



A Culinary Journey: Andy Vo Brings Authentic Vietnamese Flavors to Downtown Westfield

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In the heart of downtown Westfield, NJ, a new culinary gem has emerged, captivating food enthusiasts with its authentic Vietnamese flavors and warm, inviting atmosphere. Andy Vo, the proud owner of VPho Vietnamese restaurant, recently opened its doors at 415 Westfield Ave, adding a unique dining experience to the vibrant local food scene. With a rich history rooted in Saigon and a deep passion for cooking, Andy's journey to New Jersey and his venture into the restaurant business is a story of dedication, inspiration, and a relentless pursuit of excellence.

Andy Vo's journey to New Jersey began in the early 1990s when he was sponsored to move from Saigon. Arriving in his early 20s in 1992, Andy embraced his new home with open arms, finding comfort and opportunity in the Garden State. "New Jersey has been our home ever since," Andy shares, reflecting on the journey that has shaped his life and career.

VPho Westfield is not just any Vietnamese restaurant; it is proudly owned and operated by Saigon Cafe Millburn, which has been voted the best Pho in NJ by Yelp! Saigon Cafe was founded in July 2016 while Andy worked as a software engineer at Ericsson. In 2018, after a 23-year career, he decided to pursue his passion as a full-time, hands-on restaurateur. Drawing on his experience at Ericsson, he carefully architected a Vietnamese cuisine focused menu, designed processes for cooking from scratch with quality ingredients, and implemented a methodology for packaging take-out orders to replicate the dine-in experience.

Andy's love for cooking began during his college years at Rutgers, where he worked as a hibachi chef at Benihana in Short Hills. "I loved cooking in front of customers, showcasing my skills at the grill table, and introducing them to hot, fresh dishes," Andy recalls. His brother, Jimmy Vo, played a significant role in shaping his culinary journey. As the only non-Japanese chief chef in the Benihana franchise, Jimmy inspired Andy with his sense of responsibility, care, and passion as a leader. This inspiration, combined with Andy's dedication, laid the foundation for what would become a thriving culinary career.

Over the past eight years, the menu at VPho has evolved to offer a delightful array of healthy and delicious Vietnamese dishes. While their renowned Pho noodle bone broth and vegan broth dishes remain

a staple, their delectable grilled dishes have also become customer favorites. With a commitment to quality and flavor, VPho promises a dining experience that is both satisfying and memorable.



When asked about his favorite Vietnamese dish, Andy's answer is unequivocal: "Pho, pronounced 'fuh,' is my favorite entrée. If I don't skip a meal, I have Pho every day! It's so healthy, light, and delicious that I miss it whenever I'm away from my restaurant." Andy's commitment to perfecting his Pho is evident in every bowl, with a rich and flavorful bone broth that stands out on its own. Additionally, the restaurant's grilled dishes, which are fresh, tasty, and gluten-free, add to the diverse and inclusive menu that caters to a wide range of dietary preferences.

At the heart of Andy's approach to being a restaurateur is a simple yet powerful philosophy: "My pledge is to be 'consistently better.' I continually push myself and my staff to improve and excel in everything we do." This commitment to quality and service is reflected in every aspect of VPho, where the goal is not just to meet expectations but to exceed them. "We want our loyal customers to keep coming back for their favorite dishes, and for that, 'consistently good' is not enough. It has to be 'consistently better.'"

VPho stands out not only for its exceptional food but also for its thoughtful approach to serving customers. "I love interacting with our customers to share my passion and insights, ensuring they enjoy our dishes at their best," Andy explains. The restaurant prioritizes quality in every aspect, from the rich and flavorful bone broth that requires no additional hoisin sauce to the meticulously arranged spring rolls that are easy to hold and dip into homemade

fish sauce. For spice lovers, the homemade chili adds an extra kick to any favorite sauce, enhancing the overall dining experience. Moreover, VPho offers a vegan menu and a kids menu, in addition to their gluten-free and nut-free options, ensuring that every customer finds something to enjoy.

For Andy, the most rewarding part of owning his restaurant is sharing his cooking with others. "I wouldn't spend 12 hours slow-cooking bone broth or marinate the meat overnight with so many quality ingredients if it were just for home cooking," he shares. This passion for improving his dishes and creating an exceptional dining experience drives Andy to constantly enhance the offerings at VPho.

While the rewards are many, owning a restaurant comes with its challenges. "Operating long hours and seven days a week is a constant in my life," Andy admits. Despite the demanding schedule, Andy is grateful for the support of his family and customers, which makes the hard work worthwhile.

Westfield has always held a special place in Andy's heart. "I even promised my close friend and customer Richard Cheng three years ago that I would bring Saigon Cafe to this area. Here we are now, so Richard, you better show up more often!" As Andy looks to the future, his vision for VPho is clear: "My vision is to establish VPho as popular as Saigon Cafe Millburn. I am confident that exceptional food will transform this cozy, homelike space, offering seating on both the first and second floors, along with outdoor dining options." With a commitment to being present and engaging with the local community, Andy is dedicated to making VPho a culinary destination.

Reflecting on his journey, Andy offers simple yet profound advice: "Be nice, be kind, be honest, and pursue your passions wholeheartedly. You don't have to dream big—just find what makes you happy and enjoy doing it every day. I found mine eight years ago." This philosophy, rooted in kindness and passion, continues to guide Andy as he shares his culinary talents with the world.

In downtown Westfield, VPho is more than just a restaurant; it's a testament to Andy Vo's journey, his dedication to his craft, and his unwavering commitment to providing an exceptional dining experience. With its rich flavors, thoughtful offerings, and welcoming atmosphere, VPho is set to become a cherished part of the Westfield community. •