

Not for boring people

THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

June 25, 2008

DINING OUT

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PHOTOS BY MICK CLEA/THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

Tasty touch of Asian

Ling & Louie's Americanized fare remains true to its ethnic origins

By Erika Sagon
THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

At Ling & Louie's Asian Bar and Grill, you won't have to pluck kaffir lime leaves out of the tom kha gal before you eat it.

The food at this Scottsdale lunch and dinner spot is an unimimidating take on several Asian cuisines, including Thai and Japanese. In many ways it might remind you of a full-service version of Pei Wei, the fast-casual offshoot of PF Chang's.

Ling & Louie's is meant to feel like an Asian pub, with brick walls throughout the restaurant and bar, exposed ceilings and neon beer signs. Paper menus are also place mats, and food comes out in white bowls and square plates.

The concept comes from the same owners as the former Thaipoon, a slightly more upscale restaurant that operated in Scottsdale.

To its credit, Ling & Louie's knows where it falls on the scale of authenticity. So rather than take itself too seriously, it has fun Americanizing its cuisine, even putting meatloaf with an Asian makeover on the broad menu.

We're not sure which culinary region of Asia claims the Jeweled Beef (\$12.99), but it should be proud. A spicy sauce coated a big bowl of skinnny, squiggly egg noodles, chunks of filet mignon, sugar snap peas and mushrooms. A little flame icon next to the dish's name promised a kick. It was addictively and awesomely spicy, the kind of hot that makes you suck in air to try to cool off your mouth.

The majority of our table put out the fire with fresh limeade (\$1.49). Our waitress brought carafes of this tart drink to our table, a much-appreciated gesture since specialty drinks aren't typically refilled for free at restaurants.

The filet mignon was again a superstar in the Sizzling Surf and Turf (\$14.80). Tender and perfectly pink in the center, the chunks of lean meat gave an upscale feel to the dish, which also had shrimp, asparagus,



Above: New Wave pad Thai features shrimp, chicken, vegetables, rice noodles and peanuts. Left: Jeweled Beef brings together egg noodles, chunks of filet mignon, sugar snap peas and mushrooms.

EVERYDAY DINING

RESTAURANT REVIEW

Ling & Louie's Asian Bar and Grill

Scene: A casual, Asian-inspired pub.

Service: Friendly and efficient.

Cuisine: Asian.

Stars: ★★★★★

Must try: Jeweled Beef (\$12.99) with thin egg noodles, filet mignon, sugar snap peas, mushrooms and garlic in a spicy sauce; honey walnut shrimp (\$11.99), with crispy shrimp, mushrooms and candied walnuts in a sweet honey sauce; New Wave pad Thai (\$11.99), with shrimp, chicken, veggies and peanuts.

Hours: 11 a.m.-10 p.m. Sundays-Thursdays; 11 a.m.-11 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays.

Details: 9397 E. Shea Blvd., Scottsdale, 480-767-5464, lingandlouies.com.

mushrooms, onions and Thai basil in a thick, salty brown sauce.

The New Wave pad Thai (\$11.99) and the Red Palace pot stickers (\$7.99) made everyone happy, even if neither dish was groundbreaking.

All went back for seconds of pad Thai, the iconic rice-noodle dish with shrimp, chicken, veggies and chopped peanuts. And the six pan-fried dumplings filled with a pork mix went fast, too.

Meanwhile, the honey walnut shrimp (\$11.99) over brown rice divided our table. Some liked the supersweet sauce that coated the shrimp, straw mushrooms and candied walnuts. Others were turned off by it.

Everyone agreed, however, that the Firecracker chicken with broccoli (\$10.80) over white rice fell short. The breaded chicken wasn't crispy, as promised, and the red chile sauce was unmemorable.

Ling & Louie's tagline is "not for boring people" — but it isn't for adventure seekers, either.

Which brings us back to the tom kha gal (\$4.25). Ling & Louie's mainstream riff on this traditional Thai soup with coconut milk has neatly diced chicken and tomatoes. It's tasty, but purists will miss the galangal, chiles and kaffir lime leaves, and other spices that flavor the soup as it cooks but are pulled out once it arrives at the table.

Others will appreciate that there's no guessing game: Everything in the bowl is edible.

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