

# Restaurants

## Getting to know real taste of Thailand closer to home

Looking for a regal feast at a princely price? **The King & Thai** may be just the destination for you

**A**uthenticity is hard to come by in Shropshire eateries that offer flavours from around the world. Chinese take aways and curry houses serve Anglicised variations of dishes that would be unrecognised in their native lands.

In Indian and Bangladeshi restaurants, local tastes are catered for by chefs who pander to Western palettes. In Cantonese restaurants, lurid red sauces and MSG-filled dishes are in total contrast to food on offer in downtown Beijing.

The same is true of many local Thai restaurants, which turn down or turn up flavours according to local preferences.

Happily, there's an exception to that rule. The King & Thai, at Broseley, serves food that would be just as warmly welcomed in Bangkok or along the banks of the Mekong as it is in the satellite town of Bridgnorth.

### Authenticity

The authenticity of the food is down to Suree Coates, who runs the King and Thai with her partner, Simon Turner.

Suree grew up in Thailand and began cooking at the age of five. As a child, she helped her grandmother set a fire, so that she could cook over charcoal.

The youngster would make curry pastes, spending hours pounding with a pestle and mortar.

"My grandmother taught me the importance of good quality raw produce and that

### Verdict: Fit for a king



Inside the impressive King & Thai restaurant



Authentic Eastern food is on offer here



The dessert menu is refreshingly extensive

**The King & Thai:** Broseley, Shropshire, TF12 5DL

**Telephone:** 01952 882004

**Website:** [www.dinewithus.co.uk/king-thai](http://www.dinewithus.co.uk/king-thai)

fresh cooked food is always the best," she says.

"In Thailand, food is a very big deal; it's a family affair with everyone getting involved." Suree's father would bring fresh fish from the river, the youngster would pick wild herbs and spices while visits to market to buy fresh vegetables were a daily affair.

"This is how Thai food should be and it's what I strive for from the King and Thai."

Suree learned at an early age the inherent pleasure that could be attained by pleasing people through food.

"I knew that cookery would be my path as I enjoyed watching people eat the dishes I'd produced.

"To this day, it's something that still

pleases me – to see and hear people enjoy the food I've produced." The first dish that the fledgling cook produced was either a red or green curry, cooked under the guidance of her grandmother, for the rest of her family.

And so, when a friend and I visited the King and Thai, we opted for one of each.

### Sublime

Both were utterly sublime, offering a complexity and depth of flavour that other, local restaurants simply don't compete with.

But I've raced ahead....

The King and Thai opened in recent years at the former Forester Arms, in Avenue Road, recorded in Father Dave's excellent book, *Inns and Alehouses of Broseley*. The venue

had been quenching the thirsts of hardy Broseley folk since the 1820s. It had formerly been at The Square, in Ironbridge, where it built up a large and appreciative clientele over seven years.

The venue is all leather chairs, ambient music and neutral colours that provide a relaxing environment in which to dine.

The service was excellent, with the waitresses showing impressive levels of professionalism and attentiveness.

My friend started with marinated prawns on toast, with a sweet and sour dip.

The dish was as far removed from mushy, sesame-sprinkled prawn toasts as Libya is from peace. Fat, juicy prawns sat atop fried toasts with a delicate sauce to the side.

I opted for the spiced duck with lettuce, a ferociously good dish peppered with ring-a-ding hot spice.

My friend opted for the red curry and received a beautifully presented bowl of sublime, savoury indulgence.

### Delicious

The quality was breathtaking. My filling and delicious green curry was similarly persuasive, displaying effortless skill and innate understanding on the part of the chef.

Happily – and, again, in direct contrast to most overseas restaurants – there was a wide selection of original desserts.

I selected the deep fried ice cream, a decadent sweet that came wrapped in crisp doughnut-like pastry and was topped with chocolate and a strawberry.

My friend opted for the passion fruit crème brulee, wolfing it down without taking a breath. The bill for three courses with drinks was an entirely reasonable £55.

I've eaten Thai food better than the dinner we enjoyed at the King and Thai – but only once. That was during a visit to Thailand, when the fresh ingredients and zing-zangy flavours were executed with consummate and instinctive ease.

The King and Thai offers regal food that gives customers a genuine taste of the Far East.

**Andy Richardson**

### Meet the chef: Suree Coates



Chef Suree from The King & Thai is proud of her heritage

★ Although Suree Coates is proud of her Thai heritage, she has an appreciation for other flavours from around the world.

"I'm fond of many types of food, I love a good Sunday roast I like Italian and French cuisine and I've a special fondness for southern Spanish food with all its mixture of Moorish influences," she says.

"I love the freshness of the seafood and the simplicity of the preparation. Tapas is fantastic if the right places are found. I'm lucky as my partner's mother lives in Almeria in the south and as it's not a tourist trap the food is genuine and local.

"It's an agricultural area on the coast so seafood and good fresh vegetables are readily available. Being only 50 miles from Morocco the north African influence creates an interesting blend of flavours."

She enjoys visiting other restaurants in Shropshire, although does not have a favourite.

"I don't have a particular favourite but I'm lucky living in Shropshire as we have some very fine restaurants that cater for all tastes," said Suree.

"Ludlow is famous for its fine cuisine but closer to home there are some fantastic places from the village pub doing a fantastic Sunday carvery using local beef and seasonal veg to the new breed of Indian restaurants who are moving away from the balti house style of cuisine to a more refined dining experience."