CLIMATECATS STUDIOS

A 6 part documentary series by Joanna Hellier and Max Hellier

Logline

This visually striking and poetic docuseries follows a group of sellers who have been perfecting their traditional recipes on the streets of Thailand for decades... but there is something different about their dishes – they are all culturally and historically plant-based.

'Culturally Plant-Based' explores the deep-rooted history of plant-based eating in Thai culture, through the eyes of local sellers and food experts, in a way that has never been done before, uncovering a revolutionary view of Thai cuisine.

Series Summary / Synopsis

'Culturally Plant-Based' invites audiences to explore Thailand's diverse street food culture through the lens of its plant-based culinary traditions. This six-part docuseries uncovers dishes rooted in history, spirituality, and sustainability, offering a fresh perspective on the country's food heritage.

Guided by renowned street food vlogger Mark Wiens and featuring Thai culinary experts, the series highlights the personal stories of street vendors, generational cooks, and community leaders who keep these traditions alive. From Bangkok's

ancient breakfast customs to the spiritual practices of the Phuket Vegetarian Festival, each episode delves into the connections between food, culture, and identity.

With stunning cinematography and heartfelt storytelling, *'Culturally Plant-Based'* showcases how Thailand's traditional plant-based dishes can inspire more sustainable food choices for the future.

Episode breakdown

Part 1, "*Khanom Wan*"

Traveling through Thailand's unique history of beautiful and delicious plant-based desserts, we experience the streets of Thailand through the eyes of the sellers making some of the country's oldest and most traditional sweet treats.

Part 2, "*Roots of Thai Fire*"

Immerse yourself in spicy and savory Thai street food snacks, as we explore the many roots and global influences that have shaped the Thai food we know today. From a mother-and-daughter dumpling shop, to hand-made hill-tribe traditions, we explore how plant-based street snacks are the core of traditional Thai food.

Part 3, "*Fruit: The King & His Subjects*"

We delve into the colorful and exciting world of Thai fruit, a cornerstone of the nation's culinary and cultural identity. Journeying from family farmers growing the strangest yet most famous fruit on the planet, to michelin awarded fried fruit snacks and a city known for its unusual palm fruit and the dessert that made it famous, we uncover the extensive and imaginative ways in which fruit is integrated into Thai life.

Part 4, "*Foodcourts: From 12 til 1*"

Amidst the hectic pace of Thai office life, lunchtime is a serious business. We step into the lives of food court vendors in the busy center of Bangkok, juxtaposed with the peaceful, spiritual food courts found in ancient vegetarian communities.

Part 5, "*Dessert For Breakfast*"

A window into the hidden world of sunrise morning markets in Bangkok and ancient desserts eaten for breakfast. A glimpse into the past, into the history of Thai desserts and into the lives of those who continue the traditions of Thai Khanom Wan.

Part 6, *"Nine Emperor Gods Festival"*

In the final and most explosive episode of the season, we explore the colourful and intense annual Vegetarian Festival, including rarely-seen spiritual mediums, revealing an extraordinary connection between food, spirituality, and cultural identity that has remained largely unexplored.

Topic Summary

Goals

The directors aim to highlight an existing way of eating in cultures across the world, by looking back at history and traditions, to find solutions for our global food system going into the future.

By using heartfelt human stories to emphasize the deep-rooted cultural significance of plant-based food around the world, the directors aim to diversify the conversation about plant-based food and highlight how culinary roots can pave the way for a more compassionate and sustainable future, inviting viewers to savour flavours, embrace the culture, and reimagine their relationship with food.

