

A Gem Worthy of Love

Crystal Jade delivers with flavor, hospitality and Malaysian standouts.

Review By NICHOLAS AKSAMIT
World-Herald Staff Writer

Oh, Crystal Jade, you had me at hot tea.

The jasmine aroma, the steaming liquid, the perfectly hot metal pot – they conformed instantly on a cold day.

The wonton soup worked its magic: fresh slices of scallion floating in a glistening broth, one fat dumpling (more seasoned pork than noodle with the occasional crunch of ginger) and a few strips of Chinese barbecued pork.

By the time I got to the lemak chicken, I was ready to propose.

And a menu with many flavorful surprises (Malaysian, Indian, Vietnamese, Korean and American) as Chinese-American standards only reinforced the deal. Here's a new Asian eatery worthy of love.

Owners Shirley Sieng and Steve Yau are no newcomers to Asian cooking. Their 12 years of experience at the still popular Jade Palace in Bellevue – and their underlying hospitality and creativity – show in their latest venture, launched in late October in a former Village Inn.

The place is hard to see when you're cruising down 72nd Street, but it's easy to get to. Turn west on Cedar Street when you see the Omaha Travel and Transport building. If you hit WalMart (to the north) or Mercy Road (to the south), you've missed your turn.

Don't let the hastily painted "open" sign deter you. Inside, granite tabletops, modern metal chairs and varied shades of green – perfect for a restaurant called Jade – help camouflage the Village Inn bones.

And, even if you've been burned eating Chinese food in former diners, the cleanliness, the flavors and the friendly service here will restore your hope.

The Malaysian pad thai was subtle and delicious, with wide flat noodles that seemed to soak up more of the layered but



Crystal Jade, a new Asian eatery in Omaha from the owners of Jade Palace in Bellevue, features Malaysian, Indian, Vietnamese, Korean and American dishes as well as Chinese-American standards.

not-too-hot, peanut-flecked sauce.

Lemak chicken was a sweet and mildly spicy delight – slivers of meat in a silky yellow sauce of lemongrass-infused coconut milk with bamboo shoots, pineapple and red chili flakes. The dish gets its name from the Malay word for coconut, its color from pineapple juice and turmeric. And the fruit chunks – hot little explosions of tropical goodness – just seemed to make it sing.

You told me later that lemak is a specialty of the region where he grew up and one of the only curry-type dishes he can make without chili heat.

The true curries all begin with chili-laced pastes, he said, which is fine by me.

The yellow curry looked gray-green compared to the lemak and included chunks of potatoes, green peppers and onions – a combination that struck me as more Indian. But Yau said potato curries are common in his native Malaysia, too. If you have it after having tasted the lemak, as I did, its flavors initially might seem muddled. But after a few bites, its greener and more biting heat and starchier sauce held their own.

continued...

Grand Opening at our 2nd Location:

Crystal Jade

American & Asian Fine Dining

7255 Cedar Street

Omaha, Nebraska 68124

Former Village Inn building
(Between Travel and Transport building and Doubletree Hotel)

398-1688

Dine In * Carry Out * Catering

* Free Delivery to nearby Offices and hotels with 5 order minimum.

No minimum order for Doubletree Hotel Guests

Karaoke Nights

Every Night 8:00pm to Close at Crystal Jade

Happy Hour 3 - 6

Karaoke Fri., Sat. & Sun. 2:00-5:00pm
\$2 Domestic Bottle Beer * \$3 House Wine
* \$3 Martini * 75¢ Egg Roll * \$1.50 Fried Wontons
* \$1.75 Chicken Wings * \$1.75 Crab Rangoons

Business Hours:

	LUNCH	DINNER
Monday - Thursday:	11:00 - 3:00	3:00 - 9:30
Friday - Saturday:	11:00 - 3:00	3:00 - 10:00
Sunday:	11:00 - 3:00	3:00 - 9:00

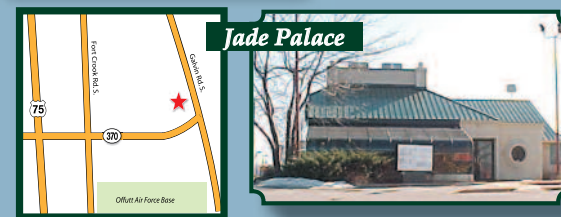
Luncheon Specials

Indicates a Hot & Spicy Dish

Served Monday through Sunday 11:00am to 3:00pm

All lunches served with Hot & Sour, Egg Drop or Creamy Potato Soup, Fried or Steamed Rice and Side Salad
(Carry Out Does Not Include Soup or Salad)

