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BUF 4300

International Palette: A Multi-Sensory Experience as a Food Critique

Lemon Grass Brooklyn

A. How were you addressed when you entered into the restaurant? Did you need to make reservations? How long was the wait before you were seated?

Upon arrival at Lemon Grass, a highly-rated restaurant on Yelp, one is warmly greeted by the staff. If one made a reservation through the Yelp app, the staff would have prepared a table beforehand. Though there may be a brief wait of around four minutes before being seated, while waiting, one can take in the cozy and elegant decor of the restaurant.

B. What are the cultural differences you notice? (Use class notes) Using your five senses of taste, touch, sight, smell, & sound describe some of the cultural differences that you are not accustomed to in comparison to All-American restaurant or restaurant chains. For example, one can describe but not limited to the sights in the restaurant décor, odors from unusual foods, and sounds from music. One should use all five-senses in this cultural experience.

Lemon Grass is a Thai restaurant that is well-known for its incredible Thai cuisine. From the moment one enters the restaurant, the aromas of Thai spices and herbs fill the air, transporting diners to the heart of Thailand. The menu features a variety of authentic Thai dishes, including curries, stir-fries, and noodle dishes. The presentation of the dishes may also

differ from that of an All-American restaurant or chain, with vibrant colors and intricate garnishes that showcase the chef's attention to detail.

The taste of Thai cuisine can also differ significantly from typical American fare. Thai cuisine often includes a balance of sweet, sour, spicy, and savory flavors, which can be a new and different experience for some diners. Thai curries, such as green curry or red curry, were dishes of Lemon Grass served with a variety of flavors that include spicy, sweet, and savory. Thai cuisine also includes a number of noodle-based dishes, such as Pad Thai or Pad See Ew, which are stir-fried noodle dishes with a variety of proteins and vegetables. The combination of the noodles, sauce and other ingredients gives these dishes a very specific flavor.

The touch of the dishes can also differ, with a focus on incorporating various textures, such as crispy, chewy, and tender. As a Thai restaurant, Lemon Grass is dedicated to bringing diners the authentic and delicious flavors of Thai cuisine, making it a must-visit destination for those looking to explore the diverse and vibrant world of Thai cuisine. Another point for touch would have been the seats and table provided at Lemon Grass. The seats were cushioned, while the tables were at a very specific height that allowed one to be able to rest their arms at a comfortable height.

The sound of the restaurant may also differ from that of an All-American restaurant or chain, with Thai music playing softly in the background. In addition to the music, you would be able to hear the staff greeting diners with a friendly "Sawasdee" (sah-wah-dee) meaning hello in Thai. The sound of the Thai language being spoken between the staff and diners can also be heard, adding to the restaurant's cultural immersion. Furthermore, the sound of slurping noodles or the crunch of crispy vegetables in dishes like Pad Thai can be heard from nearby tables, indicating the popularity of these dishes among diners. Overall, the sound of Lemon Grass is a

symphony of cultural immersion and delectable flavors, creating an unforgettable dining experience.

The sight of the restaurant may also include traditional Thai art and artifacts, providing diners with a glimpse into Thai culture and customs. Lemon Grass was surrounded by different types of art ranging from sculptures to paintings and decorative dishes. The food was visually stunning, the different Thai dishes one ordered were garnished with vibrant herbs and spices, which add to the overall visual appeal of the dishes. A plate of Pad Thai was topped with bright orange shrimp, green onions, and red chili flakes to create a visually appealing dish.

One would be greeted by the smell of herbs and spices as well as the aroma of various dishes being prepared in the kitchen when one entered Lemon Grass. The aroma of coconut milk, different types of Thai curries, and soups may also be detectable by one's smell. Overall, the aroma of Thai cuisine contributes to the immersive cultural experience of dining at a Thai restaurant and can serve as a prelude to the meal one would eventually order.

In conclusion, dining at Lemon Grass is not just a meal, but an experience that engages all five senses. From the taste of incredible Thai cuisine to the unique cultural differences showcased through taste, touch, sight, smell, and sound, Lemon Grass offers an immersive experience for diners looking to expand their culinary horizons.

C. Look at the menu. What are the types of foods they offer? What are some unusual items? Do they describe the ingredients in the food? List various food items from the menu. What menu items did you order? Is there more than one language used to describe the foods on the menu?

