Oh. I forgot this little tidbit from the end of my April 12th entry:

Okay. Back from brunchfeast. Had some excellent green curry and possibly the best mango I've ever eaten. It was sliced up and – do you know when you have really good sashimi and it just melts in your mouth? – well, the mango was just like that.
Maybe they grow better in the Thai climate.

Yerp. That was pretty good mango.

Note: I just had that mango again. Still delicious.

Bang Si Lee for Songkran, and Don't Go Shopping in Bangkok on a Sunday

4/15

On the 15th we went to a festival with muay Thai in Bang Si Lee. Bangsilee's a seaside town, like Pattaya, and after the competitors who wanted to compete (or were coerced to by their parents and trainers) had lined up and weighed in, the people from the gym spent some time lolling on the beach under palm trees. Some whiskey was imbibed and people ate fish and soup while we waited for the bouts to start.

I explored the beach a bit and found parts of it fairly empty of people, enough so that a fisherman was able to do quite well steadily catching small fish despite there being motorboats 20 meters from him.

The fights were under way by 1. There were two false starts due to competitors disappearing during the break, but the first match soon proceeded. Most of the competitors were small boys with few fights. The grown Thai men who'd stepped up were looking to brawl a bit and maybe win some cash. Unfortunately for them, a trainer had brought his gym members, who were in Thailand specifically for fight training, to get a bit of experience at the festival. Three foreigners competed and all won by stoppage in rather uncompetitive matches.

As we were leaving, I saw one fight that seemed to be what the average competitor had in mind Two men around 65 or 70 kilos threw wild punches at each other and the audience roared each time they landed. With their furious pace, a little more technique on either side would have produced a knockout. One of them needed to string together 3 or 4 punches to produce a knockout, but that wasn't happening. By the time we left, it was the third round and both were gassing out fast.

Three kids from the gym competed. The first saw a girl from Sor Klinmee matched against a boy. They both had good technique, with the slight edge going to our fighter. She was slicker than him at range, though he edged out the knees in the clinch. The decision at the end was a draw. Our next fight saw our fighter, a southpaw, in the red corner, against a much less technical opponent in the blue. Our boy's opponent rushed out and clinched him around the waist while throwing looping knees. Our fighter launched long left kicks when he had space and neutralized damage in the clinch to take the decision.

Our last fight was quite dramatic. It was the debut fight for our fighter, who is 8 or 9, I believe. His opponent, in the blue corner, didn't do a ram muay, while our fighter looked like he was going to shit himself during his, stumbling and looking like he was going to cry as he went to the four sides of the ring. He came out furiously, slinging long punches from the waist as well as constant right kicks to push the blue corner back. The referee waved it off in the second or third round when the other boy stopped putting up a fight. Our contingent from the gym had a good laugh during that bout.

4/16

I took the afternoon to tour Pattaya with a friend from Bangkok. When I left, they were watching the Channel 3 fights at Omnoi headlined by Kem and Prakaisaeng.

We bought some sliced fruit at a supermarket before taking a ferry out to Koh Larn, an island with beautiful, clean beaches and many barely dressed flabby people. In life, one must – of necessity – accept the bad with the good. Accordingly, I tried to take in more of the pleasant than unpleasant while we lounged under umbrellas. My friend got a bottle of Leo and I sipped Fanta while he explained to me the differences between Chang, Leo, and Singha (there aren't many, except in price and market).

We hopped on a ferry at 4 and went to a bookstore so I could get a Thai primer. We had some laughs looking at the trashy novels in English, French, and German. Most were thrillers fixated on racy and seedy scenarios. One had a blurb from the Pattaya Mail saying “Compulsory reading for anyone going to Thailand for the first time,” (or something like that). From what I gathered, the protagonist goes to Thailand, gets screwed (not sexy-screwed) multiple times in multiple aspects of life, falls in love with a bar girl, and gets killed by her Thai friends after she jerks him around for months or years. Compulsory reading, indeed. Not sure who would *want* to go to Thailand after reading that.

We went from the bookstore to get fresh seafood at a restaurant before he headed back to Bangkok. They had the marine critters on display out front and the first tank with rock lobsters had a really beautiful ray in it. I'm not sure if people eat them or if that one was there for decoration. Also, rock lobsters are nothing like lobster lobsters and are very cute.

April 17th

Sunday is a bad day to go shopping in a lot of places, really. In Bangkok, things close early, the Lumpini shops aren't open, and jewelry and textiles shops are closed. I still need to pick up gloves after that dog ate one of my bag gloves, so I'm going to do some shopping at the Raja shop when one of our fighters competes there on the 24th.