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Masterful Asian Cuisine at Tottie's Asian Fusion 2

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By Kenta Usuzawa, Guest Blogger, Foodies Like Us

Today, on the southwest corner of Lincoln and Scottsdale stands the all too familiar sight of chain link fences and construction in progress, a harbinger of today's economy where so many brazen ideas have been halted by dried up funding.

Here however, unlike many of the abandoned projects in the city, Lincoln Village Plaza plugs along with an ambitious 6 million dollar face lift that began earlier last year. As renovations continue and the parking lot once again becomes accessible we are reminded that hidden away here are some terrific stand out restaurants that continue to fight the good fight. Among them, the local legend Rancho Pinot, Fogo de Chao, a lavish Brazilian Steak House and as of six months ago, their newest neighbor humbly tucked away amidst rubble and steel, Tottie's Asian Fusion 2.

To remind us of what her new little oasis has to offer, last week, Tottie did what any self respecting culinary maven would do, she threw a party, and true to her reputation, a party she delivered.

Introductions were made all around as guests meandered in, absorbing the striking décor; abundant with rich textures, colors and Orient inspired artwork. Among the featured guests, was Tottie's personal friend and respected local artist Gary Hostallero showcasing his portfolio of Orient inspired paintings.



Bright tablecloths and authentic interior

Though Gary need not be present to see the shared mutual respect that these two artists have for each others' passions (his work graces the walls of both this restaurant and the original Tottie's Asian Fusion), he was there on this night to MC the party as well as generously sign his work for guests.

Magnums of wine seemed ever-flowing, and as all indulged in their personal libations of choice, a center set buffet table beckoned the guests to indulge.

All the while, everyone desperately waited for someone else to break the polite reserve, and be the first one to make a move towards the army of delectable nibbles waiting patiently.

Candy Leshner, former food writer, and also a close personal friend of Tottie's gave everyone the thumbs up, immediately ceasing all hesitation and decorum as lines formed at all corners of the buffet.



Great foodie friends Candy Lesher and Tottie Kaya

First course brought us plate after plate of mini lettuce cups, half filled with Thai Chicken Salad with a little Tamarind soy, and the other with Yum Gai, a spicy minced meat salad with fresh mint and Thai herbs, both of which you can find variations of on the regular menu.

Thai Buffalo wings: sweet and sour, pleasantly plump...and not greasy at all, and a medley of Tempura battered seafood, including the classic shrimp and calamari joined by a little mahi-mahi. The parade of well deserved ooh's and ah's began.

More hors d'oeuvre's would follow in the interim along with the entertainment. Tottie's Beef Stew (currently not on the menu) has a familiar profile to what mother used to make at home. Lip smacking-ly delicious and not overly spiced, swimming in that delectable sauce, sweet potato, carrots and of course more of that wonderful pulled short rib she used for the Yum Gai.



Perhaps the best orange chicken in the world.

For many patrons, the famous Tottie Rolls (\$7.50) were the highlight; the Thai style pork filled crispy egg rolls, served with mint and cilantro and lettuce to wrap them in.



Tottie Rolls-worth the trip for these alone!

Fans of Thai cuisine will find these all at once familiar yet distinctively unique, and a playfully hands on experience. All of the dishes served, I would later be told, were either candidates for a new Spanish style Tapas menu slated for arrival in the next couple weeks, or the upcoming \$5 happy hour menu.

So many great things to be excited for.

What sort of entertainment would we have to celebrate these Spanish inspired Asian Tapas? Well, Tottie made the answer perfectly obvious for us, Yumi La Rosa, Tokyo born Flamenco Performer & friend brought the sheer energy and power of Flamenco to the floor, riveting to watch, whether you're a fan of dancing with the stars or not.

Behind them, one of the world's most accomplished Flamenco guitarists, Miguel Rodriguez provided the backdrop, tying it all together for a rousing and memorable performance. Afterwards all performers would change out of costume to enjoy in the festivities as well. It seems that everyone is family at Tottie's Asian Fusion 2.

On an inevitable subsequent visit, we found that the pleasantly affordable prices we thought were reserved for lunch, were actually the dinner prices!

Despite the perfectly balanced ambiance, and heightened quality of culinary refinement, in the end you won't be paying anymore than your favorite Chinese take-out place.

There is in effect, no contest. The menu comes fully loaded with Vietnamese and Thai favorites, all having benefited from the creative touch of a visionary, and all the Chinamerican standards your Sunday hangover could ask for. (ie Mongolian Beef, Kung Pao Chicken, etc.) The Potstickers (\$7.50) were a side step away from the norm, semi flattened crescents, perfectly crispy, and satisfying and a great way to start.

