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Front Page

Table Talk: The Spice has terrific Thai food

By Craig and Nancy Textor, Special to The Tribune

11/05/2008

Updated 11/06/2008 11:40:01 AM CST

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He says:

You know of the Main Street Cultural District in downtown Ames. Unique businesses are there aplenty, and I'm sure you know of The Spice, a lovely restaurant where you can enjoy food prepared as in Thailand. The Spice opened in 2006 and is adjacent to the lovely little Tom Evans Plaza.

I have always appreciated the diversity of people in Ames, thanks to Iowa State University. We all have met and known people from around the world. We also can enjoy the diversity in food offerings in Ames, and so, for fine dining, check out The Spice. It's more than just nice, it's excellent.

We experienced a charming manager, a native of Thailand, and a charming waitress, a native of the United States. I asked for the Pad Ka Prow. Translation: Stir fry of beef with basil, garlic and chili. The luncheon price? Ten dollars. An appetizer preceded it, a flaky, hot, but not-too-hot spring roll along with a sweet sauce for dipping. A good start for this native Iowan. (I must confess I could have done without the accompanying garnish of thin strings of cabbage and carrots. Too healthy for me!)

The Pad Ka Prow, was served with a huge mound of steamed jasmine rice, blanketed with a Thai-style omelet (\$2 extra on the menu). Bits of beef in a delicious sauce were part of the package. I must admit at some restaurants, the beef served has been too tough for me. Guess I'm just a tough guy. But at The Spice I made the tender bits disappear in a hurry. This menu choice is listed with two stars, meaning it is medium spicy. Good. As to ratings, I would list my food high on the chart.

In closing, I will again mention Tom Evans Plaza and the outside wall of the restaurant facing it. There one can view the mural painted by Jane Graham, of Nevada, and Ursala Ruedenberg, of Ames. It's a depiction of early Ames founders and features artifacts of the history the city and Iowa State University.

I suggested to our waitress that in spring, summer and fall, maybe diners could be served outdoors in the charming park. She promised to mention it to the owner, but she wondered if it would be feasible. Maybe not. And could the servers navigate the steps between the park and the restaurant carrying trays of steaming hot food? I'll bet they could.

She says:

I felt a sense of serenity and refinement as we were seated for lunch recently at The Spice.

I loved the cream walls, black ceiling and wide-slat, café-height window treatments. A marvelous, minimalist red lighting fixture hung over each booth. Red linen napkins were folded attractively to hold a spoon and fork. The tables featured glass tops over white table covers. The menus were laminated pages held together by a coil, making it easy to turn to the section I wanted: lunches.

A wine list on the table showed products from the United States (California and Washington), France, Italy, Australia and Japan (sake and plum wine) at \$5.50 to \$6 a glass or \$24 to \$38 a bottle. Beer is also available and so are other beverages, including the hot tea I ordered. That was one of the nicest surprises. The tea was in a pyramid-shaped container, and the tea bag inside also was pyramid-shaped. It came on a handsome, oval tray with a large, lidded cup. I brewed the green tea to my liking and then placed the bag on a pretty little pedestal on the tray. Fun!

I ordered the Pad See Ew, featuring wide rice noodles, broccoli, carrots, zucchini and egg. The vegetables were all cut with decorative edges and had great eye appeal. I ate every bit of the food and was much too full to consider ordering dessert.

We were pleased to learn that the owners, Supote and Puangtip Methiyapun, had both received degrees from ISU's veterinary college in the 1980s. Then, after living in their native Thailand for 20 years, they returned to Ames when their daughter was ready to enroll in ISU. Tanita, born in Ames while her parents were students here, finished undergraduate studies and is now working on her master's in business administration degree. She is married to Sutee Eamkajornsiri, also an ISU graduate, who manages The Spice. It is Tanita who gets credit for the tasteful décor. (The space, for many years, housed the Piper Jaffray



By Keith Textor/Special to The Tribune
The Spice, 402 Main Street in Ames, features a number of authentic Thai dishes, such as Siam shrimp, spring rolls and green curry with salmon.

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11/6/2008

Mid-Iowa Newspapers - Table Talk: T...

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offices, but you'd never know that now.)

One more thing, the street-level door on Main Street has a sign asking that the side door be used, so I think it's handier to park in the back parking lot. (However, I was happy to see that a woman on crutches was able to get in the front door so she didn't have to climb nine outside steps.)

The Spice

- Menu sampling
- * Lunch menu \$10, Monday through Friday (served with appetizer of day).
- * Vegetarian dishes \$12 to 14.
- * Soups \$4 to 5.50.
- * Curry choices \$12.50 to 13.
- * Chef's specials \$15 to 20.
- * Duck dishes \$17 to 19.
- * Seafood \$15 to 20.
- * Noodles, fried rice \$12 to 18.
- * Tea \$3.50.

Nice features

- * Map for guests to show hometowns.
- * Unique desserts.
- * Handicap accessible at front door.
- * Peaceful atmosphere.
- * Gracious hosts.

Location

402 Main Street
Ames, Iowa, 50010
(515) 232-0200

Hours

- * Lunch - 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Monday through Saturday.
- * Dinner - 5 to 9 p.m. Monday through Saturday.
- * Closed Sundays.

Ratings

	He	She
Ambiance	5	5
Service	4	5
Menu	4	5
Food	5	5

Table Talk is a monthly restaurant review by husband and wife team Craig and Nancy Textor. They will visit Mid-Iowa eateries, rating the food, service, atmosphere and menu. Craig is a carnivore and Nancy a vegetarian.

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