

- EXPLORE 13 ASIAN RESTAURANTS IN THE *Twin Cities* -

# Good Eats

From

# ASIA



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Written By Irene Zheng & Megan Zheng  
With The Asian American Organizing Project

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# Special Thanks



We would like to openly state first that this zine would not have been as amazing without the help of others. We want to give our warmest thanks to Leyen Trang and the Asian American Organizing Project for editing the content of this zine and guiding us through this complex process. In addition, thanks to all of the restaurant owners for making time in their busy itineraries to meet with us.

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# Historical Impacts & Moving Forward

*\*The following two pages are written by Leyen Trang and the Asian American Organizing Project*

This rising violence against our Asian community is nothing new, stemming from deep historical and ongoing impact of imperialism, misogyny, and white supremacy - from the Page Act of 1875, which banned all Chinese women immigrants, to the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882; to present day where 33 Vietnamese men were deported and 3 Southeast Asian women were murdered in domestic violence cases. In Minnesota, an Asian family's car was vandalized with hate messages and camera equipment was stolen; and elected officials are still using "Wuhan Flu" to describe COVID-19.

We must also work in solidarity with Black, Indigenous, Latine, Arab, Pacific Islander, and LGBTQI+ allies to transform climates of hatred and fear to build revolutionary communities of care, hope, and love. Expanding law enforcement and incarceration is never the answer.

We need sustained investments and resources for the families of victims and survivors including: access to victims' compensation funds, fully funded violence prevention and restorative justice programs, and public infrastructure and institutions focused on public health and education.

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We need alternatives to community safety and healing. We need equitable policies in our schools, our work place, and more. We need stable housing, access to quality health care, including mental health, reproductive rights. We need education and a liveable wage. We need the right to vote, for the right to organize, and for art and beauty in our neighborhoods.

This is the way we can move forward and heal as a community.

## The Story Of This Zine

With the rise of violence against Asian communities since 2020 and prior, Megan Zheng looked for ways to get involved with the local Asian organizing community. At first an idea to craft stories on local Minnesotan Asian restaurants, Megan began expanding this seed to develop this zine with her sister, Irene Zheng. Both Megan and Irene are prominent leaders of their high school's Asian American Student Union.

This zine seeks to uplift our Asian community in Minnesota through the love of food. Food and community care often go hand-in-hand in many Asian cultures. We feed each other because we care and though our parents and loved ones may not always outright say "I love you," they will always ask us "did you eat?" This zine is about giving back, connecting the people with the food hubs we love and care about by showing our appreciation for the food.

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## A Message from the Authors

\*\*Permanently Closed, but we still wanted to share their story!

RESTAURANT BY THE LAKES...

# HOBAN

*You might already be familiar with Korean-style BBQ*, characterized by a grill situated right in the middle of the dining table, but are you acquainted with the more homestyle, 'grandma' side of Korean cuisine? If not, Hoban is here to show you. The restaurant has been serving traditional and authentic Korean dishes since 1994 and continues to be the go-to place for many enthusiasts of Korean comfort food. With a diverse menu and a variety of options, Hoban is always prepared to amaze its customers with dishes that taste just like how *halmeoni* (Korean for Grandma) makes it.

A well-known Korean stir fry noodle dish. *Japchae* is made with *dangmyeon* (Korean glass noodles), pork, and a wide assortment of vegetables all seasoned together with a sweet and savory sauce.

## Japchae



## HOBAN AND THE COMMUNITY

*As mentioned before*, Hoban is a restaurant visited often by Koreans in the local community who crave food that brings them back home. As Hoban's owner Kim told us, the Korean community had not been strong when she first came in 1989. There weren't any Asian markets or restaurants that sold Korean food, sending Kim into waves of homesickness. Although Korean population in the Twin Cities is still scattered and shy in number, the community is tighter-knit through community spaces such as Hoban. Furthermore, the growing popularity of K-pop and K-drama encouraged many non-Koreans to give Korean cuisine a try. The restaurant plays popular K-pop tunes for their customers too.



# 반찬 Banchan

These side dishes, usually small in portion, are called *banchan* and are always served at the very beginning of the meal. Although *banchan* food items vary with region and seasonal availability of ingredients, *kimchi* is almost always included in the array. Next time you visit a Korean restaurant, don't be surprised if your server presents you with several small dishes of food before the arrival of your ordered meal!



Soybean Sprout



Potato



Cabbage



Kimchi



Radish Salad



Black Bean

One of the editor's all-time favorites at Hoban. The seafood *pajeon* is a savory Korean-style pancake that incorporates a wide assortment of seafood from shrimp to mussels to squid. The *pajeon* is pan-fried to crisp around the edges but soft and fluffy in the middle. The sizable *pajeon* is a perfect appetizer to share amongst family and friends!



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해물파전

Rather than the typical plastic or wooden chopsticks found in other Asian restaurants, Hoban provides its guests with silverware uniformly made with stainless steel. In contrast to the circular shape of ordinary chopsticks, traditional Korean ones are flat and rectangular in shape.