<u>Redefining Authenticity:</u>

To introduce a new perspective on traditional food to travellers and cultural food lovers who may have preconceptions about cultural food in Asia. Preconceptions or notions about street food, especially in Thailand, are often that the most authentic street food consists of exotic animal-based dishes. The directors aim to bring to light that this is not the case, and that so many cultural dishes, street foods, rituals and even festivals in Thailand revolve around culturally and historically plant-based dishes. Using vendors' personal stories as well as cultural history, *'Culturally Plant-Based'* brings to light, that from Thailand's deep roots to Buddhism, and the practicality and accessibility of

plant-based ingredients, that plant-based food is a bigger part of Thailand's food culture than many people know.

Elevating Plant-Based Traditions:

By showing plant-based food in the same style and light as many other more well known, cultural foods that have been featured in food documentaries in recent years, the directors are putting plant-based food in the same category, on the same level, in the same playing field (and with the same attention to detail and poetry) as more well-known and coveted cultural foods.

Historical Roots, Modern Perceptions:

Since veganism has become more mainstream in the West in recent years, many people harbour a notion that plant-based food is a new or modern 'fad', or even sometimes that it is not true to our global culture and history. The directors aim to showcase that plant-based food is an undeniable part of our world's global history and culture.

By using this docuseries to normalise plant-based food in global cultures, (for example, the fact that many of these amazing plant-based street foods just happened to be plant-based completely by accident) the directors aim to shift the conversation about what constitutes as plant-based food.

Cultural Exploration for the Vegan Traveler:

The directors also aim to engage an existing audience who are already passionate about plant-based food, but may not know about the cultural significance of it. We want to capture the attention of vegan travellers who may believe that food-culture-exploration is limited for them when they explore new cultures, and instead show them that they can explore these cultures through cuisine, without having to consume animal products or compromise their values.

A New Genre in Food Entertainment:

The directors hope to fill a huge gap in the market with '*Culturally Plant-Based*'. No shows currently exist that utilize the 'food-porn genre' to tell stories of traditional and cultural food that is plant-based. Many plant-forward documentaries exist to highlight the problems with conventional food systems or the benefits of a vegan diet, but there is a gap in the market for a show that simply celebrates plant-based food without an agenda in a storyline beyond the food itself.

Key Creative Personnel

Max Hellier - DOP, Director & Editor

Max Hellier is an accomplished videographer, director, and animal rights and environmental advocate. Max is also the co-founder of Root The Future, Thailand's largest sustainability and plant-based lifestyle platform that utilizes compelling storytelling and impactful campaigns. Originally hailing from a background in film/TV and media production, his work has gained notoriety on platforms such as National Geographic and has been viewed across the MENA region and the UK on channels like Sky, ITV and Freeview. His dedication to exploring and advocating for critical issues is evident in compelling visual storytelling and bringing urgent topics to the forefront. Max's form of storytelling doesn't just inform, it sparks change, establishing him as a pioneer in diet-change-driven documentary filmmaking.

Latest previous works

- *The Vicious Cycle* 2024 Documentary Film (Director & Cinematographer)

Joanna Hellier (Broomfield) - Producer, Director & Editor

Joanna Hellier director, producer, and co-founder of Root The Future, Thailand's largest sustainability and plant-based lifestyle platform that utilizes compelling storytelling and impactful campaigns. Joanna's expertise and passion have led her to speak at the United Nations, where she emphasized the critical role of sustainable dietary choices in combating climate change. Joanna is a passionate director and producer, driven by her passion to change minds and spark a global dietary change towards compassion and sustainability.

Latest previous work

- *The Vicious Cycle* 2024 Documentary Film (Director & Producer)

Intended Audience

This documentary series is aimed at a global audience and is geared toward viewers with a keen interest in cultural exploration, travel, food, culinary experiences and plant-based food, as well as cinephiles.

Audience Engagement and Social Impact

The directors hope viewers and audiences around the world will take multiple forms of action after watching the series, including exploring the plant-based roots in their own cultures. They also hope viewers will personally explore the plant-based dishes shown in the series and have an increased openness to plant-based foods.

Country of Production: Thailand

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Social Media:
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Language: English & Thai (English Subtitles)
Year: 2025

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