

Thumbs-up for Pho



Pho Vien Vuong
4109-A Spring Garden
924-5551
Price range:
\$\$\$ of \$\$\$\$

By Ian Michie
STAFF WRITER

In a small strip-mall just a couple of blocks down Spring Garden from West Market sits the Vietnamese and Thai restaurant Pho Hien Vuong. From the outside this could be any Asian-American establishment, but its outer appearance, overwhelmed by retail-sprawl, hides Pho's charming uniqueness.

At 7:30 on a Saturday night, business was brisk. The restaurant, while not filled to capacity, was nevertheless humming with activity. Judging from the serene looks on the faces of the patrons, the establishment enjoys a fair amount of repeat customers.

Seated almost immediately, we waited briefly until our server appeared. This is the best service I have experienced in some time. The waiter's knowledge of the menu was extensive. When asked for recommendations he pointed us to several menu items with detailed descriptions of ingredients and suggestions for accompanying sauces.

Pho Hien Vuong claims that it "offers the most flavorful Vietnamese and Thai gourmet food around." This claim, for the most part, may well be accurate, especially in the area of Pho, an entrée-sized noodle soup served with condiments of fresh cilantro, basil, bean sprouts and jalapeños. Pho Hien Vuong offers several varieties of the soup including meatball, seafood and pork.

We asked our server if we could split the chicken Pho as an appetizer, and he obliged, substituting the dark meat for white meat for a charge of \$1. The soup was outstanding. Lending gravitas to the rich ingredients of tender chicken, clear noodles and fresh scallions was the beef broth.

I tried to determine the essence flavoring the broth. My guess was lemon-grass, and when I asked our server he gave me a look that said, "I could tell you but then I'd have to kill you," and then feigned ignorance. I'd forgotten that restaurants sometimes guard their recipes like state-secrets.

Our entrees were better than average, but a slight let-down after the Zen-in-a-bowl experience of the Pho. I gambled and ordered the salted braised pork spare ribs. The dish was served with jasmine-rice and fish-sauce, and while it was dry in places, the pork was well seasoned. Hoisin sauce (on each table sits an array of sauces varying in flavor and heat-degree) added extra flavor, but I had to admit that a full-sized order of Pho would have suited me better.

The affordability of the entrees is also a selling point. The menu also offers lunch specials at \$4.25 which is an incredible bargain for those of us on a college-student's budget. As for dinner, three people enjoyed appetizers and entrees all for well under \$50.

This is a very vegetarian-friendly place. Both of my dining-companions ordered vegetarian dishes, Vegetarian Phaht Thai and Tom Curry—a tofu curry made with coconut milk. Both dishes offer better-than-average takes on standard Thai fare.

I heartily recommend Pho Hien Vuong. While it may not beat out some of the better Southeast Asian eateries in larger cities, this establishment has a great deal going for it, and the Pho alone is worth the short journey to Spring Garden Street. ♦

AIR GUITAR CONTEST RAISES MONEY AND HOPES

GUITAR HEROES

By Jack Sinclair
STAFF WRITER

The smell of the hot dogs burning, marshmallows crisping and the sound of great guitar playing pervaded the air on this Friday night at the Founders hall gazebo. But there was one major difference between this concert and most others; the "musicians," were only pretending to play the guitar, drums and the occasional bass. This was the air guitar contest.

In an attempt to raise money to help some of Guilford's choir members and musicians be able to afford to go to Ireland in the future, students sold food and contestants had to make a donation to compete.

After a slow start to the contest, due to a lack of a big crowd and few participants, the contest finally began. First was sophomore Dean Malelu, with lots head banging and hair twirling while rocking "Wound Upon Wound" by Gorgoroth.

"He is going to break his neck doing that," a concerned adult said, in regards to Malelu's performance.

Following Malelu, sophomores Brendan Lynch and Daron Whitmore took center stage with an air guitar and drum set to CKY's "96 Quite Bitter

Being." Fans roared with intensity with their style and ability to mimic the musicians. Senior Megan Sheridan and junior Melanie Pringle jumped around to Queen's hit "Bicycle Race." Religious studies professor, Eric Mortensen, played air guitar to The Grateful Dead's "Estimated Prophet." Courtney Shaw rocked out to the Red Hot Chili Peppers song "Pea." Two first-years, Sam Flake and Max Van Pelt-Diller, performed "Message in a Bottle" by the Police.

"I have always loved Sting physically, no, intimately," Van Pelt-Diller said. "Today I was Sting."

To finish off the first round, sophomore Jonathan Richter won the crowd by rocking out to a song by the Disney character, Goofy.

Survivors of the first round were Richter, who came back with a performance of the Who's hit, "I Can See for Miles," Malelu who rocked "O Come All Ye Faithful" by Twisted Sister, and Lynch and Whitmore, who finished off the night with System of a Down's "Prison Song."

After all the finalists performed, the judges handed the

responsibility to the crowd. The crowd decided on Lynch and Whitmore for first place, Malelu for second, and Richter for third.

"I feel that it was pretty good, (but) I could have done better," Malelu said. "Also, (my song) is a bit fast for air guitar sometimes."

"I was physically forced to perform" Van Pelt-Diller said. Sam Flake, his fellow performer, literally picked him up and carried him to the sign up sheet.

"I tried to replicate as actually as I could the actual guitar part," Flake said about his performance.

Champions Lynch and Whitmore always saw first place as the goal. "(Losing) was never an option," Lynch said. Instead they picked up their invisible picks and drum sticks and destroyed the imaginary stage. ♦



PHOTOS BY JEREMY BANTE/GUILFORDIAN

For the audio slideshow of this event, go to www.guilfordian.com!