. For example, it is common to have green curry served in English pubs in the United Kingdom. It can also be seen that international companies invested in Thai restaurants with limited participation from Thai people.

Furthermore, there are more Thai cooking classes provided in the curriculums of cooking or culinary schools abroad. Similarly, there is limited involvement of Thai people in sharing Thai food knowledge at these academic spaces. Moreover, the class materials concerning Thai food are developed with international teams.

It would then be suggested that further studies should focus more on Thai food management and presentation in countries outside of Thailand. One could compare how “Thainess” is constructed or identified in such international settings, or study the negotiation between Western food and oriental food with Thai food in such settings.

REFERENCES

ภาษาไทย

- จิระพร เกื้อกิม, ธนะจักร เย็นบำรุง และรัชณี องค์กราลัย, บรรณาธิการ. วิจัยเพื่อการพัฒนาภาคอีสาน 2535-2540. ขอนแก่น: สถาบันวิจัยและพัฒนา มหาวิทยาลัยขอนแก่น, 2540.
- ฉัตรทิพย์ นาถสุภา และพรพิไล เลิศวิชา. วัฒนธรรมหมู่บ้านไทย. กรุงเทพมหานคร: สถาบันพัฒนาชนบท มูลนิธิหมู่บ้าน สำนักพิมพ์สร้างสรรค์, 2537.
- ท่านผู้หญิง เปลี่ยน ภาสกรวงศ์. แม่ครัวหัวป่าก์. กรุงเทพมหานคร: สมาคมกิจวัฒนธรรม, 2545
- โคม ไกรปรกรณ์. (2555). “การค้ำอาหารในสังคมไทยสมัยอยุธยาตอนปลาย-สมัยการปฏิรูปประเทศ: ข้อเสนอเบื้องต้น” เอกสารประกอบ การประชุมวิชาการปัญญาภิวัตน์ ครั้งที่ 1 สถาบันการจัดการปัญญาภิวัตน์.
- คำรับสายเขาวภา. ใน อนุสรณ์งานพระราชทานเพลิงศพ คุณหญิง มี กลาโหมราชเสนา. หน้า 30-32. กรุงเทพมหานคร: โรงพิมพ์สามมิตร, 2519.
- นิโกลาส แชรเวส. (2506). ประวัติศาสตร์ธรรมชาติและเมืองแห่งราชอาณาจักรสยาม (ในแผ่นดินสมเด็จพระนารายณ์มหาราช), แปลโดย สันต์ ท. โกมลบุตร. พระนคร: ก้าวหน้า.
- สมรภัย ชัยสิงห์กานานนท์. รสนิยม: ภาษาในสังคมไทยยุคบริโภคนิยม. กรุงเทพมหานคร: โครงการหนังสือเล่มสถาบันวิจัยสังคม จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย, 2544.

ภาษาอังกฤษ

- Atkins, P. and Bowler, I. (2001). Food in Society: Economy, Culture, Geography. London ; New York : Arnold.
- Atkinson, (1983) “Eating virtue”, in A. Murcott (ed.) The Sociology of Food and Eating, Aldershot: Gower.
- Bowlby, J. (1988). A secure base: Parent-child attachment and healthy human development. New York: Basic Books.
- Boomer, L. M.. How we fitted Ford’s principles to our business. System 44 (1923): ; 91, 421-424.
- Breadsworth, A. and Kiel, T. (1999). Sociology on The Menu : An invitation to the study of food and society; London: Routledge.

- Charles, N. and Kerr, M. (1988) Women, Food and Families, Manchester : Manchester University Press.
- Choden, K. (2008). Chilli and Cheese : Food and Society in Bhutan. White Lotus: Bangkok.
- Denzin, Norman K., (1992). Symbolic Interactionism and Cultural Studies: The Politics of Interpretation. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell
- Dodd, Nigel. (1999). Social Theory and Modernity. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Douglas, M. (1984) “Standard social uses of food: introduction”, in M. Douglas (ed.) Food in the Social Order Studies of Food and Festivities in Three American Communities, New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- [Douglas, M. ———](#). (1996) Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo, London: Allen & Unwin.
- Du Gay and Hall. eds. (1996). Questions of Cultural Identity. Great Britain: The Cormwell press Ltd.
- Fabricant, F. “The Westernization of Thai Food” Nation's Restaurant News 28 (94); 39.
- Fischler, C. (1988) “Food, self and identity”, Social Science Information 27, 2: 275-92.
- Featherstone, M. (1991). Consumer Society and Post Modernism; London: Sage.
- Gillespie, C. (2001). European gastronomy into the 21st Century.
- Griffiths, S. and Wallace, J. (1998). Consuming passions : Food in the age of anxiety. Manshester: Mandolin.
- Hall, S. (1997). Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practice. Open University.
- Lashley, C. and Morrison, A., eds (2000). In Search of Hospitality: Theoretical perspectives and debates . Great Britain: Reed Educational and Professional Publishing Ltd.
- Lashley, C. and Lynch, P (2007). Hospitality: A Social Lens. London: Elsevier.
- Levi-Strauss, C. (1963) Structural Anthropology, New York: Basic Books.
- [Levi-Strauss, C. ———](#). (1966b) “The culinary triangle”, Partisan Review 33: 586-95.

Levi-Strauss, C. (1970) "The Raw and the Cooked" London: Jonathan Cape
Mintz, Sidney W. (1996). Tasting Food Tasting Freedom. Boston: Beacon Press: 179

Napat Sirisambhand and Christina Szanton. Thailand Street Food Vending: The Sellers and Consumers of "Traditional Fast Foods" Women's Studies Programme, Chulalongkorn University, Social Research Institute, 1986.

Petrini, C. (2001). Slow Food : Taste, Traditional and The Honest Pleasure of Food. Vermont: Chelsea Green Publishing.

Ritzer, G. (1993). The McDonaldization of Society. London: Thousand Oaks.

Santich, Barbara. (1996). Gastronomy; Cookery, Australian; Food habits; History; Australia. Kent Town, South Australia: Wakefield Press.

Singala, M. and Leslie, D. (2005). International Cultural Tourism. Oxford: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann.

Sokolov, R. (1993). Why we eat and What we eat. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Thompson, David. (2002). Thai food. Australia: Penguin Books Australia.

Turmo, I. G. (2004). Antropology of Food: A method of analyzing recipe books. London: Thousand Oaks

Urry, J. (1990). The Tourist Gaze. London: Sage.

Van Esterik, P. (1997). Food and Culture: A Reader. New York: Routledge.

Walker, Marilyn Diana. Thai Elites and The Construction of Socio-Cultural Identity Through Food Consumption. Ph.D. York University (Canada), 1991.

"World's 50 most delicious foods". (online) Available from : <http://www.cnngo.com/explorations/eat/worlds-50-most-delicious-foods-067535?page=0,2>
[25 July 2012]

Yasmeen, G. (2006). Bangkok's Food Spcape. Public eating, gender relations, and urban change. Bangkok, Thailand: White Lotus. Yukari, I.

Formatted: Indent: First line: 0.5"

BIOGRAPHY

Niphatchanok Najpinij has a Bachelor's degree in Journalist from the Faculty of Communication Arts, Chulalongkorn University and a Master's degree in Hospitality Administration from the Johnson and Wales University, USA. She is currently a lecturer at School of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Rajabhat Suan Dusit University. She has experienced Thai culinary through Thai cooking school on ground of family business. She joined the Ph. D Program in Thai Studies at the Thai Studies Center, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University in 2007.