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## Kimchi Jjigae 김치/짜개

A Korean stew that is spicy and savory to the taste. The hot stew gets its reddish color from the *kimchi* and is often paired with seafood or meat, sometimes an egg on top.

*Kimchi Jjigae* is one of the most commonly made stews in Korean culture as well as one of Kim's all-time favorites!



This popular dish consists of chewy *garae-tteok* (cylinder rice cakes) and *dangmyeon* (Korean glass noodles) tossed in a Korean spicy sauce. *Tteokbokki* can be found in nearly every traditional Korean restaurant and is a staple in Korean street food culture.

**Try to find these dishes in K-dramas!**

# MANDARIN KITCHEN

*Celebrated restaurant for its fine dim sum experience and long-standing favorite for family gatherings!*

**Mandarin Kitchen** is one of the top-rated restaurants in the Twin Cities for an unforgettable *dim sum* experience. *Dim sum* is the brunch meal enjoyed originally in the Guangdong region of China but celebrated around the globe today. Small plates of dumplings, pastries, and other complementary dishes make up the *dim sum* experience. Mandarin Kitchen brings little delights to visitors through serving dishes in traditional carts and offering a vast range of *dim sum* dishes. The restaurant folds every dumpling by hand and sources the best ingredients. As a reminder, *dim sum* is only served on weekend mornings. Stop by for a hot pot of tea and a few *dim sum* plates. Whether you are just giving dim sum a try or a die-heart fan, Mandarin Kitchen will not disappoint you.

Har Gow



Shrimp dumpling, or 'Har Gow', contains shrimp and a crystal clear wrapping made up of tapioca, wheat starch, and lard. The wheat starch gives the dumpling an uniquely translucent appearance and a chewy texture.

芋

頭

糕



Har

蝦

Shrimp

*Shrimp is the most used ingredient in Mandarin Kitchen's dim sum dishes.*

## ----- Wu Tao Gou

Wu Tao Gou (taro cake) is a close relative of the lo baak gou (radish cake). Wu Tao Gou is soft and pan-fried to a crispy exterior. Instead of using shredded radish, this cake uses diced taro for a richer taste and a denser texture, giving the cake a wonderful aroma further enhanced when combined with the char siu (roast pork).



Fung Jao

## Dim Sum In the Community

For hundreds of years, *dim sum* had not only been just a brunch meal for the Cantonese, but also a medium for which families and friends foster unity upon. In Guangdong, people could sit for hours over *dim sum* to chat and connect with their families or friends. As one of the owners of Mandarin Kitchen, Chan, told us, *dim sum* at Mandarin Kitchen goes beyond solely delicious food and works to unite people in surrounding communities. Over the years, Chan witnessed many new additions to her customers' family, proving the longevity and importance of the *dim sum* weekend traditions.

## AN ADVENTUROUS PALATE

It has been a tradition in Cantonese cuisine to utilize as much of an animal as possible when cooking. Guangdong's proximity to the sea also allows citizens to use a variety of fresh seafood in their cooking. This has led to the innovation and development of some of the most celebrated *dim sum* dishes and beyond. For example, the *fung jao*, also known as braised chicken feet, consists of soft cooked chicken feet tossed in a savory black bean sauce. Besides *dim sum* items, Mandarin Kitchen offers other dishes on its dinner menu that are not commonly seen on American dinner tables, such as sour vegetables with pork intestines, geoduck sashimi, roasted quail, and dozens more. As editors of this pamphlet and enthusiastic food adventurers, we encourage you to give so-called 'exotic' dishes a try. There is a common misconception that unusual ingredients used in Asian cuisine are always uninviting and seemingly unpleasant to taste, but once you've crossed the initial barrier of hesitancy, only deliciousness awaits.



Zha Liang

Praised for its incredible layers of texture: a soft and chewy layer of glutinous rice followed by the crispiness of the youtiao (fried dough)



***PinKU is a contemporary restaurant that offers traditional Japanese street food. At PinKU, one can truly experience the finest integration of comforting dishes and a fine dining experience. The restaurant's succinct menu allows it to polish and perfect every one of its dishes, bringing only the best and freshest food out to its customers.***

# PINKU

## - Japanese "Street Food" Dining -

### ***Growing up as an immigrant of***

***Asian descent,*** X, the owner of PinKU, has always contemplated the redundancy and lack of authenticity of most Asian restaurants in America: authentic restaurants intimidate customers with more than 100 items on its menu, while chain franchises fail to bring the true flavor of the cuisine. Determined to alter the status quo, X embarked on his journey as an entrepreneur. Along with chef John Sugimara, X used PinKU to prove that the co-existence of casual food and an upscale dining experience is achievable.

***"The best food in Asia is often found on the streets" - X***

### ***PinKU proudly emphasizes its focus on Japanese street food.***

From the *Okonomi Gyoza* to *Chicken Karaage*, PinKU's variety of options represents colorful, warm street food you may encounter in Japan. Furthermore, to enhance the street food experience, there are no servers in the restaurant, similar to how street food stalls operate. PinKU also presents their food on metal trays and prepares the food in an open kitchen. Although the restaurant is only 960 sq.ft, it defines the vibe of casual dining.



