

ไทด่านพาล้าง

สำรับถัณฑ์ในจินตนาการ

Tai Dan Palaeng: A 16 course meal sparking
your imagination of Dansai, Loei



ABOUT LAF

LAF or Loei Art Fes is an international contemporary art festival in Loei, Thailand, starting from 23 July - 31 August 2021. Due to the pandemic, LAF was conducted in a hybrid way; on-site activities for local residents of Loei, and online activities for the public and international participants. The heart of LAF is using the festival platform as a vessel for intervention and incubation of a long-term community engagement process which includes building a bridge to connect the civil, private, and public sectors. LAF's ultimate goal is to explore alternative values and management models of contemporary art via its activities.

For this edition, LAF invites everyone to celebrate the 'spirit' of Loei, particularly of Dansai town. The 'spirit' which does not only define the cultural roots, but is the centre of a social bond and various aspects in our contemporary everyday life.

ABOUT “Tai Dan Palaeng”

Tai Dan Paleang; a 16-course menu sparking your imagination of Dansai, Loei.

One of Dansai's pride apart from the Boon Luang or Phi Ta Khon festival is the Tai Dan cuisine. It is a culture that embraces the unique wisdom and lifestyle of the Nam Mhun river basin. The inspiration for this project originated from the eagerness of Dansai people to share stories and flavours of their food culture. Also, existing research entitled "From forest to Tai Dan kitchen" by Associate Professor Ekarin Phungpracha, Ph.D. et al. These factors urged the LAF team to create a space for cultural learning and exchange through a creative process of "Chef Residency", similar to art creation.

However, due to the spread of Covid-19 throughout Thailand, our chef, or cuisine artist, could not physically travel to embrace himself in Dansai. The process had to shift to remote research via existing literature and online interviews, covering the information on local material, inherited wisdom, original recipes, and, most importantly, specific stories and memories of Dansai people bound with food. As a result, a 16-course menu was designed by Chef Note (Atip Samosorn) for participants to order and taste from their homes while joining an online dinner party to engage with Chef Note's stories and inspiration behind each dish.

Although the menus are a contemporary interpretation from remote research and interviews with an adaptation of recipes and local materials, we believe that the stories from Dansai within the food will paint you a picture of the place - becoming a healing factor for these hard times we are living in. With the hope that one day, we can visit Dansai and have a direct experience of this magical place.



ABOUT the Chef

Chef Note (Atip Samosorn); artist and creator of Tai Dan Palaeng. We may call him by the word “chef”, but for LAF, he is more of an artist who tells stories through his food creations. His past experiences involved cooking for a western-style vegetarian restaurant in Chiangmai, owning a tofu/ soy milk shop in Chiangkhan district of Loei, and a Vietnamese fusion restaurant using local and organic materials in a hospital in Bangkok. With his experience of opening restaurants in both Bangkok and regional provinces, plus a habit of learning by tasting and asking when he roams around the country, he is equipped with skills to analyse, and de/ reconstruct various cuisines. Hence, creating an understanding and connection between food and aspects of life, humanities, history, culture, and even socio-political contexts. Whether it be Thai regional cuisines, Thai ‘city’ cuisines, or even international dishes, Chef Note’s food creations always convey a message via its materials, way of creating, and way of eating.





Miang Khon



Starting off with **Miang Khon** (bite-sized leaf wrap) a dish that will greet you to the land of Dansai; home to Tai Dan cuisine. It is nicknamed the dish of happiness since you can choose whatever you want from over 12 choices of vegetables and meat in one bite. Our highlight lies in the dressing sauce which is made from “Nam Pak Satorn”; a local plant-based fermented sauce original to the mountainous region of Dansai.

