

Chote Chitr

**Turn left on Thanon Tanao off Ratchadamnoen at the 1st traffic light past Democracy Monument and go 1000 m until you come to Soi Phraeng Phuton; it's 50 m down the soi on the left
Tel: 02-221-4082**

Chote Chitr is a remarkable little restaurant. Every major city in the world seems to have at least one of these places. Small, excellent food, family owned, located on a side street, and no plans to expand by changing the way things are done. And most important of all, food that is a true and accurate representation of the best a culture has to offer. If you've ever eaten in one of these places, you'll know what I mean. Chote Chitr, located near Democracy Monument, is one of them. If you get a chance, do yourself a favor: Go there and enjoy some of Bangkok's best food.

Located in a shop house that is a part of a complex that is being preserved by local authorities, Chote Chitr is a tiny place with only five tables, one of which is usually the resting place for the family's tiny and mildly obnoxious little dogs. A cadre of foreign foodies frequents the place so the remarkably long menu is in English as well as Thai. Prices by Thai standards are moderate, but when applying an international yardstick, they seem incredibly cheap for what you get.



Robert Halliday, formerly a food critic with the Bangkok Post, has long championed the place and several dishes he recommends are usually the first items foreign customers try. I am no exception and find I have had a hard time expanding my initial repertoire. I enjoy the dishes so much it is difficult to force myself to order something new.

The banana flower salad is probably the most acclaimed dish and after you eat it, you'll understand why. Made with shredded banana leaves and small shrimp, it is mixed with a hot and sour dressing that is somehow better than similar dressings found elsewhere. Much of its success comes from the balance between hot and sour. I often find Thai salads so spicy hot that I have a difficult time eating them. Here the salad is definitely hot, but it seems endurable – make that enjoyable – because of the pronounced sourness. Another popular dish is the mee krob, Thailand's fried and crispy noodles covered with a sticky, sweet and spicy sauce. Again, the sauce is superior to what I've encountered elsewhere. It isn't so sweet that the other flavors in the sauce are hidden.

This is just the beginning. There is, of course, infinitely more to Chote Chitr than what has been described. I've found the restaurant much more enjoyable at lunchtime than in the evening. It is popular during lunch hour so it is best to arrive around 13:30. If you are serious about Thai food, this is a restaurant you must try.