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OCTOBER 2008

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**Voice Speaks Up
at Hotel Icon**

**Bobby Yang's Violin
Rocks Out**

Catering Tips

**Entertaining
Essentials**

**The Taste of
Food+Wine**

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Photo by Collin Kelly

I hope everyone survived Hurricane Ike in good health and without irreplaceable losses. Aside from the inconvenience of living without electricity and the “essential” items that it powers – such as televisions, refrigerators and air conditioners – I have observed that many of us reacted to this period with an insatiable appetite for food and drink. I ate and drank even when I was not hungry or thirsty. Many with whom I have spoken experienced the same. The theme of this issue is Food and Wine. It was not inspired by Hurricane Ike but he sure got us started in that direction.

As always, our thoughts turn to food, wine and parties as we enter October, the month in which holiday planning commands our attention. Although we focus on food and wine in every issue, this month we have added a little more emphasis with hints about choosing a caterer and a discussion of healthy foods that boost brain power.

This month we visited Voice Restaurant and Lounge in Hotel Icon downtown. The atmosphere is vibrant and sophisticated. Menu items are decidedly “gourmet” and boast a culinary creativity that is inspired. Most of us rarely think of hotel restaurants when contemplating where we want to go out to eat. Maybe our review of Voice will cause you to reconsider.

Bobby Yang will be delivering his special flavor of classical violin music a la Rock ‘n’ Roll on a fashion runway in the Galleria this month. We interviewed Bobby about his music and an upcoming CD he has coming out this month with Kevin Costner’s new band, Modern West.

Hurricane Ike is gone, thank goodness, replaced by the whirlwind of holiday planning that is just getting started. It is a much more welcome whirlwind, indeed.

Best wishes,

V. “Van” Hoang

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The color yellow has played a recurrent symbolic role throughout the history of Asian culture. It symbolizes the earth that sustains all life, yet has been embraced by Buddhist monks as an expression of unchallenged power. Such is the role of yellow: always revered but in different ways under different circumstances.

The mission of *Yellow Magazine* is to introduce our readers to the artistic, fashion, lifestyle and entertainment contributions made by Asian Americans. It is our hope that the depth and breadth of the topics and events we cover do justice to the pride that the color yellow has represented throughout the millennia. As the editor in chief of *Yellow Magazine*, my last name is Hoang, which also means yellow. Just as I am proud of my name, I am proud of my heritage, and proud of *Yellow Magazine*.

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A Vault of
Iconic FlavorsVoice by HENRI MERCERON

When you enter the doors of Voice at Hotel Icon, you are greeted with a décor that has thoughtfully transformed the vacuous space of an old bank lobby into a warm, almost cozy and elegant dining area. While light and airy, intimacy is achieved by flanking the ten towering stone columns that partition one area from another with dramatic floor to ceiling drapes. At the end of the main dining area opposite the entrance are tables surrounded by four chairs with backs so high they may be described as short walls. In essence, the chairs form a barrier that shields diners at each table from the distraction and conversation from the surrounding tables. For those diners who prefer a more open setting, there are a number of tables occupying the center of the dining area that have low back chairs and offer an unobstructed view of most of the restaurant.



Michael Kramer
Executive Chef

Multiple oversized pendulum lights that cast a warm amber glow hang two thirds of the way down from the ceiling, which has the effect of shrinking the immense space that the restaurant occupies. A custom carpet combined with the floor to ceiling drapes and high back chairs effectively soften the noise that such a large room can produce. In fact, having been seated at a table with the high back chairs, notwithstanding the fact that most of the tables were occupied, we could not have felt more relaxed. As soon as we were seated, a sense of privacy immediately enveloped us. We were able to converse throughout our meal without straining our ears or having to raise our voices.

We perused the “Summer Menu” in search of standout items that we would want to sample, but found too many. Chef Michael Kramer accommodated us somewhat by providing mini versions of some appetizers so that we would have room to sample more of the menu. As he has complete creative control over the menu, which he changes based on the seasonality of the fresh ingredients from which he gains inspiration, it was only fitting that he find a way for us to taste as much as possible. It was akin to a custom made “tasting menu” except more inclusive. We could not have been more pleased!

To begin with, the service provided by our waiter, Allen, was particularly noteworthy. When we were ready to order, we asked him for recommendations. He based his suggestions on what would pair best with the Rose we were already enjoying. We followed his recommendations right down to the dessert. Allen’s knowledge about each menu item from the ingredients to how they were prepared was remarkable. I asked him how long he was with Voice and he stated “about a month and a half”. I was even more impressed.

Before I begin, I should state that the presentation of every single item was flawless. The plates were all white, like canvasses, and seemed to be comprised of every conceivable geometric shape. Splashes and strokes of colorful sauces and sprinkles of fresh herbs were applied as though each dish was a masterpiece painting.

My first appetizer was Gulf Blue Crab Cake with pressed avocado, shaved fennel and cilantro oil (\$12). The two barrel-shaped crab cakes rested in an avocado and olive oil puree within a pool of orange beurre blanc. Fennel shavings were sprinkled on top. While there were a number of subtle flavors, the most important one was that of the crab, which was not overshadowed by the others but enhanced by them.

The Spiced Dusted Scallops with Israeli couscous, English peas and garlic emulsion followed (\$14). The large U-10 “diver” scallops were dry packed fresh on the boat when harvested to preserve their flavor. The plate appeared to have been painted with a stroke of English peas sauce on top of which rested a serving of couscous full of sweet corn kernels and peas. On top of this were two scallops seared with aji (mild Peruvian spice) and a frothy garlic infused foam. The soft and delicate scallops were especially flavorful and carried a stronger taste than I have normally experienced. Other flavors of note were the peas and corn in the couscous.

We sampled the Mushroom Soup “Cappucino” (\$8), a Chef Kramer original. It is a reduction of garlic, onion, fresh herbs, crimini mushrooms and chicken stock that is served warm in a cup topped with a very light and frothy truffle foam sprinkled with poncini powder. The body of the soup is smooth and not too thick; the strong mushroom flavor is wonderfully accented by the unmistakable flavor imparted by the truffle foam. If you like mushroom and truffles, this soup will enthrall you.



Voice’s elegant interior

Although I really like beets, had it not been for Chef Kramer, I probably would have overlooked A Patchwork of Baby Beets (\$10). Well, I must admit, the Chef really knows best. Picture a white plate upon which a literal paint stroke of crimson (caramelized beet and red wine reduction) is brushed in the center. Miniature red, yellow and candy striped beets form a small pile in the center of the brush stroke and is topped with a dab of soft homemade crème fraiche made from local goat cheese. Upon the crème fraiche are sprigs of micro arugula, the flavor of which is surprisingly potent given their small size.

For the entrées, we settled on a seasonal fish and a chicken dish. The Bryan Farms Roast Chicken (\$24) was an interesting choice because the chicken is from a local farm and is free range. Free range chickens are supposed to be healthier (and happier) because of their better living conditions. Bryan Farms’ chickens are 100% corn fed. If you are wondering about the significance of this fact, consider that Chef Kramer stated that he has compared this chicken to those that are 90% corn fed and the latter are indeed tougher.

The chicken entrée had a lot going on. In the center of the square plate was a “French supreme cut” (aka “airline” cut) of chicken that incorporated part of the breast. It was roasted crispy. In one corner of the plate was a drumette; chicken roulades occupied the other three corners. In the center of the plate was a reduction of the chicken juices upon which was a serving of stone ground polenta topped with sections of lobster tail, baby carrots, baby acorn squash, peas and micro arugula. The dominant flavors were found in the arugula, lobster, roulades and especially the chicken centerpiece, whose meat was moist while the skin was crispy. Not to be overlooked, the polenta was blended with mascarpone cheese for a thick and flavorful addition.

