



Editor's Note: Each month In Town reviews a local restaurant. Our goal is not to be (or pretend to be) food connoisseurs or cookbook gurus, but everyday folks looking for a great eating experience. We bring a guest, to make sure we give you a well-rounded review. Want to join us? Contact me at kathy@intownct.com and you just might be that guest on our next food adventure – the meal is on us!

We were sitting outside having coffee the other morning when we overheard a conversation between two tourist couples: “We’re here for a week, and really want some good Thai food, any suggestions?”

“Well,” says the second couple, “We come here a lot. And every time, we have to go to Thong’s Restaurant in Westerly. It’s the best Thai food within 30 miles!”

With a comment like that, what choice did we have but to head to 15 Railroad Avenue!

In Thai, “Thong” means gold and **Thong Thai Restaurant** may best be described as a little nugget. This tiny restaurant is a most understated place. I suspect many, like us, have driven by it on our way to somewhere else. Located across from the train station in downtown Westerly, it is off the main “restaurant row” which has taken prominence on High Street. But trust us, it is worth traveling the extra block.

When you enter you walk directly into the very small dining area, complete with less than a dozen booths and a small counter for ordering. The interior is decorated in deep rose colors, and is very casual. The day we went we were greeted by owners Choosit Buddhasuvun, a.k.a. “Andy” for us tongue-tied Americans, and his delightful wife, Orawan Chinsuwan, who goes by the name “Amy.” Andy runs the front of house, and Amy does all of the cooking.

But don’t let the understated décor or the gentleness of the owners fool you;



this is serious and authentic Thai food, well made and well-plated. We ordered an appetizer sampler, to get a wide selection of cooking. The sampler (\$11.50) came with two each: curry puffs, wild flowers, ka non jeebs, shrimp in a blanket and chicken sate. It was sufficient to have been its own meal. The standard sampler comes with spring rolls, but Amy apologized that she had not had enough time to make them in time for lunch and we agreed to the sate as a substitute.

The "wild flowers" are a crab Rangoon style fried wonton, folded into a flower shape and stuffed with cream cheese and crab. The "flowers" were good, although we would have preferred real crab meat to its imitation counterpart. The ka non jeeb, steamed dumplings stuffed with ground pork, shrimp, black mushrooms, and water chestnuts, were truly excellent. But our favorite was the curry puffs – minced chicken, potato, onions and curry in a puff

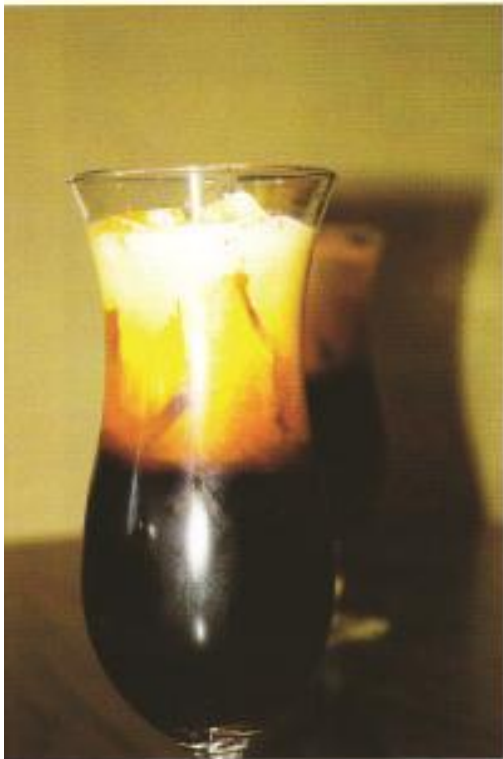




pastry shell, served with a fresh, slightly sweet cucumber salad. The sate was perfectly cooked, moist and tender. The appetizer sampler was served with a variety of traditional Thai sauces. All in all, a great start to the meal.

The main courses are interestingly presented on the menu. All curry, rice, noodle, and main entrees are priced the same, and vary only by the protein selected. So, for example, you can choose green, red, panang, jungle or massamon curry, and for any, the price with chicken or pork is \$11.00. For our main courses we ordered the shrimp jungle curry (\$14.00) and the chicken wonton pad thai (\$12.00). The curry was spicy and delicious, with ample amounts of shrimp, peppers, and beans, flavored with lime and bay leaves. It was well presented, deliciously seasoned, and we eagerly gave it a 4.5 out of 5. Well done, Amy.

The pad Thai was an interesting dish. Now, to our way of thinking, if a Thai restaurant cannot make a good pad Thai, it needs to close its doors. Yes, we have been to at least one of those. But at **Thong Thai Restaurant** Amy has perfected this dish. Traditional in many aspects, the flawlessly stir-fried rice noodles were served with eggs, bean sprouts, salted tofu, ground peanuts and lime. But unlike the traditional dish, Amy fried the tofu



and added crispy chicken wontons and shrimp. The fried wontons absorbed the pad Thai sauce and were exquisite. The dish was as good as any we have had, and we gave the pad Thai a 4.5 out of 5.

More often than not, traditional Thai meals end with fruit, but when something sweet is wanted, it can often be truly sweet. Classic Thai deserts are often some form of sweetened sticky rice, and **Thong Thai Restaurant** was no exception. The desert menu here is very small, with only two clearly "Thai deserts:" fried banana (\$5.00) or sticky rice with mango (\$6.00). We ordered the sticky rice. As with all the dishes served, Amy makes this herself. Most such deserts are very, very sweet, and we find that sometimes there can be far too much coconut cream syrup. But Amy's interpretation of this dish

is much more refined: the rice was perfectly cooked, perfectly balanced, and the fresh mango was perfectly plated. Did we tell you we thought it perfect? Oh yes, it was.

This little gem is well worth a trip or three. It can get quite busy here in the evenings we were told, and while parking on the streets of Westerly can be a challenge, don't forget that the train station, with free parking, is just across the street. All dishes are available for takeout as well.

We strongly recommend **Thong Thai Restaurant** for anyone looking for authentic, delicious Thai food made fresh and clearly with love.

Thong Thai Restaurant

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