Lemongrass is a popular Thai restaurant that serves a wide range of delectable Thai dishes. The restaurant has an extensive menu, which includes both traditional Thai dishes and some untraditional dishes. The menu is very specific and descriptive, making it simple for customers to select the dishes they want to try. Lemongrass' menu features a selection of appetizers, soups, salads, stir-fried dishes, curries, noodles, and rice dishes. Each dish is thoroughly described, including the ingredients and cooking method. Customers can easily select dishes that meet their dietary needs and preferences.

Lemongrass' menu serves a wide variety of popular Thai dishes. Classic dishes such as Tom Yum Soup, Pad Thai, Green Curry, Massaman Curry, Som Tam, Khao Pad, and Mango Sticky Rice are among the most popular dishes on their menu.

As an appetizer, one ordered curry puffs and crab rangoon from the restaurant. Curry puffs are a popular Southeast Asian snack made with flaky pastry dough and stuffed with a spiced potato and chicken mixture. Curry powder and other spices are commonly used to season the filling, giving it a fragrant and savory flavor. The pastry is then deep-fried to create a crispy and crunchy exterior while the filling stays moist and flavorful on the inside. These two dishes complement each other well as an appetizer. The savory and spiced curry puff filling complements the creamy and indulgent crab rangoon filling. Both dishes have a crispy and crunchy texture that complements the flavors well. Overall, ordering these two appetizers is an excellent way to begin a meal and set the tone for a delectable dining experience.

One at Lemongrass ordered the Brooklyn Steak and Pad Thai Noodles for the entree. The Brooklyn Steak, which consists of a juicy grilled steak served with sweet vegetables on the side, is a popular dish on the menu. The steak is perfectly cooked to medium, paired with a savory sauce that helped melt the steak in your mouth. The sweet vegetables were a nice complement to the juicy steak. The Brooklyn Steak served with Pad Thai Noodles made for a

filling entree. Pad Thai is a traditional Thai dish that consists of stir-fried rice noodles, vegetables, an egg, peanuts, and your choice of protein. One loved the combination of sweet, salty, and sour flavors in this dish. The savory steak provided a rich and filling protein source, while the soft noodles, crunchy peanuts, and fresh vegetables added texture. Overall, this was a tasty and filling meal that highlighted the best dishes at Lemongrass.

Lemongrass is a Thai restaurant in a vibrant neighborhood with a diverse population. The menu is primarily in English, catering to the surrounding target market of people of various ethnicities and cultural backgrounds. The choice of English as the primary language on the menu was deliberate. Lemongrass aimed to attract a diverse range of customers from various cultural backgrounds as a business, and English was the most widely spoken language in the area. This ensured that the menu was understandable and accessible to the vast majority of potential customers.

Despite the fact that the menu was mostly in English, the restaurant did include some Thai language on it for authenticity. Thai dish names like "Tom Yum Soup" and "Green Curry" were written in both English and Thai. Overall, Lemongrass' decision to have an English-dominated menu was a wise one that allowed the restaurant to effectively cater to a diverse clientele.

D. Is a traditional salad offered? If not, describe what is offered. What types of breads are offered (flat, pita, tortilla chips)? What type of desserts (cheesecake, fortune cookie, coffee)? What are they like?

Lemongrass did not provide one with any opening appetizers, such as bread, pita, or chips. Lemongrass may also have desired to provide a more authentic dining experience for its customers, as many Thai meals are served family-style with several dishes to share, rather than individual appetizers. Opening appetizers are not always provided by Asian restaurants. The

concept of appetizers before the main course is not as common in many Asian cultures as it is in Western cultures.

Lemon Grass serves a variety of classic Thai desserts. The Mango Sticky Rice, a sweet dessert made with sticky rice, coconut milk, and fresh mango, is one of their most popular desserts on the menu. Tub Tim Grob, a colorful dish made with water chestnuts in sweet syrup with coconut milk, was their second most popular dessert. Finally, they offer a Fried Banana dessert, which is a warm and crispy banana topped with a scoop of vanilla ice cream.

E. What types of beverages are offered? Do they have an alcohol menu? What is not typically offered in an American chain restaurant?

Lemongrass served a wide range of Thai drinks and cocktails on their menu. There was something for everyone, from traditional Thai drinks like Thai iced tea and Thai iced coffee to refreshing tropical fruit smoothies and shakes. They also served cocktails with a Thai twist, such as the Lemongrass Martini, which was made with lemongrass-infused vodka, and the Thai Basil Mojito, which was made with fresh Thai basil. The cocktail menu also included non-alcoholic options like the Virgin Pina Colada and Shirley Temple, as well as classics like the Mai Tai and Margarita. The drinks were a perfect complement to the restaurant's flavorful Thai dishes.

f. How is the food reflective of the cultural geography and the economic geography (Use class lecture notes)? (i.e. spices are abundant in India which is rich in spices & fish (sushi) is popular in Japan & it is part of the G8). Describe approximately where in the world (continent & location) and from country, this culture's food is best known.

