

DINING

Chinese restaurant stirs up unique, traditional dishes

BY KEELY KALESKI WYGONIK
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Open less than a month, Jasmine's is not your typical Chinese restaurant. Although the menu emphasizes Szechuan cuisine, you'll find surprises like Honey Walnut Chicken, House Special Basil Chicken, and Eggplant with Spicy Ginger and Garlic Sauce.

Dave Chou who owns the restaurant with his wife Fang Tan was lead chef at his parent's restaurant, Szechuan West in Ann Arbor. When the restaurant was sold in February, Chou and Tan started looking for a place of their own.

"We wanted something smaller in a more elegant setting," said Tan.

Thoughtful Chinese accents, soothing green walls, cozy booths, and comfortable tables help create a relaxing atmosphere for enjoying a meal and conversation.

Friendly service

"I get to know the people who come in," said Tan. "We train our employees to recommend dishes to customer's tastes. We can make dishes spicy or mild. We try to make our menu flexible, and choose the freshest ingredients."

Presentation is also important at Jasmine's. Chou asks a server to bring an order of Fish with Black Bean Sauce to our table. The fish, Red Snapper, is lightly fried, and garnished with snow peas. A hollowed out red bell pepper filled with black bean sauce, completes the plate.

"We want our customers to look at the plate and say 'wow this is something I enjoy looking at and eating,'" said Tan.

Starting with appetizers, Tan points to the Seafood Spring Roll Sticks, Red Sauced Wontons, and Chicken in Lettuce Wrap.

The menu includes dishes you'd expect to find in a Chinese restaurant such as Szechuan Chicken, Kung Pao Chicken, General's Chicken, Mongolian Beef, and Hoisin Pork.

The spring roll sticks are served with a citrus flavored dipping sauce that the seafood flavor. Chicken in Lettuce Wrap contrasts lightly sauteed chicken with cold, crisp, lettuce leaves refreshing in the supper. Red Sauced Wontons are served with Jasmine's house special chili sauce.

Specialties

House specialties include Honey Walnut Chicken, which Tan describes as sweet and very flavorful, and Peking Duck, which must be ordered one day in advance. Chou enjoys creating new dishes like Basil Chicken - stir-fried chicken served with shiitake mushrooms, red bell peppers and basil in a special sauce.

Jasmine's offers lots of seafood dishes such as Salt and Pepper Soft Shell Crab, and a variety of shrimp and scallop dishes.

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Broccoli with Spicy Ginger and Garlic Sauce, and Eggplant with Spicy Ginger and Garlic Sauce are popular vegetarian dishes.

Fried rice, and noodles stir-fried with vegetables and your choice of beef, chicken, pork or shrimp round out the menu.

Formerly a Middle Eastern Restaurant, Tan and her husband



STAFF PHOTO BY PAUL HURCKHAM

Beautiful presentation: Hostess Vicky Vhang and Fang Tan (right) present two of the dishes you'll find on the menu at Jasmine's.

band renovated the kitchen to accommodate Chinese cooking, but kept the fresh juice bar.

They're waiting for the liquor license to be transferred, and will offer 40 different wines, sake and plum wines, and cocktails when it's approved. Tan estimates it will be early in September.

Ginger ice cream and Almond tofu was recently added to the menu, and is getting good reviews from customers.

Jasmine's

Where: 146 Mary Alexander Court, downtown Northville, (248) 465-9393

Open: 11 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. Monday-Thursday; 11 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. Friday-Saturday; noon to 8 p.m. Sunday.

Reservations: Recommended for parties of four or more Friday-Saturday

Menu: Fine Chinese with emphasis on Szechuan. Some east meets west dishes such as Honey Walnut Chicken and House Special Basil Chicken. Freshly squeezed juices.

Cost: Lunch specials (served 11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Monday-Saturday) \$5.25-\$7.50; dinner \$7.75-\$25.95

Credit cards: All majors accepted

Carryout orders: Call (248) 465-9395 to fax your order

Seats: 69

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