



Get your fill of really good Thai food

Racha Café has been around almost 30 years. When I mentioned to my buddy Mike, who's a staff writer for the Chronicle, that I was reviewing the restaurant, right away he mentioned he used to eat there in the Seventies, when he was driving a cab. Actually, Mike was confusing the locations. Racha used to be west of Polk Street when he ate there, now it's east of Polk, at 771 Ellis. Still, Racha's been around a long time and has always served superior food at very reasonable prices.

The Wong family has owned Racha for the last nine years. Sylvia Wong is the manager and her husband, Shin Yin Wong, head chef. Daughter Kelly, a student at UC Berkeley, helps out on the weekends and trains new waitresses.

The Racha has a lovely ambience. Two walls consist of latticed windowpanes, so patrons can see out to Ellis Street and the entranceway to the offices above the restaurant. The tables are wood and the chairs are comfortable. The Racha, which means "King" in the Thai language, is not your typical Tenderloin Thai restaurant.

But that is not reflected in the prices. Both times that Carl, our artist, who recommended the restaurant to me, and I dined there for lunch, the bill was \$20 with tax. And let me tell you, we both ate our fill and then some.

Our first outing, we tried Carl's favorites. Chief among them was the roast duck, at \$6.25. Entrees at Racha come two ways, "a la carte" and "over rice." Contrary to normal pricing, the a la carte is more expensive. That's because it's a bigger portion, enough to split between two people. The Ped Yang entrée had at least a dozen slices of duck meat that sat on a bed of plain cooked spinach and was garnished with a dipping sauce of rice vinegar, soy sauce and sugar. It was delicious.

Our second entrée was Spicy Chicken, again at \$6.25. We received a plateful of minced chicken with chopped halepanea chilis and sweet basil. It was, naturally, spicier than the duck but not obnoxiously so.

Our final selection was the Vegetable Fried Rice (\$4.50), which offered jasmine rice, egg, tomatoes, bean sprouts and scallions, and perfectly fit with our other two entrees.

Our second visit was more ambitious. Rather than focus on the meat entrees, we chose a soup, and rice and noodle entrees.

The Mix Ball Noodle Soup cost \$4.50. It had meatballs and fish balls, with flat noodles in a fairly neutral, but not untasty, broth. These were Southeast Asian fish and meatballs, both of which tend to have the chewy consistency of hot dogs. Don't ask me why.

We also had Noodles with Gravy, at \$4.75. The gravy was delightfully sweet, again a sweet fish and soy sauce combination, with ground beef and really huge "sea-monster" noodles that were 12 to 15 inches long. It also featured chopped string beans and scallions.

Finally, we ordered Pineapple Fried Rice at \$5.50, which featured minced Chinese sausage, dried shrimp, eggs, scallions and onions. It worked tremendously well with the noodle dish. Carl and I are not shy eaters, yet we could not finish off the trio of entrees. Only ordering two, however, would have left us hungry.

The Racha is open seven days a week, 11 a.m. until 9:30 p.m. ■

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Hobson – Alliance feud headed back to court

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prepared an official Board of Supervisors commendation for Hobson, who was turning 50.

Though he withdrew the motion, Daly said, after hearing from "two colleagues," he offered the commendation to Hobson privately. Hobson, Daly said, turned it down.

But Hobson says he previously has received board commendations due to his "long history of volunteerism in the community." He serves in a voluntary capacity on the public policy committee of the S.F. Drug Abuse Advisory Board, is a member of the S.F. Animal Control and Welfare Commission, and the S.F. Health Plan, and is an alternate on the city Rent Stabilization Board. He also was a board member of Adopt-A-Block.

It is his concern for animal welfare that gave Hobson his greatest credibility and his nickname, "Bird Man" of the Tenderloin, based on a Chronicle story last July.

A health inspector reportedly had cited Hobson for feeding a flock of finches from his kitchen window. A neighbor

turned him in, complaining about the bird droppings.

The citation was Hobson's ticket to a supervisorial appointment on the Animal Control and Welfare Commission, and the inspiration for a city ordinance to allow songbirds — not pigeons — to be fed without fear of legal action. The Board of Supervisors passed the ordinance last July 31.

"He's a very eccentric person who has done some decent

stuff," Daly said. "One of those individuals who's able to insert himself into politics."

An assessment of Nulty was offered by Alliance officer David Baker, as the Alliance meeting of March 20, 2000, drew to a close.

At this date, the dispute was getting nasty. Nulty had alerted the police of potential trouble. Indeed, at the start of the meeting, two police officers had sent Hobson away,

advising him that his beef with the Alliance was a civil, not a criminal matter.

After much collective hand-wringing about Hobson, a presentation on Supervisor Tom Ammiano's controversial living wage ordinance by Ken Jacobs, and a long list of Alliance committee reports, Baker ended the meeting with this statement:

"I'd like to offer you a bit of affirmation. We all talk the talk,

but don't walk the walk. Michael, our president, does walk the walk. You're to be commended," he concluded with a nod toward Nulty.

In a call to one reporter on May 29, Hobson reported that District 6 Democrats would be co-hosting a benefit fundraiser for a group he called Stop Abuse and Global Exploitation in late July or early August. "District 6 Democrats is certainly a very active club," he enthused.

"I try very hard to better my world," he said. "I do what I need to do."

With the rejection of Hobson's restraining order against Nulty et al, and the research for this article under way, the sniping has subsided. The next legal volley will be Nulty's small claims request for \$5,000 for damages. Companion suits of \$5,000 each against Hobson have been filed by the Alliance and the Tenants Associations Coalition, which Michael Nulty also heads.

Fighting officially resumes at Small Claims Court, 450 McAllister, at 5:30 p.m., July 2.

Stan Hutton contributed to this report.

Alliance gets its bearings

The Alliance kicked off in October '99, electing officers on Jan. 17, 2000. Michael Nulty was elected president and Frederick Hobson vice president; Chance Martin, *Street Sheet* editor, was voted treasurer.

By the April meeting, the organization was split: Hobson was out and with him went Martin, a major contributor to the early flurry of anti-Nulty faxes that Hobson sent out, belittling Nulty as "Nulty," declaring his own innocence, and threatening legal action against the Alliance.

At the April 10 Alliance founders meeting, the members wrestled with the question: Should the Alliance be a political group or a neighborhood organization?

"The organization should have some-

thing to do in between elections," said Susan Bryan.

"It could serve as a forum for grass-roots groups to help one another," suggested Bruce Windrem, who ran for supervisor.

"I think it ought to be an umbrella organization, composed of as many organizations and individuals as we can get to join," said Jim Berk. "And we should have a political focus." He asked: "Do we have consensus" on that? And there was consensus.

Nulty wrapped up the discussion with: "Do we all agree the Alliance will be districtwide?"

"Yes," came the chorus.

And that's how the Alliance got its bearings.

— Geoff Link