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BUF4300 Multi- Sensory Paper

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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 entering SEA Thai restaurant in Downtown Brooklyn located on 114 N 6th St, Brooklyn, NY 11249 one was greeted by an ethnically oriental woman. She asked how one was doing, inquired if one wanted to dine indoors or outdoors. She stated that there was a wait to be seated regardless of which was chosen. To get the full cultural experience, indoor dining was preferred. After taking down contact information one was asked to wait outside of the restaurant. Entering only once a phone call was given. The wait lasted approximately thirty to forty minutes.

A reservation option is available on Google's search engine after looking up the restaurant. Yet upon calling the restaurant and enduring a dreadful ten minutes hold, a female employee perhaps the same one at the check-in counter as there was a phone station there and she was the only worker in sight. She stated that the restaurant does not book reservations. It was a first come first serve basis for service. Clarity of information would make dining at SEA more efficient and less troublesome.

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.

As soon as one enters the restaurant the dimmed lighting is noticed. Straight ahead there is a pond with seating on each side. This is the most illuminated part of the restaurant. To catch the attention upon entrance which worked such as in this case. At the beginning of the pond lies a statue stationed in front of a ceiling hanging of a pink lotus flower on a light green backdrop (Figure 1). Walking towards the seating there are steps at the end of the pond perhaps so people can sit and take pictures. Once seated near the pond one can see little lotus flowers floating

across the pond. Perhaps the flower is a commonality in the culture of Thailand. Along with a little boat as if to signify that trips are being made to and from the statue. The seating differs from the rest of the restaurant as the table and seats are made of wood and the seats do not have a backrest unlike the tables and seats that are typical of most American restaurants. This arrangement makes it uncomfortable but there is something comforting in viewing the pond, the statue, lotus flowers floating and the journey of the mini boat.

There is light music playing but it fades away from the voices of the rest of the customer's conversations, seems as though there is instrumental classical music playing. Played to enhance the ambiance of the dining experience due to its soothing nature which would have been enjoyed more if people would keep their voices down. It is a Saturday hence the commotion makes sense as the place is completely booked.

As waiters and waitresses pass by with neighboring guests' dishes, the smell of fish is very prominent. Along with freshly steamed rice and the creamy smell of nuts. Perhaps nuts are used as a paste and are used in a handful of the dishes. The sizzling of dishes echoes throughout the restaurant as they are freshly taken off the stove and served.

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?

Some of the dishes offered at SEA include Volcanic Chicken, Basil Duck, Fish Papaya and Spicy Thai Herbs fried rice. Some unusual items include Walnut Shrimp for appetizer and Na Na Fish, Chu Chee Salmon for main course (Thai, 2020). All food items on the menu are followed by little descriptors of the ingredients incorporated into the dish (Figure 3). The

Volcanic Chicken is made of ½ Chicken w/ spicy lava sauce and stir-fried mixed veggies. Na Na fish consists of crispy tilapia, peas and carrots with Thai peanut curry over rice.

For an appetizer, Martini Crispy Shrimp sounds intriguing followed by Drunk Man Noodles for the main course. All the items on the menu are written in English. Seeing as the target market for this restaurant primarily speaks the language. Along came the Martini Crispy Shrimp served in a martini glass. One bite in and the dish lived up to its name with its crispy outer layer that crunches into the meaty heart of the finger food. Along with salt, there are a mix of spices that light up the mouth in the Drunk Man Noodles (Figure 2). Belonging to a Pakistani background, similar aromas and tastes were found in food native to one's country.

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?

Aside from the Caesar salad, all traditional salads are offered. Such as Green Papaya Salad made with string beans, tomato, peanuts with chili lime dressing. Ocean salad made of shrimp, squid and scallop, romaine lettuce, tomato and, spicy citrus dressing (Thai, 2020). No complimentary bread is served which is typical of Turkish restaurants nor offered on the menu. Side dishes consist of rice, noodles and steamed vegetables. Fries are not offered which are typical of American restaurants. Desserts offered are Green Tea Cheesecake and Warm Molten Chocolate Cake served with pistachio ice cream unlike American restaurants in which lava cakes are served with vanilla.

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

Beverages offered include soft drinks such as Ginger Ale and Pepsi. Along with Snapple options. Other drinks offered include Thai Iced which is offered with bubbles as well, Kaffir

Lime Leaf Infused Lemonade and various teas (Thai, 2020). They have an alcohol and mocktail menu filled with many options not typically offered in an American restaurant (Figure 4). Such as The Queen, Ploy Pai Lin along with shots Tuk-Tuk, Pi-Pi and Opium.

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.

