

# O'ZAPFT IS!

Dara Executive Chef Bernhard Koll about staging the first official Samui Oktoberfest

He works in one of the most architecturally beautiful restaurants on Koh Samui. This is the **Dara Serene**, a romantic beachside idyll unique on the island, and probably the rest of Thailand. Walking along Chaweng beach you'll see a pavilion rising above the sands that looks like a scene from a fairy tale. A two-floored pavilion rises from the sands and tapers up to a spire-like roof, where you can see the delicious gold painting of a Thai peacock, its gossamer outlines and brushwork redolent of an age long gone. The restaurant is however entirely contemporary and serves up delicious dinners to those lucky enough to chance across it. Guests have views out over the bay of Chaweng, and nearer still the unusual swimming pool, which contains an arm of water that snakes past the restaurant towards the hotel itself. The creative quirk that's gone into all this is welcomingly refreshing after some of the bland, bald & standardized hotel layouts that Koh Samui has grown all too used to over the last few years.

Bernhard Koll is in no doubt that this is a rather special restaurant and he's determined to make it not just look good but be a gastronomic home to some very fine international and Thai food. His own journey to the restaurant has been a much longer one than most of us need take. To head such a place, you have to be a lot more than just a good chef. Honing his experiences has taken him many years. "I started cooking quite basic food in a Bavarian restaurant and then worked in Davos, before heading to Germany again, where I worked for a couple of years as an executive chef. Eventually, I landed a job in Bermuda at the Mandarin Oriental there, and arrived knowing very little English."

Today, he's more than fluent, and needs to be as he has to train others in the mechanics of cooking and running Dara's two restaurants. But he hasn't forgotten his culinary roots; Samui's first large-scale Oktoberfest will be held at the Dara's second restaurant situated on the beach road, which is named **Lanna Seafood**, and although the setting is just about as far from Bavaria as you could possibly get, Bernhard is putting on lavish food and drink - just like back at home. Says Bernie: "I try to keep things as authentic as possible, with dishes that you'd really find at the Oktoberfest. We'll have **Paulaner beer**, wheat beer and some special Oktoberfest beer as well." Bernhard knows exactly what he's doing as he used to supply a constant stream of food and drink to one of the big venues in Munich, where the Oktoberfest is held.



before joining Dara, Bavarian born Bernie had a successful stint at the Oriental Bangkok amongst others

On Samui, the food will be no less German with prime delights such as oven-roasted pork neck with dumplings and cabbage salad, roulade of beef, Koenigsberg style meatballs, Nuernberger sausages, and plenty of "schmankerln" (starters). It's the kind of event where you need to arrive hungry, as it'll be hard to hold back. Fish lovers can indulge in barbecued fresh fish served on skewers, also a well-known Oktoberfest dish. For afters, try the excellent apfelstrudel with vanilla sauce or apfelkuchen, and if your waistline can manage it, there's also Black Forest gateau. Impossible to resist, as by the time you've started, you want to keep on going.



The Oktoberfest goes from 13 - 28 September, from 6pm until last orders at 11.30 pm. At the Lanna Seafood Restaurant in the Dara Samui Beach Resort & Spa Villa, located in North Chaweng on the beach road. Reservations: 077 231 323