Choose your favoured fillings, dress it with Nam Pak Satorn, then “Khon” (an action where you grab things and eat in one bite) it all in one bite! It is a perfect ice-breaking meal for locals when greeting visitors where everyone can let down their guard, invest in conversations while talking about the food. The leaf for this wrap can vary from young jackfruit leaves, betel leaves, or the local “Som Gung” leaf which has a tangy taste that goes perfectly with Nam Pak Satorn.



We now move to the four overture hors d'oeuvres which were inspired by the stories and histories of old Dansai.

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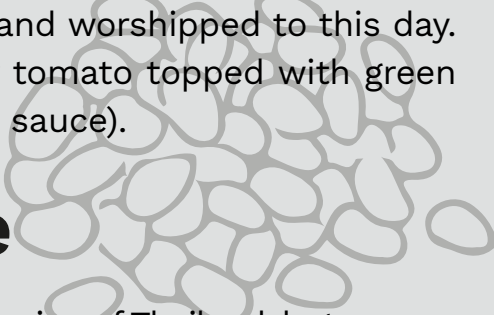


- 2 Luang Prabang Roll
- 3 Sticky rice Tua Tae
- 4 Mhok Phu Tai Dan
- 5 Dragon fruit sprinkled with dried fish flakes

**2**


Luang Prabang Roll

Apart from being home to the renowned Phi Ta Khon festival, Dansai is also dubbed as the “Land of truth and friendship”. This phrase stems from the history where pioneering generations came to this land to build a Buddhist stupa; “Phra That Sri Song Rak” (literally translates to the stupa of two loves). The stupa marks this region as a promised land by Laotian and Thai Kings and is still loved and worshipped to this day. This dish roughly consists of a fresh cherry tomato topped with green papaya, dressed with Pla-ra (fermented fish sauce).

**3**

Sticky rice Tua Tae

Loei may be a province in the Isan (northeast) region of Thailand, but we can examine its anthropological roots to a history beyond the nation-state through inherited wisdom of food preservation. Tua Tae is a way of processing soybeans, also shared in the northern region of Thailand, stemming from Lanxang roots. With a contemporary twist, it is served with a bite of sticky rice; the common carbohydrate of the region, resembling the looks of a fine Omakase sushi. It is also a metaphor for the evolution of the Phi Ta Khon, tracing back to its original simple festive core tied to the traditions of the community.


**4**

Mhok Phu Tai Dan

Mushrooms with eggs seasoned with Nam Pak Satorn baked in banana leaf sprinkled with dill. Being the land surrounded by mountainous landscapes, wild mushrooms would galore for the local people of Dansai to enjoy during the rainy season. The aroma of dill mixed with the smokiness of banana leaf will surely spark your imagination of a place outside of the busy capital.

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Dragon fruit sprinkled with dried fish flakes



Dragon fruit is one of the most popular local produce of the region in present-day Dansai. Sprinkle it with dried fish flakes to give it a fresh sweet yet savoury taste transforming this local fruit that has been overwhelming the local farms in this past year into a one of a kind dish.

Soup Khee Lao



Our soup of the day. “Khee Lao” is a local savoury snack made of Nam Pak Satorn, salt, chilli, garlic, ginger, tamarind, wild olives, and wild tomatoes. This soup-like sauce is eaten with fresh vegetables which will recharge your energy with its unique rich yet soothing taste. The original recipe is mostly made by elders of the region and eaten with a group of family and friends after a long day of work in the fields. For our meal, Chef Note has redesigned the dish for a softer taste and adding a soothing function of a warm bowl of soup, while keeping the fresh ingredients of ginger, green papaya, dill, gotu kola leaves (Asiatic pennywort), Nam Pak Satorn with the addition of fish tofu.





Tum Dansai

After our soup, we serve a papaya salad or Somtum with Nam Pak Satorn and seasoned it with salt, instead of Pla Ra with fish sauce that is common in the Isan region. Adding wild tomatoes and a touch of “Som Ko Kae” (cured fermented beef skin) - a secret tip from our local informant, for a tangy taste, original to the Dansai and the surrounding area. For the DIY at-home version, Chef Note also used the local Jaew Dum chilli paste for the salad dressing.







