

# Pho Bistro brings Vietnamese to another level



WADE MALCOLM

**cheap eats**



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don't use chopsticks as well as I thought.

Before we get to my amusing chopsticks debacle, let's focus on the food. I've visited some "Viet Thai" places in the past, but this was my first purely Vietnamese experience.

Owner Trung Huynh named Pho Bistro after the cuisine's signature dish, pho (pronounced FUH), which is white rice noodles in a slow-cooked broth. The menu offers more than a dozen varieties of pho, most containing various combinations of beef flank, brisket and tendon.

A plate of condiments accompany some dishes. One of my three fellow cheap eaters

During my trip to Pho Bistro in York, I realized two things: One, I can't wait to learn more about Vietnamese cuisine. Two, I

with the chicken pho was served bean sprouts, basil and lime.

My side dish included those three items as well as cilantro and chives. Huynh explained that different dishes require different herbs to bring out the correct flavors.

The fresh herbs made my meal of seafood and pork with clear noodles (\$7.95) even more refreshing. The light, springy soup almost felt thirst-quenching; I barely took a sip of water. The cheap eater with the chicken pho found her bowl well-seasoned and comforting, partic-

## PHO BISTRO.

**LOCATION:** 887 E. Market St. in York

**CUISINE:** Vietnamese  
**WADE'S PICK:** Seafood and pork soup with clear noodles (\$7.95)

**PARKING:** Off street behind restaurant  
**HOURS:** 10:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday to Saturday; 10:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. Sunday

**PRICE RANGE:** \$6.95 to \$9.95

**ALCOHOL:** No

**SMOKING:** No

**ACCEPTS:** Cash and major credit card

**TAKEOUT:** Yes

**KID'S MENU:** Not available

**DETAILS:** 848-2700



Lena Huynh prepares a bowl of soup in the kitchen of Pho Bistro, 887 E. Market St. in York.

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ularly since she was feeling under the weather.

Our vegan cheap eater enjoyed her surprisingly filling tofu summer roll. The rice paper, encasing the lightly fried tofu and vegetables, was a bit chewy, but the roll still had a deliciously sweet ginger taste.

The more vocal of my fellow cheap eaters raved about her grilled shrimp

with rice noodles and vegetables. She thought some of her prawns tasted overcooked, but Huynh later explained Vietnamese prefer seafood cooked all the way through.

That was one of many learning experiences. During the meal, Huynh helpfully explained the dishes on the expansive menu and pointed out the right sauces to use with each.

That's right. We didn't know it at the time, but the owner was our server. Huynh's wife, Lena, runs the kitchen. She learned to cook in the back room of her mother's tiny café in Saigon (now Ho Chi Minh City). She prepares bowls with generous portions at a reasonable price. Not one item on the menu exceeds \$10.

And yet, you still get the

feeling a lot of love goes into each bowl. It's food you want to take the time to enjoy.

Which brings us to my chopsticks misadventure. I thought I handled them pretty well, but Vietnamese cooking, with its heavy emphasis on noodles, posed a new challenge. And I need more practice. Apparently my method was the main problem. Like a silly American, I tried to politely twirl each mouthful of noodles.

I have heard and read that some Asian countries consider it proper to slurp noodles, and Huynh agrees. With my sticks in one hand and a spoon in the other, my face needed to be right on top of my food, slurping and shoveling away until emptying my bowl. But don't be alarmed. Huynh has forks if you need one.

"I don't give it to them unless they ask," he laughed. "I encourage them when they come to a Vietnamese restaurant to learn to do that."

*Cheap Eats is a biweekly column on local restaurants' meals for less than \$10. Suggestions are welcome. Reach Wade Malcolm at 771-2101 or wmalcolm@ydr.com.*