



BUDDHA THAI BISTRO

ANDY & WORRANUN POOMSAN

A place for family to gather—and every guest is family.

BY: DANIEL R. AUSTIN

Andy and Worrnanun Poomsan see their award-winning restaurant, Buddha Thai Bistro, as a place for family to gather—and every guest is family. “We treat our customers like they are our best friends,” Andy said. “We want them to feel like they are coming to our house to have dinner with us.” The Thai bistro, located in the Vacaville Commons Shopping Center, has made quite a name for itself since opening in 2014, at the time seating only 38 patrons in a small space that was once a Subway. The eatery received a Yelp Award as one of the 20 Best Restaurants in the country in 2015, and Solano Magazine named it Best Thai Restaurant several years running, from 2016 through 2019. Buddha Thai Bistro has also been featured on GoodDay Sacramento. The Poomsan family journey required a little bit of luck and quite a bit of work.

Andy Poomsan studied hotel restaurant management at Dhurakij Pundit University in Thailand and took his BA in 1999. Earning a scholarship to study abroad in the Hospitality Management International Exchange Program, Poomsan spent time in Belgium refining his knowledge of food, wine, and management. He came to America to further his studies and found work in a Vallejo restaurant, Pinoy, where he worked for 14 years, eventually as manager. Andy met Worrnanun in 2002, a student at the time, through a friend, and they married in 2006. The



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couple spent years dining at a variety of restaurants—Italian, French, Japanese—always imagining how they could fuse a medley of flavors into an authentic Thai menu if they could open their own restaurant. “We love to try different food,” Worrnanun said. “We got inspiration from many different restaurants.”

The space in the Vacaville Commons came available in 2014, and Andy says this is where the luck came in. “I love this spot. Vacaville Commons is one of the best locations in town. It’s always clean and it’s convenient for customers who might be shopping here or at the outlets, and people can park right away.” Andy attributes much of his crowd to the proximity of the I80 corridor and the ease of entry into the Commons.

The Poomsans are proud of weathering both the downturn during COVID and the two months they had to close to renovate and expand without losing a single employee. “We didn’t want to lose our people,” Andy said. “It’s important to us.” Buddha Thai Bistro has now doubled in size and boasts a completely modernized kitchen and renovated bathrooms.

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Can a vegetarian eat animal crackers?

Andy: Sure.

Mountains or beach?

Andy: Definitely beach. It's our favorite.
Worranun: I love the ocean.

Pepsi or Coke?

Andy: None of them... I don't like soda.
Worranun: Coke. It's less sweet and more sparkling.

Who wins the fight, Batman or Superman?

Andy: Superman for sure. He is the best.

When you put your shoes on, sock sock, shoe shoe, or sock shoe, sock shoe?

Andy: Sock, sock, shoe shoe.

Eating an artichoke, top teeth or bottom?

Andy: Hmmm, I never thought about it. Bottom.

What's your best dish as a cook?

Andy: Steak. We eat Thai when we are in restaurant.
Worranun: Fried egg.

What's on your playlist?

Andy: Green Day.
Worranun: Thai music. We don't agree on music at home.

Do you have a personal hero?

Andy: I like Thor.

Do you have advice for a new entrepreneur?

Andy: You have to know the four P's.
- Place. Pick the right location.
- Price. Make sure you know price of product.
- People. Make sure you have the right people.
- Promotions. You must promote correctly.

The bistro offers three menus: a lunch menu, a standard menu and a chef's special menu, which changes monthly. Andy recommends the Mango Curry from the chef's menu as an interesting choice, using a base of yellow curry and coconut milk with heart-shaped mango, prawns, green beans, potato and yellow onion, and he says the Healthy Bowl with grilled salmon, avocado, bean sprouts and carrots on brown rice is popular. But he says the Crispy Citrus Chicken Fried Rice is what made the restaurant's reputation. The dish features Thai fried rice, carrots, yellow onion, eggs topped with crispy chicken. "The batter of the chicken is perfect," Andy said, "and the sauce is the trick. It's heaven food."

Friends and family looking to enjoy a meal together should consider Buddha Thai Bistro in the Vacaville Commons. "You'll come hungry and leave happy," says Andy Poomsan.

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