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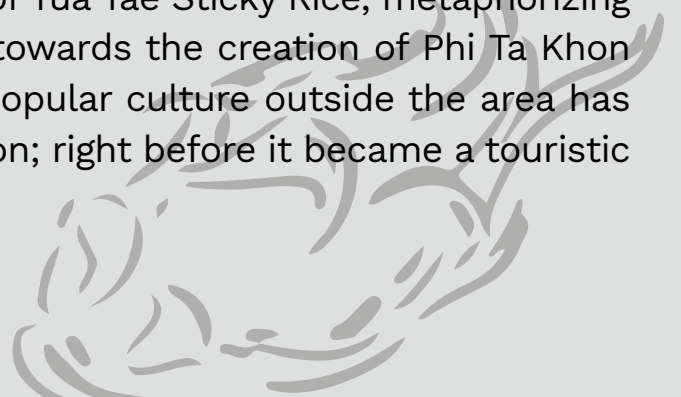
Dong Dang Pokki

Entering our main course with Dong Dang Pokki. This Korean fusion inspired stew is a nod to the present-day Dansai that is contemporary and is a part of the globalised flow of multicultural influences. Dong Dang is a kind of fresh rice noodle common in Loei province and is used to cheekily substitute for Korean Tteok rice cake. And instead of a Kochujang based sauce, Chef Note cleverly uses the essence of the northern and Isan's Sua soup, while using Nam Pak Satorn as a base flavour, plus the feisty seasoning of dried chilli, herbs, and roasted rice powder. Lastly, adding sun-dried fish for the meat.



Daifuku Tua Tae

Mochi rice cake mixed with a fresh taste and colour of dragon fruit filled with sweet potato and Tua Tae. Another fun fusion menu inspired by Japanese cultural influences all over Thailand, including regional areas, to give your taste buds a break from the spiciness. This is a reprise of Tua Tae Sticky Rice, metaphorizing the evolution of creativity towards the creation of Phi Ta Khon masks where diversity of popular culture outside the area has influenced the local tradition; right before it became a touristic phenomenon.



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Mekong giant catfish wannabe with Mala

Roasted banana blossom disguising itself as a Mekong giant catfish; a freshwater fish that has been widely enjoyed in the Mekong and the surrounding region but now critically endangered due to ecosystemic changes and external factors resulting in a drastic population decline of the species. The “Catfish wannabe” is cooked with a Nam Pak Satorn based sauce and Mala powder with a side of green okra. Although Dansai is not adjacent to the Mekong river, the influence is there as a part of Loei’s culture.



Civilised Chao Kha

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Our local informants recommended dried frogs as a popular food during Dansai’s rainy season. Deep-fried and enjoyed as savoury snacks with drinks. When cooked as a contemporary dish, Chef Note had to adapt for the urban audience by separating the legs and mixing them with deep-fried crispy noodles mixed with salty caramel sauce and macadamia nuts. Place a bite-size portion on a Royal Project lettuce, top with avocado sauce and spicy pomelo salad. A soft metaphor for the urban and centralised perspective in regional development towards “civilisation”, hoping to encourage a more decentralised and horizontal view for the future.



