

Siam Lotus Asian Kitchen and Bar

Plus a recipe for larb gai

BY DAVID CAMPICHE

On a good day, it is a 90 minute drive over the big hill and through tall evergreens to Beaverton, a radiating suburb of Portland. My mission was an eye appointment.

As it turned out, the highlight was a leisurely dinner at Siam Lotus, an attractive Thai restaurant with an impressive menu, attentive service and an eater's delight. We were two couples. The highlight was the food: fragrant, attractive and delicious. Better than delicious. Indeed, this was the best Thai meal I have eaten in one heck of a long time. Maybe, ever.

I love Asian cuisine. Both on the Long Beach Peninsula and in Astoria, we have a number of decent choices. Some of the entrees are wonderful. Some tend to be a bit predictable: Kung pow chicken, pad thai, spring rolls or General Tso's, which I happen to like when choices are more limited. What I love to find is more seasonal specialties: wild mushrooms, fresh halibut, sea beans, salmon, littleneck clams or Asian garden greens, prepared, of course, in

authentic styles including Chinese and Thai. Food from our waters and backyards. I find the taste of local diners to be diverse and refined. They know the new styles and avant garde preparations. They talk food and cook well. From time to time, when they want great world cuisine, they drive to the urban centers, where there is always something new to be discovered.

Siam Lotus offers pretty plates, ample portions and time-perfected delicacies. The establishment's chefs are masters with fast hands, perfect knife cuts and a gift for plating. They know sauce. And the delight of all that is a rush to the senses.

When a plate of larb gai and yum asparagus arrived, resplendent with sauces, spicy and savory with perfectly rendered vegetables and fresh marinated fruit, we dove in with a fury. The splendid shrimp and asparagus salad was both pretty and perfectly seasoned with just the right amount of spice and tamarind. I was once served the ground chicken delight — larb gai — in Ubud, Bali, a fine meal cooked lovingly in a small home kitchen with open windows to corral the evening breezes.

Here, on the western outskirts of Port-

Siam Lotus Asian Kitchen and Bar

12600 SW Crescent Suite 150, Beaverton

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Visit siamlotusoregon.com for hours and a menu



A spicy, northern style Thai sausage at Siam Lotus.

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land, I was not disappointed. At Siam Lotus, our entrees included deep fried pork shanks, barbecue duck with additions of coconut milk, red curry, pineapple and cherry tomatoes, and of course, kaffir lime and sweet basil leaves. There was a spicy, northern style Thai sausage, and of course, the traditional bowl of rice complemented the meal.

Below is a recipe from Ayu, our dear friend from Bali. She is a U.S. citizen living with her lovely family in Spokane.

Larb gai

Ingredients:

- 2 tablespoons roasted rice powder. You can buy this or make it by toasting uncooked rice on a pan until golden and grinding it using a pestle.
- 16 ounces finely chopped grilled chicken white or dark meat
- ½ teaspoon chili flakes
- 4 teaspoons fish sauce
- 5 teaspoons lime juice
- ¼ cup finely chopped red onions

- 2 tablespoons chopped cilantro
- 2 tablespoons thinly sliced scallions
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped lemongrass
- 1 tablespoon Thai soy sauce
- Mint leaves (garnish)
- Romaine lettuce leaves (to serve)
- Thai basil (garnish)
- Bean sprouts (to serve)

Preparation:

Grill the chicken and finely chop. Transfer to mixing bowl along with onions, scallions, cilantro, rice powder and chili flakes.

In a smaller bowl mix all of the spices left and slowly pour and mix into the bowl of dry ingredients.

Serve on the romaine leaves with the mint and basil garnish.

Serve with:

- 1/2 cup crushed peanuts
- Eight medium lettuce leaves, washed and chilled
- Basil and mint garnish
- Sticky rice

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