

Asian Restaurant News

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Seasonal Dishes for Spring

**"Customers Know Best!"
A Martin Yan Column**

Don't Overpay in Taxes This Year



Yangming: Setting the Standards in Philadelphia



Yangming is an upscale, modern and innovative Asian fusion cuisine restaurant located in an affluent area of Philadelphia. Yangming has flourished in Philadelphia with critics, community members and diners because of a high food quality standard, wonderful service, a pleasing aesthetic, and community dedication not to be rivaled.

Yangming is located in a historic two-story building that covers 13,000 square feet of dining space. The building itself is a historical landmark as it has stood on the same lot for roughly two hundred years. The structure has housed everything from a tavern to a community gathering place, even serving as a post office at one point. Since the 1930's, the building again housed a restaurant, and Michael bought the building in 1990. After a year of interior and exterior renovation, the restaurant opened and has remained under the same management since.

Yangming serves fusion cuisine drawing upon the essence of both Chinese and Western culinary styles. According to Michael Wei, Yangming's owner, the word "fusion" does not mean "Americanized" entrees; instead, the fusion dishes integrate Chinese, and Western along with Asian ingredients and flavorings, adopting their sauce making and cooking method. Methods used for cooking include toasting, steaming, stir-frying, braising and stewing. The top selling and award-winning dish is the Jumbo Lump Crab Cakes. The chef prepares the dish by mixing crabmeat with mayonnaise, a dash of salt, pepper and shallot to create a crab cake. The cake is then fried on a hot pan, while white wine, cream, and basil sauce are sprinkled on afterwards. Yangming is able to provide distinctly Asian and Western style dishes because it actually has two autonomous kitchens within the restaurant - one Western and one Chinese - each with different chefs and managers. The Western kitchen also prepares Western desserts such as Cappuccino Crème Brulee, Edelweiss, and Chocolate Toffee Tart. A catering service is also available from both kitchens.

The seasonal dishes and menus at Yangming are quite impressive. The pompano is a popular item in the summer while halibut is offered in the spring. Seasonal vegetables and fruits are also served.

Healthy dishes are offered, and also a healthier way of cooking. The chefs avoid using trans fats and hydrogenated oil and other unhealthy elements, and many dishes are prepared with less salt and oil, such as the steamed whole fish. While cooking, the chefs use little oil, salt, sugar, no

Setting the Standards in Philadelphia

Yangming Restaurant

By Chris Anderson

Yangming's philosophy is to pursue the highest standard of culinary art and innovation; Yangming has thrived in the competitive restaurant business and offers a fantastic all around dining experience to the customers.

MSG, and fresh fruit instead of canned fruit. This winning combination has made their customers happier and healthier.

Yangming also has a healthy offering of soups such as their Wonton Soup, Eight Ingredients Hot & Sour Soup, and the popular Shrimp Coconut Soup. In the preparation of the Shrimp Coconut Soup, the chefs use a selection of ingredients including shiitake mushrooms, glass noodles, galangal, lemongrass, leeks and Thai basil.

Yangming uses local and organic produce whenever possible because these items tend to be healthier and free of chemicals. Various vegetables, fruits, and mushrooms are all organically grown from local farms. This environmentally conscious restaurant uses low-energy light bulbs, and they reduce the use of plastic materials, such as the packaging bags.

The bar at Yangming is state of the art. There are two separate wine storehouses, one for red and one for white. You cannot mix the two in one storage house. The red and white wines are separated because different controlling devices are needed to achieve proper temperature and moisture. There is a full liquor bar serving various drinks. A wealth of cocktails is offered and many are created by the innovative bar manager, Nick Finelli. The



Pomegranate Truffle is a particular popular option among customers.

Yangming has been recognized by several publications for their wine list. For its dedication in wine, it was granted the “Excellence Award” by Wine Spectator, a prominent wine magazine with a large distribution. Some popular wines on hand include Silver Oak Cabernet, Shafer Merlot, and French, Australian, Argentinean, and Chilean wines. In conjunction with the renowned Albertson’s Cooking School, frequent seminars and banquets on wine tasting are held with many well-known companies, such as Moore Bros Wine Company and DiBruno House of Cheese. Wine specialists are invited to tell the already well-trained staff about the taste of each wine and liquor.

According to the owner, the staff is trained by reading service handbooks as well as watching an instructional video detailing how to properly serve customers. Meetings and seminars are held monthly to discuss the existing problems and help improve the services. Furthermore, each staff member must wear a clean uniform and they are required to serve the customers with great care and patience. The staff set of rules is: 1. The customer is always right. 2. If you found the customer is wrong, go back to No 1. This “customer-first” approach has paid large dividends in business. The staff, in turn, is treated as family and works happily with the owner, and has thus maintained low turnover for nearly twenty years.