Thai food reflects Thailand's cultural geography and economic geography. Thailand, located in Southeast Asia, is known for its distinct blend of flavors, which stem from cultural

influences from neighboring countries such as China, India, and Malaysia. According to *Sternquist*, “*cultural geography relates to how people live their lives in different regions of the world or country.*” (Sternquist,2018) The use of aromatic herbs and spices in Thai cuisines, such as lemongrass, galangal, and kaffir lime leaves, reflects the abundance of fresh herbs in the tropical region.

Thailand is known for its agricultural industry, which is reflected in Thai cuisine, in terms of economic geography. According to *Sternquist’s definition of economic geography*, “*distribution of industrialization or wealth*”. (Sternquist,2018) The country is a major producer of rice, and the most popular dish in Thai cuisine is Pad Thai, a stir-fried noodle dish made with rice noodles. Fish is also a major component of Thai cuisine, with popular seafood dishes including Tom Yum soup and fish curries.

Thai cuisine is best known for its complex flavors, aromatic herbs, and fresh ingredients. It is an important part of Thailand's cultural identity and is enjoyed by people from all over the world.

g. Describe the dress? (Dress is inclusive of all five senses - you smell perfume, hear jewelry, see make-up, etc....) What are the employees, such as hostesses or wait staff wearing? Please use Eicher-Roach-Higgins (1992) article to define dress and answer appropriately.

The waitresses at Lemongrass have dressed in black suits with trousers. The suits were sleek and professional, adding a sense of formality and elegance to the setting. The trousers and suits were *pre-shaped* to fit the waitress’ bodies. The suits were made of soft, high-quality material with a pinstriped design that added a different element to the appearance. The black color stood out against the vibrant colors of the restaurant's décor. The outfits were *wrapped* and tailored, providing care for details. Their perfume's subtle scent contributed to the overall ambiance of the restaurant, creating a pleasant and inviting atmosphere. The scent did not

overpower the experience, but rather added a subtle touch of elegance. As for sound, some waitresses' had different jewelry pieces ranging from bracelets, necklaces, and earrings clinking together as they walked around Lemongrass. Overall, the waitresses' outfits at Lemongrass added a sense of professionalism, elegance, and attention to detail to the dining experience.

H. Rate your experience as a food critic (as in the LA Times or Houston Chronicle). Ratings should be dependent on taste, service, décor, cleanliness, authenticity, quality and price and should range from A-F ("A" being the best). Explain why you chose this rating. Be thorough and detailed in your explanations. Be sure to write at least 2 paragraphs.

Lemongrass is an excellent Thai restaurant that provides a memorable dining experience for fans of Thai cuisine. The food tasted incredible, with each dish perfectly seasoned and cooked to perfection. The service was also excellent, with friendly and attentive staff who made every guest feel welcome and well cared for. The restaurant's décor was stunning, with many amazing Thai art pieces adorning the walls. The ambiance was welcoming and warm, making it an ideal setting for a meal with friends or family. The restaurant's cleanliness was also impressive, with everything looking spotless and well-kept. Lemongrass delivers when it comes to authenticity. The dishes are prepared with traditional Thai ingredients, resulting in an authentic taste. The ingredients used felt of the highest quality, allowing each dish to be of the highest quality. Finally, the food at Lemongrass is very reasonably priced and well worth it. The portions are generous, and the food is of exceptional quality. Overall, Lemongrass is a fantastic Thai restaurant with outstanding taste, service, décor, cleanliness, authenticity, quality, and value. One would recommend it to anyone seeking an authentic Thai dining experience.

- I. What did you learn from this experience that you could contribute to a multi-cultural experience in a class discussion?

One learned the value of cultural immersion in understanding and appreciating different cuisines from one's experience at Lemongrass. The restaurant provided a full cultural experience from the food to its décor, music, and ambiance. The waitstaff was knowledgeable about the food and culture and could offer suggestions and explanations to improve the dining experience. Furthermore, the menu featured a wide range of dishes that showcased the diversity of Thai cuisine.

One could emphasize the importance of cultural immersion and understanding in order to appreciate and respect different cultures in a multi-cultural discussion. The significance of cuisine helps provide a representation of a culture's history, values, and traditions. Overall, the Lemongrass experience gave one a better understanding and appreciation of Thai cuisine and culture, allowing one to promote cultural acceptance.

