

DISH

BARGAIN BITES

MECCA FOR THAI, LAOTIAN FARE

THE GREEN PAPAYA

160 ALBANY AVE., CANTON
860-693-9322

The sounds of busy Route 44 disappeared almost instantly after stepping through the door into the Green Papaya restaurant, a Thai-inspired oasis in Canton.

The site of the restaurant — a small house in a strip of retail stores — has been home to a few restaurants over the years, most memorably the Frog and the Peach. The Green Papaya has wisely carried on the Frog's tradition of diners' bringing their own wine and beer to drink, just what a good bargain-hunting eater is looking for.

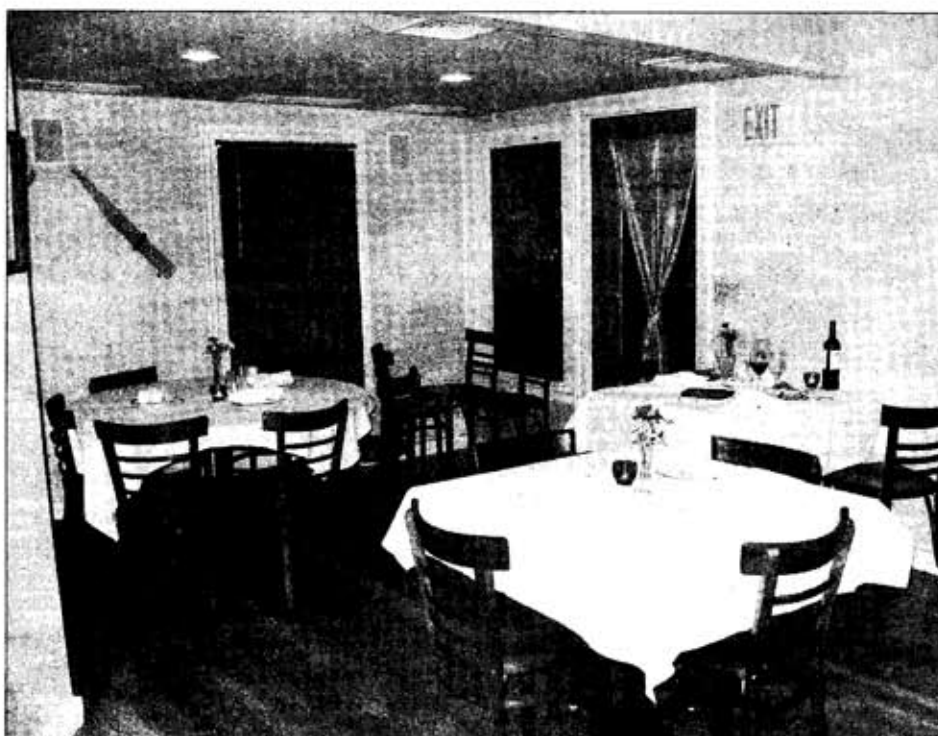
The look: The darkness of the waiting area is contrasted by the brightness of the dining room, where white-clothed tables stand out against bright yellow walls. Decorations with an Asian feel are scattered near tables and on the walls, while music plays softly over speakers.

The vibe: The restaurant was serene on our Friday night visit, with just a handful of tables occupied, making for a relaxing, unhurried experience (there was also a brisk take-out business).

The eats: Traditional Thai and Laotian dishes, expertly prepared. We started our meal with the Lao Crispy Egg Rolls, which arrived piping hot. Filled with vegetables and taro, they were delicious, especially dipped in the house pineapple sauce.

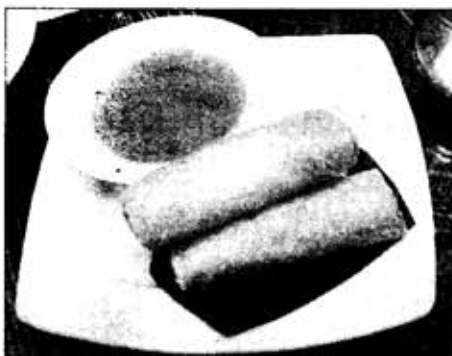
One of the most famous Thai dishes is pad Thai, a noodle dish with various toppings, in a mild peanut sauce. Green Papaya's was plentiful and flavorful, with just enough chicken to add heartiness, and fresh, crisp bean spouts on top.

One miss during our meal was the Tiger Cry, described on the menu as sliced flank steak marinated in "house seasonings." Although the meat was fork-tender, we didn't care for the flavors



ROBIN STANSBURY | rstansbury@courant.com

GREEN PAPAYA'S dining room is simple but welcoming. Menu items include the Lao Crispy Egg Rolls dipped in the house pineapple sauce and filled with vegetables and taro.



of the marinade — too tart and tangy — and at \$12, the small serving wasn't worth the price.

Try instead the stir-fry, where you choose meat or vegetables with one of five sauces, served over jasmine or sticky rice.

My husband loved one of the house specials, the Wonton Pad Thai, which included crispy wontons filled with

chicken served with sautéed shrimp and tofu.

The prices: Although some menu items are pricey — such as \$24 for the Tamarind Duck — it's easy to find less-expensive meals that go far. Appetizers were priced \$5 to \$7. The stir-fry dishes ranged from \$10 to \$12, and the chicken pad Thai was only \$11 and big enough to share.

The verdict: Green is good.

The particulars: Open Tuesday through Saturday, 11 a.m. to 9 p.m., and Sunday 4 to 8 p.m. The restaurant is closed Tuesday through Friday from 3 to 5 p.m.

— Robin Stansbury



ON THE WEB

» For more photos of the Green Papaya in Canton, visit courant.com/papaya