

Do Sit Thai Cuisine

The exciting taste of Thailand hits Walnut Creek.

BY MICHAELA JARVIS

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JENNIFER MARTINE

IN THAILAND, a restaurant with all the charm of a Woolworth's lunch counter can serve great food. Still, when Do Sit Thai Cuisine opened this summer, it seemed unbelievable that a small corner spot tucked behind the Rite Aid in Walnut Creek's Palos Verdes Mall could live up to that kind of possibility.

But just seeing the interior of Do Sit, near Lunardi's on Pleasant Hill Road, will start to shake up your strip mall restaurant prejudice. In a space that has seen at least two other

restaurants in the past five years, Do Sit is by far the best incarnation yet.

The brown-tone walls, dark wood trim, interestingly designed white leather chairs, and a few well-placed art objects create a restful, contemporary Asian aesthetic. Mellow Thai music adds to the serenity. And all this despite the fact that, every day this summer, construction workers hammered away on a new bank and a store right outside Do Sit's windows.

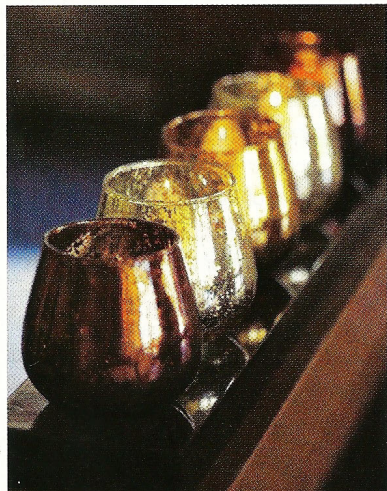
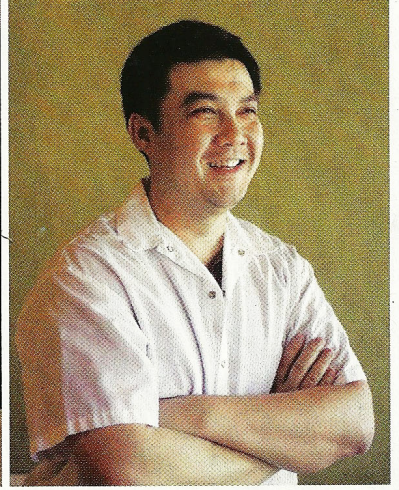
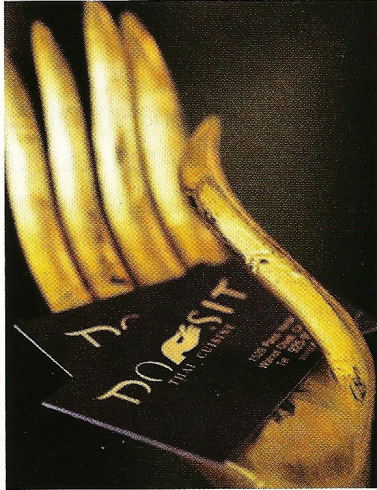
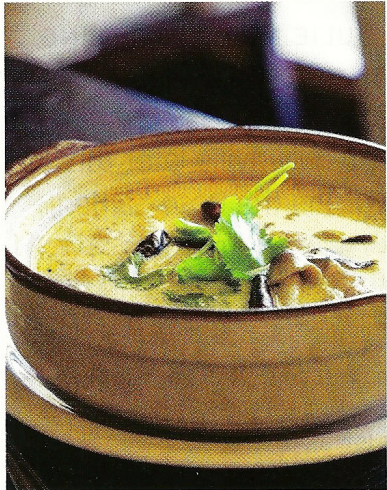
Really, despite Do Sit's geographical challenges, the restaurant has a lot going for it. Adding to its gracious atmosphere, its young servers are genuine and knowledgeable, and the food is authentic. Even the serving of a few well-chosen and well-priced wines is pulled off beautifully. It's no surprise to learn that the family of Do Sit's owner also owns Manora's in San Francisco, which was a standout as far back as the late 1980s, and Similan in Danville.