***Innovative menu - and unique operation***

# The PinKU Plating



Okonomi Gyoza

PinKU starts its busy day in the kitchen with folding homemade *gyozas*. This dish combines the best elements of *okonomiyaki*, the Japanese savory pancake, with the traditional pork and chive *gyoza*. The *gyoza* is fried to a crisp before being topped with *okonomiyaki* sauce and *bonito*.



Crispy Shrimp on Rice

Shrimp fried to a satisfying golden brown tossed in PinKU's house-made spicy sauce and served over rice. Although this dish is simple, the texture and taste of it is beyond simplicity.

Yuzu Tempura Roll

A sushi roll containing a selection of fresh seafood, avocado, and carrot battered

and fried, then drizzled with a yuzu flavored sauce. The light aroma of the yuzu creates a wonderful clash with the crispiness of the sushi roll.



Rice

Soy Sauce

## PinKU and the Community

As with how street food is often inviting to its customers and provides a sense of comfort, PinKU tries to minimize the distance with their customers. X takes his time to review and reply to feedback on how he can enhance the dining experiment at PinKU. This ensures that the communication between the restaurant and its customers is not a one-way street. The restaurant also utilizes seasonal and fresh ingredients found in local markets, a reason why PinKU often offers weekend specialty items. The restaurant also empowers the global community by putting a twist on its dishes, such as the rainbow *onigiri*!

奇華閣

# KEEFER COURT

Hong Kong bakery in the deep cities.



As one of the most well-known and long-standing bakeries in the West Bank community of Minneapolis, Keefer Court offers an experience quite different from a typical American bakery. Since 1985, Keefer Court has presented its customers with the authenticity of Hong Kong pastries and bread with modern twists. As you step into the bakery, a rush of comfort and coziness greets you, and you are welcomed by a display of bread, each handcrafted by recipes passed down over generations. This sensation has never been foreign to Michelle Kwan, the current owner of Keefer Court, who spent all of her childhood and teen years living directly above the bakery. Michelle stated that she explored and viewed the bakery as her personal playground. Instead of taking over the bakery immediately after graduating from college as her parents had envisioned, Michelle decided to venture out into the world. She officially took over the restaurant in 2018 after teaching in Chongqing, China. Reluctant at first, Michelle eventually discovered her passion for the bakery and transformed Keefer Court into what it is today with her determination, creativity, and hard work.



Winter Melon Cake

The winter melon cake, one of Michelle's personal favorites, prides a soft and chewy texture. The candied winter melon brings the cake a unique consistency while the almond paste comprises an astonishing symphony of flavors.

Rather than the soft and silky consistency of its cousin, the egg tart, the coconut tart offers a crumbly texture loaded with a buttery sensation. The overload of coconut shreds gives this tart an irreplaceable layer of flavor.



Coconut Tart



Lotus Cookie with Egg Yolk

The lotus cookie with egg yolk is one of the editors' top pastries at Keefer Court. It consists of a dense and rich layer of lotus paste wrapped by a flaky crust. What is best about this pastry is inarguably the salty egg yolk that rests at the core of the sphere, its saltiness contrasting perfectly with the sweetness of the lotus.

Keefer Court provides the Asian community and beyond with comfort for many years: one could always find a delicious piece of pastry partnered with a warm conversation conducted in the Kwan family's native language Cantonese.

Connecting to people with dietary restrictions, the bakery offers vegetarian, vegan, dairy-free, and many more versions of their bread. For example, the bakery presents a vegan version of their well-celebrated barbeque pork bun made with firm tofu. Since a large Muslim population lives in the bakery's local community, Keefer Court decided to bake their popular hot-dog buns with beef sausages. The bakery also displays symbols on their product labels stating the type of meat the item contains. Not only does Keefer Court bring Minnesota authentic Hong Kong style bread, but the bakery has also imprinted on the community around it.

# Keefer Court and the Community

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# RAMEN KAZAMA

ラーメン



Not every ramen restaurant you walk into greets you with a chandelier crafted from the shell

of a bass drum, nor does every ramen restaurant showcase guitars with broken necks on its interior walls. These are just two of several jaw-dropping decorations seen in Ramen Kazama, a friendly ramen joint in southern uptown Minneapolis. Besides a unique and musical dining atmosphere, Ramen Kazama is also home to some of the most delicious and warming bowls of ramen in the region.

## RAMEN KAZAMA AND THE COMMUNITY



*The bass drum chandelier at Ramen Kazama*

When Ramen Kazama first opened in 2015, Matthew, the owner, was extremely overwhelmed with both a newborn son and a new restaurant to attend to. During the time of seemingly endless challenges, Matthew shares that “Ramen Kazama

is very grateful and happy to be part of the team of restaurants serving a very supportive community.” To give back to the community, Matthew had served affordable Japanese comfort foods as \$5 chef special dishes.

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# - RAMEN KAZAMA'S FEATURES -

## Shoyu Ramen

The very ramen that started Matthew's ramen adventure consists of chewy noodles immersed in a broth that conveys a sonorous flavor from the soy sauce. The ramen is topped with *chashu* (roasted pork belly), *menma* (bamboo shoots), *nitamago* (soft-boiled egg), *nori* (seaweed), and green onions.



