



*One Night In
Bangkok*

Sometimes the key to packing a lot of fun into one night is all about proximity. Bangkok aficionados know that you're always only one bad transportation decision away from losing an hour or two in a traffic jam. Finding everything you are looking for in one spot is rare. But, on this particular night that's exactly what I did.

An old friend called and asked me to join him on what he called 'American Night'. 'We're going to indulge in the three B's' he proclaimed. 'Beer, Bourbon and Burritos'. How could I resist? So, I jumped on the Skytrain and headed towards Sukhumvit Soi 23, an area I know well.

About 50 meters past the entrance to Soi Cowboy is a cluster of eating and drinking establishments that could certainly exist in Anywhere, USA. Our first stop was at a big outdoor beer garden called Craft. Craft boasts about a zillion craft beers from the US and beyond, many of them on tap. They also have a small but powerful menu of American pub-grub favourites like wings, ribs, burgers and a heart-stopping pulled pork sandwich. A team of Thai cooks are also on hand banging out traditional Thai dishes that 'pair well' with beer.

My problem with all those beer choices is committing to a beverage I've never tried before. As it turned out, I didn't have to. We ordered a 'flight' of beer which was our choice of five different brews in small portions. Our lightest choice was a beer called 'Orange Ave' which as advertised tasted like oranges. The 'Big Daddy' IPA tasted like old socks, The 'Chainbreaker' IPA was light and thirst-quenching, and the 'Jet Black Heart' Porter tasted like cold coffee. Without a doubt the best of the lot was a New Orleans Ale called 'Dead Guy' ... smooth and potent.

We finished our 'flight' and moved into the next venue right next door called The Slanted Taco, a brand new Mexican eatery. This place is really cosy and only seats about 30.

The Slanted Taco has an upbeat and hip atmosphere with an elaborate Aztec inspired mural on one wall and Lucha Libre (Mexican wrestling) posters on the other. The margaritas are hand mixed, the tortillas handmade and the selection of salsas is outstanding.

My friend had fish tacos made with pan-fried sea bass. Very fresh ingredients and the mild salsa really complimented the fish. I had the pork carnitas burrito. Fresh, tasty and I should warn you ... look out for that sneaky super-hot salsa. I knew I'd need to chase it with ice cream later. The two things I'll remember about The Slanted Taco (besides the unusual name) is that it is California Mexican cuisine as opposed to Tex-Mex and the portions aren't ridiculous sizes like many American style restaurants. I was satisfied but not stuffed.

So, we walked out the door of the Mexican joint and walked about 10 steps into the 'Bourbon' phase of our evening. Whisgars is an appropriately named cigar and whisky bar. Think mahogany, leather and an extremely well-stocked liquor cabinet. If you're a single-malt Scotch guy, Whisgars is heaven. We opted for big juicy double Woodford Reserve Bourbons on the rocks.

As we watched the band set up, a charming young lady named Puna coaxed me into taking a stroll through their equally well-stocked cigar humidor. Cubans, Dominicans, Nicaraguans ... nothing smells quite like high-grade cigar leaf. I chose a Maduro and a milder Montecristo for my buddy. Puna expertly cut and toasted each of our cigars to perfection. Is it wrong for me to think watching that process was downright sexy?

The band kicked off with some blistering blues and we were elevated to a new plane of Americana bliss. The oblong room with ultra-high ceilings has unexpectedly good acoustics and the big smoke-eater ventilators keep the place from getting too hazy. We sat through three sets of music, 5 rounds of bourbon and even tried a 'flight' of single malt scotches.

Standing in the parking lot around midnight, I hailed my Uber driver by phone. 'Normally I'm not one to get homesick' I told my friend. 'But I think American Night is just what I needed'. 'I know' he said with a whisky infused grin ... 'A little slice of Americana right here in Bangkok'.

By Bart Walters

