

Tales From Thailand,

2019, #3

Kitchen Zen! A truly humbling experience...What a wonderful opportunity to fail so blatantly, on so many levels e.g. hand-slicing tarot chips with a simple grater for an hour. They're supposed to be consistent...no two of mine look alike! And I keep switching hands, cause I'm a wimp!



Or peeling hundreds of friggin' quail eggs, until I'm cross-eyed. (Actually, I was the last one standing, in that particular event) Isn't life fascinating!...
(from a note I wrote to my pal
Chef Tuesday last week.)

I'd like to dedicate this issue to the many millions of prep cooks and chefs working around the world, out of sight, in the pre-dawn hours.

The only acknowledged kitchen "hero" I know of, in literature, is Han Shan, the ninth century Taoist poet, who was the wild and giggling dish-washer in the back of the monastery, on Cold Mountain.





This morning, I peeled bushels of these sharp and spiny “thangs,” with no evidence of skill or speediness. “Moi?” I thought I was a speed-chef, back in my own Wattle Hollow kitchen.

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(some of you already know that the sound “ha” is the word for the number five, in Thai.)

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And here is the second sequel to our lek-lek, cha cha (little by little, slowly, slowly) story of garbage here at S.D.S., for you eager readers...

In the opening sequence, I impulsively separated out the plastic from the food waste, with my hands, in the 55-gallon kitchen trash barrel, and was met with

“the BlinK”.

This did have some impact on the local psyches, but not quite enough to change their deepest inclinations.

A few days later, I attended the all-staff and maichee/nuns check-in meeting, armed with some hastily scribbled notes, and Nawng-Joy, as my interpreter.

I had to check in with Spirit and my pendulum about the appropriateness of this presentation, and indeed, still felt my adrenaline pulsing as I stood up.

My Mother

Sawadkha. I am so happy to be in this beautiful place with wonderful people. My heart is full.

However, I have a problem and I need your help:

It's about my mother... She's in big trouble... Her name is Mei Torani (Earth Mother).

In her bloodstream - the ocean, there are islands of plastic larger than Thailand, floating there, killing the fish and all the wildlife.

In her lungs, the air - she can not breathe properly, because the mixture of gases is no longer correct - too much methane and carbon dioxide.

The problem is so severe that the European Union banned single-use plastic last month. That is all the little plastic bags, all the straws, all the plastic cups. Can you imagine that? I'm sure a lot of companies are not happy about that...because we all like convenience.

So, we too are a part of our Mother's health. What can we do? Satthien Dhamma Sathan is always on the pioneer edge of important solutions.

***Perhaps we can ask everyone who comes to buy a reusable drinking cup, and bring it back next time? We can raise the price of drinks to include that, at Spiritual Sip, and Open Secret?*

***We can also sell reusable shopping bags, instead of giving out plastic bags at the store. It can become a very ching ching fashion, na kha? Groovy SDS shopping bags!!! with dhamma slogans on them.*

***We can buy reusable containers and take them to the market, instead of accepting a dozen little plastic bags, perhaps? It is more trouble, I understand, but would you do it for your mother?*

Here at SDS, Ajahn Chom has been thinking about this for twenty or thirty years. He prays every day, he told me. He has been using the same reusable cup for eight years. I would, too, but I always lose mine.

Ajahn Chom is cleaning our canal water every day, so we can stay here in paradise.

***He cleans it three ways:*

He makes vinegar from the kitchen scraps and pours the vinegar into the canal water. It has over 500 beneficial types of bacteria and fungi in it. It's easy if the kitchen scraps do not have plastic garbage mixed in

He maintains this entire world of worm condominiums. They not only enrich the soil and eat the scraps, but their pee cleans the water incredibly well. Worm pee has 4,000 types of beneficial bacteria and useful fungal properties. It's also useful for insect control and as a fertilizer.

Ajahn Chom then aerates the canal water several times, putting it into a reservoir, and then piping it all over SDS.

The essence of our gardens comes from the composting operations. Veggie waste can be made into soil like magic. Unless it is mixed with plastic garbage. Then it becomes nasty and difficult.

Garbage food mixed with landfill creates more methane for our overheated planet.

I'd be happy to create two sets of garbage cans in the kitchen....right next to each other. We could paint the Mei Torani one bright pink and put paintings on it.

We need to role-model new habits that can help our Mother recover. People all over the world look up to us and learn from us!

Lek lek, cha cha (little by little, slowly slowly)

Next, Chom, got up and asked the group:

Why do we need a falang/foreigner to come here and tell us these things?

He was crying.

There was a bit of silence....I didn't see any BlinKs. And Khun Mae asked the group,

*How can we incorporate these ideas into Children's Day this weekend?
The children are our future.*

Since then, I've seen many little ripples flowing outward, as we each do our best for Mother.



Here is Chom showing our children the worm condominiums on Family Day, yesterday. He is looking much happier this week.



My schedule is shaping up:

- **Mornings are alms-walk, on week-days.
- **then Kitchen Zen, for a few hours
- **then Maichee English or yoga/dance classes
- **nap-time for Pa Joy/Auntie Joy
- **editing/writing S.D.S, pamphlets for the website.
- **some days, yoga for the littlest maichees. These are the children who were abandoned, some of them from

their first day on the planet, and have always lived here. They are raised by the nuns.

The first couple of classes with them, they were wearing nuns-robles, as they do most of the time. And they weren't nearly as strong as "my" kids at the orphanage in Kanchanaburi (where I'll be teaching again in two weeks).

I woke up last week, with the thought:

Hmmm, these are NOT nuns. They didn't choose to be nuns. It's going to be very hard to

make that emotional shift into adolescence if they have no relationship to their own bodies and all the internal chaos that is supposed to accompany growth.



And, although I felt trepidation again, about rocking the boat, I started interviewing the relevant people who spoke good English. They all agreed with me completely, to my surprise. Thai culture does not generally reward risk-taking.

I asked for permission to procure kid's street clothing...and also perhaps if we could start swimming in the brand-new and incredible swimming pool on top of the newest building...truly an artistic and engineering phenomenon.

It's all happening now. Thank you, Spirit... Cha cha, lek, lek.

This, again, is the first sequel in the secularization of our littlest nuns.

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Thanks to many of you for your birthday greetings, dear readers. It was my seventy-first revolution around the sun....what a privilege.

People here at the center seem to watch closely what I will and won't eat or drink. I have now been gifted enough organic and herbal tea to open a chai shoppe! Fruit arrives every day, and I give most of it away.

My birthday cake was spectacular: the experimental efforts of three lovely women. It is layers of coconut milk, fruit juice and coconut water, all thickened with agar-agar.

Delicious and very ching-ching/fashionable, as it contains no refined

sugar or flour. I assured the bakers that this would eventually sell very well in Thailand to the growing New Age population here. They took photos and copied the recipes.

My on-going effort to clean up my own body is the gift I am offering myself.

Blessings to all of you on your own resolutions to more deeply enjoy and imbibe these fantastic “nothings,” from which the very best of something arises.



Our community kids playing on the hand-crocheted (by volunteers) playground.

