

Make It Tonight

Quick meals from scratch
tested by The Hamilton Spectator

Maple Pork Burgers



PHOTOS BY TED BRELLISFORD, THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR

Makes 2 servings

- 1/2 lb (225 g) pork sausage
- 1/2 cup (125 mL) diced green bell pepper
- 2/3 cup (160 mL) bottled barbecue sauce
- 1 1/2 tbsp (22 mL) maple syrup
- 1 1/2 tbsp (22 mL) apple-cider vinegar
- 2 onion rolls, split, heated
- 1/2 cup (125 mL) coleslaw

1 In a medium bowl, mix sausage meat and green peppers and form into two patties, each 1/2 inch (1.3 cm) thick.



2 In another bowl, stir together the barbecue sauce, maple syrup and vinegar; set 1/3 cup (80 mL) of this sauce aside for basting patties.

3 Preheat broiler, grill or skillet until hot, and cook patties 5 minutes a side, brushing with sauce reserved for basting after you turn the patties.

Place burgers on bottom halves of rolls. Top each burger with half the coleslaw. Serve with the remaining sauce.

Approximate nutrition per serving: 450 calories, 22 g fat, 16 g protein, 50 g carbohydrates, 3 g fibre

— *Bon Appétit Cookbook*, edited by Barbara Fairchild

Tip of the day

A reader made some rice pudding from a bag of the grain she purchased in 2001 (yes, some folks do mark dates on that kind of thing; it's a good idea for ingredients you don't use very often), and thought it tasted funny.

Dry rice is quite forgiving in its shelf life. It will eventually go stale, but the window is three to four years.

That's not the case with brown rice, by the way. Because it has the bran still on and that goes bad fairly quickly, the shelf life is only about 6 months.

Do you have a question about an ingredient or cooking technique? We'll find the answer for Tip of the Day. Call 905-526-3450 or e-mail gofood@thespec.com.

Grain of salt

Food facts and fun stuff

Hershey's Chocolate Company was founded on this day in 1894, as a subsidiary of Milton S. Hershey's Lancaster Caramel Company.

— Sara Perks,
Special to The Hamilton Spectator

Restaurant review



JOHN RENNISON, THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR

Lots of light and vivid prints of Vietnam at Little Saigon Vietnamese Restaurant warm a diner's soul on bleak winter days.

Monster menu, many gems

BY JOHN KERNAGHAN

If the menu at Little Saigon Vietnamese Restaurant were as simple as the decor, the dining experience would be blissfully uncomplicated.

But the food lineup runs to 124 items, meaning serious contemplation for those unschooled in Vietnamese fare.

Still, life is about choice. So maybe this long list, combined with the kind-on-the-eyes setting near Lime Ridge Mall, is a good thing.

That setting was most welcome during the coldest week of the year. The light colour scheme, vivid prints of a verdant Vietnam and big windows maximizing the season's bleak light warmed the soul.

The fare, meanwhile, scored well after serious mulling of the menu, starting with a hot and very fresh opening duo of spring rolls (\$3.50) and rice noodle soup with seafood (\$6.50).

The former came as two 15-centimetre fingers of golden spring rolls with a small slaw of carrot and cucumber on the side. The cylinders were tightly packed with shredded vegetable and were crunchy and fresh. A bowl of a light and semi-sweet sauce heightened, but didn't overpower, the contents.

The noodle soup came in a big clear bowl that gave off fresh gusts of green onion and parsley, the only spicing provided. While that sounds quite plain, I enjoyed the simple broth bobbing with large shrimp, mock crab

Little Saigon Vietnamese Restaurant

66 Mall Road, Unit 4
905-389-9826

The look: Bright and open.

The feel: Informal and relaxed.

What you'll pay: Appetizers open at \$3.50 for spring and shredded pork rolls, rise to \$6.75 for the shrimp and mango salad, while an appetizer platter for \$12.99 includes shrimp and rice paper roll, deep-fried shrimp tofu, jellyfish salad, grilled sausage and minced shrimp on sugar cane.

Noodle soups are \$6.50 and rice noodle soups \$5.50 to \$7.25. Rice dishes like grilled pork chop, shredded pork and grilled jumbo shrimp are \$8.75 while vermicelli dishes with a variety of meats and seafood run from \$6.75 to \$12.50. Items from the wok range from \$8.50 for beef and chicken to \$9.50 for shrimp and \$11.99 for scallops.

Vegetarian items are in the \$3 to \$7.99 span while special dishes include sautéed tiger shrimp and lemon grass beef, each for \$13.50.

Hours: 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Sunday to Thursday, 10 a.m. to 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday. The restaurant is wheelchair accessible.

and squid above a big bed of rice noodles. The three shrimp were fresh and moist, the crab lush and squid not too rubbery — in

all, a good collection of protein backed by fork swirls of the tender noodles. A garnish of lime and a tiny chili sat nearby.

