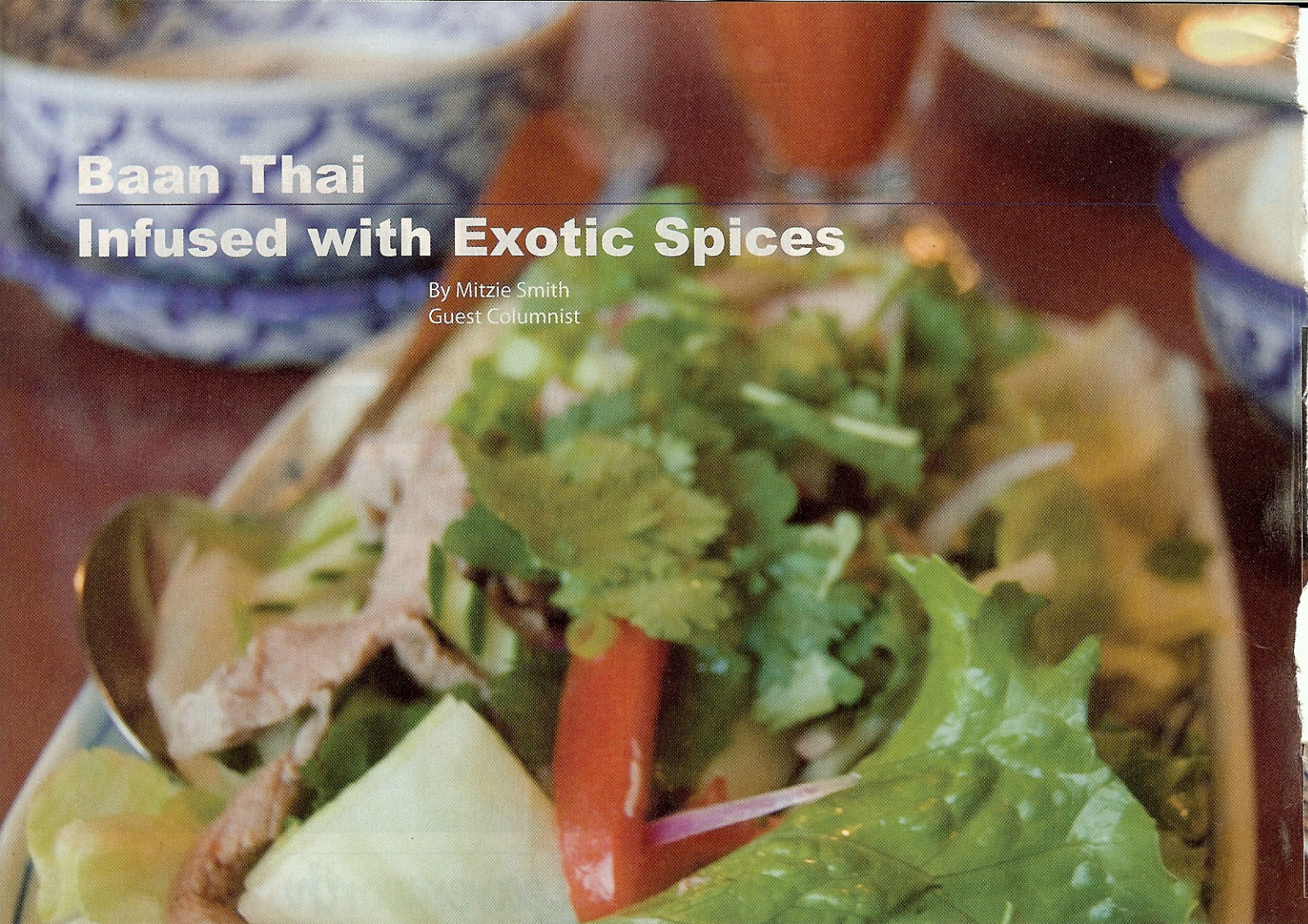


# Baan Thai

## Infused with Exotic Spices

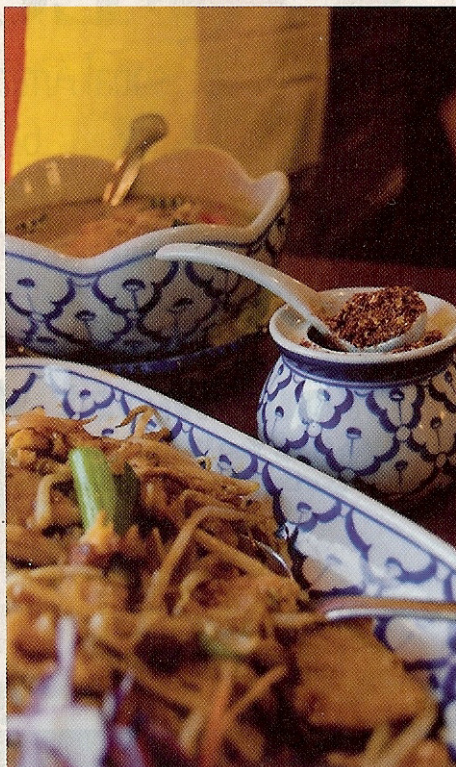
By Mitzie Smith  
Guest Columnist



**T**hailand is far off in physical miles; yet close in proximity for your taste buds, thanks to Aree Proctor, proprietor of Baan Thai Restaurant In Leavenworth.