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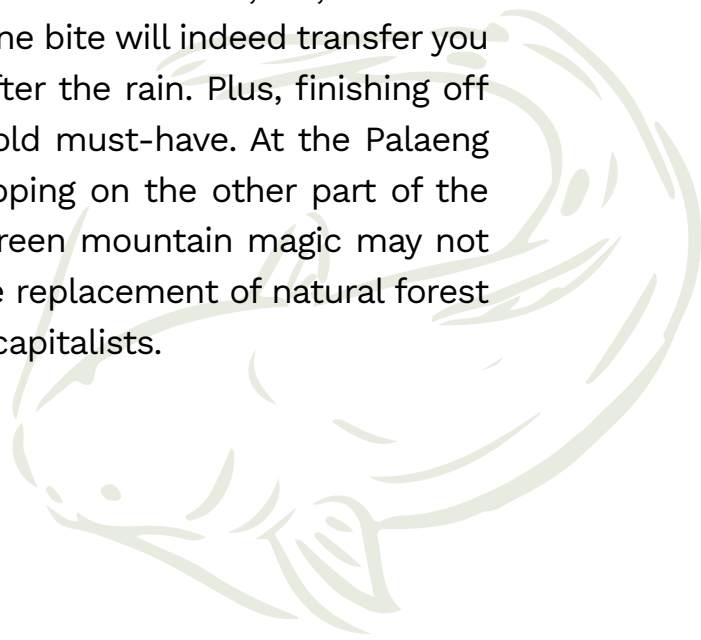
Tua Tae Risotto

Another reprise of Tua Tae and sticky rice, now evolved to an Italian fusion of a risotto. Tua Tae is now adapted to homemade parmesan sprinkled on rice pan-fried with Jaew Som of Dansai vegetables, black olives, bolete and straw mushrooms. Decoration tips are to place the straw mushroom facing upwards, and you will see a smiley face-like shape representing the Phi Ta Khon mask. The risotto represents the masquerade masks of the Venice Carnival in Italy, and Tua Tae cheese is the local tradition of Dansai. It begs the question of how we can balance and preserve the core culture of the local tradition among the changing extravagant tastes of the modernised festival.



Dansai Terrine

This french inspired menu will also touch on one history of Dansai in the past when it was under French occupation for a few years. Soft and tender redtail catfish meat with refreshing gelatin stock, sprinkled with lime, dill, and fresh herbs. The fresh and savoury aroma mixed in one bite will indeed transfer you to Dansai's cool green mountainous forests after the rain. Plus, finishing off with Jaew Dum chilli paste, a Dansai household must-have. At the Palaeng dinner event, Chef Note added corn salad topping on the other part of the terrine. This is to remind ourselves that the green mountain magic may not stay with us for long if we are not aware of the replacement of natural forest with monoculture influenced by authoritarian capitalists.





Corn Panna Cotta topped with sabayon sauce made from Nhongkai rum and sugar cane.

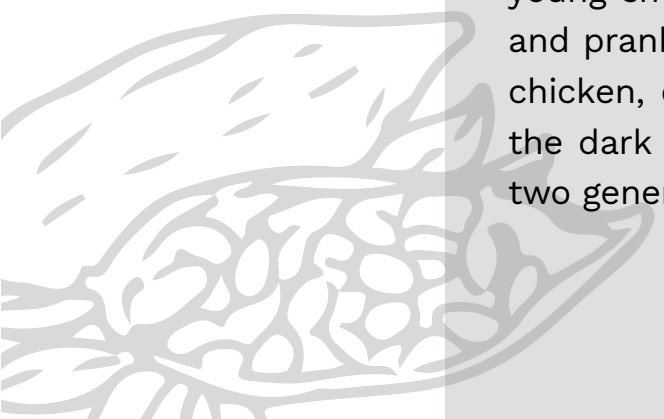


Mint Avocado Cream Cheese
- avocado mixed with cream cheese wrapped in mint leaves marinated in mint tea and honey syrup.



Macadamia Khao Dak Nga - rice cake with grains and sesame mixed with cocoa and macadamia nuts grown in the regional high land.

Moving on to our dessert set consisting of three menus inspired by an episode “Khan Tapa”; a trickster and antihero from the regional folklore. The story revolves around a young smart yet mischievous boy who lives with a monk and pranks the monk with food that resembles faeces of chicken, cow, dog for fun. The bittersweet taste reflects the dark comedy of the local tale and tensions between two generations of the contemporary time.



Tai Dan Palaeng

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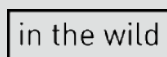
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