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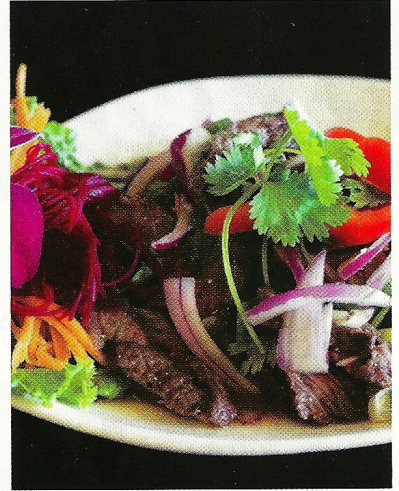
What is a surprise at Do Sit is just how perfect a chicken coconut milk soup can be. Served as an accompaniment to the \$9.95 lunch specials and as an early course on the dinner menu, the soup is sweet and rich, yet tangy and a bit spicy. It is served with a few flakes of roasted red chili and one perfect leaf of cilantro floating on top. If you like this kind of soup, you've got to try Do Sit's version. It'll have you scheming nonstop about sneaking over for a big bowl to have as a meal.

The coconut milk soup would make a great meal, but if that's all you ordered, you'd miss out on the tender satay, which is delicately grilled to impart just enough char to counterbalance the sweetness of its marinade, and the spice and richness of the peanut sauce. Another killer appetizer is the grilled prawns—their pinkish meat plumping out of peels barely blackened by the grill—which are perfect dipped in





PREVIOUS PAGE: spicy basil seafood with shrimp, squid, and scallops. THIS PAGE: (clockwise from top left) chicken coconut milk soup; artfully displayed business cards; coconut juice and Thai iced tea; owner and executive chef Jakkrid Laongsuwan; beef salad; server Pakkarj Jitchavisoot; candles set the mood.



at a glance

WHAT MAKES IT SPECIAL: The serene atmosphere, professional service, and deliciously authentic food combine for a great experience.

THE SPACE: Understated but stylish atmosphere is comfortable and relaxing.

WHEN TO GO: Lunch if you want a deal, dinner if a wide-ranging menu appeals to you.

WHAT TO ORDER: Chicken coconut milk soup (*tom kha*), beef salad, green curry.

BONUS: The Thai iced tea has a great bittersweet flavor.

their spicy lime sauce. Fish cakes come in a small bowl at lunch, soaking in cucumber and dressing, but we would have preferred them served separately.

The dish that practically brought tears to our eyes, and not only because it packs some heat, was the beef salad. One taste of its citrusy spiciness took us back to that Woolworth's-style lunch spot in Koh Samui, and to the best Thai we've eaten in San Francisco. The lime, roasted chili, and mint stand up and sing in this well-made Thai beef salad, partly because of a sprinkling of rice powder, its roasted wholesomeness serving as a foundation for the jazzier flavors. Maybe that's the dish to have on its own as a meal.

Also fabulous, though, and beautiful to look at, is the green curry, which we had with pork. Vividly fresh green beans, red bell pepper, eggplant, and tender strips of pork poke out of a smooth, rich, pale green curry sauce. Or, if you like fish, try the spicy basil seafood: Do Sit cooks its squid with a light touch so it's soft and tender, and equally succulent shrimp and scallops soak up the garlic chili sauce. The fried tofu and

vegetables in the *pra ram* vegetable looked and tasted fresh and wholesome, but overly generous peanut sauce drowned the dish a bit. Pad Thai combined firm rice noodles and shrimp with crunchy bits of bean sprouts, green onions, and ground peanuts in a preparation that might have balanced its sweetness better with more egg and tofu.

Nonetheless, *Do Sit* means a level of heaven in Thai, and it delivers. By the time we were through with our main course and eating coconut ice cream and bananas fried in a light, tender crust, we were there—relaxing on one of heaven's top floors. Maybe a Walnut Creek shopping center can be a little bit like Thailand after all.

CONTACT: 1520 Palos Verdes Mall, Walnut Creek, (925) 933-3889.

HOURS: Lunch Mon.–Sat., dinner daily.

PRICE: Entrées up to \$15.95.

ALCOHOL: Wine and Thai beer. ■