醤油ラーメン

## Veggie Curry Ramen

A warm delight to curry enthusiasts. This vegetable curry ramen prides a thick broth and a selection of vegetables including mushrooms and tomatoes. The bowl is topped with an irresistible piece of fried tofu.



カレー  
ラーメン

## Karamiso Ramen

Another best-selling ramen at Ramen Kazama. The *karamiso* ramen presents a spicy red broth made from *miso* (fermented bean paste). This ramen is topped with spice ground pork and green onions.



辛味噌  
ラーメン

## Plum Onigiri

A small rice ball filled with *umeboshi* (pickled plum) that has a slightly sour taste. The rice ball is shaped in a cute triangle before being wrapped with *nori*.



おにぎり

## Spicy Gyoza

This *gyoza* is unlike anything you've seen before. Ramen Kazama's *gyoza* features a spicy pork filling partnered with mozzarella cheese, served with a side of spicy dipping sauce.



餃子

## Chicken Karage

One of the editors' favorites as well as a celebrity at the restaurant. The chicken *karaage* is pieces of chicken thigh battered and fried until crisp before being served with Ramen Kazama's homemade spicy mayo sauce with a hint of apple.



唐揚げ

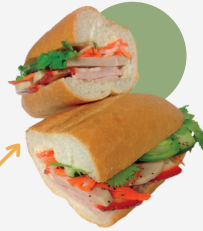
## THE STORY OF MATTHEW

*Matthew Kazama was born in Hawai'i* but had spent a great majority of his childhood in Japan. As a child, Matthew had not shared many moments with ramen, as his family rarely incorporated the noodle dish into their meals. It was only after Matthew came to the U.S. did he embark on his ramen journey. Starting from working at local Japanese restaurants to eventually calling one his own, Matthew had never ceased trying to create a bowl of ramen that reminds him of home.

# MY HUONG KITCHEN

As one of the most visited food hubs in Minneapolis, Eat Street boasts what might be the most diverse selection of restaurants. You can enjoy dishes from opposite ends of the globe within minutes of walking. Of the Vietnamese restaurants, My Huong Kitchen stands out for its uniquely inspired dishes and comfortable environment since 2012. The owner, Tracy, initially planned to serve only her famous French crêpes at the restaurant, having operated a crêpe stand at the Renaissance Festival before. But over the years, the 400 square foot crêpe shop not only doubled in size but also expanded its menu. This small, but mighty, restaurant offers its customers an authentic Vietnamese experience they will not forget.

## EAT STREET



Banh Mi



Nutella

Crepes

## FRESH HERBS



Fresh herbs

grown by

Tracy!

*The Herb Salad, one of Tracy's personal favorites, is a symphony of the restaurant's finest herbs (many of which brought directly from Tracy's backyard). Each herb offers a powerful kick to the salad while also harmonizing with others to create a mellow and refreshing flavor.*

# The Story of Tracy



My Huong Kitchen is known for using **real fruits and ingredients**, instead of flavoring powder, when making its smoothies and beverages.

The mango smoothie is a fan favorite beverage at the restaurant for its vibrant tangy flavor. Furthermore, the addition of boba enhances the smoothie by creating a new layer of texture.

## Another member of the smoothie family,

the taro smoothie,

is made from freshly steamed taro root. The smoothie is rich and creamy with a down-to-earth aroma supplied by the taro.



As someone who has been cooking since **eleven-years-old**, Tracy is not new to her pots and pans. She has expanded her career from cooking for her family to operating a restaurant that serves the community with delicious and original recipes. Along the way, Tracy discovered that she needs to enjoy every moment spent in the kitchen: “you must enjoy it. If you don’t, they (the dishes) don’t come out right.”

\*Photos of My Huong Kitchen are supplied by the owner.

## My Huong Kitchen and the community

**My Huong Kitchen sits in a community** familiar with Vietnamese cuisine. The restaurant has constructed deep connections with the Asian population in the region by bringing food that tastes just like home. As Tracy told us, one of the things she appreciates most is watching younger children come into the restaurant, enjoy a freshly made dish, and proclaim that it tastes just like how their grandmother would have made it. The way My Huong Kitchen serves as a link for the community is one of the most crucial motivators for Tracy and her work at the restaurant.

# Little Asia Cafe

You might walk by this small family-owned restaurant on several occasions without noticing its presence. Little Asia Cafe is a hidden gem tucked into the Sunrise Plaza located in St. Paul. Although the location of the restaurant conveys a subtle humbleness, the dishes it serves proudly boast exciting flavors. Because the restaurant's owner Mr. Leng Hang believes that having a wide selection of dishes is welcoming to more of the local ethnic groups, Little Asia Cafe's menu comprises famous plates from Laotian, Hmong, and Thai cuisines.

The Kawpaw chicken is a stir fry dish with minced chicken and beans glazed in a sweet sauce. Pair this dish with a Hmong purple sticky rice and a perfectly fried egg for a feast of enticing flavors and textures.



