


Sponsor a child today!

CLICK HERE



kingstonlife



SET THE "STAGE" TO SELL YOUR HOME
LEARN MORE ...



GRACE & HENRY



[Home](#) [Subscribe](#) [About Us](#) [Contact Us](#) [Sign-In](#)

In This Issue [Home > Food >](#)

- Food
- Wine
- Shopping
- Arts & Culture
- Business Directory
- A Good Word
- After Hours
- Community Spirit
- What's Happening
- Kingston Relocation Guide
- Media Kit

Quick Search:

Search

[Advanced Search](#)



1217 Princess St.
613-549-2211
1-800-567-8800
www.bestwestern.kingston.on.ca

FOOD

a taste for travel world cuisine right here at home



In this eastern Ontario bastion of United Empire Loyalist heritage, it seems it should be a stretch to find restaurants that stray from the English-influenced fare of roasted meat and boiled potatoes. But, in fact, Kingston has a wealth of restaurants that are a virtual culinary jaunt around the globe. There are doors that open into the cuisine of all seven continents (OK, maybe not all . . . it would be a stretch to find Vegemite sandwiches from Australia or any sort of food that is indigenous to Antarctica).

Still, there is no better way to travel around the world than with your taste buds. No waiting in airport lineups and no passport required. Just a dose of curiosity and a willingness to travel the world . . . one dish at a time!

Saigon Delights — Vietnamese

In Kingston, it used to be that references to Vietnam were found only in the textbooks and lecture halls at Queen's University. All that changed in 1992 when the Nguyen family opened Saigon Delights on Bagot Street, the city's first Vietnamese restaurant (the uptown location followed in 2001).

If restaurant menus were a reflection of the cooking inside a typical Vietnamese home, the Saigon Delights menu would be it, with many of the dishes based on the family's original recipes. And as with most cuisine from this part of the world, the emphasis is on fresh vegetables (bok choy, bell peppers, carrots, cauliflower and fresh greens show up in most dishes) and fresh herbs (basil, lemon grass, cilantro and fresh ginger). If it's served in a bowl or on a plate at Saigon Delights, chances are it's been made from scratch — and that includes the soups, dipping sauces and marinades.

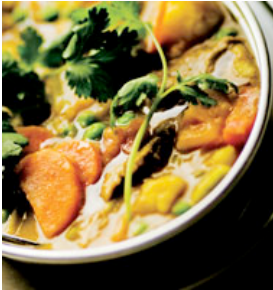
DISHES FEATURED



Cambodian Village



Grecos



Darbar

Rich and tasty broths are at the heart of the traditional meal-size bowls of soup, thick with Vietnamese rice noodles, meats and vegetables. The restaurant's famous spring rolls — minced pork and shrimp wrapped in delicate sheets of rice paper, deep fried and served with nuoc mam, the fermented fish sauce that is a staple in Vietnamese cooking — often follow the soup.

A word of advice: ditch your territorial instincts, order a cross-section of dishes and share the main courses communally with your friends. The menu is jam-packed with stir-fried vegetables and meats, seasoned (some are mild and others will light a flame on your tongue) and piled atop the staples of Vietnamese cooking: a bed of rice or a tangle of Vietnamese rice noodles. For those needing to avoid wheat or gluten products, the menu at Saigon Delights is a dream come true.

You cannot miss with the signature dishes: an order of deep-fried spring rolls, a plate of Boong Jay Yaw Tit Noong (the most popular dish on the menu made of grilled meat, fresh greens and roasted peanuts on top of rice noodles) and the Hooi Diu Sow, a stir-fry of meat and veggies tossed in a red curry sauce and served over the thicker-style rice noodles.

Whatever you order, you can be sure it will be made with fresh ingredients and seasoned just the way the Nguyen family recipes were written.

Saigon Delights, downtown at 272 Bagot St., Kingston; 613-546-3690 and uptown at 217 Division St., Kingston; 613-536-5460

Darbar — Indian

The appeal of East Indian food has spread around the globe, making it one of the most popular cuisines on continents from Europe to North America. And Kingston has been blessed with a wealth of excellent Indian restaurants, serving dishes from a large country with many different regions and many diverse styles.

At Darbar, the emphasis is on the skilled and subtle use of freshly ground spices to create dishes that range from mild to warmer to downright dancing on the tongue. Behind the kitchen doors of every successful Indian restaurant you'll find they grind their own spices like mustard seed, cardamom, tamarind, fennel and star anise. Ground and whole spices are combined to create dishes like the flavourful rice and vegetables of a biryani, or any one of the potato-based dishes (aloo gobi, aloo matter or saag aloo).

For those who shy away from Indian cuisine, paralyzed by a fear of heat-gone-wild, the best advice is: don't be. Darbar's two owners, Piklu Dey and Ashok Kar, can patiently guide you through the menu selections, choosing dishes that will be a good match for your tolerance level, even if that means very mild but flavourful.

As soon as you find your seat, a thin, round papadum will appear on the table. This deep-fried, crispy wafer is made from a staple of Indian cooking — ground lentils — and is a traditional accompaniment to any meal. It will whet your appetite for more appetizers to follow. Try the onion bhaji, small balls made of sliced onions that are coated in ground lentils and deep-fried.

