

BITESIZE

RESTAURANTS WE RECENTLY REVIEWED



Mejico

Groove@CentralWorld, Level 2
Rama 1 Road
Call 02-252-6660

Decked out in vivid pink and black, with an unfinished wall, weathered wooden furniture and handicrafts adding a warm vibe to the frisky atmosphere, the 135-seater regards itself as a modern Mexican restaurant offering the authentic taste of the country's cuisine.

To go with the bar-centric concept, the food comes in small portions and modern, sometimes swanky, presentation.

Don't miss guacamole with banana chips (235 baht), corn lollipop (135 baht), chicken tacos (185 baht) and braised pork tacos (185 baht) for starters, and Australian beef short ribs (475 baht) for main course.

• Open daily, 11am-midnight.
Park at CentralWorld. Most credit cards accepted.

Touka

Bandara Suites Silom,
Sala Daeng Road
Call 02-236-8230

Stylishly decked out to evoke the feeling of a modern Japanese gastropub, this newly opened izakaya restaurant serves up a variety of kushiyaki (grilled meat on skewers), nabe (hot pot) and some light dishes from the ever-sizzling open kitchen, bordered by the dining counter. The tori tsukune (Japanese-style grilled chicken meat ball, 80 baht-90 baht per skewer) is superb, as are the skewered pork belly-daikon roll (80 baht) and skewered wagyu beef with wasabi (180 baht).

Starter worth noshing is kaisen carpaccio (180 baht), an exhibition of fresh tuna, salmon and Hokkaido giant scallop with house-made dressing. While the Hakata-style hot pot (350 baht) isn't just tastebud-enchancing but also real value for money. For dessert, try warm sweet red bean soup with char-grilled glutinous rice cake (120 baht).

• Open daily, 5-11pm. Park at Bandara Suites' car park. Credit cards accepted.

L'Atelier de Joel Robuchon Bangkok

MahaNakhon Cube, 5th floor
Narathiwat Ratchanakharin Road
Call 02-001-0698

Opened a few weeks ago, L'Atelier de Joel Robuchon Bangkok serves up contemporary haute French delicacies in tapas-like portions at the convivial dining counter that borders the open kitchen.

From the 30-item à la carte menu, best-sellers include salmon tartare with imperial caviar (1,900 baht), seared sea scallops with kumquat reduction (1,900 baht), roasted Brittany lobster with black pepper sauce (2,300 baht), Pyrenees milk-fed lamb cutlet with potato purée (1,100 baht) and free-ranged quail stuffed with foie gras (900 baht).

L'Atelier's compilation of desserts (600 baht each) features the likes of warm Guanaja chocolate soufflé with Sicilian pistachio ice cream and sugar sphere with Amoua strawberry and basil-flavoured milk foam. Service, by a team of international staff, is charming for its five-star efficiency and genuine cordiality.

• Open daily, 11.30am-2.30pm and 6.30-10.30pm. Park at MahaNakhon Cube. Credit cards accepted.

Vogue Lounge

MahaNakhon Cube, 6th floor
Narathiwat Ratchanakharin Road
Call 02-001-0697

The fourth dining establishment in the world officially inspired by the iconic fashion magazine, the all-day dining restaurant with an awe-inspiring outdoor zone serves up contemporary haute cuisine by a Michelin-starred French chef.

Presented in neat, tasting portions, the menu changes according to the season's best harvests and come at a fixed price of 350 baht for a savoury dish and 250 baht for a sweet selection. Don't miss otoro sashimi with lemongrass beef jelly; diver's scallop à la plancha with Iberico paleta; pan-seared line-caught sea bass with savoy cabbage, green apple and Béarnaise sauce; grilled Aveyron lamb rack with artichoke barbajuan; Japanese wagyu beef sirloin with black truffle potatoes and smoked bone marrow butter; and frozen matcha sphere dessert.

• Open daily, 10am-midnight.
Park at MahaNakhon Cube. Credit cards accepted.



The restaurant boasts a lively atmosphere.

EATING OUT | STORY: VANNIYA SRIANGURA
PHOTOS: PATTANAPONG HIRUNARD

IN ITS PRIME

With a larger space and near-constant crowd, this steakhouse is basking in success wrought by affordable, juicy cuts and a healthy variety of European dishes

For almost six years, Prime has been one of the most popular establishments among Western tourists and expatriates in Hua Hin's fine dining scene.

Run by Swedish brothers, chefs Anders and Peter Hagstedt, the restaurant first opened in 2009 as a small eatery and cocktail bar on the ground floor of a nondescript back alley hotel. A few months ago, in need of more space, Prime relocated to a main road just across from the Hilton hotel.