1. Chicken, Pork Beef or Vegetable Fried Rice.....	\$5.95	16. Lemon Chicken	\$6.75
2. Shrimp or Combination Fried Rice (Chicken, Beef & Shrimp)	\$6.95	17. Teriyaki Chicken	\$6.75
3. Chicken, Pork, Beef or Vegetable Chow Mein.....	\$6.75	18. 🍷 Pork and Crispy Eggplant with Hot Garlic Sauce	\$7.75
4. Shrimp or Combination Chow Mein.....	\$7.75	19. Broccoli Beef	\$7.75
5. Chicken, Pork, Beef or Vegetable Lo Mein	\$6.75	20. Mongolian Beef	\$7.75
6. Shrimp or Combination Lo Mein.....	\$7.75	21. Pepper Steak	\$7.75
7. Buddhist Delight	\$6.75	22. 🍷 Kung Pao Beef	\$7.75
8. Sweet and Sour Chicken	\$6.75	23. 🍷 Szechuan Beef	\$7.75
9. Cashew Chicken	\$6.75	24. Shrimp with Mixed Vegetables	\$7.95
10. Moo Goo Gai Pan.....	\$6.75	25. 🍷 General's Chicken.....	\$7.95
11. 🍷 Kung Pao Chicken.....	\$6.75	26. Sesame Chicken.....	\$7.95
12. 🍷 Hunan Chicken	\$6.75	27. Triple Delight	\$7.95
13. 🍷 Yam Yam Chicken.....	\$6.75	28. Chicken Pad Thai Noodles.....	\$7.95
14. 🍷 Chicken with Hot Garlic Sauce	\$6.75	29. Chicken Biryani.....	\$7.95
15. Peanut Butter Chicken.....	\$6.75	30. 🍷 Chicken or Beef Rendang.....	\$7.95
		31. 🍷 Chicken or Beef Yellow Curry .	\$7.95
		32. Crispy Chicken	\$7.95
		33. 🍷 Hot Garlic Tilapia	\$8.95
		34. 🍷 Kung Pao Tilapia	\$8.95
		35. Sweet Pineapple Glazed Tilapia .	\$8.95
		36. Teriyaki Tilapia	\$8.95



Jade Palace

1702 Galvin Rd South, Bellevue

Next to McDonald's

Dine In * Drive-Thru * Carry Out * Catering

www.JadeDinners.com

** No Checks Accepted**

Gem, continued

Another Malaysian specialty at Crystal Jade is rendang – a tasty meat dish in a spice- and chili-laden sauce. Yau thickens and sweetens, as his mother did, with roasted and finely ground coconut. We had the beef version, served with a sweet-and-sour garnish of house-pickled cabbage, carrots and celery.

The house special Chinese pan-fried noodles involved carrots, broccoli, slippery straw mushrooms and beef, chicken and shrimp atop a tangle of thin noodles fried to a crispy gold. The star of the dish was a remarkably good brown sauce – salty and bright and balanced enough to lighten the occasionally greasy noodles. Sieng later confided the sauce's secret ingredient: rice wine. Yau makes himself.

I also enjoyed the crispy eggplant and pork – an unusual, winning combination that first caught on at Jade Palace. The eggplant is battered and fried and tossed with thin ribbons of stir-fried pork and carrots in a smooth, sweet-savory sauce. The textural contrasts make the dish – even if you're not particularly fond of eggplant.

Chopsticks are available but were not automatically supplied with anything we tried except the chom pong noodles – a giant bowl of Korean soup with assorted proteins and

spaghetti-sized lo mein noodles. We let it cool slightly, and I fear we didn't taste it at its peak. By the time we dove in, the noodles were water-logged, the small scallops overcooked. But I loved the broth, the spicy sort that makes your nose run. (We asked for it spicy hot. If you don't ask and don't look Asian, Sieng said, they'll hold back the heat.)

The tiny salad bar (iceberg lettuce, crisply fried wonton strips, and an assortment of house-made dressings) offered with every entrée struck me as nice but unnecessary. Sieng said later she added it because she's a salad nut and a mom who wants folks to get their vegetables.

I ran out of time and room to try the few Vietnamese and Indian dishes or any of the American fare, save one well-seasoned and velvety potato soup. And I'd still like to bring a big group there for one of the family style dinners.

