



Local Resources!



Check the calendar



- [NEWS](#)
- [FEATURES](#)
- [CALENDAR](#)
- [ANNOUNCEMENTS](#)
- [OPINION](#)
- [PHOTOS](#)
- [ARCHIVES](#)

- [RESOURCE DIRECTORY](#)
- [REAL ESTATE](#)
- [CLASSIFIEDS](#)

- [ADVERTISE!](#)
- [CONTACT US](#)

- [E-MAIL LISTS](#)
- [VOICE • BLOGS](#)
- [COMMUNITY LINKS](#)

Features

Want to make a comment regarding your experience at this restaurant or on this review?

Click [here](#) to send a comment.

We'll post any relevant feedback here for our readers to see.

Click [here](#) to review Voice reader comments.

Thai Derm serves up authentic dishes with a smile

BY PATRICIA B. GROSSMAN



Hidden among the little rowhouses in the block of Bonifant Street just west of Georgia Avenue sits the small, unpretentious home of some of the best Thai cuisine in the DC Metropolitan area: Thai Derm.

Opened in 1983 by Sutonta Thumpasert and his wife, Sirikunya, in 1983 with recipes they had brought from Thailand, Thai Derm has since earned a solid reputation for its delicious food and gracious service.

Once inside Thai Derm, you could almost think you were in Thailand. Near the entrance, a paper sign instructs you to call 562-867-6710 to find out where you can play golf in Thailand. The walls are adorned with colorful pictures and other artifacts from Thailand. High on the wall ahead of you hangs a little altar with sacred Thai objects. The tables are all laminated with artwork depicting scenes from Thailand, and to your right is a miniature Thai village, complete with a waterfall (and newly added yellow, baby, rubber duckies, floating on the lake).

The atmosphere at Thai Derm is casual—very casual—and very friendly. Dining alone on a Sunday night, I was treated royally by the three waitresses who served me.

I began the meal with my favorite Thai drink: a Thai iced-tea, which was worth every calorie. Thai iced-tea consists of a reddish Thai tea, poured over a glass of ice and topped with a generous portion of sweetened condensed milk, with the option of cream on top of that—a luscious drink in either case. (It can also be made with coffee instead of tea.)

For an appetizer, I chose the fried spring rolls with a sweet dipping sauce, standard fare in most Thai restaurants. Thai Derm is no exception. What was exceptional, though, was the crispness and lightness of the skin around the appetizer, with not a hint of oil.

In contrast to the spring rolls, my soup—chicken with lemon grass soup in coconut milk—was a big disappointment: the chicken was flavorless, the coconut overpowered the spices, and the broth was watery and with no hint of lemon grass. After that, though, things improved considerably.

I scanned Thai Derm's vast and sophisticated array of egg- or rice-noodle dishes, some in soups, some in gravies, some with meats, and some vegetarian, each one running

\$7.45. I chose another popular Thai dish, Pad Thai, in which rice noodles are mixed with either shrimp, chicken, or tofu and then topped with bean sprouts, scallions and ground peanuts to create a healthy and delicious entrée. In some other restaurants, the noodles in Pad Thai can be sticky and gluey and can overpower the other ingredients. But not at Thai Derm; the dish was delicious!

Because Thai Derm's Pad Thai is quite mild (like most of their noodle dishes and unlike all of their curries), the waitress serves it with a tray of four little lidded ceramic crocks with tiny ladles, each filled with a different condiment. One crock had ground chili peppers; another had vinegar with chili flakes; another, vinegar and chopped jalapeños; and the last, fish sauce. Each brought a new dimension to this most traditional dish.

For a final entrée, I took the waitress' recommendation of Grilled salmon in red curry sauce for \$9.45, in favor of the spicy duck with basil and bamboo shoots at the same price. She brought out a respectably sized salmon filet in a flavorful and spicy red coconut curry sauce, with fresh basil leaves and steamed broccoli florets. Had the fish been cooked just a second longer, it would have been dried out. But instead, it flaked nicely, and the center piece was just moist enough. At first taste, the curry sauce seemed mild, so I began to eat all the broccoli in earnest. But then it hit: a three-alarm fire that had me coughing and sneezing until dessert!

For dessert, what I really wanted to get was the fried bananas in egg roll wrappers, since I was unfamiliar with that concoction. But my waitress informed me that fried bananas are not really a Thai dish and convinced me that I should order the sweet, sticky rice with fresh mangos instead. When she left the table, I sat there wondering why I let her talk me out of those fried bananas. But, in a moment, she came back to my table with not one but *two* treats on the tray—she had included the banana dessert on the house!

The mound of sticky rice covered with a sweet and salty coconut cream and served alongside a perfectly ripe, sliced half-mango was not exactly to my tastes. But the other dessert—the smooth, warm, sweet banana chunks, each one like a miniature spring roll with a perfectly thin and crispy skin, each one drizzled with honey and sprinkled with sesame seeds—was so good that I'm definitely going back for more of it, Thai or not. The combination of the flakiness of the crust and the intense sweetness of the honey reminded me of baklava.

Even without a dining partner, I really had fun at the Thai Derm. The waitresses were attentive and very pleasant, almost all of the food was delicious, the prices were better than reasonable, and the portions were so generous that I'll be eating Thai food for the rest of the week!

Thai Derm is located at 939 Bonifant Street, Silver Spring. 301-589-5341. Open M–Th, 11AM–9:30PM; Fri, 11AM–10:30PM; Sat, 12noon–9:30PM; Sun, 5PM–9:30PM. (Closed daily, 3PM–5:00PM.)

[HOME](#) [NEWS](#) [FEATURES](#) [OPINION](#) [CLASSIFIEDS](#) [CALENDAR](#) [CONTACT US](#)

Copyright 2004, Takoma Publishing, Inc.