

Liang's Bistro Upgrades New Tampa's Favorite Asian With New Menu Items!

By Gary Nager

Obviously, folks in our area already love Liang's Bistro Asian Cuisine, the outstanding Pan-Asian restaurant which has been located in a former Burger King on Bruce B. Downs Blvd. north of I-75 since 2004.

I say that because in only two+ years in business, Liang's already has been named both the favorite Asian and favorite Chinese restaurant by our readers two years in a row.

Not content to rest on their laurels, our friends at Liang's unveiled an entirely revamped new menu in October, with so many new menu items that folks who think they know what all their favorite dishes are at the place had best try it again.

For example, my favorite dishes at Liang's have always been the appetizers. I still believe the restaurant named for general manager Linda "Liang" Le has the best egg rolls, the best barbecued spare ribs and the best pan-fried dumplings I've tried anywhere in Tampa. And, the trio of sauces served with any of those appetizers, especially the homemade duck sauce with chilis and the equally unique dumpling sauce, also are unsurpassed.

Yes, I love Liang's starters, but now, after a recent visit where Linda brought out not only a sampling of the veritable plethora of new offerings for me to sample, but also several of the restaurant's most-popular and most-recommended dishes, I have so many more favorites that I hope to have room to describe them all.

I'll start with the new stuff. My favorite new dish probably was the sizzling Shanghai steak, which is an incredibly tender flat iron steak cooked to your specifications (although medium-to-medium-rare is my recommendation) and prepared tableside on a sizzling hot

plate with onions, red and green peppers and perfect asparagus tips in Liang's signature (and abso-lutely delicate) black pepper sauce. Next time I visit, I'm going to pair this incredible steak with another new menu item, the Thai fried rice, which has a little spice to it. The black pepper sauce also is available for chicken, shrimp and other beef dishes at Liang's.

The three other new menu items I loved are ones that I have to admit I would never have ordered if Linda hadn't brought them out for me to sample. I like, but don't usually love scallops, but the new Ku Pao scallops at Liang's are ever-so-lightly breaded and fried to a golden brown and then wok-fired with mushrooms and red and green peppers in another incredible, slightly spicy brown Ku Pao sauce and then tossed with fresh cashews.

Another seafood item not usually too high on my list (in part because I have had the occasional allergic reaction to it) is shrimp. I'm also not usually keen on any kind of fruit sauces, much less pineapple, but I'd be lying if I said I didn't love Liang's pineapple prawns, which are breaded, truly-jumbo fried shrimp tossed with red and green peppers and pineapple chunks in a wonderful sweet-and-sour sauce.

I also am not a big curry fan, but I did also enjoy the new curry shrimp, which is so new it isn't even on the menu copy I took with me to write this story. More jumbo shrimp are tossed in this surprisingly mellow curry sauce, with similar veggies as served



with Liang's garlic shrimp, which is another excellent dish I sampled for the first time, although it isn't a new menu item.

One new item I didn't get to try that I'm definitely coming back for is Liang's fish filet "your way." I'll choose the grilled (you also can get steamed) filet of snapper (salmon also is available) with either the garlic or black pepper sauce. Also available are black bean and sweet & pungent sauces.

I also can recommend existing favorites such as Liang's BBQ pork, orange peel chicken or beef and sizzling teriyaki steak.

Liang's also has a great variety of noodle and rice dishes and also recently added Kirin Ichiban and my favorite Singha Thai beer to their list of imports. There also is a nice variety of red and white wines, all priced at \$22.50 or less per bottle and of course, great plum wine and hot and cold sake (rice wine).

Try to save room for dessert because Liang's has three doozies — banana spring rolls, creme brulee cheesecake and my favorite, the decadent chocolate chip cake.

Among the great new menu items at Liang's Bistro are (clockwise from top left) the pineapple prawns, sizzling Shanghai steak and Ku Pao scallops.

Liang's Bistro Asian Cuisine (17515 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., next to Chick-fil-A) is open every day for lunch and dinner (11 a.m.-10 p.m., until 11 p.m. on Friday and Saturday), but Linda recommends that you try it on Monday or Tuesday night for the quickest possible service. Reservations are accepted only for parties of eight or more. Off-site catering also is available. Call 978-1225 for more information.