The presentation of every single item was flawless.

The other entrée was Alaskan Halibut with fennel, baby carrots and a truffle emulsion (\$24). The thick serving of fish was tender but meaty and the mild flavor was a perfect backdrop for the micro arugula and truffle. The artichoke puree upon which the halibut rested added another mild flavor to the mix.

For dessert, the Study in Chocolate (\$10) interested me because I love chocolate and the name seemed very sophisticated. It consisted of a petite sampling of chocolate flavors and textures and included a warm chocolate cake filled with what tasted like a soft chocolate mousse, white chocolate pana cotta, rocky road ice cream encased in a chocolate shell and a milk chocolate gelatin. It will satisfy your craving for chocolate but without the guilt – it really is a study in quality and not quantity.

The other dessert transported me back to my youth when I used to eat lemon meringue pies at every opportunity. Layers of Lemon Meringue with a quartet of sorbet and crisp pavlova (\$10) takes a unique approach to lemon meringue. The centerpiece is comprised of three layers of rectangular cookies filled with a lemon and whipped cream filling and lightly dusted with powder sugar. It is not too sweet nor is the lemon too tart. Completing the dessert are four miniature meringue (pavlova) cups filled with mint, raspberry, apricot and blueberry sorbet. The flavors of the fresh sorbet are strong and fruity, complementing the lemon meringue very nicely.

Most of us do not consider hotel restaurants when we want to go out to eat. I know that I did not. But I will now. The creative and masterfully prepared dishes that I sampled within the compellingly relaxing environs of an old bank that is now Voice, have expanded my dining horizons. I give my approval and recommend that you do the same. You can take it to the bank.

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Wine and food go together as the classic lyrics have noted “like the horse and carriage and love and marriage” and really “you shouldn’t have one without the other.”

Let’s explore some of the variables that impact the union of wine with food in such a way that by serving them together one can derive a more pleasurable experience than can be attained by having either one by itself.

First, keep in mind that wine is also a food, and as such contains the following: calcium, phosphorous, sodium, potassium, iron, copper, riboflavin, protein, vitamins A, B-complex and C and, of course, alcohol. Food flavors typically found in white wine include tropical fruit, apple, pear, citrus, nuts, minerals, honey, butter and cream. Red wine flavor profiles include strawberries, raspberries, cherries, black berries, plum, peppers, cassis, cloves, truffles and chocolate.

Thus, wine as a food-beverage is a natural accompaniment to a fine meal. The components found within wine can highlight the flavors found in food and vice versa. Consumed together, their flavors may be mutually enhanced.

Another aspect of the wine and food dynamic is biological. Food is digested more efficiently when one is relaxed. This is because stress and anxiety can create problems within the stomach and impede the digestive process. The alcohol in wine is a “depressant” and when consumed in moderation it can help reduce tension serving to calm the digestive system and help make the dining experience more enjoyable.

upon the need for external validation. In fact, it is in vogue to select wines based upon what you like as opposed to those that you may like less but which pair better with the food that you will be consuming. After all, the purpose is to enjoy! In a worst-case scenario, it is almost impossible to ruin a meal as a result of poor pairing. Nonetheless, it is quite another thing to be able to sit down with friends and family to a lovely feast punctuated by the expert matching of wine and food. While pairing is an art and a skill honed by experience, we offer a few generalizations that will help you along the way.

- Each dish has a dominant flavor. Identify that flavor and pair the wine to it. It may be the butter in a sauce or notes of citrus in a seafood salad.
- If a wine was used in the preparation of a dish, then that same type of wine might be an excellent accompaniment.
- In some cases, you will match the wine to the flavors found in the dish and in others you will seek to complement those flavors. You can match a meal of lobster and drawn butter with a buttery California Chardonnay and complement spicy hot cuisine with a fruity white wine. The peppers and spices in a Chianti match well with the peppery gamey spices found in big red meats, while fruity white and red wines complement sharp cheeses.
- Match the weight of the wine with the weight of the dish; heavier wines with more robust foods and vice-versa.
- Red wine should still be paired with red meats and white wines with seafood.

In a worst-case scenario, it is almost impossible to ruin a meal as a result of poor pairing.

Finally, and most importantly, wine is the perfect palate cleanser. Let’s say you sit down to a fine meal and take your first bite...mmmmm, delicious! Unfortunately, that initial taste could be the best of the meal because as you place the next portion into your mouth, residual flavors from the first bite will remain on your palate. However, if you rinse your mouth with a sip of wine to refresh your palate between bites, then every bite can be as fresh as the first, thereby maximizing the dining experience. The palate cleansing properties of wine can not be equaled by other beverages, including water, tea, soda, beer, or spirits.

Our modern, more informal culture has softened the hard and fast rules that dictate proper food and wine pairing etiquette. This has provided for greater flexibility and more room for creativity. It also marks a natural evolution as we have all become more food/wine savvy and less dependant

- White wines should usually be served before reds.
 - Lighter wines should be served before heavier ones.
 - Younger red wines should be served before older ones.
 - Dry roses go with just about everything.
 - Sparkling wines go with just about everything and anytime.
 - Sweet wines that are low in alcohol can be served with desserts while those high in alcohol are better served by themselves.
- Remember to relax and have fun. If you serve good wine and good food, then the worst that can happen is that it will be appreciated. One final rule to remember is that food and wine are always best enjoyed when shared with those you love most.



Here are some suggestions that offer a good opportunity to practice your wine-pairing skills:

H. Lun Pinot Grigio 2006

Pinot Grigio is the most popular wine in the United States. Unfortunately, most of the Italian wine offered in the U.S. is specifically produced for our market and tends to be light and watery. This wine from one of Italy’s most prestigious producers is none of that. This is a serious complex wine that is typical of what Italians would drink in their homeland and reeks with “Terroir”. Vines from Burgundy produce this dry, white wine with an intense nose of pears, a body big and rich with layers of flavors and a long finish. Close your eyes and you will not recognize this as a Pinot Grigio. Serve with all types of seafood and lighter grilled meats. **\$24.00**

Fattoria Paradiso Sangiovese “Maestri di Vigna” 2006

Fattoria Paradiso (vineyards of paradise) located in Italy’s Emilia Romagna is one of the world’s most respected producers. This single vineyard Sangiovese is hand picked, fermented in stainless steel at controlled temperatures and aged in American oak. The result is a delicious and big wine offering flavors of ripe, red-berry fruit undercoated with layers of peppers and spices. The tannins are soft and well rounded. The finish lingers and will entice you to raise your glass repeatedly to your lips. Serve with red meats. **\$19.00**

Marramiera “Inferi”

Inferi takes its name from Dante’s epic poem “Divine Comedy” and this divine wine is no comedy. Marramiera is a master wine producer located in the Abruzzi region of Italy. This offering is from 100% Montepulciano grapes that are aged in French barriques. A rare wine that exhibits a ruby-red color beckoning one with a floral bouquet that leads to a taste so smooth and velvety that you want to shake your head with pleasure. The body is big but soft with red-berry fruit, peppers and spices perfectly balanced and which cascade into a wonderfully long finish that will cause you to exclaim “Wow”! This wine will be wonderful with game and red meats. **\$33.00**

A Tasty Selection
of Food for Thought

Your Brain

by IVY YANG

You are what you eat and a good diet keeps you physically healthy. But did you know that what you eat also influences how your brain functions? The brain is a metabolically active organ. Foods that contain natural neurochemicals can protect the brain from diseases that destroy mental capabilities such as Alzheimer's. It is smart to eat well-balanced meals. It is smarter to eat easy-to-get brain foods that keep us motivated, enhance our memories and alertness, increase our stress-coping abilities, and prevent our brains from aging.

