



Tender Treats At Pan Asian

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By LINDA SALISBURY

FOR THE FREE LANCE-STAR

We have sampled food at a number of Asian restaurants and are always amazed by the variety of dishes and spices from country to country.

Pan Asian, a new eatery in the rapidly growing Cosner's Corner shopping complex, offers much to try. The chefs/owners are from Taiwan and Singapore. Their menu features typical dishes from Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, Japan and China. Seasonings and ingredients are also distinctive and many were unfamiliar to us, prompting questions for our gracious hostess. She was happy to oblige.

My Dining Partner started with satay (\$4.95) that we've had elsewhere. The Indonesian dish involves three skewers--shrimp, chicken and beef--served with peanut sauce and a side of mildly pickled vegetables. The peanut dipping sauce was billed as "spicy," but, like the other "spicy" items he ordered, the "heat" was lacking. However, the dish was pleasant.

We also tried soup. MDP ordered hot and sour (\$1.95) and missed a spicy tang. I tried wonton (\$2.95), an agreeable light, clear broth filled with four wontons.

I ordered something unfamiliar: tuna tataki (\$9.95), slices of tuna in soy vinaigrette. Especially good was the fresh ginger and also the mashed ginger. Really good was a tangle of radish that dressed the plate.

Speaking of plates, the white plates and bowls are elegant, and the food presentation was lovely.

We both ordered chef's special entrees. MDP picked baby short ribs with a black pepper sauce (\$13.95)--again billed as spicy, but wasn't. The large portion of thinly sliced beef (with bone) arrived on a sizzling platter and came with bowl of white rice. The meat was fall-apart tender.

I ordered ginger and basil chicken--again an abundant portion. This dish is from Taiwan and is not like the more familiar Thai basil and chicken dish. The Taiwanese dish was flavored with a thick hoisin sauce coating and fresh basil. I located the slices of fresh ginger when enjoying leftovers the next day. However, I would have liked more ginger flavor.

Pan Asian salads came with our entrees. Our hostess told us that the delicious dressing was made with ginger, oranges and Japanese mayonnaise.

We took a look at the dessert menu but knew we had no room. Pan Asian serves many varieties of ice cream--including one that is flaming ice--and several cheesecakes.



Take a culinary adventure at Pan Asian, which offers dishes from Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, Japan and China.

We happily settled for an almond cookie served with the bill.

Part of the fun of trying new restaurants is trying new foods. Pan Asian has lots more to sample.

Linda Salisbury is the author of an award-winning adventure series for kids.

Address: 9819 Jefferson Davis Hwy., Massaponax, in Cosner's Corner, across from PETsMART. Phone: 540/891-2838 Hours: Seven days, 11 a.m.-10 p.m. Prices:

Appetizers: \$3.95-\$9.95

Soups and salads: \$1.95-\$7.95

Asian sandwiches: \$6.95-\$8.95

Dinners: \$8.95-\$17.95

Desserts: \$2.55-\$4.25

Beer, wine and mixed drinks available.

The Scoop: Simple, elegant art adorns the walls. Oriental background music provides proper atmosphere in this clean, nonsmoking, family friendly restaurant. Payment: Major credit cards accepted.

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