Being a novice, I invited Jim and Carol to join me to navigate the Far East flavors as they enjoy Baan Thai regularly. We opted to sit in the pagoda-like area in a booth surrounded by ornate scrolled woodwork; part of the authentic Thai décor.

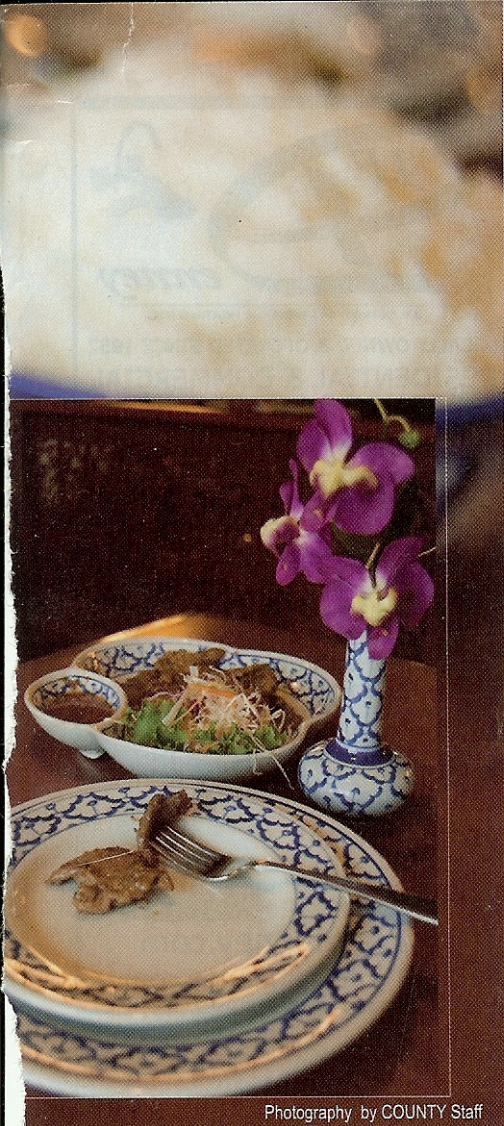
We honed in on appetizers for a starter and couldn't pass up the Tiger Cry Beef (\$7.95) just on its moniker alone. At first blush, the spice concoction in the Tiger Cry sauce registered a bit over the mild meter. A second sampling ensured the sauce had a "cumulative effect" as Carol dubbed its heat index. My thought, don't shy away; it is tolerable and exhilarating with loads of character. The beef was very tender, obviously marinated with care. Jim surrendered on the Tiger Cry Beef after deciding the fla-



vor was great yet "nasty hot." You can see our trio varied on the spiciness and you'll need to gauge your own comfort level. Our vote: worth the try!

Someone suggested ordering the Yam Nua Salad (\$9.75) and Tom Kha Gai Soup (\$5.25 for bowl – pots available for sharing). The salad was colorful with lettuce, tomatoes, cilantro, basil, cucumbers and sliced beef generously lavishing the apex of the greenery and a spicy lime juice dressing waiting to be discovered beneath. A little pot of hotness (chilies and other dry spices) for those that want to rev up the temperature of their dish was graciously deposited next to the platter. Our trio decided what a nice way to individualize your own sense of heat. Nan, our waitress, shared with us that she ordered the mild for us on this dish, as Baan Thai's "medium" in her words, "is hot, and it is easier to add the spice rather than take it away." Again, everyone was grateful for the little pot to personalize!

At this time, we decided we needed to



Photography by COUNTY Staff



sample the Thai Iced Tea. A deep orange tea with coconut milk and cream floated over the top. As we sampled this liquid cooling power, it countered the temperature of the Yam Nua and quenched the thirst - an added bonus!

A bowl arrived, with gorgeous red chilies and mushrooms floating on the top. Time to spoon up the delicateness of the Tom Kha Gai with you. An absolutely intricate blending of many flavors: lime, lemon grass, coconut milk, cilantro, mushrooms, and kalanka in a tempting soup that was refreshing to say the least. Being the intrepid food explorers we are, several in our party bit into the lemon grass, kalanka and kaiffer lime leaves. Note of caution: they aren't meant to eat; interesting textures though. This soup was terrific. You could make a meal of it with a pot rather than just the bowl.

Next, we shared Gang Keaw Waan (Green Curry- \$9.95). The Green Curry boasted beautiful fresh bell peppers, zucchini, basil and coconut milk flavors paired with a side of white rice. The three of us unanimously enjoyed it. Jim, who is a regular at Baan Thai, insists that the Red Curry with Shrimp is Baan Thai's best curry dish.

Pad Thai Noodles with Pork (\$9.95) rounded out our meal. This dish was a nice balance to other dishes selected as it provided yet another dimension of texture and flavor.

We enjoyed a communal meal and still left with a bag full of "to-goes" for later.

Proctor and her team have me sold on Thai food. The flavors are phenomenal. I'll be back for more and become a regular like Jim and Carol. ✍️

4881-588-810