

Nankin Chop Suey

Nankin Cafe in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

SERVINGS

4

Ingredients

- 1 cup chicken
- 1½ cups celery, chopped
- ½ cup bamboo shoots
- ½ cup bean sprouts
- ½ cup water chestnuts
- ¼ cup mushrooms
- 1 onion, chopped
- peanut oil
- water
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 2 tablespoon soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- ½ teaspoon Chinese molasses
- 1 teaspoon MSG (optional)
- Hot cooked rice or Chinese noodles for serving

Instructions

- Chop meat and vegetables separately. Brown meat in peanut oil. Add vegetables and pour in 1½ cups water. Boil for 10 minutes.
- Add MSG to ½ cup water (skip this step if not using MSG). Mix together MSG mixture (optional), salt, sugar, soy sauce, cornstarch, and molasses to make the gravy. Let entire mixture come to a boil to thicken. Add meat and vegetables and stir.
- Serve with rice or crisp Chinese noodles.
- Note: To make chow mein, use the same recipe but chop the vegetables and meat finer than you would for chop suey and serve with crispy noodles rather than rice.

out the swinging doors, zip up and down the carpeted stairs. The public never sees the 30 Nankin chefs, 20 of whom can only speak Chinese. Together, they crack out some 3,000 meals daily. That's almost a million a year. And in a town which seems to slam its shutters around 9 p.m., the Nankin could be relied upon to serve food until late at night." The Nankin closed on February 24, 1999.

Douglas James world at the Nankin from 1965 until 1984, and then he worked at other Chinese restaurants in the area, learning more about his trade. "I learned as much as I could." By January, 1986, Douglas James opened the House of Yim at 576 Marshall Road in Shakopee.

Douglas James was drafted into the Army one week after high school graduation. He spent two years in the service, including one year in Vietnam. After being discharged, Douglas used the G.I. Bill to go to Duluth Business College where he learned bookkeeping and accounting, according to the *Shakopee Valley News* in 1986.

The House of Yim employed ten people, including Douglas' wife, Doris, Chan, a cook, two people who worked in the kitchen, including Lien Tam and John Ploof, a work-study student from Shakopee Senior High School. His brother-in-law, Barton Leung, who is also learning how to run the restaurant. Five part-time wait staff included Sheryl Gulbrandson, Lona Brown, Nicky Uber, Heidi Boyd, and Stacy Anderson.

The House of Yim served food in the Cantonese style, with several selections including several kinds of chow min, sweet and sour pork, egg roll, egg food young, and other traditional Chinese dishes.

Douglas James philosophy about business was "I stress being honest. You also need to have quality food and services and a good atmosphere, so people like being there."

The location is now the New Dragon Cafe.



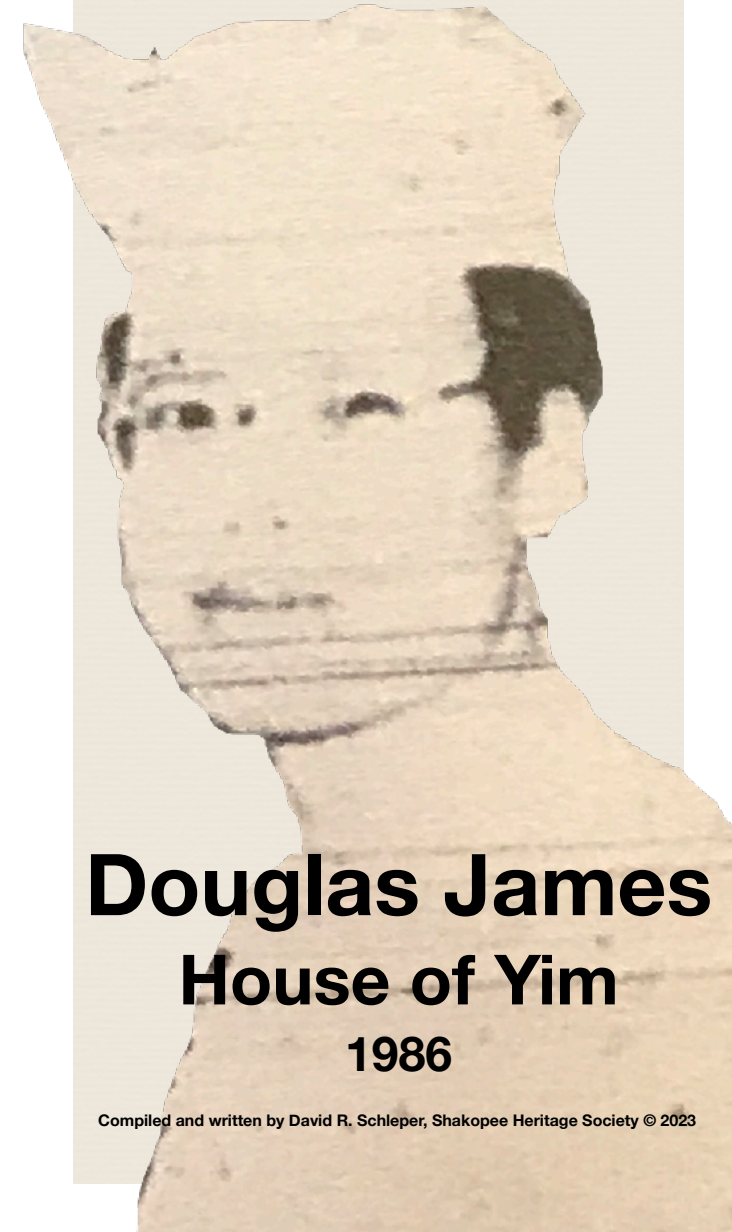
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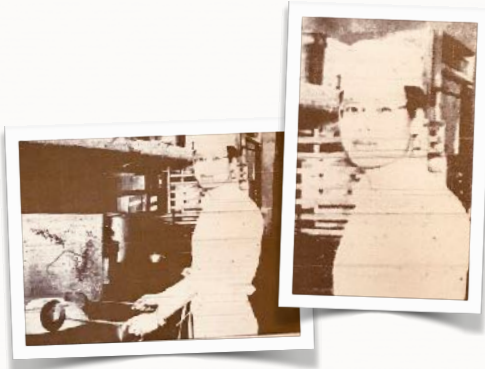


