





GO WITH THE FLOW

MIXING COCKTAILS WITH SUCH ECLECTIC NAMES AS FRENCH SUMMER WISH, HANGOVER RELIEF AND SERPENT SEDUCTION, THE BOYS FROM FLOW ARE MAKING QUITE A SPLASH IN BANGKOK'S SOCIAL SCENE.

Before interviewing the four partners behind Flow, I admit I'd never heard of a mixology company before. What exactly does a mixologist do besides concocting and sipping cocktails all day? Quite a lot it turns out. Flow, now almost one year old, specializes in beverage catering, consulting, training, events and recruiting staff for clients such as restaurants, bars, hotels and event organizers.

It seems like the perfect profession -- where drinking on the job is not only allowed but a must. But this illusion is quickly shattered when I meet Bennie Sorum, Dannie Sorum, Chanond Purananda and 'Ning' Nongthiwat Prabhananda at their office in Chidlom. The guys from Flow could easily pass for a boy band: uniformly hip and trendy clad in matching blue jeans, light shirts and black jackets, yet each with a distinctive personality.

While Dannie makes -- not beautiful music, but a hell of a racket crushing ice cubes in the background, Bennie tries to tempt me with a lethal looking Lychee Martini. Despite these diversion tactics, I manage to find out more about the foursome.

Bennie, with his signature blond ponytail, crystal earrings and cocktail shaker, was a familiar sight behind Syn Bar at Nai Lert Park, where he worked as a promotion manager. His brother Dannie was an equally familiar face at the Diplomat Bar at the Conrad hotel, and many a late night crawler with a drink too many must have done a double-take the first time they laid eyes on him so much is he a dead ringer for his brother Bennie.

Contrary to one's first impression, the brothers are not twins who only their mother can tell apart. The two -- Bennie is the senior by two years -- grew up in Sweden, where their parents own a chain of top Swedish restaurants. Carrying on the family tradition, they studied Hospitality Management at Sweden's leading hotel management school, after which they started their careers as mixologists in Sweden and Australia. One day while working in Brisbane, a Thai man walked into the bar, had a few drinks, and the rest as they say is history.

Apparently the gentleman was so impressed by the brothers' deft handling of the cocktail shaker that he invited them to consult for him in Bangkok at Six Degrees, a bar-restaurant he was opening on Convent Road.

While they were setting up the beverage side of Six Degrees and doing stints at a couple of the city's top hotel bars, the Swedes became acquainted with Chanond.

"I was just dying for a cocktail!" he says. "When I met these two guys, they were responsible for setting up the new cocktail scene in Bangkok, before that there was pretty much nothing going on."

Chanond, who was born in Thailand but brought up in the upscale London suburb of Cheltham -- hence the posh, upper-class British accent -- started off as an interior designer and soon had a sideline in cocktail catering. Together with the Swedish brothers he's mainly responsible for operations, his

forte being keeping large numbers of staff in check. Bennie claims that's because Chanond used to be an army officer. (Chanond quickly refutes this -- he was head boy at boarding school in England.)

Managing Director Ning, somewhat intimidating looking with his dark-shaded lenses, has been on the distribution side of the hospitality industry for the past eight years, supplying cigars, wine and alcohol to hotels. He also used to be a Johnnie Walker brand ambassador, doing the training and consulting for trade customers and consumers. "Over time, I fell in love with beverages," he says.

After he left wine and distilled beverages company Riche Monde in late 2005, he decided to look for fellow entrepreneurs who shared his passion. According to the other three, the 35-year old, who's in charge of strategic planning, finance and accounting, is not only very organized and hardworking, "but also a great dancer".

Gradually the idea took shape of establishing a business in mixology and consulting together, as no such company existed yet in Thailand. They didn't have to think too long before choosing the name 'Flow'. Combined, their different professional careers and personalities is proving a winning formula for the company.

When setting up the bar at a hotel or restaurant, the boys from Flow will assist clients on anything from devising the drinks menu and creating new concepts for cocktails,



to advising on the interior design, layout of the beverage workstations and staff requirements.

On the event side they've worked with such big names as BMW, Kate Spade, Mini Cooper, Vertu, Dunhill, Starwood, Chivas and Fendi. Their fame even stretches across the border and Flow is regularly invited to do events and fashion shows in Singapore and Hong Kong. Other projects in the works include consulting for a couple of bars opening at Suvarnabhumi airport.

Besides commercial events, Flow has also been known to give private events such as weddings a personalized touch with the creation of a special cocktail for the bride, groom and wedding guests. Dannie is often the 'mad scientist' behind the invention, experimenting until the cocktail tastes just right, while Bennie, a.k.a. 'The Poet', is instrumental in giving the drink a memorable name.

Ning explains that another important ingredient in their mixology business is premium beverage brand management. Currently Flow advises brands like Cîroc French

grape vodka and Jonnie Walker Gold & Blue label how to best promote and sell their products. One project they are currently working on is Johnnie Walker Black Planet, an undertaking of epic magnitude involving catering for 2,500 guests at the Sukhothai hotel. "For this event we've come up with the concept and we're pretty much organizing the whole thing when it comes to drinks," Dannie says. Big brother Bennie chimes in that "you shouldn't be drunk while you're working, but there are after-parties and after-after-parties of course."

What are they boys' favorite cocktails? Bennie insists that their preferences in alcoholic beverages is pretty straightforward – "simple classic cocktails and fine spirits". Chanond adds that it's not always easy to get a decent drink in Bangkok. But with the arrival of Flow, the tide has certainly changed.

FLOW
cocktail catering and consulting
www.flowcocktail.com

COCKTAIL RECIPES

Bennie and Dannie Sorum co-authored 'Tipple', a cocktail recipe book with concoctions inspired by Thai fruits, herbs and alcohol.

Below two of Dannie's more recent concoctions using Cîroc French grape vodka

CÎROC ROSÉ

Cîroc	50 ml
Peach Schnapps	10 ml
Red Grapes	8
Apple Juice	30 ml

In a mixing glass muddle the fruit, add the rest of the ingredients then shake with ice. Fine strain into a chilled martini glass. Serve with a small slice of brie cheese, a cracker, 3 grapes and a plate.

EAST MEETS WEST

Cîroc	60 ml
Fresh Lime	5 wedges
Lychee	3 pieces
Sugar Syrup	15 ml
White Sugar	1/2 teaspoon

In a mixing glass muddle the fruit and sugar, add the rest of the ingredients, then shake with ice, and pour into an old fashioned glass. Garnish with fresh lychee on the edge of the glass.