In his book, *UltraMetabolism: The Simple Plan for Automatic Weight Loss*, Dr. Mark Hyman states that sugar and certain fats are the two things we consume that most damage our brains. While none of us wants to give up sweets and fats, we need to get smart about consuming the right amount of the first and the right type of the second. In fact, the brain is comprised mostly of fats and it needs the glucose (blood sugar) from carbohydrates for energy.

While we may know that eggs are great sources of vitamins, proteins, and minerals, few of us know that they are also high in choline. Choline is essential for the structural integrity and neurotransmission of cell membranes and if we have a deficiency of the nutrient our memory will deteriorate. Numerous studies have demonstrated that adequate amounts of choline in the diet of pregnant or breastfeeding women will boost the cognitive performance of their children.

Fish that have a high oil content contain omega-3 fatty acids that have been found to be essential for intellectual performance, brain health and for fending off the onset of Alzheimer's disease. Salmon (especially Alaskan sockeye salmon), sardines, and herring lubricate the cells of the central nervous system. Vegetarians should consume flaxseed and walnuts to replenish their Omega-3 supply.



Leafy dark green vegetables such as spinach, kale, mustard greens, and Swiss chard are considered exceptionally good sources of nutrition that help preserve mental acuity. The National Institute on Aging reported that folic acid, a B-Vitamin found in leafy vegetables, helps lower the risk of Alzheimer's more effectively than the antioxidants and other nutrients found in the same vegetables. Folic acid also breaks down homocysteines that are believed to contribute to the development of dementia and cognitive decline.

Berries satisfy our sweet tooth without adversely affecting the brain's function.

Berries satisfy our sweet tooth without adversely affecting the brain's function. Blueberries, strawberries and colorful fruits not only ease our craving for sweets, they provide a host of antioxidants that mitigate free radical damage in the brain. While excessive amounts of refined sugar creates insulin resistance and poor glycemic control that increases memory loss, berries may significantly improve short-term memory.

In sum, eggs, oily fish, leafy green vegetables and berries are best suited for optimal brain function. Make sure you add these to your regular grocery list. Don't forget!

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The One and Only King of
Rock 'n' Roll Violin

Bobby Yang

by HENRI MERCERON

Bobby Yang is a classically trained violinist whose soul resides in classic Rock 'n' Roll. He has opened for Grand Funk Railroad, Big Head Todd and Blondie, amongst others, and has a new CD coming out this month with Kevin Costner's new band, Modern West. See him on YouTube to sample his talent, but if you really want to be thrilled, come to the *Simon Fashion Now* event on Thursday, October 16 and Friday, October 17 at the Galleria and watch him perform live from the upper-levels.

I once read that Mozart could reproduce from memory a composition he heard only once. This same attribute has been credited to you. What has been the greatest benefit of having this gift?

People are often surprised that I don't consider any of the "talents" that I have to be "gifts." I think that everyone with dedicated practice could develop Mozart's musical memory, but to answer your question, my ability to recall music gives me the freedom to focus on expression. For me, playing does not have to be all about the notes on the page because after I hear something the notes are already in my fingers.

Were you pushed into taking music classes as a child by your parents or is it something to which you gravitated on your own?

100% pushed into taking music classes, and 100% forced to practice. I didn't truly enjoy playing violin until I was 15.

You started at a very young age playing piano. At what age did you switch to violin and why? If rock music dazzled you, why not play guitar instead of playing the violin so that it sounds like a guitar?

I actually started playing piano and violin at the age of 5, and I continued taking lessons for both instruments until the age of 18. I started focusing more on the violin around the age of 15 after attending music camp for both violin and piano. For me, playing the piano did not provide me with the outlet for expression or the community that the violin gave me. The violin sings; for me, the piano doesn't. And, you don't play the piano in a community; it is pretty much you, your piano and your piano teacher. With the violin, I played with an entire strings section in an orchestra—there was competition and camaraderie.

Regarding the guitar and rock 'n' roll, there are two reasons I didn't play the guitar as a kid: 1. Mom, 2. Dad. Even today, people tell me I should switch to the guitar, but in terms of the raw expressive emotion, I think the acoustic violin outperforms both the acoustic and electric guitars. I know a lot of that has

to do with my lifelong relationship with the violin; it is really my voice. I can't just walk away from it, as there is a personal history that is tapped every time I perform. I don't think that would be there with a guitar.

From the perspective of a classically trained musician, with respect to my previous question, is it your intent to make your violin sound like a guitar or do you believe that the final product improves upon the sound of the guitar for which the music was originally written?

My intent is to express myself, and to oversimplify, I am a mixture of an Asian kid forced to play the violin and an American kid who grew up with MTV.

My intent is to express myself, and to oversimplify, I am a mixture of an Asian kid forced to play the violin and an American kid who grew up with MTV. But, there is also the element of pushing your art to its limit. I want to know the full capability of the acoustic violin, and that also influences my sound. I do believe that an acoustic violin has a lot of sound qualities naturally that fulfill the intent of an electric guitar, such as sustain and distortion. The bow really creates a limitless range of sound, and I often joke that a guitar had to be electrified to compete with the violin. Still, I don't think that my final product improves upon anything that is performed with passion and skill, regardless of whether the original was played on an oboe or a '57 Les Paul goldtop.



As a person with an untrained ear, I listened to your music on the Internet and would be hard pressed to recognize that I was listening to a violin if I was not watching you playing it. What captured me was the intensity and passion of your delivery. Do you get into a certain zone when you are playing? Where are your thoughts? Who are you?

Whoa. Those are some intense questions. In the big picture, I am that Asian kid forced to play the violin and really not given too many other outlets to express a lot of emotional and social inputs. My enemy became my best friend in some ways because it (the violin) gave me an avenue to really be me. In the small picture, when I am performing, I am really nowhere with no thoughts. You could draw from a lot of philosophies and science to understand this, but psychology would call it unconscious competence. There are really no thoughts regulating the exchange between my purest emotion and where my fingers go and how my bow arm moves.

How has your career progressed? We have interviewed people who have been greatly impacted commercially by YouTube. I know that you have opened for a number of musicians and that the "conversion rate" of gaining fans has been successful. What avenues have worked best for you?

My career has progressed as most careers progress I think, with the combination of hard work and luck. I lived in Aspen after graduate school, and from there I met a lot of people who have helped keep my career moving forward. Live performance, whether it is a corporate party or opening for Grand Funk, is the best and only avenue as far as I am concerned. There are videos on YouTube, but inevitably someone doubts that I am really playing the violin or claims that I am just a heartless Asian-robot (seriously, you can see these really terrible comments out there), so I just like to prove it all in a live venue, kind of like Steve Wiebe.

Is all of your work now concentrated on your Unrivaled Players band? How many CDs do you have and are they mostly original works?

I currently have two main projects. One is my band, the Unrivaled Players, and the other is Kevin Costner's new band, Modern West. My band has 2 CDs, and they are both classic rock jams. The Costner project has an original CD coming out in October.

You have created compositions that consist of layers of separately produced pieces originally for cello, viola and violin, which you combine into a single orchestral piece. It sounds fantastic. Where can I find these?

Currently, the most comprehensive collection of my orchestral work is on Butch Walker's album "Letters" and on Modern West's upcoming Universal Records release "Untold Truths."

