

Benjarong
The Dusit Bangkok
Tel: 02-200-9000

As the signature Thai restaurant in the leading Thai owned hotel chain in the world, there is a lot of pressure on Benjarong to succeed. Fortunately, it more than responds to the challenge and is near the top of my list of fine restaurants in Bangkok.

Located in the lower level of the hotel, it overlooks an artificial waterfall. This could easily be tacky, but it adds an element of peacefulness to the restaurant. The interior is heavily carpeted, the lighting low and the furniture substantial. Although the furnishings are 'European', subtle decorative touches communicate this is a Thai restaurant.

The cuisine here is Royal Thai and features many of the elaborate dishes with sweet coconut curries that have made this branch of Thailand's cuisine famous. In the last couple of years, several new and innovative dishes have been added to the menu, adding lightness and excitement often missing in the past. A recent addition I



particularly enjoy is the B220 'Poached chicken breast and strawberries'. Strawberries aren't a typical Thai ingredient and I haven't previously encountered poached chicken in a Thai dish. The combination is superb and when the two are tossed with lime juice and Thai spices, the result is superb and unmistakably Thai. Among the traditional dishes, my favourite remains, 'Chu Chi Kam Poo Talay' – crab claws topped with sweet red curry sauce. If anyone does this dish better, I have yet to find it.

Although rich and spicy, the sauce doesn't overpower the crab. This is one of a handful of dishes I have eaten in Bangkok that makes me return to a restaurant again and again. To finish your meal off, don't neglect the B190 'Flamed Bananas'. They use local Thai whisky and for once it actually tastes good!

The service at Benjarong is always pleasant, efficient and several cuts above what it's like in the hotel's other outlets. The wine list is extensive and ranges well beyond the Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay only syndrome typical at many Thai restaurants.

If you have out of town guests and want to show them Thai food at its best, this

restaurant is a must. By Thai standards it is rather expensive, but in my opinion, it represents excellent value for money.