Thailand sits in a region referred to as Indochina in the Southeast of Asia due to it being the crossroads of India to the east and China to the north. This rich geographical location offers Indian spices and Chinese cooking techniques alongside the omnipresence of coconut. The Thai kitchen offers many vegetarian dishes to the long tradition of Buddhism in the country. However, many notable Thai dishes are meat-based and have a more diverse background, for example, the well-known Massaman Curry. Its recipe is traced back to Persian traders from India. The word massaman is the Thai pronunciation of the Persian word "musalman" meaning Muslim. Alongside Buddhist and Islamic influences in many well-known Thai dishes, we can also find a strong Chinese presence in the cuisine as well as in the population of modern Thailand. Northern Thailand being closer to China prefers pork as the meat of choice. Coconut is to Thai food what the tomato is to Italian or Soy Sauce is Japanese cuisine. An interesting point is unlike many Asian countries, Thailand was never colonized. Wonder if that made a difference in their food and kept it more Puritan as compared to the kitchens of China and India who definitively show European additions into their diet. Thailand has a long coastal region and a history of seafaring thus seafood is also a common ingredient in Thai food including shrimp paste, oyster sauce. Also, Thailand is a kingdom with an uninterrupted line of Kings reigning over Thailand. Being from a Pakistani background one can mistakenly pinpoint many Thai ingredients and dishes as Indian or Chinese based but Thai cuisine is unique in its own identity

due to the richness and cosmopolitan nature. It's evolved over centuries of long contact between first the Hindu kingdoms of India, then the Muslim conquerors of most of South Asia. The enormous cultural juggernaut that is China and the many distinct and proud nations of SouthEast Asia and Maritime Asia (Indonesia, Philippines, Southeast Asia, etc).

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-Roacher-Higgins (1992) article to define dress and answer appropriately.*

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The hostess upfront who took down the contact information to be seated was wearing all black along with a black face mask with the restaurant logo on the bottom right hand side in illuminating red colors. The waitress was wearing a white button down shirt with a black apron with pockets around her waist from which she took the electronic device out that she used to place the orders. The other pocket had straws sticking out adjacent to which was a pile of napkins. Waiting for the second they could flop out and escape. All the staff was wearing sneakers. Both the employees had no jewelry on and had very light makeup- if any at all. With their hair pulled back into a low ponytail and bun. As to maintain the professional, clean look the restaurant has to offer. When the waitress arrived, so did a vibrant scent of orange along with floral scents characteristic of Coco Mademoiselle. Upon inquiry, she confirmed that this was the perfume she had put on today.

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.

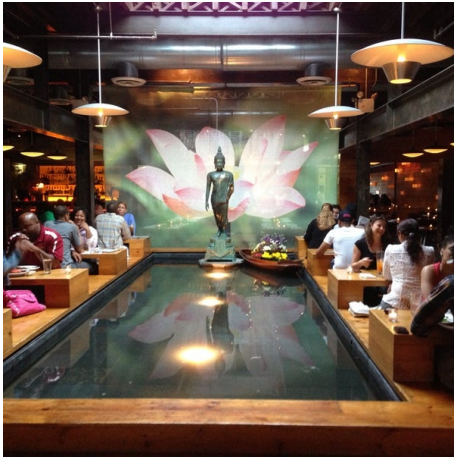
All in all, SEA Thai in Downtown Brooklyn is a C restaurant. The taste of the food is out of this world as the abundant flavors of the food please the taste buds, having them begging for

more. Despite having overeaten. The restaurant is extremely clean and tidy there are no foul smells or garbage on the floor, no seats misaligned. Everything has a place in the design layout of the restaurant and they stay in their set positionings. While seated, if anything were to be moved by customers it is quickly fixed by the staff. Although one would hope for cheaper prices for the dishes offered, there is ample food served. One can have a wholesome dinner in the ambient restaurant and still have left over for late night snacking. The only place where this restaurant lacks is in its miscommunication with information offered in order to dine here along with long wait times. With the acceptance of reservations and implementing faster service, SEA would be put at an A rating for its exceptional dining experience.

i. What did you learn from this experience that you could contribute to a multicultural experience in a class discussion?

One can contribute to a class discussion on multicultural experience the findings from the dining experience at SEA. Although slightly modified to cater to an American demographic, this restaurant offers a great first look into the culture of Thailand. Through the variant native species utilized in the food, music played and decor. It also shines light on the fact that, although there are various ethnic groups with distinct characteristics there will always be some commonalities. Such as the taste of the Drunk Man noodles to that of Pakistani food.

Figure 1



SEA Thai Williamsburg interior Sea. (n.d.)

Figure 2



Drunk Man Noodles (Original Photo)



Figure 3



SEA Thai Menu Sea photos.

(n.d.)

Figure 4



SEA Thai Drink menu. Sea photos. (n.d.)



Non- Alcoholic Drinks. Sea photos. (n.d.)

## References

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