

FOOD & DRINK • RESTAURANTS & CAFÉS

How to Get the Anthony Bourdain Treatment in L.A.'s Thai Town

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May 04, 2014



Courtesy Jet Tila

Wouldn't it be nice to get a No Reservations-style food tour of a city? In Hollywood's Thai Town, celebrity chef Jet Tila makes it possible.

Ever wish you could go on a *No Reservations* -style food tour of a new city? In Hollywood's Thai Town, it's possible. [Jet Tila](#)—celebrity chef, battler on *Iron Chef America*, restaurateur, radio show host, and the guy who led Anthony Bourdain on an enviable Thai culinary odyssey—now leads locals and visitors on his “[Flavors of Thai Town Food Tour](#).” The seven-stop, nearly three-hour food and culture trek follows the exact itinerary Tila formerly reserved for visiting chefs and journalists.

The Thai Town enclaves—there's one in L.A., another in Sydney, Australia—are some of the best places to find authentic (and might I add, delicious) Thai food outside of Thailand. The neighborhood is a must for food-and-culture-seeking travelers, but even native Angelenos are daunted by the endless array of eateries that line Thai Town's five-block stretch. Tome-like menus that list hundreds (and hundreds) of dishes don't help either. Tila, whose parents opened the first Thai restaurant and grocery store in Los Angeles, demystifies all that by sharing his favorite hangouts and dishes along with lessons on utensil use (hint: chopsticks are only appropriate for noodle eating), proper greeting etiquette, and insider secrets to having the best possible Thai restaurant experience.

Here are the Thai Town Tour's best sites and bites:



All photos by Valentina Silva.

1. Papaya salad. The papaya salad from [Ruen Pair](#) is “the best in the western United States,” said Tila. Palm sugar is part of what makes this salad—composed of green beans, tomato, dried shrimp, and lime juice—so special. *5257 Hollywood Blvd; 323-466-0153*



2. Pork jerky. Ruen Pair’s deep-fried marinated pork served with a special hot yum sauce allowed Tila to demonstrate the proper way to use sticky rice: Roll a small piece into a ball, flatten it out, and use it to pick up morsels of food sans fork.



3. Jade noodles. [Sapp Coffee Shop's](#) jade noodles get their green tint from spinach. The dry (no soup) noodle dish is served at room temperature and includes a hearty mix of barbecue pork, crabmeat, and roast duck. Tila recommended adding a squeeze of citrus and making sure all the ingredients are well combined before taking that first bite. *5183 Hollywood Blvd; 323-665-1035*



4. Sukhothai noodles. Another specialty at Sapp Coffee Shop, the Sukhothai noodles dish is a hot and sour soup with pork, shrimp, trout fish balls, and green beans in a flavorful broth with accents of lime and vinegar. *5183 Hollywood Blvd; 323-665-1035*



5. Grocery shopping. After a quick trip to Siam Book Center to browse Thai newspapers, books, and curios, Tila revealed the “trinity of Thai cooking”—kaffir lime leaves, lemongrass, and galanga—at BangLuck Market. He also dished on which brands make the best fish sauce and most authentic Sriracha chili sauce. *Siam Book Center: 5178 Hollywood Blvd; BangLuck Market: 5170 Hollywood Blvd; 323-660-6000*



6. Buddhist shrine. Between restaurants, Tila offered a brief history of the neighborhood's Buddhist shrines and spirit houses. _Thailand Plaza, 5311 Hollywood Blvd

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7. Spicy Thai basil pork stir-fry. The last savory bite of the tour is the spicy Thai basil pork stir-fry from [Red Corner Asia Restaurant](#). The fried, yolky egg that tops the dish should be broken and mixed with the ground pork sausage and rice. 5267 *Hollywood Blvd*; 323-466-6722



8. Dessert box. A visit to [Bhan Kanom Thai](#) caps off the tour, where we dug into a box packed with house-made roasted coconut pancakes, crepes filled with pandan cream, taro coconut corn fritters, layered coconut and pandan gelee, jasmine sticky rice cakes, and coconut mochi balls. The *kanom buang* (sweet and savory “tacos” with a crisp outer shell) were a highlight. 5271 Hollywood Blvd; 323-871-8030

Jet Tila’s “[Flavors of Thai Town Food Tour](#),” along with other Los Angeles food tours, can be booked through [Melting Pot Food Tours](#) on their [website](#).

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