Yangming has an upscale eastern-style décor with



classic Chinese traits. The color scheme mainly focuses on earth tones as well as gold and brick red trim. Yangming has a romantic atmosphere achieved by elegant interior décor. The lighting is especially attractive with various kinds of Chinese contemporary lanterns and wall sconces. There is also soft classical music played by a professional pianist in the main bar area which adds to the elegant atmosphere.

The spacious dining area is home to four types of accommodation: three dining rooms, two VIP rooms, a stylish bar, and a party room on the second floor that can hold two hundred people. The spacious party room is not merely a place to dine, but also features a dancing hall for special events.

Speaking of events, Yangming constantly plays host to a number of fundraising banquets, where part of the proceeds are donated to local charities such as the Ronald McDonald House, the Philadelphia Corporation for Aging, Philly Meals on Wheels Program, the Diabetes Research Foundation, the Penn-Jersey Metropolitan Chef’s Association and the Fight Against Childhood Hunger Foundation.

The future looks bright for Yangming and owner Michael Wei. He has a great passion for food and drink, driving him to do more research and constantly innovate the way Yangming operates. With such dedicated focus, Mr. Wei is ready to build upon his



accomplishments. In 2004, Michael partnered with local American restaurateur Scott Morrison and renowned chef Patrick Feury to open Nectar, a venue aimed at pleasing customers with refined European cuisines with Asian flavor and savory Japanese sushi and Chinese dishes. This new establishment seeks to be a breakthrough in the Chinese restaurant genre. He hopes the styles of his new restaurant, while drawing on many traditional themes, will stand on its own. Mr. Wei said, "To establish the uniqueness, only by injecting the fresh blood can the restaurant stand out distinctively. I hope this combination of Chinese and Western style is not only displayed in dishes but also in the management styles that will present a totally new face." This May, Michael will cooperate with the co-owners of Nectar to open another restaurant named Maia, serving gourmet European tapas in the hopes of winning a large share of the market.

Yangming is the 4th restaurant opened by Michael Wei. He is always striving to come up with new ideas and carry out innovative research with his partner, Muyang Shen. Mr. Shen is also the chef of the Chinese kitchen. Alan Huynh and Steven Szereres manage the staff, while renowned chef Vincent Viola oversees the Western kitchen. Meanwhile, Nick Finelli is in charge of the bar management.

The Chinese restaurant industry has spread over the United States. Yet the

rise in popularity of Vietnamese, Japanese, Korean, Malaysian restaurants threatens the further development of Chinese restaurants. To dominate the restaurant market, Mr. Wei believes Chinese cuisine should draw upon the essence of various cuisines in

order to construct a new breed of fusion dishes appealing to both Western and Chinese diners. Yangming's philosophy is to pursue the highest standard of culinary art and innovation; Yangming has thrived in the competitive restaurant business and offers a fantastic all around dining experience to the customers.

Mr. Wei said, "We always look towards the future with an eye on the present. Everybody has their own unique style of doing things. Yangming also has its own unique style. I believe that we could still maintain our own style, but at the same time broaden our perspective and become more open-minded towards all international culinary influences. Looking at things in a different perspective will help you grow as an individual."

While Mr. Wei always knows where he is going, he never forgets where he came from. He said: "I would like to give special thanks to my team. All of my managing partners have previously been employees. They are all very talented and devoted, and I appreciate that very much."

Reservations are recommended as the bar and restaurant can get very busy especially around happy hour.

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Phone: 610-527-3200

Website: <http://www.yangmingrestaurant.com>

3 dining rooms, two party rooms and 2 VIP rooms, a separated bar

Capacity: 450

Established: 1991



Jun Wang contributed to this promotional story.

Awards: Reported by ABC and NBC, "10 Great Fine Chinese Restaurants" – USA Today, "America's Top Tables" - Gourmet Magazine, "Best Chinese Restaurant / Fusion Cuisine" - Philadelphia Magazine, "Award of Excellence" – Wine Spectator, "Five Star Diamond Award" -Academy of Restaurant Sciences, "One of the top 100 Chinese Restaurants"- Chinese Restaurant News, "Best Main Line Restaurant and Best Asian Restaurant" - Main Line Today Magazine, "This Bryn Mawr star serves the best of Chinese cuisine, plus several Continental classics, with elegance and style. Amazing jumbo lump crab cakes...nirvana." - County Lines Magazine. "Best Restaurant and Best Oriental Restaurant" - Suburban Publications, "Best Chinese Restaurant" - Main Line Times, "Best Continental Dining and Best Chinese Restaurant" - Main Line Life, "Consistently the highest levels of food preparation, presentation and service..." - Main Line Ticket, "Critic's Choice Award" - Philadelphia Magazine, "Award of Excellence" – Vintage Magazine, "Style Ultimate Restaurant" - Philadelphia Style Magazine, "One of the region's best Chinese restaurants...virtuoso cuisine, excellent wine list, first-class service.... The best won-ton soup ever." - Main Line Midweek, "Best Power Lunch" -Main Line Today Magazine, Yangming is also a favorite of many celebrities.