

Take Me
Along
Thachin River

Celebrating Citrus in Thailand

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Dedication

to

Sophie Phipps
aka Sista Sophie

one of the sweeter members of humanity

Take me along the blue, surrounded by the green: take me along Thachin River.

Ahhh, Purple Heron, do you still revel in this sight everyday? Hoping for frogs and salamanders, as I wish to see pomelos and tangarines. You amongst the reed beds and I on the open water. And while enjoying the blue and green reverie, my purplish friend, I'll drink this *Nam Gluay Bpan* drink; a Citrus Banana Punch, of bananas, oranges and water.

I guess you've visited the water throughout the land, but my focus for the time being, is here in Nakhon Pathom province, one of the regions where the citrus grows: I've come here in search of pomelo. After visiting some orchards, I'll treat myself to what is called a "*Yum Som O*," a pomelo salad. Unlike you, elegant one, I'm not an eater of fish, so I'll ask for one without the shrimps - which I know you like – and the fish sauce. I shall be more than content with a pomelo salad of lime juice, coconut, red chilli jam, tamarind puree and cilantro leaves: yes more than content.

Do you like to fish where the citrus grows? Do you dilly-dally in their aroma? After the hunting, do you relax near the orchards of the green gems?

I see you have caught a snake, master fisherman; I'm off to meet the master farmer, who cultivates the Thong Dee variety. You have your pleasure and I shall have mine: may the prayers from the shrine, fall on your head as well as on my one.

As well as fish, snake, shrimps and other things, I know you like insects. For those of us who love citrus, there is an insect which generates a different sentiment to love: the Asian citrus psyllid, the little destroyer. I know the citrus farmers of Nakhon Pathom, must also curse that insect.

From one disaster to another! How did you fare in the flood? It was hard for the citrus family; the flood brought disease and a decrease in soil quality: there was no thanksgiving that year for the harvest. But the farmers carried on and pomelo came again. Sometimes, *ardea purpura*, I pay homage to human endurance, as I celebrate the generosity of citrus.

By the way, I saw your larger cousin, the Goliath Heron, standing in the Blue Nile in Ethiopia. I hope I see your smaller cousin, the mangrove Heron, here on Thachin River. The Thong Dee is also known as "Golden Pomelo"; do they call you the Silver Heron?

I do not know, but maybe someone in that riverside restaurant, is partaking of a drink of lime and lemongrass; while another eats a citrus chicken salad, with input from orange and lime juice, as well as other sources; someone else might be finding enjoyment, via a coconut cheesecake, whose ingredients include lime juice and lime leaves. The interaction of citrus knows no bounds; there is no discrimination from that family: and their generosity extends to all.

As you give thanks for rodents and small birds, I give thanks for all the pomelo give us; iron, to boost the immune system; B vitamins for our nervous system; pectin for our digestion; potassium to regulate blood pressure and so on: the long list of beneficial qualities.

I wish you well Purple Heron. I hope the prayers from the nearby shrine include you and I also. Let there always be pomelo in Thailand, as well as the omnipresence of lime and the other members of the family, who give and give. As Thachin River continues to flow, let the citrus grow.

Sources

Journal of Thai Interdisciplinary Research

Thai National Parks

Appon's Thai Food

Yummly