Gift of Time
Osha Thai owner’s watch collection began with first success.

LALITA SOUSAMLANE is known for building and operating Osha Thai restaurants in San Francisco for more than 25 years now. But her road to culinary success actually began long before that, as a young girl growing up in northeastern Thailand.

It was there that she helped her father in the kitchen, learning his craft and mastering his recipes. In 1995, she moved to San Francisco with her sister to pursue her lifelong dream of opening her own Thai restaurant, but Sousamlane could have never imagined the success she would achieve after opening the first Osha Thai on Geary Street in 1996.

As the saying goes, timing is everything. Perhaps that’s why, after a year of success, Sousamlane began rewarding herself by collecting watches. It was a fitting nod to the time spent honing her skills, cultivating her dream and making the right move at the right time to see that dream become reality.

“I began collecting watches in 1997, when I felt I finally became a successful restaurateur,” says the owner and executive chef. “I felt that I needed something to mark the occasion, and I knew the gift to myself was going to be timeless watches.”

Diners of Osha Thai restaurants can immediately appreciate the meticulous design of the restaurant, from ornamental Ramayana masks to golden statues that evoke the wonders of Bangkok. It’s clear Sousamlane has an eye for beauty. The timepieces are more than a fashion statement. Sousamlane is fascinated by the mechanical aspects of timepieces, which she finds incredibly complex in design, reminding her that “each piece is handcrafted with historical significance.”

Among her favorite brands is Longines, which she says “always provides tradition, elegance and performance.”

The La Grande Classique de Longines collection, Sousamlane says, best reflects her style: easygoing and always accurate. “A wristwatch does more than tell time,” she says. “Like the clothes you wear, a watch truly represents your personality and character without any form of communication.”
Dress, $1,100, at Chanel, 154 Geary St.; Sheer slip dress, price upon request, at Theory, 402 Jackson St.; Les Bons Bins de Diamants earrings in white gold, price upon request, by Chanel Fine Jewelry at Chanel, 154 Geary St.; Infinite Diamant ring, price upon request, at Dior, 185 Post St.; Vintage Mellerio Paris aquamarine and diamond bracelet, price upon request, by Fred Leighton at Sheve & Co., 150 Post St.