

*Carol & Joe Davis*

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## EPICUREAN EPISODES

### One-Fifty-Four Restaurant Vietnamese Cuisine



*Appetizer Sampler (Bo Huong)*



*Golden Shrimp Salad (Goi Tom Chien)*



*Sunny Chiang*



*Beef Look Luck (Bo Luc Lac)*

Vietnamese Cuisine has gained more and more popularity over the last few years in the Bay Area. It is generally considered to be the best of all the Asian Cuisines because of the French, Chinese and Indian influences. We dined at One-Fifty-Four last year and enjoyed the upscale California Cuisine. However, it was time for a change, so One-Fifty-Four has reinvented itself with a new chef, a more casual atmosphere, and a new menu of reasonably priced Vietnamese Cuisine.

The new Chef is Viet Binh who moved to Petaluma from San Francisco. He honed his skills preparing Vietnamese cuisine on Clement Street, which is a very popular dining area and home to many Asian restaurants. The new Proprietor is Bruce Chiang who took over for his brother Michael. (Michael has just opened an Italian Restaurant in Shanghai, China. This is a very international culinary family.) Their mother, Sunny Chiang, was there the night we dined and told us of how thrilled they have been with the response to their new Vietnamese menu.

The Starters (Khai Vi) all looked interesting, so we opted to let our waiter (also named Michael) bring what he thought we'd like. It was a good decision. Chopsticks were perfect for eating the Crispy Squid (Muc Xao Don) -- a tender baby squid dish marinated in garlic and black pepper. The sweet chile dipping sauce that accompanied it was spicy and sweet and added to the enjoyment of the squid. Next, we had the Appetizer Sampler (Bo Huong) -- a lovely arrangement of Imperial Rolls, lettuce cups of grilled beef with rice, and a lotus root salad with shrimp, rice noodles, peanuts

and scallions. It is perfect for sharing provides a little taste of most of the starters.

The next course was Salads (Goi). Our choice was to share the Golden Shrimp Salad (Goi Tom Chien). It consisted of delicious deep fried breaded shrimp, cabbage and mint leaves, topped with ground peanuts. It had a truly amazing taste. The soup (Sup) we tried was a fantastic Crab Meat and Corn Soup (Sup Bap Cua) -- unique, subtle and just delicious!

We weren't sure which entrees to choose, so we gladly took Michael's suggestions again. The meat (Thit) dish that we chose was the Beef Look Luck (Bo Luc Lac) -- tender pieces of beef cut into squares and cooked in high flames with garlic. It's served with salt and pepper lime juice. It was an excellent choice. The small squares were medium rare as we like and very tender. Next, we tried the Combination Sizzling Seafood (Hai

San) -- sautéed shrimp, fish, and squid with fresh chile, garlic, basil leaves and onion served on a hot plate. It was a sizzling, spicy, aromatic, and delicious entrée. Our vegetarian (Cac Mon Chay) choice was the Eggplant with Garlic Sauce (Ca Tim Sot Hahn) and it proved one of our favorite dishes! It was uniquely flavorful and melted in your mouth. It was sautéed in a fabulous sauce -- both fragrant and exotic. It should be a must when you dine here.

The wine and beer list is small but well chosen to compliment the menu. Our tastes are for beer or white wine with spicy food. The beers we most enjoyed were the Vietnamese Saigon Export Beer and the Brew 33. The wines we liked were the 2002 Trecini Sonoma County Sauvignon Blanc (lively, with a citrus taste) and the 2002 Cloudy Bay New Zealand Chardonnay (full-bodied and buttery).

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*Combination Sizzling Seafood (Hai San)*