

■ Restaurant review

# Sweet Basil restaurant dishes out the elegant side of Thai cuisine

As part of a trendy trio on Pearl Street, this spot is perfect for special outings

BY NATASHA CHILINGERIAN  
SENIOR PULSE REPORTER

Sweet Basil Thai Cuisine is part of a trio of new restaurants on Pearl Street that emulate the Portland Pearl District, according to the new Mezza Luna's Sandy Little. Granted, the Eugene version of Portland's upscale, trendy area is only one block long and is not surrounded by big city buildings, but the new establishments do a fine job of evoking elegance.

Inside Sweet Basil, the dress and mannerisms of staff and diners scream "special occasion" and/or "date." To the left of the door is a beautiful painted mural of the floating market in Bangkok, Thailand, where shoppers paddle by and choose from fresh produce situated atop small boats. Lighting is dimmed among black tables, some of which are perched high from the ground with tall stools to sit on. To the right sits a full bar, making Sweet Basil a possible candidate for a hip, new spot to meet for drinks. One flaw in the atmosphere is the claustrophobia. Tables sit so close to one another that it's easy to hear the conversation of your neighbors.

My friend and I started with the appetizer sampler plate, which was filling and copious. It came with light rice paper rolls filled with bean sprouts, tofu and transparent noodles; fried rice paper rolls stuffed with vegetables and glass noodles; and thin, crispy fried wontons served with plum and peanut sauce. Next, we shared the house special curry, which came with broccoli, carrots, green pepper and a choice of meat, tofu or tempeh. The sauce,



Waiter Ryan McLean brings out one of Sweet Basil's popular Thai dishes Friday night.

TIM BOBOSKY | PHOTOGRAPHER

which had a strong peanut flavor, was tear-inducingly spicy even though we asked for the mildest kind. The rice was visually pleasing — it had layers of white and brown grains and was molded into moon and star shapes.

The presentation of food and drinks was impressive. Aside from the celestial cakes of rice, I noticed arrays of color, carrots carved into flowers and frilly cocktails while glancing at the tables around us. Just from looking at the restaurant's guests — well-dressed and middle-aged couples, families and college students gussied up for dates — I got the feeling that this place was best suited for special nights. Prices unsurprisingly matched the upscale feel, with appetizers ranging

from \$3.50 to \$9 and entrees running from \$8.25 to \$19.

Service was as impeccable as the dishes served. When we informed our waitress that our curry was too spicy for our liking, she brought over a cup of coconut milk to cool it off. When we asked for a box for our leftovers, she brought out some additional rice for us to take home.

Under the restaurant's name on the menu is written, "The elegant side of Thai food," and I agree with this claim. Although slightly Americanized through big portions and cramped seating, Sweet Basil is a delicious and glamorous spot, perfect for your next exciting night on the town.

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# Arts Amore

Impact! Arts and New Zone Art Collective collaborate on an event to raise money and to celebrate the arts

BY AMY LICHTY  
PULSE REPORTER

Eugene is home to many art organizations that work hard to create a community of art for the surrounding areas. On Friday, two of these organizations will collaborate to celebrate the love of the arts while working to raise money for each of their own causes through an event called Arts Amore.

Arts Amore promises to be a night full of food, art and entertainment. The event was put together by Impact! Arts, an education and community outreach association committed to offering arts programs — such as theater arts training for preschool children all the way to adults — together with the New Zone Art Collective, a non-profit group established in 1983 to foster experimental visual arts.

"It is a benefit party, but it is kind of a Valentine's Day party as well," Randy Lord of Impact! Arts said. "There will be lots of good music, food, beer and wine. There will be some silent films as well."

"We will have art provided by New Zone Art Collective, films provided by Impact! Arts, music by Botox and Mood Area 52, and DJ Molly B will be spinning discs after the live music," Steve LaRiccia of New Zone said. "Imagine-a-Nation Puppet Theatre will also be there. It's going to be a family event and all ages are able to come."

Doors open for the event, hosted by Mayor Kitty Piercy, at 6 p.m. at Eugene Wine Cellars at 255 Madison. The music begins at 7 p.m. with the jazzy sounds of Botox. Around 8:30 p.m., children and adults can enjoy the original performances of Imagine-a-Nation Puppet Theatre and at 9:30 p.m., when the kids have gone off to bed, the tango

quartet Mood Area 52 will perform. After Mood Area 52, DJ Molly B will take over the stage to keep the fun going until midnight, and throughout the night Impact! Arts will be projecting a variety of silent movies both old and new.

Although both New Zone and Impact! Arts agree that having fun is the most important aspect of the evening, Arts Amore has different goals for the different art organizations involved.

"A couple of students of ours died a couple of months ago in a car crash in Veneta. They were really bright, young, talented guys on their way to becoming really fine actors, and they were taken away from us too soon," Lord said. "So we established a memorial scholarship fund in their name called the Kyle and Bryan Memorial Scholarship Fund. The money that we raise will be going directly into that fund. This will help any promising young students who wish to take our classes but can't do so because of finances."

New Zone also has its own goal for the fundraiser, which includes raising money through a silent auction.

"Our goal is to show off our work and for people to have a good time," LaRiccia said. "We used to have a space in downtown Eugene, but we lost that when the building was sold, so we would like to raise some money to try to get a gallery space. That is our goal, but we'll see what happens."

Tickets are \$10 in advance and are available at Eugene Wine Cellars, the Museum of Unfine Art and Record Store and Tsunami Books. Tickets can also be purchased for \$12 at the door. Free food and refreshments will be provided.

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2005 Chinese Spring Festival Celebration:



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Many thanks to ASUO and the sponsor, Golden China Buffet, King's Asian Market

**What:** Dinner and Performance

**Where:** Emerald Baptist Church (631 E. 19th Ave., Eugene)

**When:** February 12 @ 5 p.m. Performance will begin at 7 p.m.

**Who:** Chinese Scholars and Students Association (CSSA) invites everyone!