Photos by Bartram Nason



For more info about Bobby Yang, visit bobbyyang.com

Bobby will be performing live for the Simon Fashion Now presented by Cadillac October 16 & 17 Galleria Houston simon.com



Is there a composition of which you are particularly proud? Is it a piece that you have covered or your own composition?

Honestly, I am most proud of the Unrivaled Players' live performances. When we are on stage, we really break it down into a jam, and during a jam there are literally an infinite number of choices to be made, and I am continually amazed by the choices that my band makes. Today, anyone can sit in front of their home computer and create a seemingly impressive recording, but very few can walk onto a stage and deliver the same or better. I think we do, and that makes me particularly proud.

How has your musical focus changed over the years? In what direction do you see yourself growing? Do you think you will ever introduce vocals into the mix?

I am really into the dance these days, whether it is downbeat or house or trance or anything that makes people dance. I keep saying that my next album is going to be an original dance album, but we'll see. I love recording and performing with vocalists, but in terms of Bobby Yang and his Unrivaled Players, I consider myself the vocalist. I cherish the freedom that the band gives me to push the violin. Maybe it is selfish, but I want to keep the Unrivaled Players completely instrumental.

The whole HipHop and TripHop craze seems to have lasting power. What do you think about it and does it offer a musician such as yourself any prospects for new projects?

I am excited about anything that makes people dance. I actually really enjoy playing live with a DJ.

Where would you direct our readers to see/hear the best example of what you and your music are all about?

Of course, I would want everyone to see the band live. While the events are private, everyone can come down to the Simon Fashion Now presented by Cadillac fashion show on Thursday, October 16 and again on Friday, October 17 at the Galleria and watch from the upper-level common areas. If they can't see me live, they should start with my website: bobbyyang.com

You are going to be on the runway with all those models. Are you going to be able to concentrate?!

I think you should be more worried about the models' concentration. (Haha.)

Will you be playing your own compositions?

The night is going to be a tribute to classic rock greats, like Led Zeppelin and G&R.

You have stated that the traditional violin has taught you to create beautiful sounds in such a way that an electronic violin could not. Have

you tried applying what you have learned from the traditional violin to the electronic one or have you had no interest?

I have played plenty of electric violins, and from my experience, the electric violin has half the capabilities of an acoustic violin. The reason people play the electric violin is to create more sustain and distortion. These are things that you can do with technique on an acoustic violin, and an acoustic violin has infinitely more complex sounds and dynamics. I do not understand why someone would put down an acoustic violin for an electric; it is a step backwards to me.

Since you've been in this business, how has it changed for you? How many performances do you do each year? Has the number been increasing?

I think most of my friends would say that I am pretty much unchanged. If anything, the business has really opened my eyes to the possibilities of following your passion, and I think that is a good thing. I probably do around 100 performances a year, and yes, there are more every year.

I do not understand why someone would put down an acoustic violin for an electric; it is a step backwards to me.

Has being an Asian American had any impact upon your career? Where were you born and please tell us a little about your family heritage. What do your parents think about your career? Were they/are they supportive?

Definitely. I would not be the performer, heck, I wouldn't even be a violinist if it weren't for my parents. I was born in New Jersey, but I was raised in Houghton, Michigan (the Upper Peninsula). My parents were born and raised in Taiwan and their upbringing definitely impacted me. They expected me to appreciate every opportunity I was given and to give 110% to school and to practice before I even thought about fun. It created an odd combination of discipline and rebellion, which is represented in my career. My parents wanted me to be an engineer. I auditioned for the music school without their knowledge and when I received a full scholarship, they couldn't protest too loudly. As I get older and more successful, they become more supportive. They just worry about me making a living with my hands, that if I injure my arm I won't be able to earn money. I understand where their concern comes from and I don't hold it against them. After all, I have them to thank for who I am today.

Selecting A Caterer:
An Insider's Tips

Fine Taste by V. "VAN" HOANG

Chris Nguyen is the Catering Director of Café Natalie Elegant Dining and Catering, and offers some common sense nuts and bolts suggestions that will help you navigate the decisions to be made before you engage a caterer to provide for your upcoming holiday parties. An overlooked benefit of having a party catered is that it liberates you so that you can enjoy yourself, as well. So often, we host a party and are too busy preparing the food, making sure our guests are attended to, and collecting dirty glasses, plates and silverware that we never get to participate in the festivities. Perhaps it is time to consider your options.

What information is necessary to properly bid on catering a prospective party?

Three things that all caterers must know before bidding on an event are: the number of guests, menu selection, and the type of occasion.

Do caterers have specialties or should a client expect that they can prepare any kind of food they desire?

Most caterers are able to provide the standard menu selection that other caterers also offer. Every caterer has a specialty of their own that makes them unique to their prospective clients. Due to the diverse ethnic community here in Houston, caterers must meet the needs of their clients and broaden their scope of knowledge to better serve them. If the caterer cannot provide the specified ethnic entrées, I personally recommend choosing a specialty caterer.

How can a client compare prices between caterers?

Typically, caterers first invite prospective clients to something called a "tasting." During this time, the caterer and clients are able to discuss pricing and sample a variety of entrées that the caterer has to offer. In some instances, caterers will provide the pricing on a per person basis on their website or give specific quotes over the phone once they have a feel for what the client desires.

Is price a fair method to even compare caterers?

No! Price is not the best way to determine value because it is difficult to compare apples to apples. It is best to decide on a caterer that has a reputation for quality and professionalism and to have that caterer adjust the menu to match your budget. A good caterer will be able to create a pleasing menu that keeps within the dollars you have available to spend.

What is the best determinant in selecting a caterer?

The best determinant in selecting a caterer is the quality of the food and the quality of the service they provide to you at the tasting. Clients should know what they are paying for.

Is it desirable to have a taste testing before you commit?

Absolutely. I highly recommend a taste testing before you commit to the caterer. You must know the kind of service and quality of food your guests will be served at your event. Like the saying goes, "Test drive the car before you buy it".

What should prospective clients guard against when engaging a caterer?

Don't succumb to the sales pressure of choosing what the caterer wants to serve. It is your event. Therefore, you should serve what you want. If they cannot accommodate your needs, then resort to a different caterer.

Is it best to select a caterer based on a referral and then adjust the menu to meet the specific budget?

Yes, it is best to choose by referral. Referrals are very important because the referrer was obviously very impressed with the service, so you know that you are in good hands.



What are the cost components of a catering job? Will most caterers provide an itemized bill or just tell you a total cost for a party?

The cost components of a catering job are service, food, and rentals. Most caterers provide an itemized bill. Never sign a non-itemized contract. It is industry standard to provide an itemized invoice.

If I'm a cost-conscious client, what are the best ways to keep costs down?

The best way is to choose a buffet style service as opposed to seated dinner service. If you have a set budget, the caterer should help you get the most for your money. In regard to rental costs, you would want to keep to the standard service ware.

Due to the diverse ethnic community here in Houston, caterers must meet the needs of their clients and broaden their scope of knowledge to better serve them.

What is the most popular holiday menu?

The most popular entrée is oven roasted turkey and honey roasted ham. The most popular dessert is crème brule. And the most popular beverage is a pear and cranberry cocktail.

What can prospective clients do to make their parties particularly memorable?

What is a cheap bang for their buck?

Chocolate fountains provide a bigger "wow" factor, but the ice sculpture is definitely a better bang for your buck.

Are there trends in catering holiday parties?

Clients are requesting only hors d'oeuvres for their holiday parties as opposed to seated dinners.

What's "hot" this year?