For our dinner course, what began as mild disappointment when I found that the Salmon with Basil-Ginger Sauce (\$12.95) came with a dark sauce instead of a lighter one that I expected (oh, fear thy dark brown goop that so many others pass off as sauce.) quickly turned into elated surprise, when I found that this was no dark brown goop, but a happy medium of silky flavor, with balanced interplay of both Thai Basil, and spikes of sassy ginger. The sauce was masterful, and more importantly, despite its appearance, subtle enough to recede when what I wanted to taste was the perfectly flaky grilled salmon on my fork.

I'm going to say it again: Masterful.



Salmon with a silky and tasty brown sauce

The Panang (\$9.95), a spicy Thai curry with your choice of meat, also did not disappoint. We ordered a spice level of 6 out of 7, which was perfect for us after a pitcher of water and a few extra bowls of rice.

I imagine a 4 or 5 would suffice for most everyone else.

The ocean of curry as it was, was so generous in portion that we imagine, we'll be enjoying it again, if not on several nights to follow, and was even boxed with an extra portion of rice for us to take home. In a time where every penny counts, the value this restaurant offers couldn't possibly be overstated.



Superb and spicy curry

Ah, desserts.

At a period of the evening when so many Asian Restaurants disappoint, Tottie's Asian Fusion 2 gleams with sparkling surprise. If you're expecting to settle into some mundane green tea icecream or frozen distributor bought mochi, be prepared to be disappointed.

Here at Totties, everything is home made by Tottie herself. Starting with nearly a dozen homemade icecream's, the superb balance of which I've only found one rival in the valley.

Favorites include Avocado, Peanut Butter, Lychee, and Coconut. Tottie proudly tells us that all of the icecream is made from coconut milk,

completely dairy free, and even Vegan, if that's important to you. Nut-Crusted Honey-Fried Bananas, Homemade Japanese Kabocha Pumpkin Custard and of course the classic Thai dessert, Mango Sticky Rice.



Home made ice creams--some of the best in Arizona

In short, these desserts not only blow away every other Asian Restaurant's all too often meager offerings, it rivals the best of any desserts we've had in the valley, period. The power of homemade is never a thing to underestimate.

It's largely accepted that sequels rarely live up to the prestige of the original.

Chef Tottie Kaya, has proven otherwise, and evolved once again. Tottie Kaya began her career in the valley in 2003 with the opening of her first restaurant Shanghai Palace. Quickly showing the valley that it was something more than your run of the mill take-out place, In 2006 She would be featured on the cover of Food & Life Magazine as one of the valleys best new Chefs, quickly garnering the attention and support of local celebrity chefs and foodies alike.

Diving deeper into her skill set of Laotian, Thai and Vietnamese culinary roots, and the addition of an authentic Japanese Sushi Bar, it was then that Shanghai Palace became the first Tottie's Asian Fusion, forever securing the sassy Lady from Laos in the valley's public eye.

Like many, I knew Tottie's name before ever having met her or even dining in her establishment. Now with the 2nd Fusion open for the last 6 months, when asked what's next, she answers that she will be here at the restaurant, making quite certain that she makes a friend out of every guest that walks in, since that, more than anything, is what's important to her.

Just who is Tottie? She's the one sitting at your table after a wonderful meal, sharing life stories with you. She tells us that she learned everything she knows from her mother, a prestigious caterer in Laos, who used to cook for the King, and she offers these recipes with her own added touch to us. Food meant for royalty at these prices? We couldn't be any more grateful.

Located in the Lincoln Village Shops. 6204 N. Scottsdale Rd., Ste. 106 Scottsdale, AZ 85253. Tottie's Asian Fusion is open Tuesday –Sunday 11am – 10pm. Closed Mondays. P (480) 998-8220 F (480) 998-8797 www.tottiesasianfusion.com

Tottie's Asian Fusion 2

82% like it - 23 votes

in Scottsdale
6204 N. Scottsdale Rd #106
(480) 998-8220

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ANNE AND JIM WALTON
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WE WERE INTRODUCED TO TOTTIE BY GARY HOSTALLERO SUMMER OF 2009. MOVING HERE FROM BACK EAST AND BEING OF ASIAN DESCENT, IT WAS DIFFICULT TO FIND GOOD ASIAN FARE OUT HERE. TOTTIE HAS SUPERCEDED OUR EXPECTATIONS AND WE DRIVE FROM AHWATUKEE AT LEAST ONCE A WEEK TO SPOIL OURSELVES AT HER RESTAURANT. TOTTIE IS AN AMAZING WOMAN, WHOM WE HAVE COME TO LOVE DEARLY AND HER STAFF IS THE BEST! SHE TRULY IS FAMILY TO US AND WE WISH HER ALL THE BEST!

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