Designed to resemble a sophisticated European bistro, with red brick walls, rough-hewn wood flooring and warm yellow lighting, the open-air restaurant's focus is on charcoal-grilled steak, offering a variety of northern European fare and selections of fine wine and well-crafted cocktails.

The steakhouse's menu is available in Thai, English and Swedish, and features both classic and new dishes that showcase freshness of ingredients and exuberance of taste.

As it's a Scandinavian joint, you can't afford to miss the skagen, a classic Swedish dish named after a Danish port town, features toast topped with chopped prawns and other seafood, mixed with mayonnaise, lemon and dill.

Prime's bestselling half avocado with crab fish skagen (190 baht), a creative rendering that substitutes bread with avocado, was deserving of its high popularity. The mild and creamy quality of the avocado subtly downplayed the salty seafood, which was laced with pleasantly crunchy shrimp roe.

Another two starters worth ordering are beef carpaccio (280 baht) and smoked salmon carpaccio (250 baht).

The first, graced with sun-dried tomatoes, Parmesan cheese, sunflower seeds, rocket salad and a lemon wedge, was



Grilled beef tenderloin with duchess potatoes, served on a wooden plate.



ABOVE
Grilled New Zealand lamb rack.

LEFT
The bestselling half avocado crab fish skagen.

praiseworthy for the naturally sweet, thinly-sliced New Zealand beef, enhanced by the complementary aspects of its garnishes.

The latter, featuring the Norway's best-known cured fish with Parmesan cheese, rocket salad, capers and olive oil, was impeccable.

The chef also created a new dish that blends northern European fare with Thai piquancy. His chilled Canadian lobster with mango-avocado and ciabatta



Butter-fried fish with baby artichoke and tomato concasse.



Chilled Canadian lobster with mango-avocado salsa.



The restaurant relocated to a bigger space opposite the Hilton hotel.



Prime chefs and brothers Anders, right, and Peter Hagstedt.

toast (750 baht) was lent a sweet taste by the fresh crustacean, while the salsa, seethed in chopped capsicum and bird's eye chillies, provided a slight fiery kick.

Connoisseurs might find Prime's lobster soup (140 baht) a bit too salty when compared to the likes of lobster bisque. But considering the price and quality of the aromatic soup, which is topped with Cognac cream and served with brittle cheese twists, it more than manages to hold its own.

Prime also has more than 20 sizzling options from the grill.

All of its steaks are served with corn on the cob and a choice of sauce (nine options are available, including red wine, blue cheese, Béarnaise, chanterelle and smoky BBQ).

We were gratified with the 200g Australian Wagyu rib-eye (995 baht) and the New Zealand lamb rack (850 baht).

The restaurant's signature cuts, however, are listed under the "wooden platter" category.

From it, highly recommended is the grilled beef tenderloin with duchess potatoes, Béarnaise sauce and bacon-wrapped haricots (680 baht).

The hefty 200g tenderloin was surrounded by a monumental mass of the French-style puréed potatoes, grilled vegetables and a generous serving of Béarnaise sauce.

The substantial-sized accompaniment lent an addictive complement to the medium-cooked steak, which was extraordinarily tender and perfectly retained its flavour.

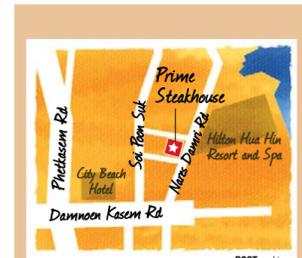
As for fish, the oven-baked salmon with capers, black olives, roasted tomatoes and potato purée (590 baht) and the butter-fried fresh fish with baby artichokes, tomato concasse, fresh herbs and rocket salad (650 baht) promise to delight your taste buds.

Pasta addicts won't be left unsatisfied either, as Prime offers seven pasta dishes on a regular basis.

We waived the likes of spaghetti Bolognese and farfalle with salmon in favour of penne with Wagyu beef sausage, tomato concasse, fresh herbs and Parmesan (290 baht), and were delighted. The restaurant has a decent selection of desserts, including apple pie (which resembled apple crumble) with overly sweet homemade vanilla sauce (220 baht) and delectable crème brûlée with mixed berries (170 baht).

Prime prices its dishes with relative modesty, and without a service charge — a fact uncommon in Hua Hin's fine dining scene. The constant overflow of diners apparently helps the restaurant keep its food affordable.

Over our two-hour Friday night visit, the 150-seater remained full. All tables were occupied by 8pm. Brisk service by a well-trained local staff kept the lively crowd satisfied.



Prime Steakhouse
154 Naresdamri Road,
Muang District Hua Hin
Call 032-512-979
Opens daily 6-11pm
Park at City Beach Hotel (fee applies)
Most credit cards accepted