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A Garden of Spirits: Ryan Dela Vega's Craft at AQUA Bar

Amid koi ponds and willows, Anantara Siam's head mixologist turns Bangkok's energy into refined, emotionally charged cocktails.



In the verdant enclosure of [Anantara Siam Bangkok Hotel's AQUA Bar](#), which recently debuted on [Asia's 50 Best Bars in 2026](#), Ryan Dela Vega tinkers with what's at hand: top-shelf spirits, market-fresh seasonal ingredients and precision barware to craft the signature potions of the secret garden bar. What ends up in the glass depends largely on the guest, as the hotel's head mixologist treats the cocktail not as a vessel for liquid, but as a vessel for emotion.

"When someone takes a sip, they shouldn't just think, 'this is good.' They should feel like they've arrived somewhere — and want to stay."

AQUA's secret-garden setting often has that effect on people. In the middle of Ratchaprasong's rush, where resident ducks waddle beneath weeping willows framing the koi pond, this pocket of calm has been drawing in regulars for decades. Ryan himself has fallen for it after years thriving in the high-pressure Middle East, where he earned awards and mastered the bar scene's curated precision. His journey to this sanctuary was a long one, spanning fifteen years in the United Arab Emirates. In the desert, luxury often meant perfect execution; in Bangkok, it means listening to the ingredients and embracing the beautiful unpredictability of seasonal markets and street-side flavours.

For someone operating at the height of his craft, the freedom to experiment is everything, and AQUA gives Ryan the space to do it with intention. There is the smoke-and-donut elixir, a concoction born of nostalgia, and a reimaged horchata he approaches with the reverence of a historian.

“The whimsical part is what the guest experiences, but the technical side is what makes it believable. When both are in sync, the drink feels effortless.”

That balance of whimsy and discipline is where Ryan's philosophy lives. Like the Prestige, the moment when the hidden architecture of a magic act reveals itself and the trick lands, his craft is built on what the audience never sees. They may not witness the years of practice poured into achieving such flawless execution, but they feel the intention behind each movement and the restraint in a drink that arrives looking effortless.

“Just because you can use multiple techniques doesn't mean you should. The best drinks express one clear idea, executed with clarity.”

And then comes the final ingredient, the one no technique can replicate: the human touch. Ryan teaches his team of spirited alchemists that while precision provides structure, it is their presence, and their ability to connect with anyone from a long-time regular to a curious walk-in, that leaves the mark.

Ultimately, Ryan delivers the hardest trick of all: discovery without effort. All that is asked of the guest is to step in, settle in and allow themselves to be carried somewhere else for a moment,

under the curious eye of the pond-side ducks.

Learn more about Anantara's 25th anniversary celebrations on anantara.com.



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