

Getting Around

By ETHEL SIMMONS



Chinese restaurant gets Tokyo touch

The biggest Japanese steakhouse in metropolitan Detroit will open next week at a Chinese restaurant in Farmington Hills.

Yes, tabletop-cooking will come to the area when Wing Hong, owner of two suburban restaurants, expands his Farmington Hills restaurant to include a complete Japanese steakhouse.

Wing Hong has featured a few Japanese dishes on his menu, but now he's going all out, importing nine Japanese chefs from Tokyo to do the cooking at 16 topan tables.

Wing Hong, who came to the United States from China in 1951, knows a lot about Tokyo. He served with the U.S. Army there.

"Chinese, Japanese and Korean cooking are similar," he said. "The main difference is in the garnishing."

The first Wing Hong Restaurant opened 15 years ago at Ten Mile and Southfield roads in Southfield. In 1974 Wing built a big (14,000 square feet), lavish Wing Hong Restaurant on Fourteen Mile Road in Farmington Hills.

He was there for a year when four other Chinese restaurants opened within about a mile.

"They all thought, 'If Wing Hong is going, it must be good,'" he declared. "All the rest popped up like mushrooms," he said with a laugh. The Chinese part of the Farmington Hills restaurant is elaborately decorated and adorned with red and green accents ("Happy colors," he said).

THE WING HONG Tokyo Japanese Steakhouse, adjoining the Chinese dining areas, will be spectacular, but totally different. "It's more rustic," Hong explained on a tour of the steakhouse.

Douglas fir is used throughout, and you can stroll across a bridge to look down at a serene Japanese garden on the lower level. A waterfall will flow into a tranquil lake.

Beef, shrimp and chicken will be mainstays of the tabletop cooking, with each table seating up to 10 persons. The chef's dazzling culinary performance is part of the dining pleasure.

Wing hopes to have his steakhouse ready for an opening Wednesday, Jan. 17, ahead of the Chinese New Year. To celebrate the Chinese New Year on Sunday, Jan. 29, there will be a Lion Dance at the restaurant on Monday, Jan. 30.

This year is the Year of the Sheep, which should mean a year of peace.

Wing Hong and his wife Nina, who works at the Southfield restaurant, have five sons. Wing is the son of Yick Hong, who also has five sons.

Yick, or "Papa" as he is known, is 88 years old and lives with Wing Hong and his family. Papa comes in to work every morning at the Southfield restaurant, takes a break in the afternoon and returns for the dinner trade.

Papa works an 11- or 12-hour day. But he proclaims his longevity is due to the fact that he keeps moving. Small, slim, he walks with cane but has a buoyant personality.

"I took care of my sons. Now they take care of me," he said. "I educated them." He is busy at the restaurant doing everything. "They said, 'Papa, I need you here. Papa, come peel some shrimp.'"

He even waits on tables. When customers ask what to call him, he says, "Call me Papa."

Back in 1939, Yick Hong had his own

restaurant, the Mandarin Gardens on Cass Avenue in Detroit. Later, he moved to Pontiac and for eight years operated the China City until he sold it.

A NORWEGIAN BUFFET will be the ethnic dinner for a real change of pace Friday and Saturday, Jan. 19 and 20, at The Community House in Birmingham.

Mark Fraker, food and beverage manager, said this is the first time a buffet has been offered for the diners that have been an extra attraction at the travel film series.

About 15 years ago the long-running series began to present pre-film dinners by reservation, featuring ethnic specialties of the country featured on film.

Now the dinners have become so popular that some people have come from as far as Saturday, Jan. 19 and 20, at The Community House in Birmingham.

The diners accommodate 200 persons on each of the two nights, while the auditorium seats up to 500 travel filmgoers.

Fraker and chef Lois Crittenden work together, pouring over cookbooks, to come up with a menu that has appeal, variety and can be handled by the small Community House kitchen.

He said, "Whenever you think of a particular country, you usually think of a certain food, like spaghetti for Italy, but we never serve the one that pops up in your mind. We look for something a little bit different."

The Norwegian buffet will offer a selection of four entrees, appetizer and salad, in contrast to the usual sit-down ethnic dinners which have only one of each on the menu. Also, three side dishes instead of the usual two will be served.

Fraker said he has been striving to make every aspect of the dinner interesting, including how the table is arranged, how the napkins are folded, and how the centerpiece will look.

A HOLLOWED-OUT ice block will be the tureen for Aebleskuppe, a chilled apple-wine soup. "We served a chilled sour cherry soup last winter and it was well received. We're trying the apple wine, rather than cherry wine, this time," Fraker said.

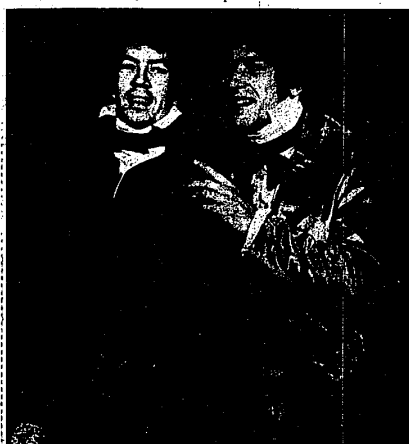
Once the menu is selected, the chef gives each cook a card with the recipe that cook will prepare. Any problems or questions are worked out ahead of the big preparation day.

Some dishes are tried out ahead of time, particularly sauces and perhaps different cuts of meat to see which accepts marinade best.

All entrees at the Norwegian buffet will be fish, but served in uncommon ways. Sautéed flounder with shrimp, poached codfish steaks with egg sauce, baked pickled stuffed with cucumbers and rice, and fried smelt are on the menu.

The ethnic dinners are usually sell-outs, Fraker said. More information about the dinners, or the film program "Norway" narrated by Ed Lark, can be obtained from The Community House by calling 644-5832.

Dinner, with prices for adults and for children, begins at 6 p.m.; a full bar is available. The film program begins at 8 p.m.



They're gentlemen

Neil Martin (left) and Richard Buzinski appear in the title roles in the Wayne State University production of William Shakespeare's "The Two Gentlemen of Verona." This romantic comedy will be performed at the historic Bonstelle Theatre on Jan. 24, 27, Feb. 2, 3 at 8:30 p.m.; with two matinee performances Sunday, Jan. 28, and Feb. 4 at 2 p.m. Call the Bonstelle Theatre box office at 577-2960 for information and reservations.

DINING AND ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

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