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Chef of the moment: Kimmy Tang, the woman behind 9021Pho

Chef Kimmy Tang of 9021Pho.
(9021Pho)

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Kimmy Tang is the chef behind the Vietnamese restaurant chain 9021Pho, a go-to spot for Westsiders looking for traditional pho, *bun* salads and more. Born in Saigon, her culinary career started in her family's kitchen. She moved to California and opened her first restaurant, Michelia Asian Bistro in Los Angeles, where she combined French techniques with dishes inspired by her background in Chinese and Vietnamese cooking.

After selling that restaurant and embarking on a world culinary tour that included Spain, Germany and a trip back to Vietnam, Tang opened the first 9021Pho in Beverly Hills in 2009. She hasn't slowed down since.

There are currently four 9021Pho locations in Southern California, and she is busy expanding the brand with a new location in West Hollywood and one set to open in Westwood in April.

What's coming up next on your menu?

The menu is always evolving. I am developing a few new dishes that are inspired by requests from my very savvy customers, who are passionate about the latest discoveries in nutritionally dense and medicinal plants, fruits, grains, etc. We are beginning our new weekly chef specials, featuring an off-the-menu item each week. This week we have the spicy beef that comes with a spicy and sweet sauce with sautéed celery, onions, scallions, carrots and jalapeños.

Latest ingredient obsession?

Quinoa.

What restaurant do you find yourself going to again and again — and what do you order?

A Japanese restaurant close to my house, Hanami Sushi, where my mom and I spend mother-daughter time and talk about her old recipes. She loves the veggie roll and the hamachi *kama* (grilled yellowtail), so we always order that. The chefs know our order when we come in, and always bring us their fresh fish of the day. A favorite is their fresh uni.

What is your favorite breakfast?

If I could, I would awake each day to my mom's soup. It is a tradition in my family to indulge in morning soup to fuel the rest of the day. It not only provides energy but it also cures anything that is hindering your well-being. Therefore, my mom cooks her magical soup each day, and as only a mom knows what is best, she alternates between chicken, beef and veggie soups. Chicken is my favorite; it is filled with whole stewed chicken, goji berries, Chinese yam and ginseng.

What's the last non-food book you read?

“The Art of War.”

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