Crystal Jade seemed very kid-friendly. A couple with an 8-month-old daughter got a warm welcome one night – a ready highchair and a server who doted on the child.

The same server knew the food well, kept glasses full and was friendly and accommodating. And Sieng herself made the rounds, leaning in to ask ladies young and old, "How was everything, sweetie?"

Alas, the only desserts available when we asked were for-

tune cookies. Sieng told me later that they sometimes have cheesecake or ice cream or lychee (the fruit). And, she said, Yau can almost always whip up some fried bananas.

Even without dessert, entrée portions were big enough for two.

The plates were prettier at dinnertime, though, adorned with vegetable roses (slices of daikon or turnip, dyed beef red and artfully folded and fastened with toothpicks).

On separate lunch visits, we averaged about \$12 per person (for soup, salad, hot tea, entrée, tax, tip and leftovers). And for appetizers, drinks, entrées and enough leftovers for lunch the next day, we spent \$59 with tax and tip at a dinner for three.

Though Crystal Jade is busier on weekday lunches, when it sees office-worker traffic, it doesn't have many residential neighbors to draw from on evenings and weekends. I often found myself among only a handful of diners.

Sieng said she's not sure why it's been so slow – "the economy, the location, us?"

Here's hoping it's just that word hasn't gotten out about this three-month-old gem.

It's a standout anyone would feel lucky to find.

House Specialties

1. General's Chicken	\$10.95
2. Orange Chicken (Beef add \$1.00)	\$10.95
3. Sesame Chicken	\$10.95
4. Amazing Chicken	\$10.95
5. Fire Cracker Chicken	\$10.95
6. Chicken Pad Thai Noodles	\$10.95
7. Triple Delight	\$11.45
8. Empress Delight	\$12.95
9. Mongolian Delight	\$12.95
10. Crispy Shrimp	\$12.95
11. House Special Pan Fried Noodles	\$13.95
12. Beef & Scallops	\$13.95
13. Happy Family	\$13.95
14. Tofu Triple Crown	\$13.95
15. Seafood Delight in Bird's Nest ...	\$13.95
18. Crispy Duck	\$14.95

Soup

Egg Drop Soup	\$1.95
Wonton Soup	\$1.95
Hot & Sour Soup	\$1.95
Three-Flavor Soup (for 2)	\$7.95
Sizzling Rice Soup (for 2)	\$7.95
Creamy Potato Soup.....	\$2.95

Appetizers

Egg Roll (1)	\$1.50
Fried Wontons (6).....	\$2.00
Chicken Wings (6).....	\$3.00
Crab Rangoon (4)	\$3.50
Fried Dumplings (6)	\$5.95
Spring Rolls (4)	\$5.95
Combination Appetizers (for 2).....	\$6.95
2 egg rolls, 2 crab rangoons, 2 fried shrimp & chicken wings. (Add \$3.50 for each additional person)	

Family Dinner

Minimum Order: Two Persons

Peking Dinner

\$12.95 Per person

Served with Egg Drop or Hot & Sour Soup, Egg Rolls, Crab Rangoon, Fried Rice and Your selection of One Entrée for Each Person

P1. Sweet and Sour Chicken
P2. Cashew Chicken
P3. Broccoli Beef
P4. Chicken w. Hot Garlic Sauce
P5. Mongolian Beef

Crystal Jade Dinner

\$13.95 Per person

Served with Hot & Sour Soup or Wonton Soup, Egg Rolls and Crab Rangoon.

Your selection of One Entrée for Each Person

J1. Sweet & Sour Chicken or Shrimp
J2. Mongolian Delight
J3. Triple Delights
J4. General's Chicken
J5. Shrimp w. Mixed Vegetables

Malaysian Cuisine

(Your choice of meat)

Chicken, Pork or Beef.....	\$10.95
Shrimp	\$11.95
Combination -	
Chicken, Beef & Shrimp	\$11.95

Rendang
Yellow Curry Coconut milk, potatoes, green peppers & onions
Red Curry
Green Curry Coconut milk, potatoes, green peppers & bamboo shoots
Masaman Curry Coconut milk, carrots, potatoes & onions
Lemak Lemon grass, coconut milk, pineapple & bamboo shoots

Korean, Indian & Vietnamese

Chicken Biryani (Indian).....	\$9.95
Chicken Tikka Masala (Indian).....	\$10.95
Beef Noodles Soup (Vietnamese).....	\$8.95
Chom Pong Noodles	
Soup (Korean)	\$10.95

