

Meet the Merchant

Interview by Edward Stratton



HAILEY HOFFMAN/COAST RIVER BUSINESS JOURNAL

Suen Chang opened Milky-Cha on Commercial Street in Astoria.

Milky-Cha

Suen Chang, owner

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Suen Chang, 24, recently opened Milky-Cha, a boba tea and bubble waffle shop, at 1442 Commercial St. Astoria. The shop is next to Tokyo Teriyaki, run by Chang's parents. Chang graduated with a bachelor's in economics before returning home to open Milky-Cha amid the coronavirus pandemic. The shop opens from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily.

How did you end up opening the shop?

"I grew up with bubble tea and bubble waffles

pretty much my whole life. And when I went to college at Portland State University, I was more surrounded by bubble tea options. And right after I graduated, I came here and thought, 'There's no bubble tea here. Why isn't there any bubble tea

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here?' I told my mom, 'Hey; you guys should open one.' And my mom said, 'Why don't you? You have time because of COVID and stuff.' After graduation, my plans just changed completely."

What happened?

"I didn't think I was going to go this route. I was applying for different internships and differ-

ent jobs. But right as COVID hit, most of them were canceled. And then I had to move back home because I lived in the dorms in Portland. And yeah; I couldn't stay there."

Tell us about the shop.

"Every boba shop is different. I have about five different teas — green tea, jasmine, black. Black is like the main one. And I have different toppings. There are a lot of toppings. But I chose to just do some for now and a little later on I can open up to new options.

"I specifically try not to go to places where they (do) boba with powders, because I never really liked the powder stuff. That's why I make my ingredients with real fruit and no powders."

What about the bubble waffles?

"It takes a bunch of eggs to make. We have matcha, chocolate, a vanilla-ish version of it. The bubble waffles come from Hong Kong. They're just like this nice street waffle."

What is your long game with this shop and

your education?

"My parents ... they do Tokyo Teriyaki (next door). They have one in Seaside as well. And they know it's a lot of hard work. And they said, 'We didn't raise you to be exactly like us. We want you to grow more.' So they said, 'If you want to do more, do something else, don't let this stop you.'"

"I don't know if anybody's sure of what they're doing. I was never sure of what I wanted to be growing up. So this is just one of the many things I can do, because I love working here and making drinks for Astoria. But I always wanted to continue my schooling as well. I don't want this to stop me from that."

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