

## RED PEPPER CHINESE RESTAURANT & LOUNGE



Chuan (Tom) Tien Li has been a Chef since the age of 16 in his native country of Taiwan. Chuan came to the United States in 1984 and his wife Hsiu (Sho) Kuan Li followed in 1985.



Their first stop was Houston, Texas.

The Li's worked together at the same restaurant for five years before buying the restaurant in Texas.

Chuan and Hsiu were visiting family and friends in Madison. One afternoon, friends took the Li's out for lunch to a restaurant named Paramount Inn. They were talking with the owner of the restaurant and found out that he wanted to sell. The Li's were looking to buy in this area.

In 1993, with the help of the Wisconsin SBA and the Deforest-Morrisonville Bank, Chuan and Hsiu assumed the SBA Note Receivable from the former owners. The Li's made Madison their home, and opened the '*Red Pepper Chinese Restaurant & Lounge*' - located at 1518 North Stoughton Road in Madison.

Hsiu states, "The hardest thing for us was getting our name out there. That is one of the reasons we named our restaurant 'Red Pepper' to show that we have spicy cuisine and that we are unique. We did not advertise in any media outlets, people came to our restaurant by word of mouth. We keep our prices low to stay in competition and we offer authentic Chinese dishes but with a different flare. We use better ingredients, plus everything is fresh; fresh vegetables; fresh meats, seafood and poultry."



"From the restaurant in Texas that we owned, we brought in new dishes as well as diet dishes. Dishes that were not available at other Chinese restaurants in the area. We continue with that menu today, states Hsiu." Some examples of their specialty dishes include; Egg Plant Deluxe, Seafood in Black Bean Sauce, Sesame Chicken, Marco Polo's Beef Tenderloin, Phoenix and Dragon, and Crispy Whole Fish Szechuan Style. The diet dishes include; Steamed Fresh Mixed Vegetable; Steamed Chicken, Shrimp or Scallops with Vegetables.

Red Pepper has a large menu selection for customers, including menu choices for children.

Hsiu says, "We have regular customers that come to eat as far away as Eau Claire, Hayward, and Mercer. Being located off 51 and 151 is a desirable location to be in."

Chuan and Hsiu state, "When we bought the restaurant, we left the building pretty much the way you see it now. This building has history and we did not want to change that." Recently, more history was found while Chuan was removing the wallpaper in the lounge area, he came across a painting on the wall. The painting covers two walls in the bar area. It is a vibrant painting signed by Earl Ferguson, Jr. and dated January 1961. Chuan has been working on finding information about the painter and his work.

Chuan and Hsiu offer a relaxed and friendly atmosphere at their restaurant. They want their customers to feel comfortable when dining at the Red Pepper and have a good time. The Li's state, "when they come to the Red Pepper they get Excellent Food and Friendly Service."

In addition to running their restaurant seven days a week, the Li's have donated restaurant certificates to the Wisconsin National Guard for their fund raising events for many years. They also sponsor a local coed softball team, named of course The Red Peppers. The team won the Championship in 2001.



The Red Pepper is open 7 days a week for lunch and dinner. You will find Chuan and Hsiu there every day serving and greeting their customers. The Li's, married for 20 years, have worked side by side their entire marriage. They truly enjoy running their restaurant, working together as a team and believe that hands-on is very important to running a successful business. Their hard work and entrepreneurship have proven successful in running their business for over ten years and for many more years to come. Madison is fortunate to have such a superb place to dine!

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