

New York Asians in the News

A melting pot of commentaries, features and profiles of Asian Americans who make things happen

<http://nyasiansinthenews.com/2009/04/04/khmer-and-enjoy-the-sandwiches.aspx?ref=rss>

Khmer and enjoy the sandwiches

Imagine a sandwich that uses fish sauce instead of, well, mayo or butter. Not liberally though. That's just one of many unique qualities of tasty Num Pang Cambodian sandwiches.

Their shop on Union Square (opposite Strand book store) is known for its long line of customers at the kiosk and the quick turnover of the student crowd on the second floor--which says a whopper about its food. (You don't know how food is at a particular eatery? Just follow the line)

A Num Pang ('bread' in Khmer, the Cambodian language) gourmet sandwich comes in five varieties -- pulled pork with honey, catfish with peppercorn, shrimp with toasted coconut flakes, veal meatballs, and grilled skirt steak.

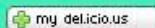
My initiation started with the veal meatball sandwich with Hoisin sauce. I ate the meatballs and bread separately because I wanted to savor the meat at its purest. I've been coming almost every week (Num Pang: 12 E 12th Street, between 5th Avenue and University Place) before the start of my writing class at the New School. I'd carry my takeout in a brown bag, take my usual place by the fifth floor hallway, and savor every bite in solitary bliss.



Khmer American Ratha Chau and college buddy, Ben Daitz, built Num Pang. Their website says both attended Clark University in Massachusetts, lost touch after college, and found each other again in New York. Serendipity would find them working in the restaurant industry -- Chau at Blue Water Grille and Daitz at Tabla -- and learning the ropes of the food business along the way. (Photo from numpang.com)

The duo ate and drank, drank and ate as they talked about their dreams and other possibilities. That's when Daitz discovered the Cambodian sandwiches Chau served during their endless brainstorming. A lightbulb came on: how about a num pang shop using the traditional recipes of Chau's mother? How about keeping the prices within student budget? How about a shop close to the universities?

How about that? It's been 10 years since, and Num Pang remains a Union Square landmark for the eternally hungry and the perpetually broke.



Posted by Cristina Pastor at 4/4/2009 11:26 PM

Categories: [Food](#)

Tags: [peppercorn catfish](#) [Ben Daitz](#) [pulled duroc pork](#) [Union Square](#) [hoisin veal meatballs](#) [coconut tiger shrimp](#) [NYU](#) [Ratha Chau](#) [New School](#) [Cambodian gourmet sandwiches](#)