

Heard it through the grapevine

Vine dining on homemade fare next to a National Park

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There aren't many places in Thailand where you can dine amidst an extensive vineyard next to a national park. And if you are looking for excellent home-style cuisine, then your choices can even be less than a handful.



The bright and homely setting of the vineyard eatery, Vincotto. PHOTOS: ANUSORN SAKSEREE

Located in GranMonte wine estate in Asoke Valley, Vincotto, meaning grape syrup, is a warm and lovely restaurant where home-cooked meals are prepared according to the vineyard owner's family recipes. Every single dish is carefully selected and created by the lady of the house, Sakuna Lohitnavy, to offer her guests a real gastronomic pleasure while celebrating the freshness of the ingredients, especially the grapes.

The menu of Vincotto is not large but it is impressive. We kicked off our dinner with pan-fried foie gras with

grape juice sauce (780 baht), which featured three moderately thin slices of duck liver accompanied by poached apple and drenched with balsamic grape juice sauce. The foie gras, crispy on the outside and velvety soft on the inside, was superbly enhanced with the subtle grape juice sauce which displayed a perfect combination of sweet, tangy and grapy zests. While the poached apple offered a soft and sweet cut to the meat.

For salad, I suggest that you go for prawn and fresh grape salad with fresh grapes (190 baht). Though sounding to me somewhat uninteresting, this fruity and refreshing dish has been proved to be very delightful with tasty home-made dressing and crisp and sweet fresh fruit.



Prawn and fresh grapes salad.

Whether or not you're a fan of cheesy dishes, I'm sure you'll love crab au gratin (370 baht). The recipe for this classic Gallic dish came from Le Metropolitan, one of Bangkok's oldest and most respected French restaurants in the '70s. A generous portion of crabmeat was properly seasoned and stuffed in a crab shell and topped with cheese before being baked. Served piping hot, the dish, meaty in texture and subtly cheesy and salty in flavour, was of course scrumptious.

Penne with smoked duck (290 baht) is a good option if you're in for the poultry. The dish, featuring al dente pasta nicely intermingled with the aromatic and flavoursome slices of duck meat, offered a deliciously spicy taste.

As our dinner progressed, never did we know that the real highlight of the evening hadn't yet come. Sakuna's signature slow-cooked short ribs in red wine (490 baht), served with fettucini pasta, presented a true tastebud delight for beef lovers. The properly cooked and pungently flavourful beef was tender but far from being mushy.

For desserts, we had fresh grape crepe (150 baht), which came stuffed with home-made vanilla ice cream, and grape cheese pie (95 baht) which was not too sweet nor heavy.

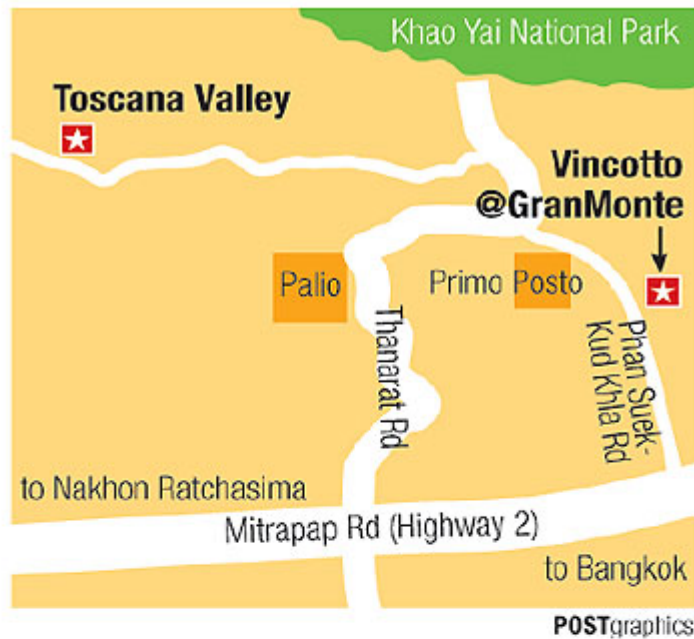
Vincotto is a small restaurant with a seating capacity of 50 in its main dining room and 70 outdoor. Reservations are recommended, especially on weekends.



Slow-cooked short ribs with fettucini.



The very scrumptious crab au gratin.



Toscana Valley Restaurant

Khao Yai-Wang Nam Khieo Road, off Thanarat Road
Moo Si Sub-district, Pak Chong district
Nakhon Ratchasima Province
Tel 084-360-3711, 02-745-6999
Open: Daily 6am-8pm
Parking: On the premises
Credit card: Most accepted

Vincotto

GranMonte Wine Estate
Phan Seuk-Kud Khla Road
Pak Chong district, Nakhon Ratchasima province
Tel 081-900-8282
Open: Daily 11am-8pm
Parking: On the premises
Credit card: Most accepted
GPS co-ordinates: N 14° 34.082 : E 101° 16.654

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About the author



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