

Shunju: New Japanese Cuisine,
by Takashi Sugimoto and Marcia Iwatate (Periplus)

If isolation from the latest trends in Japanese cuisine has put you in a state of desperate anxiety, herein lies the remedy: *Shunju* - from *shun*, denoting seasonal, farm-fresh food - is the food philosophy of the moment, pioneered by two restaurateurs who are also, naturally, the authors of this book. Every philosophy has its tenants; *Shunju*'s lie not only in food but everything from restaurant design to dishware aesthetic. Recipes come by the season, prefaced by a page or so of wee starters. Many are deceptively simple, and often lessons in patience (Grilled Bamboo Shoots: just two ingredients, plus digging to source). There's a section on homemade tonics for general health and a very-necessary picture glossary. Award-winning photography makes even tofu look tantalising.

Ultimate Spa: Asia's Best Spas and Spa Treatments,
by Judy Chapman
(Periplus)



Personal scepticism and affiliations aside, I speak the truth when I say I like this book, and would even call it a worthy investment. Why? The recipes, stupid! The plethora of D.I.Y treatments here are proof that when Chapman, who is also a spa columnist for this magazine, asserts that “daily rituals and ceremonies are all part of the spa experience...,” well, she means it. With the Asian spa/nature credo favouring organic materials, embracing the “spa-life” becomes a much simpler (and cheaper) process than hunting for those chemical-heavy potions peddled in department stores and pharmacies. And if whisking up a hair mask at home sounds hopelessly plebeian, there's always room at one of the top-class Asian spas profiled in the first chapter. Luca Invernizzi Tettoni's photographs of everything from Bali spas to massage techniques are themselves invigorating.

NOT A VERY LONELY PLANET

Lonely Planet's Best of Dubai & Best of Beijing

LP have hit their groove with the pocket guide formula: slim, colourful, concise and informative - and so it is with *Dubai* and *Beijing*, both with fold-out city/outskirts maps; directories; and complete contact information and directions for all points of interest. But it's not all site-seeing: with Dubai and Beijing expat populations on the rise, insightful tips and recommendations from LP's expatriate writers will appeal not only to the tourist on a cultural treasure hunt, but also to the neophyte foreign resident exploring his/her new home.

Extreme Cuisine: The Weird & Wonderful Foods That People Eat
by Jerry Hopkins (Periplus)

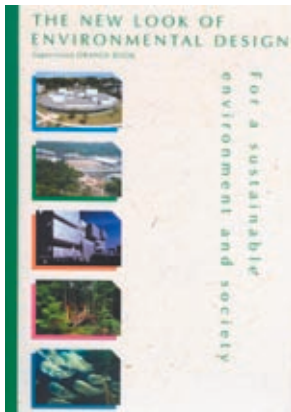
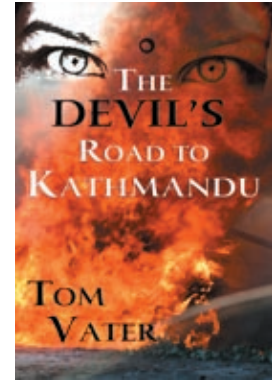
Brave or crazy, Hopkins embraces the world as if it were a limitless refrigerator, few animals, vegetables or minerals escaping his eager gullet. And while humorous, graphic anecdotes make for enjoyable gross-out moments, the book pivots on Hopkins' extensive anthropological, historical and sociological research. He is an explorer *gastronomique*, deconstructing the controversial (à la shark fin soup, something this publication is dead against) as well as the bizarre (cup-o-urine), treating cuisine, and cultures with a good measure of scholarly respect. Oh, and there are recipes, too; a few of them modernised (like his speciality: placenta pâté).



The Devil's Road to Kathmandu by Tom Vater (Dragon's Mouth Press)

Three friends, two cities, one bus and a seemingly endless supply of narcotics: a typical GAP year? Not quite. It's 1976, and the lads' road to Kathmandu - through pre-revolution Iran and feudal Pakistan - is paved with self-destructive yet philosophical tendencies, the likes of which have, in the context of today's North Face-backpacker hegemony, gone the way of the dodo. Vater, a frequent contributor to this publication, sets scenes on a razor's edge, catastrophe, oblivion and unbridled passion waiting for these volatile characters to lose balance - a common fate when you're stoned out of your tree. Multiple narratives and parallel plots give this book breadth and depth - quite a mind trip, actually, and a rather addictive read.

Available at all good bookshops in Thailand and Hong Kong. Other regional centres should follow shortly.



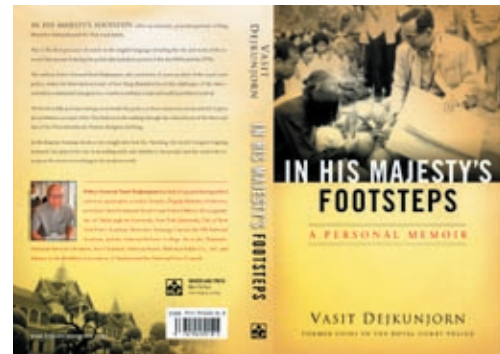
The New Look of Environmental Design for a Sustainable Environment and Society (Supervision Orange Book/Asia Books)

Lacklustre photos and tiny (albeit bilingual) text aside, this book attests to Japan's hyper-speed progress in the realm of environmental design. Ethical intentions coupled with practical technology have produced such things as an environmentally friendly aquarium in Okinawa, economically efficient airports, and schools of inspired and inspiring design. By elaborating on the sound public policies behind such inventions - like the hard-to-refuse "people-friendly public transport system with roots in the community" - this book raises the point that environmental design suits both Earth and earthlings. One to read - and pass on.



This title is available from Asia Books:
asiabooks.com.

In His Majesty's Footsteps: A Personal Memoir by Vasit Dejkunjorn (Former Chief of the Royal Court Police) (Heaven Lake Press)



A rare glimpse into the minutiae of Royal Court life during the military coup- and communist insurgency-rife Thailand of the 60s and 70s by Renaissance-man author Dejkunjorn. Journalist, editor, novelist, senator, politician, company director, and, for the period covered in this book, Special Branch and Royal Court policeman and politics/history police/army teacher-trainer, Dejkunjorn writes in a charming manner (not lost in this May 2006 translation), both of his own astounding career and of the royal household he has devoted much of his life to protecting and being guided by.

In a timely - and, happily for the establishment, uncontroversial tome - released as it is on the year of the Thai King's 60th anniversary of his accession to the throne and one year before his 80th birthday, we are treated to a tale of an incredibly talented king who has kept in constant touch with the changing world around him. This is a monarch possessing strikingly quick learning abilities and endless fascination for aspects of life as diverse as reassembling broken M-16 rifles for the Thai army, amateur radio broadcasting (including fixing and building receivers) and playing the sax in a jazz band from dusk to dawn. These interests underlie the King's more important environmental and humanitarian efforts which have recently won him a special UN lifetime achievement award. His ceaseless visits to hill tribe communities (advising them to abandon opium production for other cash crops), and efforts to initiate sustainable (and 'sufficiency') communities are profiled in depth. Today, although the King might no longer take the daily evening jog which was once part of his strict fitness regimen, he shows no sign of slowing down in the most important aspects of his reign - that of being a symbolic father figure for a grateful nation, whose regular subtle interventions in the country's tumultuous political life have always made things turn out for the better. - *Peter Myers*

Available from heavenlakepress.com and major bookstores in Thailand.