

Sidling Up for A Taste

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9021Pho chef Kimmy Tang dazzled The Taste crowd with her unique creations. Photo courtesy of 9021Pho
By Michael YEGHIAYAN

Some of the most renowned and well-respected chefs in Los Angeles took part in this year's "The Taste," an annual celebration of food and drink presented by the Los Angeles Times over Labor Day weekend. Like much of the Los Angeles food scene, the event's focus was centered on restaurants, bars and hotels from the city's west side and downtown areas.

However, a growing buzz of unique and innovative restaurants has started to develop clout in the viciously competitive culinary battlefield. Cities like Glendale and Pasadena, once far removed from the collective conversation of trendsetting restaurants, are shedding the stereotypes and beginning to draw attention.

One of the restaurants on the forefront of this trend is 9021Pho, whose popular Glendale location can be found in the Galleria. It boasts a menu of casual dining with Vietnamese roots with dishes influenced in the French and Californian style. The entire restaurant is a testament to the abandonment of many long-held beliefs about food with offerings that are uncompromisingly rich in flavor while remaining healthy and substantial.

Despite the heat and the Labor Day weekend, plenty of folks turned out for the annual tasting event. Photo courtesy of L.A. Times

The constant creativity and dedication to innovation can be traced to the restaurant's chef, Kimmy Tang. Her dishes reflect two of the most important skills for a chef to possess: a profound understanding of various schools of cuisine and the ability to weave those styles together to create something that is appealing and original.

9021Pho president Greg Aghamanoukian described the characteristics of Chef Kimmy that allows her to produce such unique dishes.

"She is simply a culinary genius that can stand toe-to-toe with some of the best chefs out there," he said. "Kimmy is always thinking of a different twist on her creations; she never stops thinking about her next dish."

Judging by the reaction at The Taste, Los Angeles residents have taken notice. 9021Pho's booth on the Paramount Studios lot featured one of the longest lines at the event with people eagerly awaiting a sample of either Vietnamese-style pork or chicken served over rice.

"Kimmy has a blast every time," said Aghamanoukian. "She loved the chance to meet with some of her fans and win over some new ones."

Joining 9021Pho last weekend in Los Angeles was Pasadena's Dog Haus, the ever-popular destination that offers an array of hot dogs, sausages and burgers that stretches that traditional concept of American cuisine. Having recently formed a partnership with Chef Adam Gertler, Dog Haus has found the ability to attract new audiences with offerings that are immediately recognized as adventurous and intriguing.

This attitude was on full display at The Taste where founding partner André Vener helped attendees cope with the heat of the afternoon with a Red Thai CurryWursts with Sooo Cali toppings. It has been said that fortune favors the bold, and this marriage of Eastern flavors on a traditional German dish with a Californian flair certainly did its part in proving that particular idiom correct.

This past weekend, some of the best culinary minds in the city presented their offerings to hungry hordes of Angelenos. Restaurants like 9021Pho and Dog Haus proved that this side of town can compete with the best of them.