

1. Thailand Gastronomy Tourism : An Experience to Remember

By Dr. Sasithara PICHAJ

Rector of College of Tourism and Hospitality

Rangsit University, Thailand.

2. The tourism of Thailand has rapidly grown since the past decade. We used to welcome tourists at the only airport which was both domestic and international. Today the new international airport, Suvarnabhumi, needs an expansion for Terminal II because of the inadequate passenger carrying capacity. Another domestic airport, which once was used as a military training base, U-Tapao Airport, is now being renovated as another domestic and international airport to receive incoming tourists and connecting to internal destinations.

3. Eastern Economic Corridor, the Prime Gateway to Asia, linking Bangkok, Eastern Seaboard areas and the southern part of Cambodia, will be beneficial for tourism and economic development.

4. In the past decade, Thailand received 15 million tourists and it was recorded as a surprising phenomenon of the country. At the beginning of this year, we welcomed the 35th million international tourist. It was first in our history that we got tourists more than half of our populations.

5. UNWTO Tourism Highlights 2017 edition noted “In receipts, the US and Spain remain the top, followed by Thailand, which climbed to number 3 last year!”

6. Significant growth of tourism industry does not create only positive impacts to the country, but various problems also follow : deterioration of tourism destinations, overcrowded airports and insufficient manpower in tourism. Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Education and Labor Ministry are actually strengthening capacity of the workforce. Tourism curricula and training methods have been reformed and updated for fast growing chapter of tourism industry in particular competency-based assessment and digital tourism.

7. Development of tourism professionals in hotels, restaurants, food production, tour operation and travel agencies as agreed upon by ASEAN mutual recognition arrangement is now carried out in educational institutions and agencies.

8. Our commitment to support “Inclusive Tourism” is shown in allocation of budgets to public central and regional organizations to upgrade facilities like hygienic toilets for ladies and men, sloping walkways and racks for elderly and disabled, light weight infrastructures in tourism areas to prevent danger from falling, slipping, accidents, etc.

9. On Gastronomy Tourism, a campaign like “Clean Food Good Taste” is inspiring tourists to enjoy Thailand’s rich culinary history including variety of street food for selection.

10. In 2017, we hosted International Sustainable Development Tourism Year 2017 with UN World Tourism Organization, urging conservation and protection of nature, environment, local culture, and importantly creation of income from tourism for people and tourism entrepreneurs inclusively and fairly. The International Year promotes tourism’s role in five key areas :

- a. Inclusive and sustainable economic growth
- b. Employment and poverty reduction
- c. Resource efficiency
- d. Cultural values
- e. Mutual understanding

11. Gastronomy tourism offers high potential in increasing regional and national economies and enhancing stability. Gastronomy tourism contributes various levels of tourism value chain ranging from agriculture to local food manufacturing, social inclusion, cultural and environmental reservation and mutual understanding.

12. In January this year, Thailand hosted ASEAN Tourism Ministers Meeting and ASEAN Tourism Forum 2018. The 10 ASEAN Tourism Ministers recognize the integral role gastronomy plays in building destination brand and its ability to be a key driver to achieve inclusiveness and sustainable development for the local agricultural producers, local artisans, young artisans and young artisan chefs in globalized process,

13. Essentially to re-connect rural and urban environment, Gastronomy Tourism could be an effective strategy for poverty reduction and an efficient utilization of resources,

14. The Ministers encourage cooperation among ASEAN Member States in environment protection and climate change mitigation, protection of cultural values, heritage and bio-diversity.

15. The Ministers also encourage Members to elate international gastronomy experts, tourism stakeholders and global professionals in the field of agriculture, culture, art and culturally and economically sustainable food production and consumption as well as to promote deep understanding about gastronomy tourism in Southeast Asia.

16. To promote tourism's role in inclusive and sustainable economic growth, Thailand uses Gastronomy Tourism to alleviate incomes of the 55 less visited provinces among only 22 highly visited provinces of our country.

17. A new measure on inclusive tourism is tax reduction of this 2018 fiscal year for those spending on hotels, restaurants and tourism services in these 55 less visited provinces. And yet Gastronomy Tourism is one of the goals.