## Kawpaw Chicken & Sticky Rice

This Laotian version of the papaya salad differs slightly from its well-known Thai counterpart. The Laotian salad is more heavily seasoned with fish sauce and citrus, giving a more electrifying taste.



## Steamed Rice Roll

This Hmong favorite is characterized by chewy steamed rice rolls filled with pork and chives topped with crispy fried onion. Little Asia Cafe's special hot sauce is also paired with this dish, providing an extra kick of flavors.

## Laotian Papaya Salad



Beef



Brisket

**Behind the dish:**

Although the restaurant specializes in various Asian cuisines, it shines a prominent spotlight on Thai dishes. Because Hang grew up in Thailand and immigrated to the U.S. before taking on the restaurant, he brought with him several recipes and combinations from his homeland. Little Asia Cafe's menu captures various family-developed sauces as well as traditional styles of cooking learned from Thailand.

The Beef Brisket, the restaurant's star dish, is the number one reason people visit the restaurant. The tender BBQ beef briskets are grilled with a sauce Hang learned from Thailand, and the dish wears a luring aroma able to be picked up miles away. Little Asia Cafe pairs the plate of meat with its house special hot sauce that only adds to the already flavorful dish.

The plaza that hosts Little Asia Cafe is a popular hub for the local Asian community, making the restaurant a common destination for delicious food. The restaurant reaches out to its customers with its diverse menu and welcoming environment. It is almost as if Little Asia Cafe acts like a focal gear that links people with varying ethnic backgrounds together with its dishes. The restaurant also returns kindness to the community by donating and sponsoring food to local Asian events. As Hang had said, "we [Little Asia Cafe] do not have a lot to give but we are happy to do what we can in order to stay connected with the Asian community."

Community



Little Asia

# Manila

## SIZZLING WOK AND GRILL

In a cozy neighborhood of St. Paul rests a restaurant that would satisfy your craving for Filipino cuisine. As the name suggests, Manila Sizzling Wok and Grill serves traditional Filipino food made in sizzling woks and flaming grills in an open kitchen.

The restaurant brings its customers a dining experience without a long wait because it operates in a buffet-style express. Although dishes on the line-up vary from day to day (customers receive updates through the restaurant's Facebook page), Filipino staples like *sisig* can always be expected there.



Lechon Kawali

A dish that is almost always on the daily menu of Manila Sizzling Wok and Grill, Lechon kawali is pork belly deep fried to a golden brown.

The pork has a phenomenally crispy top layer with a moist and soft layer

underneath. The restaurant pairs its lechon kawali with a special homemade gravy.



Lumpiang Shanghai

Manila's lumpiang is characterized by a filling consisting of ground pork, minced onions, carrots, salt, pepper, and other spices wrapped in lumpiang wrappers.

The lumpiang is then deep fried and served with a sweet and sour sauce.

**Manila Sizzling Wok and Grill** is closely connected with the local Filipino community as the restaurant sources its ingredients locally and contributes to local gatherings big and small. For example, instead of frozen chili leaves, Rowan (the owner) purchases freshly picked ones from local Filipino markets to use in the kitchen. The restaurant also partners with nearby Filipino pastry vendors, bringing both sweet and savory parts of Filipino cuisine. Furthermore, Rowan and his wife are often invited to Filipino festivals to serve their top dishes, leaving an eminent print on the surrounding community.

Manila is among many small shops on the busy St. Paul Street.

## MANILA AND THE COMMUNITY



**As an immigrant** from the capital of the Philippines, Rowan grew up surrounded by traditional Filipino foods and is an outstanding cook of the cuisine. Rowan worked as an architect before he opened the restaurant. Although hesitant at first, Rowan has taken solid strides towards making the restaurant

## About Rowan:



better; it became a place where he can reach out to the Filipino community through delicious food. And as the architect part of him believes, there is always room for improvement at the restaurant, and there will always be ways to 'build' upon the restaurant.

*Sisig* is a classic Filipino dish that traditionally consists of parts of a pig's face (i.e. jowl and ears)



seasoned with onions, peppers, and calamansi. Rather than using jowls and ears, Manila Sizzling Wok and Grill's version of this popular dish is made with pork belly, making the dish more approachable for people to try. The restaurant also cooks and serves its sisig directly on a hot plate, keeping the dish hot and ready to be enjoyed.

# SISIG

## HOW MANILA BEGAN



**The start of Manila Sizzling Wok and Grill** gives its credits to a typical potluck among Rowan's family and friends. As the host of the gathering, Rowan's wife made a generous plate of *lumpiang shanghai*. The dish was shared around and received an overwhelming amount of positive feedback. As a result, more and more people began to invite Rowan and his wife to cook their pleasing homemade Filipino food to parties and gatherings, marking the embarkation of what will eventually lead to the restaurant Rowan proudly owns today.



## The Manila Express Style

# -PENINSULA-

## ***Tasty Escape to the Southeast Peninsula:***

One cannot miss Peninsula Malaysian Cuisine if they're desiring an authentic dining experience of the Southeast Asian peninsula. The restaurant, located on Eat Street, serves traditional dishes enjoyed by many Malaysians. Because Malaysia is a country that hosts people of many ethnic and cultural backgrounds, Peninsula's menu reflects this diversity. From curries with a Malaysian twist to dishes commonly spotted on the local streets of Malaysia, Peninsula takes you into the heart of southeast Asian food.

