

9021Pho's Kimmy Tang Returns With New Asian Fusion Restaurant in Pasadena

Bistro Mon Cheri is the veteran chef's return to the kitchen

by [Linda Burum](#) May 11, 2017, 12:30pm PDT



Bistro Mon Cheri [Nicole C./Yelp](#)

Bistro Mon Cheri, a bright new star from chef Kimmy Tang, has landed in the former Tamashii Ramen spot overlooking Pasadena's East Colorado Boulevard shopping district. The blink-and-

you'll-miss-it location sits upstairs in a small business center. Opened just a few weeks ago, you'll know you're close when you see a post office.

You may remember that before Tang owned (and sold) her mini chain, [9021Pho](#), diners fell in love with the imaginative California-inflected twists on Vietnamese cuisine she served at her West Hollywood restaurant [Michelia](#) from 2001 to 2008. But her cozy new place is not simply Michelia 2.0.

Here, the tiny self-taught chef has expanded her culinary horizons adding more European influence and making it less strictly Vietnamese. [Even the simplest dishes burst](#) with flavor, color, and herbal fragrances, and come at lower than expected prices (three-course daily lunch specials run \$10.95).

The menu characterizes Tang's fare as "east-west gastronomy," a term that now seems as familiar as California pizza. But in her case, blending cultures has long been part of her creative DNA.

From an early age in Vietnam, Tang's culinary sensibilities were shaped at the elbow of the family cook who prepared both Vietnamese and European dishes. Before revolutionaries took command of the South, her entrepreneurial father introduced the family to European cooking with celebratory meals at the famous French [Hotel Rex in Saigon](#).



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So it's no surprise that Bistro Mon Cheri serves a near classic house-made French duck liver pate as a possible shared starter before a dish called "Marisco Bay" — Tang's interpretation of fried rice tossed with crab paste and egg.

The chicken noodle soup you might expect to taste like pho, has the comforting heartiness and flavor of a Central European grandma's broth instead of a bowl from a street food stall. Tang puts a fresh batch of broth on the stove at 8 a.m. each day, letting an entire flavorful stewing hen and bones simmer until lunchtime.

After years in the restaurant business Tang has her carefully curated sources: the supple rice noodles for the Bistro's soups come fresh daily from a tiny factory in Monterey Park and the crispy baguettes served with pates are made by a nearby Vietnamese baker.

Tang stirs up more excitement with her self-created genera by amending classics like aioli. She flavors the sauce with spicy chilies or with garlic and passionfruit juice, a perfect foil for fried shrimp. A mushroom-walnut pate and several meal-size noodle soups are strictly vegan. If someone wants an item customized, Tang will often dash out of the kitchen to discuss a request which she tries her best to accommodate.

Bistro Mon Cheri is open from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., then 5 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. from Monday to Thursday. Hours extend to 9:30 p.m. on Friday to Saturday. Closed Sundays.

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626-787-1323 <http://bistromoncheri.com/>