18. The northern part of Thailand consists of 17 provinces. The tourism revenue ranks fourth of the country, after Bangkok, the southern and the central regions. High cool lands with rainforest mountains, adventurous creeks, and valleys attract tourists to this land. Cold weather fruits, vegetables and flowers are main products for tourism industries.

18. Clean organic food and food for health are consumed in hotels, wellness resorts and spas. Fruit skin is used in cosmetic or age slow down products.

19. The outstanding identity of this region is the nontoxic and natural food, linking to organic agriculture, visit to ethnic groups on high land, adventure tourism, forest and nature tourism, and Food Valley.

20. The local and signature foods in the northern part popular among tourists are sticky rice, chili paste, Hunglay curry, sausage, curry noodles.

21. Foods are served on a tray called Khan Tok.

22. The southern part consists of 14 provinces, gaining the 3rd most tourism revenue of the country, second to Bangkok and central part. It is popular among tourists for the beaches because the both sides of the southern part are paralleled with seas.

23. Andaman Sea is on the west with well-known tourism destinations, namely: Phuket, Phang-Nga, Samui and Krabi. The Gulf of Thailand is on the east with beautiful coast, key and important diving sites at Tao Island and Nang Yuan Island.

24. Southern foods are spicy, not popular among tourists, who prefer sea foods. The famous food of the south is bitter beans fried with shrimp paste. Moreover, there are yellow

curry, fish bowl curry, spicy parched chopped meat, and Liang vegetable, which is found only in the south, fried with eggs, etc.

25. Southern Sea Food Extravaganza for tourists.

26. 24 provinces in the biggest central plain of the country, fertile crops and vast rice fields are our Life, as we said “Rice is Life”. Cuisine of this part is daily consumed in the country and worldwide known as “Thai Food”.

27. Fried noodles, spicy shrimp soup or Tom Yam Kung and green curry.

28. The northeastern part or known as “Isaan” consists of 19 provinces. Its revenue from tourism ranks the bottom because of the huge area, scattered tourism destinations, hot and dry weather, and infertile soil.

29. Most of the tourism resources are historical and civilizational destinations, gaining tourism income from domestic tourists. There is necessity to accelerate distribution of products and services to these minor tourism cities.

30. Isaan foods are the favorite of Thais and foreigners although they are quite spicy, for example, grilled chickens, papaya salad, sticky rice, spicy catfish and spicy sauce. Isaan silk and fabric are also popular.

31. Potential Strength of Thai Food Sector is the support from the government, its wide variety of raw material, quality and food safety, delicious cuisines.

32. Thailand’s international campaign on “Kitchen of the World” promotes both our exportation and gastronomy tourism.

33. We appreciate our host country of the Second International Conference on Tourism, Gastronomy and Tourist Destination, Indonesia, for joining Thailand “Kitchen of the World” and carrying this logo in one of your prestigious restaurants.

34. Farmstay is one of various means to increase economic benefits using organic food demonstrating agricultural identity of each community. It fosters employment and poverty eradication.

35. Farmstay offers an opportunity to discover locality and authenticity of destination.

36. The Michelin Guide has just published an Amazing Thailand “Bangkok” version launched in January this year. Wearing her signature goggles, Jay Fai or Sister Fai,

the local legend continues what her father stated 70 years ago and makes crab omelet, crab curries and dried congee.

37. The World is full of good food. CNN World's 50 best foods have been awarded last week, on the 28th February. CNN quoted George Bernard Shaw's saying "There is no love sincerer than the love of food".

38. Mussaman Curry of Thailand is the first! "Emphatically the king of curries, and perhaps the king of all foods. Spicy, coconutty, sweet and savory. Even the packet sauce you buy from the supermarket can make the most delinquent of cooks look like Michelin potential. Thankfully, someone invented rice, with which diners can mop up the last drizzles of curry sauce.

39. "The Land of Smiles" isn't just a marketing catch-line. It's a result of being born in a land where the world's most delicious food is sold on nearly every street corner.

40. Gastronomy Tourism in Thailand is your true Experience.

8 - 9 March 2018

The Second International Conference on Tourism, Gastronomy and Tourist Destination
Trisakti School of Tourism, Jakarta, Indonesia.