



# MEDITERRANEAN DECADE

Serving top-notch delights since 2004, **The Cliff Bar & Grill** has more than stood the test of time.

When you look round Samui these days, you'll see that it's basically short of nothing when it comes to food and drink. There are restaurants of all kinds, from the simple to the sublime. But just a decade ago, there were few suppliers here, and many foods were extraordinarily hard to get – it was like panning for gold. It was very difficult to open a restaurant that specialized in food from outside Thailand. The Cliff was one of the first places to brave that culinary void. Lionel Helena, who has been The Cliff's manager from the very first days, saw at first hand that while it might be easy to get local products from Samui itself, it was another matter to get products from the mainland or from outside Thailand.

Before opening The Cliff, owner and master chef Bradley Munns had already painstakingly travelled to Portugal, Spain and Italy to find the right combinations of herbs, spices, olive oils, ingredients and recipes to please his guests. It's thanks to Bradley's dedication that he was able to succeed in bringing quality food to Samui, and it can be safely said that he was one of the first restaurateurs to do so. Things have changed a lot since those early days and there are more suppliers now, new routes from farm to kitchen and generally a very savvy, international approach to food.

If The Cliff cut its culinary teeth in hardscrabble times, it also meant that it established itself as dependably reliable, a reputation it holds to this day, serving up excellent and highly tasty food that's eclectically Mediterranean in style.

The kitchen team is headed by Chef Sergio Martelli. He's from Ancona in Italy, and has been on Samui for the last 13 years. He's worked at The Cliff, heading its culinary team since the restaurant's earliest days, and has a cachet for producing creative food that focuses on the Mediterranean. As he's made Thailand his home for so long, he also understands exactly how to use the country's ingredients and foods to produce further great tastes.

Spanish-born Nicolas Vicenc is Sergio's right-hand man, and brings inspiration from the Basque country, where he trained, but he also adds some French touches too – his mother is French and he learned as a child to cook the dishes she loves. He's responsible for The Cliff's all-day tapas menu, making this restaurant one of the few places where you can get genuine Spanish tapas, rather than an imitation. The tapas menu features dishes such as Stewed Cowtail Raviolis, Tuna Carpaccio on Tomato Sponge and the excellent Salmorejo Chef Style, which is a tomato soup, served cold. Once you taste dishes such as these, you'll know why tapas has remained so abidingly popular in its home country, and why it's caught on in so many other places, too.

At The Cliff, the best meats are used, with beef being flown in from King Island, Australia. It's aged 21 days and is always chilled, not frozen – allowing for more freshness and, of course, taste. Vegetables are equally good; they're organically grown and include herbs that come from The Cliff's own herb garden. It'd be difficult to get better quality than that.





Go for lunch or dinner, and you'll have a choice of some highly tempting dishes. You can start with a tasty salad; choose between Mediterranean salad, with cheddar, cashew nuts and apple, or Greek, or perhaps a chicken salad – you'll find more on the menu, which by the way, is on The Cliff's website.

There are also different breads for you to try, such as bruschetta mista, garlic bread, and bread sticks with olives from Italy. A series of yummy appetizers comes next and you'll enjoy Portuguese piri prawns, curried Goan ones, or perhaps live imported oysters (they're shucked and served fresh).

Mains never disappoint at The Cliff. There are seafood platters and fresh line fish – catch of the day – grilled to perfection with Italian lemon and herb sauce. They're served with Spanish rice or French fries with salad. The Cliff offers a lot of seafood and this is one of the places where you can dine on lobster. It goes without saying that if a fish is native to Thai waters, it's caught locally and so red snapper, sea bass and calamari are all from nearby waters.

Meats are equally delicious. Try the house speciality, Portuguese piri piri chicken, marinated in special piri piri sauce then grilled over charcoal. Also recommended is the Australian rib eye steak, or the highly delicious lamb chops from New Zealand – you get three of them, each weighing 100 grams. Steaks and chops come with tasty sauces; choose between garlic, blue cheese, pepper sauce, BBQ sauce and mint sauce. Steaks are served with button mushrooms and fondant potatoes. In addition there's also a variety of pastas that are sure to tempt your taste buds and fill hungry stomachs.

The Cliff stocks 140 different wines from all over the world, including champagne, so there's always plenty of choice. And if you can't decide, then the staff will be able to advise you. Wine Spectator magazine

awarded The Cliff its award of excellence 'for having one of the most outstanding restaurant wine lists in the world'. So if you're a wine lover, you can be assured you're in good hands at The Cliff.

Pleasures don't stop after the main course. Deliciously decadent desserts await you, such as the ever-popular tiramisu, chocolate brownie cake and ice cream. You can also enjoy the platter of blue cheese, cheddar and brie. And if you enjoy cigars, this is one of the few places on Samui where you can find them on offer.

You're sure to enjoy eating at The Cliff; after all its popularity has been vouchsafed by Thailand Tatler, with The Cliff being designated as one of the country's best restaurants. The Cliff is easy to find; drive south from Chaweng and it's on the ring-road just a kilometre before you reach Lamai. You can't miss it as there are no buildings either side. It overlooks Thong Takian Bay, one of the island's best beaches, and has beautiful views. Naturally the restaurant's terrace is extremely popular, but in any case it's always recommended to make a reservation. The Cliff is open daily from midday until last food orders at 9:45 pm. Drinks continue till a lot later and on Friday's DJs play in The Cliff's air-con cocktail bar.

With great choices when it comes to food and drink, along with its picturesque setting, The Cliff is a natural choice for a superb lunch or dinner.

### *Dimitri Waring*

For reservations or further information, telephone 0 7744 8508.  
[www.thecliffsamui.com](http://www.thecliffsamui.com)