## ***Peninsula and the Community:***

Out of the nostalgia for Malaysian food, Chef Tong and his partners chose to join the Eat Street community with Peninsula. Chef Tong noticed a strong lack of restaurants in Minneapolis that serve food from Malaysia. With a background of working closely with Malaysian cuisine, Chef Tong envisioned Peninsula to be a medium through which he can introduce the cuisine to the Twin Cities, as well as a restaurant that can relieve the homesick sensations of local Malaysians.

### ***Sambal Ikan Bilis***

*Fried ikan bilis (anchovies) seasoned with a spicy chilli sauce.*

### ***Chicken Curry***

*Pieces of chicken mixed in coconut curry.*

### ***Curry Vegetables***

*Cabbage, carrot, pineapple, and other vegetables tossed in coconut curry.*



## **NASI LEMAK**

A broken rice dish consisting of rice infused with coconut milk along with many sides. There are many variations of this dish among different ethnic groups in Malaysia. As the national dish of Malaysia, the dish perfectly captures the diversity of the country.



# COCONUT MILK and Malaysia

When the Hainanese first came from China to the Malaysian peninsula, they were not used to the herbs and spices incorporated in traditional Indian curries popularized by the Indian population in Malaysia. To make the curry taste relatively more subtle, the Hainanese people added coconut milk to counteract with the strong spices. As time passed on, the new variation of curry stuck around and became iconic on the Malaysian Peninsula.

## Nyonya Laksa



A traditional Malaysian noodle soup celebrated for its spicy curry broth, assortment of seafoods, and a strong aroma contributed by coconut milk.



## Roti Canai

One of the most popular dishes at Peninsula, the *roti canai* is an Indian-inspired flatbread known for its crispiness and flakiness. Peninsula pairs its star dish with traditional chicken curry for the *roti* to be dipped in. *Roti canai* is best eaten hot.

One of the editors' favorite dishes at Peninsula! *Roti durian* is a flaky *roti* flatbread filled with rich and creamy durian paste. Since Malaysia is known for its abundance and variations of durians, the fruit is often used creatively.



## Roti Durian

A Malaysian version of *kebab* that can be spotted in almost every street food vendor in Malaysia. What makes satay stand out from its counterparts is the peanut sauce, which tastes sweet and salty. *Satay* is the go-to food for casual gatherings with friends and families or for a late-night snack.



## Chicken Satay

# — Sen Yai Sen Lek —

In a busy *Central street* of Northeast Minneapolis sits a warm and welcoming restaurant that lures diners in with amazing food and dining environment. Opened in 2008, *Sen Yai Sen Lek* specializes in **authentic rice** and **noodles dishes** of Thailand. The restaurant sets out to bring its diners a **diversified** Thai experience through a relatively **simplified and straight-forward menu**. Its concise menu comprises not only iconic plates like *pad thai* but also dishes that might shy in fame (but definitely not taste). Many of the *Sen Yai Sen Lek* visitors commented on how the restaurant's dishes, such as the *Khao Soi*, tasted just like what they would get at a Thailand street food stall. On any occasion, *Sen Yai Sen Lek* offers a pleasant escape to **Bangkok** without stepping out of the Northeast community.

*Tod Mun* is a thin curry fish cake infused with leaves of kaffir lime and served with peanut and cucumber relish. The cakes are crispy off the bite followed by a soft and chewy texture.



## Som Tum ส้มตำ



A popular salad in Bangkok consisting of thin strips of green papaya mixed together with an assortment of vegetables. The lime dressing of this salad is extremely refreshing and pairs perfectly with the traditional northeast Thailand sticky rice.

*Khao Soi* is soft, thin egg noodles that rest in a creamy coconut curry broth with pickled mustard greens. The most attractive touch to this dish is the crispy egg noodles that top the dish, providing a clash of texture when enjoyed together with the soft noodles underneath.



• **Sticky Rice At Sen Yai Sen Lek**

## Khao Soi



ข้าวซอย



*\*Sen Yai Sen Lek's interior is vibrant and warm in colors*

## JOE AND HOLLY *An Adventure of Two*

Joe and Holly Hatch-Surisook view Sen Yai Sen Lek as an outlet to share traditional Thai cuisine with Minneapolis in a less intimidating fashion. As a child raised in a typical Bangkok household, Joe was always excited to cook meals and to visit Asian markets with his family. After immigrating to the United States and starting a family with Holly, Joe translated those values he had held as a child over to his own family as well as the restaurant. With amicable energy and attitude, Joe and Holly shaped Sen Yai Sen Lek into a welcoming space that makes its diners feel at home.



A well-known beverage both in and out of Thailand, the Thai iced tea is brewed with Ceylon tea and mixed with milk before being served.

### ชาเย็น Thai Tea



ข้าวเหนียวมะม่วง



### Khao Neow Mamuang

Khao Neow Mamuang is a classic dessert in Thailand characterized by warm sticky rice covered with slices of sweet mango and a thick stream of coconut milk.