Chicken

Sweet and Sour Chicken	\$9.95
Cashew Chicken.....	\$9.95
Broccoli Chicken.....	\$9.95
Moo Goo Gai Pan.....	\$9.95
Yam Yam Chicken	\$9.95
Hunan Chicken	\$9.95
Kung Pao Chicken	\$9.95
Chicken w. Hot Garlic Sauce	\$9.95
Chicken w. Mixed Vegetables	\$9.95
Peanut Butter Chicken.....	\$9.95

Pork

Pork w. Hot Garlic Sauce	\$9.95
Pork w. Eggplant in Hot Garlic Sauce	\$10.95

Egg Foo Young

Chicken, Pork or Beef.....	\$9.95
Shrimp or Combination.....	\$10.95

Shrimp

Sweet and Sour Shrimp	\$11.95
Cashew Shrimp.....	\$11.95
Broccoli Shrimp.....	\$11.95
Shrimp w. Snow Peas.....	\$11.95
Yam Yam Shrimp	\$11.95
Hunan Shrimp	\$11.95
Kung Pao Shrimp	\$11.95
Shrimp with Hot Garlic Sauce	\$11.95
Shrimp w. Mixed Vegetables	\$11.95

Fish Your Choice of Fish & Sauce

Tilapia	\$12.95
Flounder	\$13.95
Norwegian Salmon	\$15.95
Chilean Sea Bass.....	\$20.95
Hot Garlic, Kung Pao, Sweet Pineapple Glazed, Honey Glazed Sesame, Teriyaki, Red Curry or Lemak Curry	

Beef

Broccoli Beef	\$10.95
Pepper Steak	\$10.95
Mongolian Beef	\$10.95
Beef w. Snow Peas.....	\$10.95
Hunan Beef	\$10.95
Kung Pao Beef	\$10.95
Szechuan Beef	\$10.95
Beef w. Hot Garlic Sauce	\$10.95

Weight Watchers & Vegetarians

Buddhist Delight.....	\$8.95
Vegetables w. Hot Garlic Sauce	\$8.95
Tofu in Hot Sauce	\$9.95
Braised Tofu with Vegetables.....	\$9.95
Steamed Mixed Vegetables	\$9.95
Sauce served on the side.	
Steamed Seafood Platter.....	\$11.95
Shrimp, scallops & mock crab w. vegetables. Sauce served on the side.	

Lo Mein or Chow Mein

Chicken, Pork or Beef.....	\$8.95
Shrimp or Combination.....	\$9.95

Fried Rice

Chicken, Pork or Beef	\$7.95
Shrimp or Combination.....	\$8.95

American Dinner Specials

All Dinners Served with Soup
(Carry Out Does Not Include Soup)

SALADS

Asian Chicken Salad	\$10.95
Bleu Cheese Chicken Salad	\$10.95
Texas Chicken Salad	\$10.95

RIBS

Served with spaghetti or French fries

BBQ Pork Backribs (6 ribs).....	\$10.95
BBQ Pork Backribs (8 ribs).....	\$12.95

PASTA

Spaghetti & Meatballs	\$9.95
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Beverages

Pepsi, Diet Pepsi, Cherry Pepsi, Dr. Pepper, Sierra Mist, Mountain Dew, Root Beer, Lemonade	\$1.75
Iced Tea, Coffee, Sweet Iced Tea.....	\$1.75
Hot Tea	\$.95
Milk, Juice.....	\$2.00

Beers & Wine

Domestic Beer	\$3.00
Imported Beer	\$4.00
Plum Wine.....	\$3.75
Sake.....	\$4.75
House Wine.....	\$3.75
Kendall Jackson	\$5.75
Chateau St. Michelle	\$4.75

Martinis

Chocolate, Mandarin, Cosmo, Strawberry Blonde, Apple, Lychee.....	\$6.00
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Call Mixed Cocktails

Rum: Bacardi, Capt. Morgan	\$5.00
Scotch: Dewar, Johnnie Walker Black, Crown Royal, Jack Daniel's, Jim Beam, Seagram's 7.....	\$5.00
Vodka: Absolut, Grey Goose, Smirnoff	\$5.00
Liqueurs: Kahlua, Midori	\$5.00

Having a Party?

Crystal Jade is an excellent place for all kinds of special events – Wedding Receptions, Anniversary Parties, Graduation Events...
YOU NAME IT!