The two appetizers alone would constitute a fine, complete meal.

But there was more to try — such as the exotic combination of grilled sausage, minced shrimp on sugar cane and jumbo shrimp with vermicelli (\$12.50) and stir-fried rice noodles with chicken and vegetables (\$9.50).

These revealed the only flaws in the experience: A mushy jumbo shrimp that was a letdown and the very plain chicken dish.

The shrimp, still in the shell, needed to be scraped out in pieces to consume and was not the specimen one expected.

But the eight grilled balls of sausage and minced shrimp saved the platter with a contrast of moist spicy meat and light, almost foam-like, shrimp mix impaled at each end with sugar-cane sticks.

A mound of vermicelli centred the arrangement.

The chicken platter was robust in size with plenty of tender chicken pieces mingling with broccoli, snow peas and celery over the rice noodles. But the dish needed a kick-start — namely liberal lashings of soy sauce — to bring it to life. Still, there was no denying the quality of product for price.

Service, by the way, was swift and gracious.

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Don't trifle with truffles

BY JUDY CREIGHTON

Whether romancing your loved one with a bottle of Pinot Noir (known as the heartbreak grape) or taking a chef's advice on what delicacy to serve your main squeeze on the big night, Canadians are gearing up for a sizzling Valentine's Day on Feb. 14.

"Forget the lingerie, lipstick and silk-tie handcuffs. Just ensure that the object of your desire drinks a little wine," advises Ottawa wine writer Natalie MacLean.

"Researchers at Glasgow University have discovered that if you consume two glasses of wine, members of the opposite sex appear more attractive by about 25 per cent."

For those in need of a relationship renovation, a major hotel and resort chain has come up with a unique plan for the most romantic day of the year, using their top chefs as bait.

Fairmont Hotels & Resorts has put together a team of Love Chefs, who, with their culinary prowess and a computer, can address any affair of the heart.

Love Chefs like Jean-Mark Leon of the Fairmont Queen Elizabeth in Montreal and Patrick Turcot of Jasper Park Lodge in Alberta, as well as others in the chain's North American hotels, are offering to help with relationship woes, says Mike Taylor, a spokesman for the team. "Simply e-mail your love quandary to lovechefs@fairmont.com and the expert Love Chefs will respond with an appropriate recipe, guaranteed to incite romance," he says.

MacLean says a survey of women ages 21 to 39 by CyberPulse found 59 per cent wish their sweethearts would give them wine, not candy, on Valentine's Day. "Forget the line about candy is dandy, but liquor is quicker. Women find gifts of wine romantic," she says.

And don't forget chocolate. Chocolate truffles (especially those with liqueur) are among the most decadent desserts you can make. Thrill your sweetie by whipping up this spirited delicacy and serve with a White Russian cocktail. Watch the sparks fly!

The Canadian Press

To really wow your love, flavour your truffle mixture with Chambord (a French black raspberry liqueur available at the LCBO), and form the truffle around a whole fresh raspberry.

Tipsy Chocolate Truffles

Makes 48 truffles

- 1 lb (450 g) semi-sweet chocolate, finely chopped
- 1 cup (250 mL) whipping cream
- 1 tsp (5 mL) vanilla
- 2 tbsp (30 mL) liqueur of your choice
- 2 tbsp (30 mL) butter, cut into small pieces
- Icing sugar OR cocoa

Place chocolate in glass or stainless-steel bowl.

Stir cream, vanilla and liqueur in a saucepan over medium heat until barely simmering. Pour cream over chocolate and let sit for 20 seconds. Stir gently until smooth.

Add butter a piece at a time and stir constantly until incorporated.

Transfer to a shallow baking dish. Cover and refrigerate until firm.

White Russian

Makes 1 serving

- 1 oz (30 mL) vodka
- 1 oz (30 mL) Kahlua
- 1/2 cup (125 mL) milk



THE CANADIAN PRESS

Tipsy Chocolate Truffles: decadent

Use a teaspoon to roll chocolate into balls, then coat in confectioner's sugar or cocoa powder.

Note: Truffles can also be rolled in shredded coconut or finely chopped nuts.

Approximate nutrition per truffle (rolled in cocoa): 70 calories, 5 g fat, 1 g protein, 7 g carbohydrates, 1 g fibre

Combine vodka, Kahlua and milk in an old-fashioned glass and garnish with a maraschino cherry, if desired.

Approximate nutrition per serving: 250 calories, 2.5 g fat, 4 g protein, 23 g carbohydrates, 0 g fibre

— *Cooking With Booze*, by Ryan Jennings and David Steele