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New Thai address, but same good food

Thursday, March 24, 2005

By Carol Roberts
Dining Out

A new location was an excuse for a return to Siam Thai Restaurant, where I was introduced to this cuisine many years ago.

In its 21st year, Siam Thai has moved from Matteson to Flossmoor, bringing with it a lot of memories of other customers, like me, who tried their first pad Thai under the guidance of its kitchen and staff.

The new space is lovely, with small bamboo plants on each table and pictures of Thai royalty overseeing all.

During my visit, the plants and flowers that greeted the restaurant's reopening still were filling small alcoves along one side of the split dining room.

Also greeting guests was the wonderful aroma of Thai seasonings that are so important to the cuisine.

The staff was welcoming, but struggling to cope with a large crowd that already had found the new location. Despite her work load, our server took time to tell me and my guest that the banana blanket we were eating for dessert is street food in Thailand, where she had visited a few years earlier.

It may be a simple treat overseas, but I thought the dessert was extraordinary. A plantain wrapped with sweetened rice, black beans and coconut, it was more complex than many desserts.

But before we got to dessert, we had we had a lot of eating to do.

The appetizer plate for two was a good choice. It's not the most adventuresome of the starters, but it was a nice assortment, and the sauces were wonderful.

One of the dipping sauces was soy based, while the other was a combination of chili and sweet and sour.

We used these concoctions to flavor sui mai, pot stickers and shrimp blanket (literally a long shrimp in a wrapper). Providing a crunchy

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counterpoint to these fried and steamed items was a nice portion of cucumber salad, with the traditional sweet vinegary sauce.

Individual appetizers at Siam Thai include all of the above, as well as such items as fish cake, satay, deep-fried tofu and three kinds of rolls (spring, egg and veggie). Customers also can start a meal with vegetable, chicken, shrimp or squid tempura.

On the "special" appetizer list will be found such items as soft-shelled crab and vegetable tempura, grilled jumbo shrimp with spicy lime sauce and steamed mussels.

Half a dozen soups are on the menu, including the traditional tom yum and tom kha.

Besides the cucumber, salads feature mushrooms, beef, chicken, seafood or ground pork.

Siam Thai makes it easy for patrons to individualize stir fry, noodle and fried rice dishes.

On the menu, each dish is described in its vegetarian state, and a list of options is available. So to garlic and black pepper stir fry that includes onions, mushrooms and sprouts, customers can add shrimp, squid, chicken, beef, pork, tofu, scallops, mussels, crabstick, fish cake or vermicelli noodles.

The same list of extras can be added to thick or thin rice noodles, or to barbecue pork-fried rice, too.

The heart of the menu — "ocean delight" and "Noi's special entrees" — is where the Siam Thai kitchen shows its stuff.

My guest's salmon ginger and my roasted Cornish Hen basil were fine entrees that demonstrated the kitchen's talent for combining flavors and its restraint with the spice.

Actually, we would have liked a little more ginger in the first dish, but we would not change one thing about the salmon. Onions, as well as fresh and dried mushrooms, were part of the dish.

My Cornish hen, ordered because this succulent bird is seldom on restaurant menus, was delightful, too, but again, gently seasoned. Shiitakes and other vegetables teamed up with the hacked chicken.

Siam Thai also serves up such items as tilapia filet garlic in oyster sauce, catfish filet red curry, mussel or scallop hot pot, with noodles, roasted duck pineapple fried rice, five-star jumbo shrimp and lobster chili garlic.

Siam Thai has a new address, but that is all that has changed. Attention to the food and to the customers still is a hallmark of this restaurant.

Siam Thai Restaurant

Location: 3311 Vollmer Road, Flossmoor

Telephone: (708) 798-8030; www.siamthai-flossmoor.com

Cuisine: Thai

Prices: Appetizers, soups and salads \$2 to \$7.95; entrees \$5.95 to \$14.95; luncheon specials \$5.25 and \$6.25; dessert \$2

Hours: 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Mondays; 11:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. Tuesdays through Thursdays; 11:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays; noon to 8 p.m. Sundays

Credit cards: Major cards except Discover

Extras: Carryout and catering available; no liquor served, but patrons may bring their own beer



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