



# THE ONLY PLACE

The very best of all worlds at  
**The Cliff Bar & Grill!**



It's getting harder every year. There are a hundred on the beach. There's lots more tucked away. For every one you can see, there are many more you can't. Yes, everywhere you look on Samui there's another restaurant. You'd think this would be good, wouldn't you? And, in many ways, it is. But the big problem is that you're utterly spoiled for choice. There are just so many good restaurants now that it's not easy to pick out the great ones. But there's one that everyone agrees is way up there on the list. It's perched overlooking the sea, on the twisty hill-road between Lamai and Chaweng. And its name is The Cliff Bar & Grill.

This excellent restaurant has been collecting accolades ever since it opened, back in 2004. In fact, during this time, it's picked up the Thailand Tatler 'Thailand's Best Restaurants' award – a guide that has become a trusted companion for gourmands living in Thailand – no fewer than seven times, and with the latest of these coming over the last three years consecutively. And to drive home the point, on the 17th August this year, The Cliff was host to the Porsche Club Singapore; 32 immaculate cars and their drivers, who undertook a four-day round trip in order to spend an afternoon of fine dining and company, at what they had previously judged to be the best restaurant on the island!





So exactly what is this elusive recipe for success? The location? The atmosphere? The food itself or the cost of it all? Well the location has a lot to do with this. It's right on the main ring-road, highly accessible (and with parking for at least 32 cars!). Plus the fact that the outlook is super – the whole picture-postcard Samui seascape, complete with fluffy clouds and little fishing boats. And then the design and layout is just so good; it's all very low-key, with loads of dark wood and warm lighting. In the daytime, it's cool and shady, with almost a whole wall of glass at both the front and also looking out to sea. Plus a dining terrace perched outside along the top of the cliff. So that's the context. And then we come to the food.

Italian master-chef, Sergio Martelli, has been running the kitchen here ever since it first opened. His menu has continued to evolve over the years and, as well as a superlative selection of Italian dishes, is truly international and with one of the best quality selections of seafood that you'll come across. Sergio was a firm believer in organic produce even way back before it became so fashionably popular, and this is reflected in his insistence on daily shipments of the more delicate fruit and vegetables being flown in from Bangkok. Much of the seafood is bought each day from the local markets, as you'd expect. But the harder-to-find items, such as the Pacific lobsters and oysters, are shipped-in live and kept in tanks that you are invited to choose from. But Sergio's pièce de résistance here is most certainly the 'Seafood Platter for Two' which runs to Atlantic lobster, king scallops, NZ mussels, calamari, prawns sea crab legs and fish, that all comes with a plentiful risotto.

Nash Ludlow is the genial restaurant manager. "Sergio is a terrific chef," he enthused, "and is constantly moving around among the diners, chatting and generally offering information or advice. Plus he'll cook anything for you if you ask him, even if it's not on the menu. One nice thing also is that every three days he creates two or three specials that aren't on the menu, and these have proved very popular. Our lunch menu begins at midday, and I think we're one of the few restaurants on the island that is busy in the daytime as well as at night. One reason for this has to be the extensive tapas menu. But then," Nash smiled, "tapas is just as popular in the evening, too."

This is not surprising, as there are 23 tapas items, ranging from the everyday (Spanish Tortilla) to the truly exotic (Pata Negra Joselito – aged Spanish ham from the black Iberian pig). And, as with all things here at The Cliff, this is a handcrafted gourmet selection, in this instance authored by Peruvian chef, Adrian Torres Palomino. To top all this off there are also three 'combos' – mixed platters of various tapas, and a very palatable Chilean house wine to complement these delectable dishes.

Needless to say, the selection of wines here is impressive. There are more than 100 labels of classic and New World wines, and the labels are continually being added to and refined. There is a section dedicated to premium wines and another to some very exotic luxury wines. Of note here is the French champagne, Cristal, Louis Reederer, together with the venerated Opus One, Napa Valley USA 2008. And to officially stamp the quality of this selection of wines, you can add another prestigious endorsement, that of the Wine Spectator Award 2014 – 'for restaurants with the best selection of wines in the world'.

And if some of these represent the pinnacle of luxury, then going hand-in-hand with this are the cigar pairings. There's a fine range of hand-made cigars, each of which has a recommended match with a similarly elegant wine. And featuring proudly here is the award-winning and highly-acclaimed 'Perdomo Nicaragua 10th Anniversary Sungrown' that is . . . "somewhat reminiscent of dark chocolate, with a natural sweetness that is merged with the impressive flavours of cocoa and coffee."

For a while now there's been a little motto associated with The Cliff, and you'll see it both in the restaurant itself and also on their comprehensive website - 'The Cliff – the only place to spend your afternoon.' But I think they've got that only half right. It's spot-on about the afternoons. But it's pretty hard to beat at night, too. Maybe they should trim it down a bit and make it ' . . . the only place? Because they wouldn't be that far wrong!

*Rob De Wet*

For reservations or further information, telephone 0 7744 8508.  
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