



Doctoring Up the Best Thai Food in Burnaby

BY ALFIE LAU

James Shu has one of the most interesting and eclectic resumes. For the last two years, he has run a successful restaurant, Days Thai, at the corner of Canada Way and Edmonds.

But dig a bit deeper and you'll find that Shu was a practicing doctor in Shanghai between 1979 and 1989. Wanting a better life for his children, he emigrated to Canada, only to find authorities wouldn't recognize his qualifications as a medical doctor.

Undaunted, he took college courses to improve his English and earn the qualifications to work as a care aide in a seniors' centre.

After 10 years in that job, time in which he earned enough to sponsor his parents to come to Canada from China, he was laid off after provincial budget cuts.

Going back to college for an entrepreneurship course, Shu met an old friend from China who offered to help Shu with fulfilling a dream: Opening his own Thai restaurant.

"I'd always wanted to run my own business and my friend told me that Thai food was becoming very popular," said Shu. "I trained for 10 months with him and learned everything about Thai cooking."

That friend Qing Qi Liu, now works in the Days Thai kitchen, working alongside his friend.

"I don't know how I can thank him," said Shu. "I've been in business for a couple of years now and I think we're getting a lot of repeat customers."

Shu doesn't have a secret to his success – a recent lunch hour saw the place packed for the plethora of \$6.95 specials – but he does insist on three things from each dish.

"I want to serve big portions, I want them to be affordable and I want the taste to be authentic."

Shu said the two most popular dishes are the traditional Pad Thai rice noodles and the chicken with cashew nuts.

"I make sure that with the Pad Thai, we use fresh basil," said Shu. "And with the chicken and cashew nuts, we make sure there's just enough chili sauce to give it a nice kick!"

Because Thai food can be very spicy, Shu notes on his menu which of the 94 dishes is hot.

Regular customer Rick Poloway was one of the first customers when Shu opened his doors in November 2006. He's been coming back for lunch and dinner ever since.

"I really enjoy the yellow curry because it's not too hot," he said. "And the mixed vegetables with the Thai black bean sauce are very good as well."

And as good as the food is, Poloway is happy that Shu sits down and talks with him.

"I've learned a lot about his family and it's great to see him always willing to learn and try something new," said Poloway.



"I like to think of all my regulars as family," said Shu. "They have allowed my business to do well and I've had a chance to work on my English."

With Liu working the kitchen, Shu has been working the dining room, connecting with his customers as he grows the business.

"I love cooking but I just don't have time to do everything," he said. "To have my cooking instructor cook for us has allowed me to do everything else, like buying fresh ingredients and serving my customers."

And if success can be measured in an intangible way, witness this: Shu and his family were able to take their first vacation in three years recently, a weeklong Caribbean cruise.

"I wanted to build the business and now it's doing well," he said. "I have to thank my customers for helping this dream come true."

Days Thai Restaurant is located at 7245 Canada Way.

Open seven days a week for lunch and dinner

(no lunch on Sunday), dinner delivery is also offered within a five-kilometre radius. For more information, call 604-520-7383.

