



A Great Leap Forwards

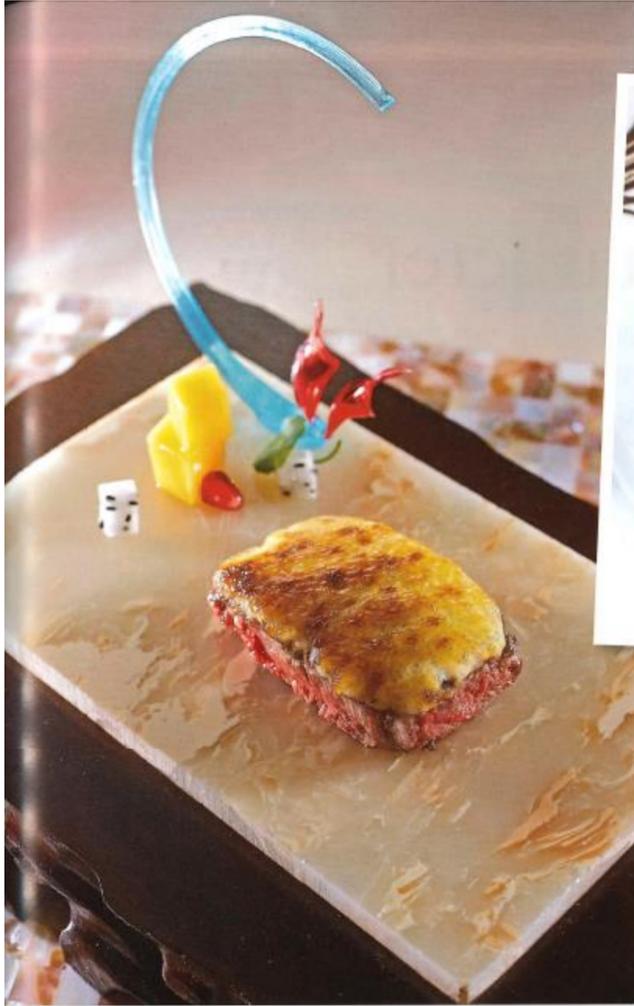
*M Krub gives Bangkok's Chinese dining scene a long-needed, beautifully presented rebcoot, discovers **Tim Footman***

BANGKOK IS HOME to any number of excellent Chinese restaurants, from shabby old shop houses doling out comforting bowls of noodles to lavish, red-and-gold palaces of indulgence where extended families gather round lazy susans to enjoy set-piece house specialities like peking duck and suckling pig, the recipes for which haven't changed for decades. It's a comforting state of affairs but you do wish that once in a while someone would come along and tweak the script.

Enter Man Wai Yin. The Hong Kong native settled in Bangkok in 1995 and since 2011 he's been building up the Chef Man stable of

PRESENTATION PIECE (From top)
Chrysanthemum tofu in almond soup; a selection of petits fours





EATS MEETS WEST *Wagyu rib-eye with mustard cream sauce could come from a French menu; aumônière with crab meat, despite the name, seems more Chinese*

restaurants, with three at the last count and some more affordable outlets opening soon. His latest venture, M Krub, is rather different, though, bringing Western ingredients and presentation—not to mention a French pastry chef—into the mix. The location in MahaNakhon Cube, three floors below L'Atelier de Joël Robuchon, strongly suggests that he's aiming at the same clientele that's been flocking to the big-name Michelin-heritage restaurants that have opened in Bangkok over the past 12 months or so.

So what's so special about M Krub? At its core, it's still classic Cantonese cuisine, but with a renewed focus on quality ingredients (from Asia and beyond) and spectacular, meticulous presentation. It's all set menus, with dishes presented in individual portions—no vast tureens or whole piglets. Day-to-day operations are the responsibility of executive chef Jiang Jisheng but, as Man himself says, “all the dishes have to come through me.”

And what dishes they are. We begin gently with two crab concoctions, one layered with tofu and spinach, the other a delicate egg-



white purse with fish maw that Man has been tinkering with for over 30 years. “I'll never be satisfied,” he sighs. Both demonstrate modern Western techniques but they also show off another of M Krub's strengths, the calligraphic skills of Liu Cheng from Hunan, who paints designs directly onto the plates for each meal.

Then there's a more conventionally Chinese presentation, with scallop and mango on a crisp, golden nest made from finely shredded bread; but that's followed by a piece of rare rib eye topped with a delectably creamy mustard crust that wouldn't look out of place at Robuchon. Purists will probably be storming out of the door by now in search of more traditional delicacies. That's fine—all the more for us.

Fried grains in a stone casserole, a combination of rice, job's tears, oats, lotus seeds and more goodies, is more identifiably Asian, as is the extraordinary chrysanthemum tofu in almond soup, with bean curd sliced till it resembles some kind of otherworldly sea creature. And then we're in the capable hands of patissier Marc Razurel, with a deconstructed lemon tart, a crisp citrus shell cracking to reveal the delights hidden within; and finally an extraordinary display of petits fours, displayed with a Chinese tea service.

This is Chinese fine dining of the highest order and Man is far from apologetic about it. There's a reasonable lunch menu for 2,800 baht but the top-priced dinner set runs to 12,000 baht per head, without wine. The chef thinks this keeps his team on its toes. “This restaurant is expensive,” he says, “so we can't expect diners to give us a second chance.”

M Krub, MahaNakhon Cube, 96 Narathiwat Road, Bangkok 10500; tel: 0-2019-8105

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