Now, more than ever, people are very health conscious. Unusual proteins such as quail and rabbit are hot items to serve for the main entrée and piping hollowed fruits and vegetables with filling are hot dessert items.



Chris Nguyen
Catering Director
Café Natalie Elegant
Dining and Catering

cafenatalie.com

Have more questions?
Give Chris a call at
281.513.0156





a night out

photographer: Collin Kelly
fashion stylist: Leslie Rivas
hair & makeup: Tree Vaello
hair piece: Mari Ari Hair
model: Judy Ngo
location: Mo Mong Restaurant

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Necklace by Giles & Brother @ Barney's CO-OP
Earrings @ Erika's Jewelry \$40



Dress by LA ROK @ Neiman Marcus \$298
Necklace @ Erika's Jewelry
Shoes by Brian Atwood @ Neiman Marcus \$695
Clutch by Elaine Turner @ elaineturner.com



Dress by Diane Von Furstenberg @ Barney's CO-OP \$465
Necklace by Giles & Brother @ Barney's CO-OP \$635



Top by Marc Bouwer @ Neiman Marcus \$295
Skirt by Marc Bouwer @ Neiman Marcus \$340
Necklace @ Erika Jewelry \$50
Belt by Suzi Otler @ Neiman Marcus \$295
Shoes by Yves Saint Laurent @ Neiman Marcus \$1070



Dress by LA ROK @ Neiman Marcus \$378
Necklace @ Erika's Jewelry \$68

Discovering the Nuances
of the Streets of

San Francisco

by HENRI MERCERON

If one is planning an escape from Houston's brutally hot and humid summers, San Francisco definitely has to be amongst your top destination choices. The temperature ranges between the low 50s and the upper 60s, requiring that you pack a variety of clothes that can be layered as needed.

The city is miniscule from a Houstonian's point of view. At 46.7 square miles (roughly 7 by 7), the saturated mass transit system almost seems to be excessive; it includes subways, trolleys, cable cars and buses. When I visit a city, I want to get to know it as a native and not as a tourist. While every destination has certain "must see" sights, it is in the nuances that I really form an appreciation of a place. So, with that mindset, I was determined to explore every inch of San Francisco and some of the surrounding areas.

I stayed at the 4-star Argonaut Hotel located at Fisherman's Wharf. The Argonaut ranked very high on tripadvisor.com, an excellent resource for any traveler. Using expedia.com, I hooked a room for \$185 a night – a steal! The Argonaut was converted from part of an old Del Monte cannery and the décor preserved certain aspects of its past, such as exposed wood beams and the steel braces and bolts that connected the frame of the building; the other part houses shops and restaurants. It was very quaint, and in between the two parts was a courtyard where old black and white movies were shown in a casual setting as people drank their wine. Every evening, the hotel hosted a gathering during which guests could mingle and drink wine that they provided. That was a nice touch.

The noisy sides of the hotel where my room, thank goodness, was not facing, looked over the wharf on one side and Buena Vista Restaurant on the other. Adjacent from Buena Vista was the terminal point for the trolley cars. You would not believe how much trolley operators love to clang their bells! It's okay during the day but at night, it must be torture. Buena Vista achieved its fame as the first establishment to introduce Irish coffee to the U.S., back in 1952. Today, they serve more than 2,000 cups daily. While eating breakfast there, I noticed that people were drinking Irish coffee with their meals. "When in Rome..." I did the same. I don't know why I thought it would taste like Bailey's Irish Cream, which I really like. The coffee and cream were unsweetened and the whiskey was potent, which did not work well for me. But if you like your coffee black and your whiskey stiff, you will enjoy yourself.

There was a free concert at a park about seven miles from the hotel to which I intended on walking. My journey began on Hyde Street that ran between the Argonaut and Buena Vista. I came to think of it as Jekyll and Hyde Street because by the time I had travelled from one end to the other, I was literally a changed man. The path I had charted included about three miles on Hyde. Unbeknownst to me, it included a hill that rose at a 45 degree angle for about half a mile. Each cross street provided a short plateau where I could rest and shed a layer of clothing before I continued. At the base of the hill, I was wearing a T-shirt, sweater and windbreaker and had a cap on my head, as it was 55 degrees and chilly. By the time I reached the peak, my sweater and windbreaker were wrapped around my waist, my cap was in my hand and I was sweating as though I had just run a marathon.

The views from the top were exceptional, as you have a clear view of the bay. One of the cross streets near the peak is Lombard, famously known as the world's "crookedest street." It snakes left and right a half dozen times within a 50 yard distance at a 45 degree angle and is lined with well landscaped homes. I wondered how the residents managed to park their car in their garages and if they ever tired of the endless stream of tourists that drove past them.

As I descended the other side of Hyde Street, I felt the pull of gravity as my quadriceps strained to keep me from toppling over. All I could think about was that this was not a city for the disabled or the elderly. No wonder they have so much mass transportation. A half mile trek can wear you out, which is okay for a tourist but quite another thing if you have to go to work each day.

I decided to catch the BART (subway) to complete my trip to the concert for \$1.50. The Stern Grove Festival has been a mainstay in San Francisco for 72 years. Every Sunday in the summer, free concerts are held in a park that contains a natural amphitheater surrounded by a dense forest

of eucalyptus, red woods and fir trees. The aroma of eucalyptus permeates the air and each breath you take is invigorating. There is ample space to sit on the ground and there are about 15 rows of benches in the "orchestra section" nearest the stage. Somehow, notwithstanding that the place was already packed with perhaps 1000 people, I secured a seat on a bench in the second row.

Every age and ethnicity was represented in the crowd. People brought blankets and ate food that they brought or that was prepared by vendors in the outer area. One guy with long hair was shirtless and drank from a bottle of wine as though it was a bottle of beer. That day, two Latin influenced groups were performing rhythms that drew upon electronica, soul and triphop. It was two hours of electrifying music that had everyone on their feet dancing, including me. It was impossible not to be taken in by the music and the liberating effect of the place and moment in time. If you are travelling to San Francisco, check out what is happening at Stern Grove by visiting sterngrove.org.

I decided to walk the seven miles back to the hotel via a more circuitous route that went around the steep peaks rather than over them. I met a friendly native who told me a few things as we walked. In the 39 years that he had lived in the city, it had only rained once during the summer months. That is good to know if you are planning a summer trip. He also told me that I would be passing Sunflower Vietnamese Restaurant, a very popular place for locals but not well known by tourists. I decided to eat there. While the ambiance was ordinary, I had a terrific meal of steamed sea bass with ginger and scallions for \$15.95. The fish must have been at least a pound, which was great since I was famished.

Every Sunday in the summer, free concerts are held in a park that contains a natural amphitheater surrounded by a dense forest of eucalyptus, red woods and fir trees.

I tend to enjoy food that is shunned by animal lovers: foie gras, veal and Chilean sea bass. A day after my very enjoyable sea bass meal, I rented a car and visited the Monterey Bay Aquarium. The aquarium, which is a two hour drive from San Francisco, is highly recognized as one of the nation's best and is visited by almost 2 million people each year. It has a 300,000 gallon live kelp forest, the nation's first, and exhibits more than 550 species of fish and marine animals. A leader in conservation research, the aquarium has an exhibit that is a faux seafood diner in which you learn which types of fish are environmentally sustainable and which are not. There are three grades and Chilean Sea Bass is included in the worst one. You can get a copy of the "Sustainable Seafood Guide" on line at montereybayaquarium.org if you want to see how your favorite fish rank. With a little guilt, I am glad that I visited Sunflower before I visited the aquarium and got educated.

