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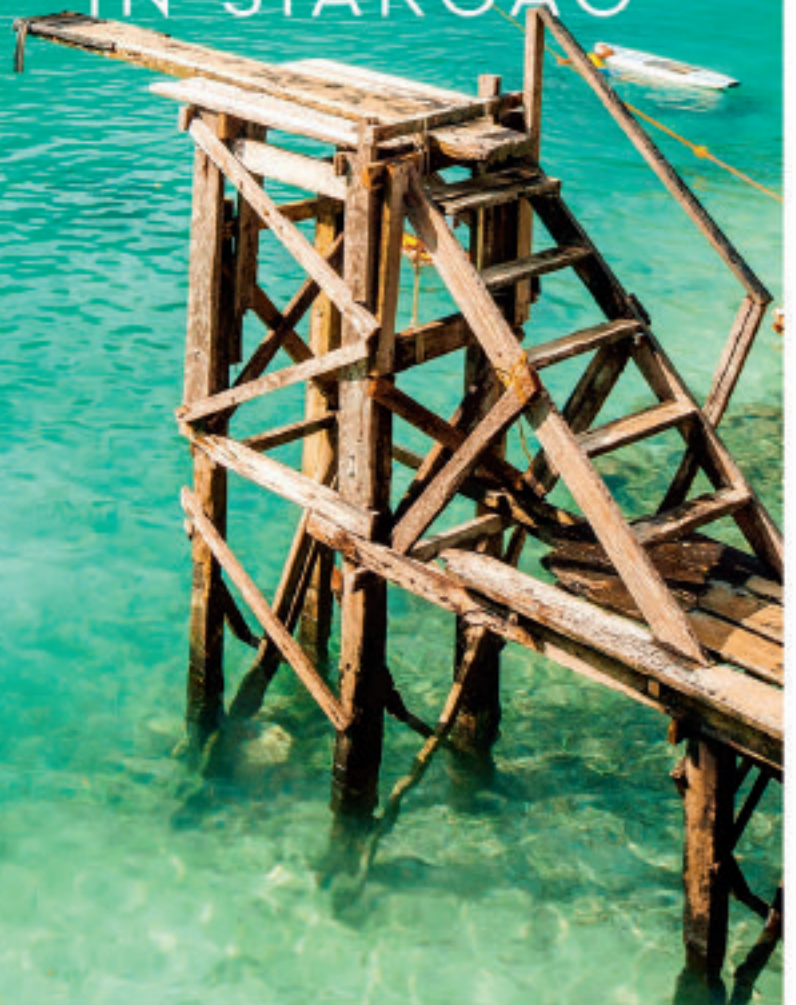
GOING GLOBAL

A SPLENDID WEEKEND IN SIARGAO

From soaps to bags,
upcycling gets a
local spin in Bangkok

Raise a glass
to San Francisco's
female brewers

Smart technology
is altering Hong Kong's
tailoring industry





MAKING





As in other cities, sustainability has become a buzzword in Bangkok. But these boutique brands show that big change starts small

DIFFERENCE

By Craig Sauers
Photography Leigh Griffiths

products have to last and be timeless, too – “fashion that can be worn for many years”. Tanisara and Patanin achieve that by developing a modest yet enduring aesthetic. Their panel and patch caps feature simple silhouettes and classic shapes while their tote bags are durable and cleanly designed.

A surprising value-add of using found, one-off items is the limited-edition appeal of Madmatter products. “We might have only one or two of a certain color in stock,” says Tanisara. “A lot of customers will rush to buy them right away, because they feel they will regret it if they miss out.”



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 Bangkok Soap Opera's shop in Phra Khanong; one of the raw ingredients that Kalita uses; Bangkok Soap Opera's products

WITH BANGKOK SOAP OPERA, MARIA Kalita is showing that sustainability can be a core part of everyone's lifestyle, even in Bangkok which is, as she says, “a skyscraper paradise”.

Kalita produces all-natural lip balms, shampoos, serums, body butters, creams and even toothpaste. But her best-selling products are her soaps made from edible ingredients – from dinner plates straight to your soap dish.

While studying chemistry in Poland, Kalita started making soap in the common kitchen of a shared apartment with ingredients she had on hand. As her reputation in old-fashioned soap-making took off, the Ukrainian native moved to Bangkok with her husband to make natural cosmetics, specifically soap, full-time. Crafted from almost entirely local ingredients – goat's milk purchased from farmers, turmeric and lemongrass from markets, fresh-squeezed orange juice – her increasingly popular products have shattered the stereotype that natural goods must be expensive.

The business has gained so much traction that Kalita and her husband, who handles logistics for the brand, were able to open their own store in Phra Khanong, a booming neighborhood on Sukhumvit Road.

Kalita frequently leads workshops in this space, too. Blond, bright and seemingly always smiling, the forthcoming and anything-but-

TREAT YOURSELF

Give your body a break at one of these organic spas



Pañpuri Organic Spa

This long-standing spa has a deeply rooted commitment to natural ingredients. The now-international brand has its flagship in the renovated Gaysorn Village, where its state-of-the-art facilities – including onsen pools, Akasuri scrub rooms and a wellness bar – are eco-friendly, too.

panpuriorganicspa.com

Organika Secret Spa

This spa claims to use only its own premium-quality, hand-selected spa products – all free from toxic chemicals. The tranquil, tucked-away setting only adds to the rejuvenating effects of the massages and aromatherapy treatments.

organikahouse.com





THIS PAGE, FROM TOP
Bangkok Soap Opera founder Maria Kalita; a display corner in Bangkok Soap Opera

intimidating Kalita offers advanced courses for entrepreneurs, as well as free events – but she is strict about sustainability. “We don't use prepared soap bases. We make all our products from scratch in the store and at our workshops. If you come to us, you learn the techniques really from scratch, from zero,” Kalita says.

Her generosity is anchored by principles and her enthusiasm is infectious. Back when Bangkok Soap Opera was a pop-up at the Bangkok Farmers' Market, Kalita would bring uncut soaps, no packaging, and just talk about her products. Thanks to her sparkling energy, Kalita has since been able to partner with hotels, restaurants and community malls, including The Commons, Roast and Broccoli Revolution. Taking waste oil from their kitchens – the kind of oil that, in Bangkok, can end up down the drain or treated with bleach and resold at open markets – Kalita creates liquid soap that the venues put in their restrooms, allowing customers to discover the benefits of natural products.

“We believe everyone should be able to [access] organic products, but producing good things is not enough. We need to share our knowledge and motivate people to do these things at home,” she says. Bangkok Soap Opera encourages customers to bring glass jars for refills of liquid products and eschews packaging for their bar soaps – a technique called naked packaging. Bangkok Soap Opera also hosts community events, creates YouTube videos and hands out soap to everyone who visits the store. Kalita's vision keeps growing, too. She wants to set up waste oil recycling stations, like the one inside Bangkok Soap Opera, citywide. She wants to work with more hotels and restaurants. And she wants Bangkok to internalize the tenets of sustainability.

“Living in a beautiful place like Bangkok and driving a beautiful car doesn't equate to a high quality of life. It's important to be happier and healthier, and to leave something for future generations,” says Kalita. “You can be cosmopolitan and still go green.”



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