*\*Artworks showcased at Sen Yai Sen Lek were drawn by Joe's father. Meanwhile, photos of Joe's family are also present at the restaurant. The fruit in the above photo, a durian, is a special and famous fruit of Thailand.*

## *Sen Yai Sen Lek and the community*

Having lived in the very neighborhood that Sen Yai Sen Lek currently resides in, Joe and Holly know the community like the back of their hands. Despite the familiarity, the couple was shocked by just how supportive Northeast Minneapolis is. From anonymously sent flowers and cards congratulating the opening of the restaurant to the revisiting diners that soon became friends, the community of Northeast Minneapolis gives the restaurant as much warmth as the restaurant gives itself. Furthermore, the restaurant has contributed to local fundraisers that focus on improving education, infrastructure, food, and many more aspects of the Northeast community.

# Gorkha Palace



Many South Asian restaurants focus on one specific cuisine, but Gorkha Palace is a place where you can enjoy the best parts of Nepalese, Indian, and Tibetan cuisines. The restaurant has a diverse menu that captures the authenticity and deliciousness from all of the three respective cuisines. In addition, Gorkha Palace is known for being the first South Asian restaurant to go green with its operations; the restaurant emphasizes quality ingredients and environmental sustainability. Gorkha Palace is determined to source all of its ingredients from local suppliers (indicated on the website) or make ingredients, such as yogurt, in-house. In short, this restaurant located in North Loop Minneapolis captures the nuance of both food and community.

## GARLIC NAAN

A soft and chewy bread infused with garlic and herbs. Gorkha Palace makes all of its *naans* with organic ingredients and organic *ghee* (clarified butter).



## VEGETABLE PAKORA

Mixed vegetables coated with chickpea batter before deep frying to a crispy and golden brown. Gorkha Palace pairs this amazing appetizer with both a mint and a tamarind *chutney*.

## PALAK PANEER

*Palak paneer* is a dish consisting of *paneer*, an Indian cheese that boasts a soft and chewy texture, and spinach absorbed in a cream and tomato sauce.



Within the bustling food court of the Market at Malcolm Yards lies a restaurant that stands out for its simplistic but elegant South Asian dishes. Momo Dosa at Malcolm Yards is a restaurant that specializes in a dish chef Rashmi, co-owner of both Momo Dosa and Gorkha Palace, is most passionate about: *momos*.

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# Momo Dosa

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Serving *momos* with different fillings steamed fresh to order, every order comes with two house made *chutneys*. Besides *momos*, the restaurant also provides a wide selection of amazing *dosas*.

Find Momo Dosa here at Malcolm Yards



## Beginning with A Passion for Momo:

Chef Rashmi and Chef Serala are perhaps the most important minds behind keeping both Gorkha Palace and Momo Dosa running smoothly.

As an immigrant from Nepal, Rashmi had always enjoyed sharing her culture with family and friends, from very humble beginnings of a small farmer's market momo stand. Since then, Rashmi embarked on a journey that would lead her to partner up with Chef Serala to open two well-celebrated restaurants.

Along the way and even now, Rashmi has maintained her values for sustainability and most importantly, her utmost passion for *momos*.

### CHICKEN MOMO

A famous south Asian steamed dumpling filled with chicken, cabbages, and several other complementary ingredients. The restaurant also offers veggie, mutton (goat), and bison *momos*.



### DESERT DOSA

A spin on the classic south Asian *crêpe*. This desert *dosa* is filled with bananas and drizzled with nutella before topping it with a generous dose of whipped cream.



# THE CURRY DIVA

A WEEKLY  
ADVENTURE  
TO SRI  
LANKA

The Curry Diva is a pop-up diner serving traditional Sri Lankan dishes. However, the restaurant is not carved out of the same mold as a typical dine-in restaurant: The Curry Diva operates once a week on Saturday evenings. Every week, Chef Heather Janz, the *Curry Diva* (goddess) herself, prepares her favorite recipes for her customers to enjoy. At The Curry Diva, one can truly feel as if they have just walked into a cozy Sri Lankan kitchen, filled with spices, tasty food, and astonishing stories awaiting at the table.

As mentioned above, dishes served at The Curry Diva do not follow a rigid menu but rather are modified by Heather from

week to week. However, there will always be a curry dish on the table, as Heather believes that besides tasting phenomenal, curry blends offer health benefits unmatched by other spices, such as helping with the digestive system; The Curry Diva will always be nutrient-rich. Entrees are accompanied by protein-packed lentils and an abundance of green vegetables. Despite the diner opening on a weekly basis, preparation for operating days lengthens to the many days prior. Heather busies herself grinding spices for her signature dish, roasting herbs to release the oils,

## THE CURRY DIVA & ITS DISHES

scouting for fresh local ingredients, and more. As casual as The Curry Diva might appear, the effort that Heather invests for the dishes served at the restaurant is really meticulous and sophisticated.



