

# A STAR IS BORN

For the first time ever, IGNIV by Andreas Caminada has flown the coop, leaving Switzerland to create a new home at The St. Regis Bangkok. GAVIN NAZARETH has much to yodel about after his meal

**A**lmost a decade ago, a chef I was working with handed me a magazine he had picked up on one of his many jaunts around the European culinary scene. Titled *Caminada*, the cover photo was a closeup of a man's torso, his hands extended outwards from which an explosion of yellow powder obscured his face. The cover line simply said "Powder". Inside the exquisitely produced publication, incredible photography gave life to an exciting bouquet of features on culture and cooking. One looked at how the chef drew inspiration from concrete, snow, gold, and flour. Another took an in-depth dive into the tradition of buckwheat, from producing and processing it to using in cooking. There were fascinating stories about people, regions and products, and even a section dedicated to the craft of cooking, with cooking methods and extraordinary recipes. It was visually driven with much attention to the small details. This was my first introduction to the exciting world of chef Andreas Caminada.

Until last year, Andreas Caminada might not have been a household name in Bangkok. But the acclaimed chef-owner of the three-Michelin-starred Schloss Schauenstein restaurant in Switzerland certainly made people sit up and take notice when he teased taste buds with "The Peak" last year. This intimate pop-up countertop at the St. Regis Bangkok was just an *amuse-bouche* of things to come.

Last month his second restaurant brand, IGNIV, flew its coop to make a nest in the space vacated by Jojo, The St. Regis Bangkok hotel's acclaimed Italian restaurant. This is the first iteration of IGNIV outside of Switzerland, as Caminada's three other "nests" (the reference will hit you as you read on) are in Bad Ragaz and St. Moritz – both of which recently earned two Michelin stars – and in Zürich.

"Bangkok is an amazing city! I love the deep connection it has with food, its rich culture and lively, bustling atmosphere. It has become an internationally, much-regarded culinary hotspot in recent years," says Caminada, adding that IGNIV Bangkok's fine-dining sharing experience will charm its guests.

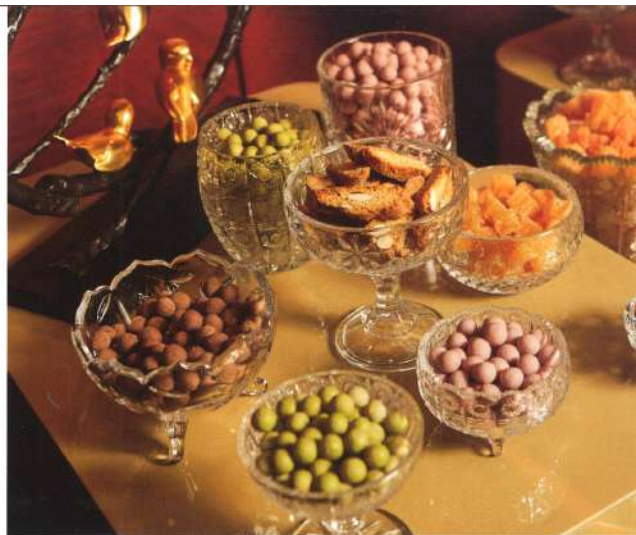




## LIFESTYLE *Indulgence*



CLOCKWISE FROM THIS PAGE (ABOVE): THE ELEGANT DINING ROOM DESIGNED BY PATRICIA URQUIOLA; OFFERINGS FROM THE CANDY STORE; MAINS FROM THE THIRD COURSE; HEAD CHEF DAVID HARTWIG AND PASTRY CHEF ARNE RIEHN, CANELES; PAPAYA ROLL



Drawing inspiration from the restaurant's name – which means “nest” in Romansh, Switzerland's fourth official language – renowned Spanish interior designer Patricia Urquiola (who also styled the other three restaurants) has created the distinctive conviviality of a bird's nest, which matches the kitchen philosophy of sharing. Her mixing and matching of contemporary materials and classic elements not only underlines the nest concept, but also reflects the frenetic energy and essence of the city. Dressed in muted shades of jade, the elegant dining room, with refined fabric *boiseries* and dark wood flooring, is dominated by large brass mesh nested chandeliers. Comfy sofas stacked with bird motif cushions are fronted by circular marble-topped tables and rounded-back swivel chairs. In short, it qualifies as one of the most beautiful dining rooms in the city.

