

Myong Gourmet

By Nancy McLoughlin

“Myong” is a complete name like “Cher.” It represents the petite Korean diva / chef, wife, and mother of two from Cross River. It also refers to the culinary empire she has built up from her first café in 2004. Myong has joined the exclusive ranks of those who have “made it” and are easily identifiable by one name and not two.

Myong is back. After a gap between closing her previous Myong Private Label Café and renovating and opening her new eatery at 487 Main Street in Mt. Kisco, her followers were beginning to feel a limp sadness like addicts that might never get a “Myong fix” again.

Today, Myong might be found in her sleek new restaurant kitchen, covered in ingredients at 6:00 a.m. She might be “runway walking” through her crowded dining room on a Friday night, wearing a hot pink sequin snakeskin blazer and teetering on tall glitter Miu Miu clogs. Or, Myong might be swathed in her signature black chef’s coat and cap, filming her “Just Myong” television pilot, a concept that takes place while the café shop is up and running.

No matter where she goes, devotees call out her name. They want her attention. They want her freshly prepared food. They want to talk about catering a party. “Myong mania” has sparked a cliquish Bedford vernacular. “I am gonna get Myong,” a yoga panted woman might say when planning a shopping spree to include a pre-packed signature salad. “Let’s do Myong,” is a phrase, when uttered outside the confines of Northern Westchester, might mean something other than an opportunity to pick up a cellophane wrapped sandwiches to go. “I’m thinking Myong,” is another phrase that translates into a food craving so specific, that it can only be satiated by a Myong meal.

Myong’s initial lines of signature sauces were successfully marketed on the internet. Her subsequent “lunchy” dishes were unique in flavor and healthy. They caught the eye of the athletic set, as her first cafes operated under the umbrella of area clubs. These experiences led to the Myong franchise, a bankable name, and a group of followers who might value a “Myong fix” as much as a good massage, a great movie, or dare we say it (sex). Myong and her longtime business partner and husband Rob Feiner, recently opened the sixty seat Myong Gourmet, located in the space formerly occupied by Restaurant Q. The eatery is three times the size of their previous venue (Private Label) yet combines the food and features of their former business with the elegance and expansion of a full service restaurant experience.

Two businesses in one are synchronized by mealtime. Café style breakfast and lunch is presented to meet the need of a hustle and bustle clientele. As the day winds down, the dramatic theatre lighting of the cafe and its tables go dark. The left side of the space becomes the evening restaurant. The Myong signature colors; red, black and stainless steel, provide punctuation to an exotic food presentation and performance that begins a new chapter in Myong’s journey with food and fame.

By day, the smoothies and fruit drinks flow, and at night, it is the cocktails (“Myongarita” which is garnished with sea salt foam) and an extensive wine list. A “pod bar” preservation system for the “wine by the glass” (\$7 to \$10) program, enables the restaurant to offer twenty varieties of wine by the glass (including a popular white Le Bourcier, Macon Cuvee, Burgandy, perfect with beef, for a non red wine drinker).

"One important change for me was to make the dining room less noisy," said Myong, referring to the transformation of the bare floors, high ceilings and echoing exposed ductwork and pipes. "We added carpet and lots of professional soundproofing techniques to make this a soft and relaxing place." Myong also created the series of oil paintings that decorate the perimeter or the dining room walls.

“This is no pan-Asian restaurant, but a different exploration of global tastes that defies restaurant classification,” says Rob Feiner. **“We call this progressive world cuisine.”** The entrees range in price from \$15.00 for the Myong burger to the mid thirty dollar range for some of the beef entrees. (Note: Some of the lunchtime favorites are available on the new dinner menu)

The “first tastes” menu includes a yellow fin tuna tartar with miso sake dressing, onion and citrus and wantons, (\$14) and lamb sliders with coleslaw and curry dressing (\$13). Myong has always had a magic touch with fish. Her first TV pilot spot is entitled “The Tuna Segment.”

The entrée menu reflects her confidence in blending fresh flavors and main course ingredients. Miso marinated black cod with forbidden black rice, shitake mushrooms and cucumber kimchi (\$30) is a winner as is the Pat La Freida Rib Eye, a sixteen oz. prime cut of meat with twice-baked potato, frizzled tobacco onions and sautéed spinach for \$38.00 gets five stars!

Diners should remember to leave time for dessert (\$8-\$9). It would be a mistake to miss out on the creations of Pastry Chef Kristen Barone, whose fresh and innovative “elegant endings” are a departure from some area restaurants that import their sweets rather than custom make them. The Tiramisu Dome is a twist on the classic tiramisu coated with an espresso ganache top the list which has plenty of variety, including a warm apple dessert, which Myong claims to have spent months perfecting. Myong and her staff are not likely to grow complacent with the early success or the status quo, but they can all take a bow and enjoy the positive buzz that this new restaurant has generated around town. “Myong” could be the newest word for “Cheers!”