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Douglas James House of Yim 1986

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Douglas James had been working in Chinese restaurants since 1965, when he was 16 years old, and began dreaming of owning his own restaurant, according to the **Shakopee Valley News** on March 19, 1986. On January of 1986, Douglas opened the House of Tim at 576 Marschall Road in Shakopee, said staff writer Beth Forkner-Moe.

Douglas James and his family worked in Chinese restaurant. His great uncle, Walter James, came to America in the 1890s, and opened the Nankin Cafe in Minneapolis in 1919.

Nankin Cafe was a Chinese restaurant in Minneapolis, Minnesota, United States. It was considered "a downtown Minneapolis landmark for 80 years" according to Rick Nelson, in the **Minneapolis Star Tribune**, February 25, 1999. Founded by Walter James in 1919 at 15 S. 7th Street, now the site of the Dayton-Radisson parking ramp, it was sold in 1949 to the Golden and Chalfen families.

"Walter James was born in 1892 in Olympia, Washington into a family of modest means."



Douglas James learned about the restaurant business from his great uncle, Walter James. Walter came to America in the 1890s, and in Minneapolis, Minnesota opened the Nankin Cafe in 1919. It was in business for over 80 years. Douglas James father came to America in 1950s and began working as a cook at the Nankin. The rest of the family, including Douglas, arrived in Minneapolis in 1963, and Douglas James worked at the Nankin Cafe until 1984.

"As a child he and a friend played hooky from school often until they were finally caught. At the tender age of 9 he went to China with a family friend and stayed in his father's home village of Taishan for two and a half years. When he returned he rejoined his family and spent his teenage years around Tacoma Seattle, and Yakima. He did odd jobs here and there, including managing a Chinese restaurant and working as an interpreter for the US Immigration Service. In the latter role he visited many Chinese steamboats that came into the Tacoma harbor. He got to know many of the Chinese sailors on board and soon was trading with them, buying silk handkerchiefs and other merchandise from them and reselling them. His budding entrepreneurship took a step forward when he was offered a position by a restaurateur from Chicago. He moved there in 1913, but did not like the city."

He soon moved to Minneapolis and opened his first Chinese restaurant, Canton, there. In 1919 he opened his second one, Nankin Café, in downtown Minneapolis.

Nankin was a grand operation that featured antique Chinese furniture as well as a western orchestra. James created his signature dish, Nankin Chow Mein, early and it became very popular, well known far beyond Minnesota. The restaurant was highly successful, becoming a magnate for the local Chinese community, as well as a landmark for the city of Minneapolis, noted in <https://chineseheritagefoundation.org/09-walter-james/>.

Through his Walter C. James Foundation he gave generously to many charitable organizations in Minnesota, Chicago and Hong Kong. In founding the Chinese American Civic Council, he hoped "to promote better citizenship, to strive for freedom and equality of all persons, to work for the civic and economic development of Chinese communities, and to foster the well-being of citizens and residents of Chinese extraction."

Minneapolis Star, in August 1981, Karen Winegar noted "The cheerful, hard-core and silent bus help are part of a crew of some 200 workers, said to be the largest restaurant staff in town....They zoom in and