The food here is designed for sharing. The aim being for guests to connect not just with the food but with each other as well. Each course is made up of several smaller components, to be shared as one would at a casual family dinner at home. Swiss head chef David Hartwig oversees the kitchen, along with German pastry chef Arne Riehn. A longtime collaborator of Caminada's, and formerly one of his most promising talents at Schloss Schauenstein, Hartwig has worked in some of the world's finest kitchens, including Michelin-starred restaurants in Switzerland, Norway,

Germany, and New York City.

“The use of fresh and top-quality ingredients is very important to me, and Bangkok has many fresh ingredients to choose from. Guests can expect a thought-through, but easy and not stuffy, full experience in terms of choice of dishes, cooking techniques, products, flavour profile, and balance of seasoning,” explains Hartwig as he sends out the “snacks” from the kitchen.

There's the delightful half macaron topped with tiny pieces of local mackerel and herbs, wasabi cream and kalamansi gel. This is followed by a tartlette with banana shrimp, yoghurt foam, and lime zest, and the one-bite papaya roll with its mix of herbs, salad dressing, kalamansi gel, and peanuts that is a zesty ode to the popular *somtam*. The star here is the toasted almonds coated in foie gras and rolled in beet powder. Why hasn't anyone thought of this before? The nutty flavours and the opulence of the liver pairs well with Domaine Testut Chablis that head sommelier Yongyuth Udompat pours out.

The curated gastro journey continues with a parade of starters. A sumptuous duck liver terrine with a middle of foie gras is capped by a mandarin gel and yoghurt foam; we are instructed to eat it with warm brioche fresh out of chef Arne's oven. A beautiful crystal bowl holds a ceviche of seabass and finely sliced radish, seasoned with dill oil, kalamansi



gel, and avocado cream. A crisp quarter of lettuce is layered with kimchi sauce, shrimp powder and topped by delicious smoked mayonnaise, and kalamansi gel. Premium beef comes together in a classic tartare, with sunchoke slices and house-made mayo. It is accompanied by potato chips that are no ordinary chips. “These are the signature IGNIV chips,” Regina D’Souza, the graceful restaurant manager, informs us. “It takes about 24 hours to prepare. The potatoes are juiced, then it is put in a steamer and a dehydrator before the starch is washed out so that we get very thin, crisp chips that are not oily at all.”

Diners can also opt for several “surprises” to be added to their dining experience at an additional cost. Smoked tableside with applewood for aroma, the grilled hamachi is a revelation with its crust of crushed black pepper. Celery, kalamansi gel, tiny fish chips, and wasabi cream add flavours and textures. The other surprise dish is a salad with the humble tomato playing multiple roles: sundried and semi-dried tomatoes, and fresh oxheart tomatoes with a dill and tomato dressing for some tang and zing. There is also a chicken nugget surprise, but I leave it for you to discover.

Hartwig keeps the pressure up with the mains. Beef short rib is served with a celeriac mash, garnished with bits of caramelised onion. The side of salsa verde is the perfect counterpoint to the succulent blushing meat. If

you dislike cauliflower, then their take on the vegetable might change your mind. The florets are covered in truffle glaze and served in a froth of warm brown butter sauce, topped by a generous pile of black truffle shavings. There is also tender BBQ pork shoulder with fresh plum and prune sauce. And for the final mains, butternut squash is puréed, finely diced, and roasted, tied together by an ethereal Hollandaise espuma. Yongyuth’s pairing with the Atlan & Artisan 8 Vents Mallorca is on point.

Finally, it’s chef Arne’s turn to take centre stage and he doesn’t disappoint. He wows first with oats and buckwheat in a light, airy cream. Following it up with a rich chocolate tart and mango cream, and a basil and lime sorbet with white chocolate crumble, and pickled melon with crushed almonds. Light, yet decadent, dark and intense, his chocolate soufflé is a showstopper, as is the IGNIV Sundae, a layered confection of milk custard, shaved milky ice, caramelised cashew nuts and milk foam meringue. His skills continue to shine in the Candy Store on the way out, where each diner gets to pick a bag from a selection of chocolates, fruit jellies, canelés, panforte, madeleines, and macarons.

With IGNIV Bangkok ticking all the boxes, Andreas Caminada and his team are definitely on track to becoming a household name in the city, and pointed in the direction of a star. **12**