



Meditations on a mullet

SERENE: Calm surroundings, delicious eats, except for that fatty lamb

Review

Green Basil Thai Cuisine

Where: 4623 Kingsway, Burnaby

Payment/reservations: Major credit cards, 604-439-1919

Drinks: Fully licensed

Hours: Sun.-Thurs., 11 a.m.-10:30 p.m., Fri.-Sat., 11 a.m.-11:30 p.m.

There's nothing more disarming than being sandwiched between two opposing forces. Like Captain Kirk trying to arrange a truce between Klingons and Romulans or the residents of Labrador during the Cold War waiting for the anticipated U.S. or Russian missile to fall short while passing overhead.

So it was with me sandwiched between my two dining companions, Ricky Roulette and the Culture Vulture. One enjoys gambling and woodworking and tree hewing; the other fills his days with more artful pursuits and tosses around phrases such as "alluvial silt" like they grew on the very trees Ricky Roulette would hew if he'd spotted them first. But I'm getting ahead of myself. Let's begin at the beginning of this story.

The three of us hit this cool place that embodies stylish and serene pitted against the over-lit cacophony of Metrotown across the street. Statues of the Buddha glowing in small backlit alcoves set the scene, along with walls the colour of tamarind, including one wall that splits the room into two separate spaces, evocative artwork hanging and I barely noticed the small-screen plasma TV over the bar



Chef Tony Chen (left) and manager Daniel Chow. RIC ERNST — THE PROVINCE

broadcasting a basketball game.

We began with the ubiquitous satay sticks, chicken in this case (\$8.50) with a wonderful homemade peanut sauce. Just a whistle-whetter for what the Culture Vulture had in mind for us as he perused the menu for the most obscure dishes he could find. He

hit paydirt with the steamed mullet with Thai spices, fresh lime and a homemade tamarind sauce (\$20.95).

"Isn't that a hairstyle?" asked Ricky Roulette.

"Perhaps where you live but, in this instance, it's a type of fish I believe can be found foraging in

the alluvial silt," replied the Culture Vulture.

"Instead of trailer parks," I pitched in.

"Makes 'em both bottom feeders of a sort," ventured Ricky Roulette.

This creature of the depths made quite a splash visually, laid out in a long metal tray supported over a flickering flame, a great dish with an amazing sauce that had both RR and CV agreeing and spooning the spicy murk into their mullet-engorged gullets.

Next was a green bean, lime leaves, prawns and spicy sauce shindig (\$13.95) that was a riot of colour and flavour, the prawns as plump as a politician's campaign funds and the sauce striking a perfect balance of spicy and sweet. A highlight for me.

CV led us into deeper intrigue with lamb submerged in a rich, thick curry suffused with green basil, lemon leaves and coconut milk (\$14.50). The sauce had deep, dark spicing lurking in the molten mire but the lamb definitely needed to go on a diet. Fatty wasn't the word for it. It was obese.

Really, it was the only downside to this great Thai feast, and a return visit is imminent to sample dishes like eggplant stuffed with shrimp and chili paste, roast duck with red curry or the Wild Bangkok Delight which is a stir-fry and not what you think. And there was satisfaction in knowing two opposing forces could be brought together in harmony, thanks to the serene atmosphere and the meditative nature of mullet.

THE BOTTOM LINE:

A touch of Thai serenity in the big city.

Grade: Food: **B+** Service: **A**
Atmosphere: **B+**