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*\*All Curry Diva photos taken by Kelly Cotton Photography & supplied by Heather Janz*

Growing up with curry leaf trees steps away from the backdoor of her home on the island of Sri Lanka, Heather Janz has been immersed in the food culture of the island since day one. Heather had spent great portions of her childhood in her family kitchen, where she learned curry blends and Sri Lankan recipes from her mother. Many of these blends are adopted and built upon by Heather, transforming into the dishes served at the restaurant today. After settling in Minnesota, Heather picked up her identity as the curry 'goddess', unveiling the charm of Sri Lankan food for the people of Minneapolis through The Curry Diva diner.



## THE STORY OF HEATHER

# CURRY DIVA & THE COMMUNITY



It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that The Curry Diva restaurant will be difficult to operate without the support from the local community and vice versa. The restaurant prepares its dishes using fresh ingredients sourced from local farmers, especially female farmers and those of ethnic minority groups. Heather loves to work with local farmers because she believes that "there is a certain joy that just comes out of two people being better off than one person is: if two people are happy, there is so much more happiness than just one person being happy." Furthermore,

Heather ventures in advance to the restaurant's operating day to seek seasonal ingredients at the market before she designs the course, so every week's menu is a testament of Heather's creativity as she produces dishes with what the farmers have available that week.





*There are many restaurants in the Twin Cities famous for their Indian food,* but this restaurant brings an experience that is on another level. Raag stands for ‘symphony,’ and the restaurant lives up to its name by presenting diners with a concert of elegance, comfort, and most importantly, tasty food. Starting in 2019, Raag has been serving progressive Indian cuisine, focusing on obtaining the highest quality of ingredients and presenting its dishes in a refined fashion. Raag presents its customers with the possibilities of Indian cuisine beyond the stereotypical simplistic plating and street-style dishes.

## **RAAG AND THE COMMUNITY**

Although Raag had only been part of the 50th and France Ave community in Edina for two years, the restaurant continues to influence its surroundings day by day. As one of the only restaurants serving south Asian cuisine in the region, Raag adds a colorful dash to the palette of restaurants. While enhancing the diversity of food enjoyed on 50th and France, the restaurant also strives to match the graceful ambiance radiated by the community itself through charming presentation and delicate dishes.

## **WHY PROGRESSIVE?**

One challenge that Raag faces as a progressive restaurant is balancing authenticity and innovation. The dishes at Raag capture the elements of both genuine Indian tastes and modernity. Many items at the restaurant carry a special Raag ‘twist,’ but maintain a distinguished South Asian flavor. For example, the well-celebrated Indian street food *pani puri* is traditionally served as little spheres of puffed bread filled with flavored water. Raag’s version of the snack, *jal tarang*, features shot glasses of flavored water intended for the diners to fill the puffed spheres as they desire.

## **EMPHASIS ON PRESENTATION**

To set apart from other Indian restaurants, Raag’s administrative team, head chefs, and designers worked to perfect the appearance of the dishes for months before the restaurant’s opening. For instance, every plating is different and unique to the entree it holds, and all of the garnishes on the dishes are meticulously placed. At Raag, the dishes provide the eye with a feast certainly as enjoyable as the mouth.





The decor at Raag

## CURRIED SAGE & COCONUT SOUP

Coconut flavored soup made with slow-simmered sage and Madras curry spices. An innovative creation for an introduction to Raag.



As one of Raag's signature dishes, the vegetable *kofta* has a unique creamy tomato sauce and creative touch of cashew, fig, caramelized onion, and pecan nuts.

## SPRING VEGETABLES AND FIG KOFTA



A simple whole-wheat flatbread with a flaky and crispy texture. This bread is perfect for dipping in any kind of curry or to enjoy on its own.



## LACHHA PARATHA

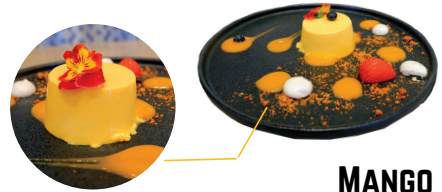
## MUSHROOM & TRUFFLE NAAN



## MANGO LASSI



A yogurt-based drink that perfectly brings out the sweet and tangy flavor of mango. The *lassi* is completed with a dash of cardamom for an additional layer of flavor.



## MANGO KULFI

A smooth and silky dessert that resembles a custard pudding. Raag pairs this treat with seasonal berries and crumbled almonds.

One of the editor's favorites at Raag. The soft and chewy *naan* boasts a strong, but not intimidating, flavor from the truffle and mushroom duo.

A variety-bread basket is also available at Raag for those who want to try different breads.

# A Message From the Authors

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Hello! As you can probably infer from this booklet, we are a pair of sisters who enjoy writing about food just as much as we enjoy eating them. Coming from a family that heavily accentuates our Asian heritage, we are determined to bring authentic and often unrecognized Asian restaurants out to the front stage. Besides enjoying the delightful dishes these restaurants had to offer, we found more value in the stories these dishes told. So we hope that when you find a chance to visit any one of these thirteen restaurants, you can see beyond the tastefulness of their food to acknowledge the narratives they share!

## We would love to hear your feedback!

Scan the following QR Code or go to [bit.ly/goodeatsmn](https://bit.ly/goodeatsmn) to complete a short form for feedback! Thank you!