On the way back to San Francisco, I was captured by the waves of thick fog that rolled over the many hills and valleys that I passed as night approached. It was a dramatic sight that constantly took my eyes off the road.

I rented the car from Reliable Rent A Car for \$65 a day, including tax, near Union Square. I mention this because having a car in San Francisco is an expensive proposition because of the rental rates and, especially, the parking. The nice thing about Reliable is that it offered free in-and-out parking close to mass transit. Parking at the hotel would cost \$35 per night; parking at Reliant's garage cost \$3 round trip on a cable car that dropped me off right near my hotel.



Argonaut Hotel

495 Jefferson Street at Hyde
San Francisco, CA 94109
866.415.0704
argonauthotel.com





The next day, I drove 12 miles over the Golden Gate Bridge to Muir Woods, the pre-eminent redwood forest. I actually got dizzy as I drove up steep winding roads to the 560 acre national park. There are six miles of trails that include a 2 mile (1.5 hour), 1 mile (1 hour) and half mile (.5 hour) trail. I think this is absolutely a "must see" as it is such a unique and awesome experience. Three hundred foot trees are everywhere; you feel like an ant. I gathered some interesting facts about the forest from one of the guides. Each tree drinks 500 gallons of water every day. During the rainy seasons, the bark swells to twelve inches in thickness providing a natural barrier to fire damage. The trees do not have sap but are saturated with tannins that deter insect infestation and fungi. The leaves are flat, perfectly suited to collect vast amounts of water from the perennial fog that envelops the forest. The droplets feed the trees' roots that only run thirteen feet deep but a hundred feet wide. Hence, the roots of all the trees are intertwined for strength against the winds that swirl high above. Most of the trees are between 500 and 800 years old with some as old as 1,000 years. For more information, visit nps.gov/muwo.

I did visit some of the more touristy places in the city. I sampled some of the signature sundaes at the Ghiradelli complex (the whole menu is sundaes). I walked to and across the Golden Gate Bridge (which is really "international orange"). I visited the sea lions that populate Pier 39 and was entertained by their antics for about an hour. I walked to the Ferry Building and stopped by a number of shops inside and strolled outside through the booths of paintings, photographs, jewelry and arts and crafts across the street

When you walk every inch of a city, the "wows" come from the simple things

on the weekend. I viewed the rows of hand-painted garage door murals in the Mission district. I took the ferry to Alcatraz which was well organized but disappointing in that they never showed us Al Capone's cell, which is what I really wanted to see. In the final analysis, the problem with the tourist attractions is that you have an expectation of being "wowed". When you walk every inch of a city, the "wows" come from the simple things such as attending a concert in a eucalyptus forest, stumbling upon an interesting gallery or store, eating delicious (if endangered) Chilean sea bass, and walking up a street so windy that you get dizzy or so high that you think you are in heaven. The bonus is that when you return, you will know exactly where you want to go.

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Exit Saigon, Enter Little Saigon Opening Night Party

Held at Houston Community College

Photos by Sopheavy Than

The lobby of the Houston Community College was transformed into an art gallery to display the Smithsonian traveling exhibit, "Exit Saigon, Enter Little Saigon." Hundreds of people attended opening night festivities.



Mr. La, Kim Su Tran, Muoi Tan, At Tan Sun, Dr. Mary S. Spangler, Yolanda Navarro Flores, Peter Khanh Pham, Stephen Le, Ly Thai



Party guests



Dee Doan, Therese Nguyen, Gigi Do



David Vinh, Chris Nguyen



Ninh Ngo



Dr. Art Tyler, Andy & Michelle Escalona



Martha Wong, Kim Szeto



Hoang and Yumi Le and Family



Sue & Randy Sim



Good Tiding Charity members



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Moon Festival

Held at Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

Wachovia Bank celebrated the Moon Festival at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

Photos by Sopheavy Than



Annie & Tom Hoang, Anthony Dang



Viet Hoang, Lori Vettors



Jennifer Bergman, Donna Cole

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Vanessa & Eddie Chang



Jenny Pallais, Karin McClurg



Catherine Tran, Lina & William Yeh

AAFS Golden Ball Gala

Held at Hotel ZaZa

Photos by Samantha Pham

More than 300 people attended the Asian American Family Services (AAFS) Gala. AAFS is a nonprofit agency that provides mental health and family counseling services to Houston's growing Asian American community. The evening honored CNN's Dr. Sanjay Gupta, who accepted via video, Tara Energy, Linda and Dr. Minh Huy Le, and Alex Chenne.



Kim Szeto, Jim Mc Ingvale



Dr. Minh Huy Le, Linda Le, Alex Chenne



Mariam Issa, Glen Gondo, Hon. Theresa Chang, Munira Panjwani-Zahid, Kal Shah



Anne Chang, George Chang



Dr. Tuan Nguyen, Kal Shah



Kristie Huynh, Chris Nguyen, Paul Nguyen, Hien Le, Theresa Luong



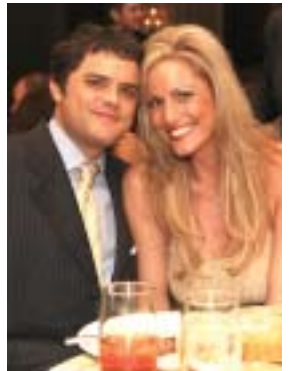
Yuki Rogers, Sanjay Bhatia



Nancy & Nick Nikolovski



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Ron Jenkins



Lily & Charles Foster



Terry Cheng, Hon. Theresa Chang, Ann Cheng, Yen & Dr. Allen Lee



Andy Cerota, Mimi Dinh



Yvonne Laurel, Terry Bartifay



Julie Vo, Charles Flores



Chau Nguyen, Rob Todd



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Zac Efron Has Nothing on Our Woody Shaggy Hair Tales

Trish Volore and her husband, Vuthy “Woody” Kuon, have been blissfully married for almost two years. As is the case with many newlyweds, the first couple of years present an array of challenges, discussions and compromises. Coming from different cultural backgrounds, they found that there are some challenges that are unique to their special circumstances. This month, we learn a bit about Trish’s shaggy hair fantasies.



I love shaggy hair on men. I don’t mean long hair in a pony-tail. I’m thinking of hair like that of Zac Efron and Joe Jonas, not Bon Jovi and other rock stars of the 80’s. I like to touch and tug hair gently, of course, and it helps if it’s shaggy. It doesn’t look girly, at all. I think it looks great and sexy on men.

After Woody and I had been dating for a while we were talking about hair and I mentioned how cute I thought men looked with the new shaggy-hair style. I loved Woody’s hair then and now. He has beautiful black, thick hair and it has always been very easy to tug and touch. When I made the comment about shaggy hair, Woody started growing his longer. It got nice and shaggy and looked really cute. One day, when I was frosting my brother’s hair, who was already a dark blonde, Woody asked me to do his hair, too. I didn’t want to do it. I was afraid of ruining his beautiful black hair but he said he had done it before and it would be fine. When I was finished, the hair on the top of his head was dark blonde and the rest was black. With his shaggy cut, he looked really cool. Many of my girlfriends were impressed with his new “do”. They started calling him “surfer dude.”

As much as Woody and I liked his hair, his mother hated it. Whenever she saw him she lectured him about how long his hair was and the color. When he didn’t seem to respond, she lectured me about what a man’s hair should look like. I just smiled and said that I thought it looked great. Woody kept his hair shaggy for quite a while before cutting it to punish me after a fight we had. At least, I think he wanted to punish me. Oh, well. I still have pictures.

