

MOUTH OF THE COLUMBIA

Coast Weekend's local
restaurant review

Seaside Thai restaurant cranks out reliable food with value

Review and photos by MOUTH OF THE COLUMBIA

At the beginning of the year, there were no Thai restaurants in South County. Now there are two. Manzanita's A Mighty Thai opened its doors in January. Seaside's Yellow Curry, meanwhile, started serving in mid-March.

Unlike Mighty Thai, Yellow Curry isn't the venture of first-time restauranteurs. Yellow Curry's owner operates two similar businesses in Beaverton: Green Curry and Red Curry. The menus are relatively similar, which means the newest outpost hit the ground running.

My first visit to the Seaside location came on a Friday evening. The restaurant, located at the mouth of Broadway's tourist vortex, is in the building that once upon a time housed Little Bayou, and many failed endeavors since. The space has since been halved. It has six or seven tables, bright yellow walls, and a kind of non-denominational, left-over hodgepodge of decor. The placemats, for instance, feature a mustachioed, Italian chef. It's high-ceilinged, bright and uncluttered.

And on this day it was busy. Most of the tables were taken, and to-go orders came and went. The lone server seemed a tad overwhelmed but remained attentive and effusive. The kitchen, meanwhile, didn't bat an eye. It cranked out dishes with impressive speed.

I began with the Coconut Shrimp (\$8.95), which came stacked like logs beside a bed of lettuce, carrots and an orange slice. The shrimp were oddly long and thin, with a light crust, flecked with flakes of coconut offering a satisfying crunch. The oblong shape upped the breading ratio, and for nearly nine dollars it felt pricey. The accompanying sweet and sour sauce was much sweeter than it was sour, and I asked for some hot sauce to bal-

ance it. It came in a tiny cup — a bit of oil, a squirt of sriracha and a pinch of thick, minced red and green chili paste. I tried a dab of the paste and immediately I was panting and welling up. The peak arrived a few minutes later. Indeed, the paste — with a base of Thai chilies — was a hair shy of nuclear.

Like many of the dishes on the menu, the Yellow Curry (\$10.95 with chicken) was offered on a spice scale from one to five. I went with a two, and that's what I received: a subtle, back-of-the-throat tingle. Covering hunks of buttery potatoes, carrots and onions, the yellow curry sauce was creamy, coconutty and rich. The spicing was deep, profound and ancient. It made me want to lick the plate.

The Garlic Supreme (\$10.95 with beef) lacked that depth and nuance. A stir fry in a thin, salty garlic sauce, it was prepared minimally. While I appreciated the way the vegetables were lightly cooked, their essence and structure maintained, the dish paled in the curry's long shadow. On the spice scale, I ordered this dish at a three, and it went up like a brush fire. To be fair, the server warned me: This one used the near-nuclear paste, and the curries were on a different spice scale. But why have different scales? Isn't relativity the whole point?

On my second trip, I had to fight the compunction to order more curry, and eventually I found a roundabout way to do so. In the meantime, my companion inquired about drinks — specifically, had they any wine or beer?

"We do healthy food," the server said. So, in place of spirits we had an Iced Coffee and a Thai Iced Tea (\$2 apiece), each of which were staggeringly, lip-smackingly sweetened. More welcome, each was also quite stiff, finishing with a bite of herby tea or bitter coffee after the sugar dissipated.



The Thai iced tea and iced coffee drinks were staggeringly sweetened but also full of stiff tea and coffee flavor.

Moments later, our appetizer, the Seaside Stickers (\$7.95), popped out. Like the shrimp, the six pot stickers had a nice, not too oily, deep-fried crust. While they appeared to be made in-house, they could've been packed fuller. And, like the shrimp, the price felt high — out of line with the rest of the menu, where full, reasonably-sized entrées were just a few dollars more.

Of the noodle dishes we had the Pad Thai (\$10.95 with chicken). With rice noodles that were rather chewy, it was as the dish generally is: familiar and filling.

Of the "Signature Dishes," the Angry Catfish (\$15.95) was well-presented. In a lake of the grand curry sauce, beside a bed of lettuce, lightly steamed carrots and broccoli, was an island of fried catfish topped with kiffir leaves, lemongrass and a dollop of what I think was coconut ice cream. Despite resting in the liquid, the catfish breading retained its crunch throughout the meal. The fish was light and clean, though the herbs were a bit dry. It was a dish reaching for elegance, but blue collar at heart.

Indeed, Yellow Curry is comfortably casual — perhaps better suited for lunch or an easy dinner than a fancy date. (Lunch, which is available 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. weekdays except Wednesday, features slightly lower prices and an abridged menu.)

Compared to A Mighty Thai, Yellow Curry provides a better



The Angry Catfish was a well-presented signature dish.



The Seaside Pot Stickers had a nice deep-fried crust but could have used more filling.

value, a more reliable, well-oiled kitchen, and quick turnaround. Mighty Thai offers a more cozy and romantic ambiance, presentation, a full bar and some more upscale items. Indeed, each has its own drawbacks and allure. Both, though, are important additions to the region's dining scene, and an indication that, yes, we crave more than just burgers and fish and chips. It's a wide world out there, and we're hungry for it.

YELLOW CURRY

Rating: ★★★★★

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yellowcurryseaside.com

HOURS: 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.
Thursday to Tuesday.

PRICE: \$ – most entrées
around \$10

SERVICE: Effusive when
stretched, but the kitchen is
quick

**VEGETARIAN/VEGAN OP-
TIONS:** Plenty

DRINKS: Thai iced tea, coffee

KEY TO STAR RATING SYSTEM

- ★ Poor
- ★★ Below average
- ★★★ Good & worth return
- ★★★★ Excellent
- ★★★★★ Best in region