



## RESTAURANT REVIEW

# Wonderful Jasmine Thai and Sushi

## Authentic, Fresh Cuisine

By Charles Marcanetti

The first restaurant to get reviewed a third time in six years is also the newest, freshest and (finally) most modern eatery for Thai cuisine and sushi anywhere in our six-city circulation area. The owner, operator, head chef, and, yes, herbalist Peter Hongnophkun, has built a brand new, upbeat, but not upscale, restaurant. Unlike historic Asian (cum Chinese) restaurants which are dark, this restaurant is brightly lit, from the ample parking area to the innermost corners of the exposed, but pristine, ductwork, open-to-the-customers' view kitchen, spotlessly clean restrooms, and light tan well-scrubbed floors separating the many tables with much more space between the seating spaces than any of us has enjoyed in many years.

Even while Peter was still operating the older version, he owned this new location. He patiently waited for the tenant to move out and then slowly built this wonderful restaurant, incorporating the many lessons he learned over decades of listening to his customers, into this friendly and American-dining-attitude facility serving authentic Thai food and fresh, large cut sushi and sashimi.

Jasmine Thai and Sushi Restaurant, located at 1785 N. State Road 7 in Margate (west side of 441, south of Copans/Royal Palm, 954-979-5530), is fronted by a white glowing sign. This place respects its customers' intelligence; and, my friends, that philosophy is consistent throughout.

I asked Peter why he hasn't focused on a design scheme from Thailand or sought out an Asian staff. His answer both surprised and impressed me: "This is a restaurant in America and we Americans (Peter is an Asian-American) have different inclinations about food service. I am not trying to create a theme here at Jasmine Thai. I am trying to create, and I think I have succeeded in creating, a fun place for western sensibilities in design and layout to meet with delicious Asian food experiences."

He added, "As regards my staff, I was looking for the most talented, courteous, genuinely fun-filled people who actually enjoyed making customers happy with meeting new taste sensations."

Peter has accomplished his goal. Our server for the evening was Rose, a gracious, well-informed young woman, who knows the menu and doesn't hesitate to offer her choices in the many appetizers and main dishes. Rose brightened our evening. I suspect the entire staff at Jasmine Thai brightens the dining experience for their guests.

We started out with Jasmine rolls, wrapped in rice paper and

stuffed with imitation crab (now called krab, and usually made from pollock) with chicken and herbs, then quickly fried. Also on the appetizer list were shrimp shumai (steamed) and gyoza (fried shrimp). Both are delicious.

We next over-stuffed ourselves with several signature entrees: Panang curry, a slightly spicy dish made with fresh greens, bell peppers, wild lime leaves, squid, and fresh basil (here's the kicker: Peter grows his own Thai basil with basil cuttings he had shipped from Thailand). The basil is so fresh – it was on the stem five minutes before we tasted it. There is a difference and it is a delicious difference and you will notice and appreciate it. This dish is also comprised of a light peanut sauce and your choice of the fish or meat or poultry (yes, we tried them all). This is a truly special treat made by a man who genuinely wants to share his homeland's finest delicacies.

We just had to taste the roast duckling, since duck is a staple for special occasions in Thailand. It was sweet, tender, and succulent. The green curry dish was smoking hot for me and just about right for my guests. I, as you know, am a wimp.

Jasmine Thai and Sushi, a stopping place for families for many years, is better than ever. With its new, bright and modern décor, it promises to be thriving for years to come. **D**

