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# RECYCLE

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## FOOD

BY TODD SOUTH



Thai Corner Cafe serves a rendition of veggie-filled spring rolls and peanut sauce.  
PHOTO/ALLISON YOUNG

## Thai one on

Although it's been around for nearly a decade, I just got around to checking out Thai Corner Cafe. The layout and vibe is less cafe and more "bar with food," with pub height tables, cozy two-seater booths and a couple of expansive "bring the whole gang" booths.

There are just over 20 varieties of bottled beer—half of them imports, with no local producers represented. Brewed by Thailand's biggest beermaker, bottles of Singha lager (\$9.45, 21-ounces) and Leo lager (\$5.75, 11-ounces) were served with chilled pint glasses, both reminiscent of American mass-market brews. My younger dining companions chose bubble tea (\$4.25 each), one mango, the other honeydew. I've never acquired a taste for the chewy boba balls, but they seemed satisfied with it.

The food menu isn't huge, but it has enough stir-fry, curries and classic Thai dishes to choose from. It's impossible for me to make a first-time visit without ordering fresh spring rolls (\$6.95, four pieces) and chicken satay (\$8.95, four pieces), whereas my dining companions can't resist potstickers (\$6.95, six pieces). The rice paper rolls were heavily stuffed with lettuce, vermicelli, carrot, cucumber, basil, cilantro and shrimp, served with a whole lot of agreeably chunky peanut sauce. Large skewers of grilled, marinated chicken were served with just as much sauce and a rice vinegar cucumber salad. The marinade was sweeter than expected but worked with the goober goo. The chicken and veggie dumplings were on the small side but were served hot and crispy with a soy/ginger sauce.

Though other dishes beckoned, I doubled-down on being predictable and ordered combo pad Thai (\$17.95), an exceptionally large serving

of rice noodles stir-fried with tamarind sauce, onion, egg, bean sprout, chive and plenty of chicken, pork, beef and shrimp—crushed peanut on the side. The grilled meats had a nice bit of char, and the sauce was less sweet and better balanced than the last few examples I've been served. An enormous platter of seafood fried rice (\$21.95) was similarly impressive, loaded with egg, tomato, onion, pea, carrot and a generous quantity of mussels, squid, shrimp and scallops.

A pair of normal-sized entrees rounded out the meal, each served with white rice. Strips of teriyaki pork (\$12.95) were served with steamed broccoli and carrot in a sauce that was more savory and slightly spicy than the syrupy stuff I associate with teriyaki. As a result, I think I enjoyed it more than the person who ordered it.

Spicy basil tofu (\$12.95) came with large cubes of crispy bean curd fried up with bell pepper, onion and mushroom in a spicy basil sauce. The tofu was still soft and pillowy on the inside, with the veg cut large and retaining a bit of crunch. The sauce was easily my favorite of the meal, just spicy enough to warrant use of the word and almost overwhelmingly redolent with fresh Thai basil. All of the main dishes can be ordered with a choice of proteins, but I'm glad my friend went vegetarian on this occasion. It's rare I find a tofu dish done well enough I'd order it again.

All in all, we had a fun evening. Service was excellent, and any place with both great spring rolls and decent pad Thai will keep me coming back for more. □

### Thai Corner Cafe

100 W. Second St., 327-4333

Thai Corner Cafe is open Monday through Thursday from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m., Friday and Saturday from 11 a.m.