Now our baby boy, TJ, is 16 months old and he has shaggy hair. He is so adorable and has such a beautiful face. His bangs are cut above the eyebrows and the hair in back hangs, curling slightly down to the base of his neck. His hair is so precious that Woody and I really don’t want to get it cut. We don’t want to let it grow indefinitely, of course, but we both like it shaggy.

A week or so ago, we went to a birthday party for Woody’s cousin at which several family members were present. The older relatives, including Ma (Woody’s mom), told us that we really must cut TJ’s hair. I told them that Joe Jonas and Zac Efron sported shaggy hair and that it is the fad right now. I don’t think they know who Joe Jonas and Zac Efron are.

One big difference between Woody’s relationship with his mom and my relationship with my parents is in regard to following their advice. I think that Woody’s mom expects him to do what she says, even in matters of personal preference, even though he is an adult. I always get the feeling that she may get upset if he chooses to go against her advice. I wonder if he feels disrespectful if he doesn’t do what his mom tells him to do. My parents, whom we recently visited, did not mention anything about TJ’s hair. In the past, if I asked for their advice or if they gave it without my asking, there was an understanding that I must make decisions based on what I thought was right or best for me. I have found, however, that it is wise to think hard about what they say before I make my decisions. In general, they don’t give advice unless I ask for it, which is probably why they hadn’t weighed in on TJ’s hair and I was not planning to ask them about it.

I’m in a quandary. For the time being, to avoid having to make a decision about TJ’s hair, I’m planning on him being Joe Jonas for Halloween.

– TRICIA VOLORE

I don’t have anything against longer hair on men... just on Asian men. Well, maybe not all Asian men... just those with funny shaped heads that are too flat on the back or that are just too big... like mine.

I don’t believe every person can pull off the same fashion trend. For example, even though tall and skinny runway models can look decent in those “baby-doll” tops, I think that it makes the rest of America look pregnant. Also, tight long-sleeve button-up shirts with *Queer Eye* patterns may help certain men on television, but for me? No thanks. Also, if anyone has gone to a beach lately, they’ll see why everyone does not belong in a string bikini or Speedo.

Just as all of these fashions may not work for certain people, usually, long hair just doesn’t work on Asian men. It may be trendy in American pop culture, serving as a symbol of rebellion to the traditional short haircut, but long hair on Asian men just reminds me of kung-fu fighters in Shaw Brothers movies from the 70’s.

I guess I am somewhat influenced by my mother’s traditional views and having grown up with her constantly telling me to cut my hair short so I don’t look like a girl. That is why I have always kept my hair short as a child, except during a weird phase in the 80’s when I sported a style that embarrassingly resembled a mullet. I wouldn’t have believed this myself, if I didn’t have a high school yearbook photo to prove it.

My college years really proved to be the time to expand my horizons through hair. Having attended an art school, I was encouraged to express my individuality by experimenting with different cuts and colors. I started by growing my hair long and instead of trimming the bangs, I let the front grow and trimmed the back. After many months, my hair had grown so long in front that it fully covered my face. I started looking like a young “Cousin It” from the Adams Family.

I never felt strange or different, since I was an “artist.” Believe it or not, I looked pretty normal compared to most of my college peers.

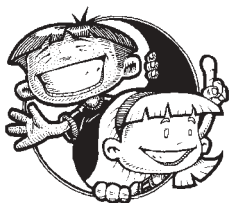
For my next hair phase, I decided to shave my head; all but the extremely long bangs. I worried a bit that I had to visit my mother in Houston soon after doing this and feared receiving one of her famous lectures. Luckily, by the time I arrived home, my hair had grown sufficiently not to look bald. As long as I kept facing her with my long bangs strategically combed back, she never even noticed.

I decided to dye my hair blonde before a trip to China with my family. It was going to be my first visit to my native country. I would finally get to see where my ancestors came from and get in touch with my roots. I would truly become connected with my people.

To my surprise, I did *not* make a connection at all. In fact, I had never felt more unwelcome in my life. I felt as if they saw me as a towering 5 foot 10 inch, 185 pound, orange-haired sideshow. I truly believed that my trip to China would make me feel more Chinese, but instead the experience made me realize how American I really was.

Honestly, I do not like my hair being long. But I do like the freedom I have to wear it long because my wife likes it. But most of all, I like the freedom to shave it if she ever decides to tick me off.

– VUTHY KUON



WOODY TRISH



By Vuthy Kuon

Dining Guide

Yellow Magazine's featured restaurants

JAPANESE

Sake Lounge

Nouveau Japanese
550 Texas St., 713.228.7253

Sake Lounge offers traditional sushi, with a personalized touch from head sushi chef Yama. Signature items include the Sake Ceviche marinated in a sake cocktail sauce and Sake Lounge Roll which has fresh fruit slices infused into the roll.

Shabu House

Japanese soup
8719- Bellaire Blvd., 713.995.5428

Only beef or seafood items are served and will be cooked with the classic shabu shabu style. Boiling broth is situated at the bar. When the food arrives, place everything in the broth and begin the unique experience.

Tokyo One

2938 W. Sam Houston S., 713.785.8899

Tokyo One is a sushi buffet restaurant, situated in a fancy boat house with an outside deck. The food is fresh and is constantly replenished. Selections include: salads such as sea weed, beef, squid, salmon and watercress. Sushi includes a variety of rolls and sashimi. A "must have" is the escobar. There are also a variety of fresh crabs during dinner. Great price and great atmosphere.



Zushi Japanese Cuisine

5900 Memorial Dr., 713.861.5588

Zushi serves extremely fresh and high quality sushi. Stand out items are the sashimi appetizers served with perfectly paired sauces or any one of the many house specialty rolls.

Uptown Sushi

1131 Uptown Park Blvd. #14 713.871.1200

Uptown Sushi personifies an upscale sushi restaurant located near the Galleria in the swanky Uptown Park Plaza. The menu offers Japanese fusion dishes and a great selection of high-end sashimi and sushi. Side note: Uptown Sushi has "off-the-menu" specialty rolls served daily!

Rickshaw Bambu

713.942.7272

So many great dishes and variety to match, picking a favorite seems to be a daunting task. The East West Chicken Wraps, Mandarin Beef and Rickshaw's Pad Thai are favorite Pan Asian dishes. The sushi menu has seventeen specialty rolls and, of course, nigiri and sashimi.

CHINESE

Auntie Chang's

2621 South Shepherd #290, 713.524.8410

Auntie Chang's offers the most flavorful home-style Chinese cuisine around. Although known for their dumplings, any of your favorite classic Chinese dishes are done extremely well.

Hong Kong Food Street

9750 Bellaire Blvd., 713.981.9888

Peking duck and roasted pork hang from cleavers in a front window display giving a Hong Kong street market feel. In addition, the menu is divided into sections including Seafood, Hot Pot, Special Stir Fry, Sizzling and Chef Specials. The Peking duck, Beef Pot and Dry Scallops are recommended items.

San Dong Noodle House

9938-F Bellaire Blvd., 713.271.3945

Authentic hand pulled Chinese noodle dishes are served at a reasonable price. A few favorites include the Roast Beef Noodle soup served in a beef broth accented by ginger and soy, or the oh so addicting pan fried dumplings.

Sinh Sinh

9788 Bellaire Blvd., 713.541.0888

The seafood at Sinh Sinh is quite exciting because everything served comes from live tanks. Prawns, Australian king lobster, King crabs, Coral Leopard trout, Surf clams, Geoduck clams, Trunk clams, Elephant clams, etc...are all featured as live seafood.