Like most authentic Indian restaurants, Darbar cooks many breads and dishes in a tandoor oven, a traditional clay oven fired by hardwood charcoal in which food takes on a distinctive smoky flavour. No one leaves without trying the naan, the wonderful flatbread cooked on the sides of the tandoor.

A typical dish from the north reaches of India would be the very popular sabji gosht, described by Dey as "spicy but not hot." It's a flavourful concoction of meat and vegetables cooked in a fenugreek-enhanced sauce. Wash the meal down with a bottle of cold Kingfisher beer.

Whether mild or hot, vegetarian or meat-based, the dishes at any of Kingston's excellent Indian restaurants are all winners.

Darbar, 479 Princess St., Kingston; 613-548-7053

Grecos — Greek

It's one thing to have dinner at a restaurant, but it's quite another to experience a little "culinary geography." That's what happens with a meal at Grecos, a family-run slice of the Mediterranean right on Princess Street.

Chef Jim Kofinis grew up and developed his cooking skills at the side of his father, Gus. Today, the duo shares the kitchen detail at Grecos. "We still cook together and my dad is still very hands-on," explains the younger Kofinis.

Cold Canadian winters make for short growing seasons, and it's not unusual to find these chefs scouring the markets to find the freshest ingredients each day. At the heart of a typical Greek meal are several diverse ingredients. Flavourful olive oils, briny feta cheese, ripe tomatoes and plump kalamata olives are found in dishes from salads to main courses. The Grecos menu is full of signature dishes that take the diner on a culinary voyage through the warm Mediterranean country.

A classic Greek salad is often the first taste a hungry diner experiences when seated at the table in a taverna, and it can set the tone for the meal to follow. This traditional salad

(no greens) depends on the intensely flavourful ingredients: wedges of fresh tomato, chunks of cucumbers, tangy feta cheese and the bite of chopped red onion. The kitchen at Grecos relies on the taste burst of high-quality Greek olive oil and lots of chopped, fresh oregano.

For visual and taste impact, it would be a challenge to beat a Grecos favourite, the saganaki flaming cheese. "That's a winner," laughs Kofinis. "People love that cheese flambÇed at the tableside." The wedge of hard, salty Kefalotyri cheese is lightly battered, pan-fried and then set aflame with a shout of "Opa!"

The rest of the menu is heavily peppered with Greek favourites: layers of phyllo pastry, spinach and feta cheese to make spanakopita; cubes of broiled pork souvlaki; and a moussaka casserole of potato, sliced eggplant and two well-seasoned sauces (one tomato-based and the other a creamy white bÇchamel sauce).

Grecos Wine Bar and Grill, 167 Princess St., Kingston; 613-542-2229

Cambodiana Restaurant — Cambodian and Thai

If you were aiming to find a world cuisine that spoke of fresh ingredients and a healthy style of cooking, you'd best look to the countries of Southeast Asia. And Kingston is blessed with restaurants from this region, especially those specializing in the sweet and hot flavours of Cambodia and Thailand.

Both cuisines are served at Cambodiana on Brock Street. (Restaurant co-owner Quoc Tran also operates Cambodian Village in downtown Kingston.)

Fresh vegetables and fruit are widely used in both Thai and Cambodian cuisine — the latter is often described as similar to Thai cooking, but milder on the heat scale. The dishes on the Cambodiana menu range from mild to very hot (but they'll adjust according to your preferences) using standard ingredients like lemon grass, kaffir lime leaf, coconut milk, tamarind and fish paste (prahok). There's also the flavourful Thai curry paste, which Tran admits "finds its way into most dishes." Ask for the yellow paste if you're not sure about the heat, red if you like your food spicy, and green if you know exactly what you're doing when it comes to the punch of Thai foods.

Most Cambodian meals start with a large bowl of soup (Tran recommends the Tom Yum Goong) with the strong flavours of Thai mushrooms, lemon grass and a little sour taste from the tamarind paste. It's a great choice if you have the sniffles. "The spiciness will clear your sinuses right out," promises Tran.

Dishes are usually quickly steamed or stir-fried, preserving the nutrients of the vegetables and herbs and making them unusually healthy. Ideally, you should choose a variety of dishes to share (eating Thai style is a social affair), looking for a combination of tastes that are sweet, salty, spicy and sour. Two of the most popular dishes on the Cambodiana menu are the Phanaeng Kai (chicken done with red curry paste, lime leaves and coconut milk) and the Pad Thai Sai Khai (for many, Pad Thai is their first venture into the cuisine from this part of the world). Pad Thai — the name translates as "Thai-style stir-fried noodles" — is the country's national dish. It's a mixture of quickly fried chicken, shrimp or tofu with vegetables and a salty fish sauce, served with narrow rice noodles.

Cambodiana Restaurant, 161 Brock St., Kingston; 613-531-0888

Discussion Closed

Osprey Media

Disclaimer | Privacy | © 2009 

Newspapers:

Select a Publication:

wHaggle
Careers

Blogs
Wheels

Obituaries
Classifieds