Arco Seafood

9896 Bellaire Blvd., 713.774.2888

A refreshing take on Chinese seafood offering an upscale ambience. Subtle flavors allow the natural taste of the seafood to emerge. Dishes to try: Sea Cucumber, Crab Meat and Fish Maw Soup, Noodle's with Abalone Sauce, Sautéed Snow Pea Leaf or the Steamed Whole Tilapia.

KOREAN

Airang Korean Restaurant

9715 Bellaire Blvd., 713.988.2088

From the décor to the cuisine, everything about this place exemplifies tradition. The Moh Dum Bulgogi is a classic family style dinner which includes barbecued short ribs, squid, chicken and a vast assortment of side dishes such as the potato salad, kim chi and spicy cucumber salad.

ITALIAN

Da Marco Cucina E Vino

1520 Westheimer Rd. 713.807.8857

If you are looking for authentic Italian food, Da Marco is the place to find it. It has a charming atmosphere to go along with the excellent fare. All of the entrees are subtle and prepared nearly perfect. Must try Sweet Corn Ravioli and Lobster and the Sea Bass with Aceto Tradizionale.

THAI

Thai Spice

8282 Bellaire Blvd. 713.777.4888

Thai Spice on Bellaire is a foodies dream. It's a casual place that serves Thai dishes you won't find anywhere else in Houston, with a huge selection of interesting, rare, tasty dishes at excellent prices. A must have is the whole fried tilapia with hot and sour dipping sauce and papaya salad and Tom Yum soup.

Nit Noi

6700 Woodway Pkwy., Suite 580
281.597.8200

Nit Noi means "a little bit" and Thai food lovers pack Nit Noi restaurants and cafes all around Houston. Nit Noi will always be known for their Pad Thai, but other must try dishes include PadThai Korat (flat noodles stir-fried with chicken, pork or shrimp with vegetables) and Tom Yum Goong (spicy and sour shrimp soup).

Red Basil

11322-C Westheimer Rd., 281.293.0426

A gourmet take on traditional Thai cuisine, Red Basil offers fabulous food at a reasonable price. If you are a fan of Thai soup try the Tom Yam with shrimp. It will evoke all of your senses of taste with its sweet, sour and spice flavors. The papaya salad and the Massaman curry beef are a few others to try.

Tony Thai

10613 Bellaire Blvd., 281.495.1711

A sophisticated approach to traditional Thai cuisine, Tony's executes with perfect balance and pizzazz. Tony's Wings, wet or dry, and the Steamed Mussels are popular appetizers. For the main course try the Basil Lamb, Garlic Salmon or the Steamed Fish with Chili.

INDIAN

Kiran's Restaurant

4100 Westheimer Rd. #151, 713.960.8472

This northern Indian style restaurant embodies a fusion approach to its cuisine. With a focus on well balanced flavors rather than spice, the Flaky Halibut Swimming in Watermelon Curry sauce and the Tandoori Platter typify this perfectly.

MALAYSIAN

Malay Bistro

8282 Bellaire Suite 138, 713.777.8880

The exotic dishes at Malay Bistro perfectly blend the aromatics of spice and flavor, creating traditional Malay cuisine that exemplifies how Indian, Chinese and Malay culinary worlds come together. Dishes to try; Chicken Satay, Beef Rendang, Banana Grilled Fish or the Bah Kut Te. The pull tea beverages are also extremely popular.

VIETNAMESE



Kim Son Restaurants

2001 Jefferson (and other locations),
713.222.2461

The menu is the most imposing part of this casual, highly regarded landmark Vietnamese restaurant. There are no poor choices among the 100 or so options. Enjoy finely prepared delicacies as well as the expected fare, such as the pork vermicelli and fried eggroll. Must try is their black pepper softshell crab. Expansive banquet and special event facilities are also available.

Vietopia

5176 Buffalo Speedway, 713.664.7303

Trendy yet elegant, Vietopia delivers top notch Vietnamese cuisine at reasonable lunch prices and a stellar dinner menu. The lounge at Vietopia works perfectly for those who want a less formal dining experience but still want to enjoy quality food.

Van Loc Restaurant

3010 Milam St., 713.528.6441

A great lunch time eatery serving classic Vietnamese cuisine which, according to the establishment, has around "200 menu items that come straight from mama." Dishes to try are the Vietnamese egg rolls and the beef cubed steak with lettuce and tomato.



Mo Mong

1201 Westheimer Rd. #B, 713.524.5664

This Trendy Montrose establishment has a great lunch crowd as well as a packed martini night on Wednesdays. But the real draw is the food- traditional family recipes mixed in with some tasty modern dishes. Must try items include the Mango Spring Rolls, Shrimp and Avocado Spring Roll, Volcano Chicken, and the Bo Luc Lac.

WINE BARS

So Vino Bistro & Wine Bar

507 Westheimer Rd., 713.524.1000

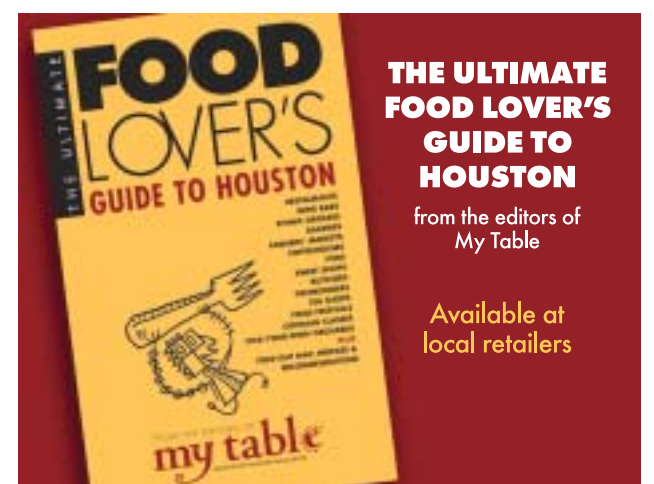
So Vino highlights the unique tastes and styles of Southern Hemisphere wines. The pairing of stellar wines with the new interpretations of traditional world cuisine is the passion of co-founder Elizabeth Abraham. Must try include cooked mussels served with a soy potatoe patty and topped with a mushroom ragu, also the short ribs.

The Tasting Room

1101 Uptown Park Blvd. #18, 713.993.9800

Each of The Tasting Room's three Houston locations offers a unique food and wine experience. Uptown has a more sophisticated feel that attracts a hip, professional crowd. It is the newest "in" spot to sip and be seen. Check out the Sunday Brunch Buffet for \$24, or their delicious thin crust pizza anytime.









To have your restaurant featured in Yellow Magazine, or to recommend a restaurant that you enjoy, please email the information to dining@yellowmags.com.





ATOLLO ULTIMA
Design by Francesco Rota

Conceived as a modular sofa, Atollo Ultima combines a smooth shape and maximum comfort. The softer shape is due to a layer of down covering the structure. The Atollo Ultima system includes corner pieces, central elements, and poufs, and allows for a variety of compositions with different dimensions. With fully removable covers, the Atollo Ultima is available in 12 different fabric options from the Paola Lenti collection.

<p>Element with Left Arm</p> 	<p>cm 125x98 H37/60 49"x37" H14"/24"</p>	<p>Pillow Options</p> 	<p>cm 45x45 18"x18"</p>
<p>Element with Right Arm</p> 	<p>cm 125x98 H37/60 49"x37" H14"/24"</p>		<p>cm 50x50 20"x20"</p>
<p>Central Element</p> 	<p>cm 105x98 H37/60 41"x37" H14"/24"</p>		<p>cm 40x50 16"x20"</p>
<p>Pouf</p> 	<p>cm 75x105 H37 29.5"x41" H14"</p>		<p>cm 50x60 20"x24"</p>

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