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Thai restaurant NaKorn opens its doors in Evanston

Nora Shelly, City Editor
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When Mina Sudsaard was trying to figure out what to do with a big blank wall in her restaurant, she decided to honor her home country with a portrait of deceased Thai king Bhumibol Adulyadej.



Jeffrey Wang/Daily Senior Staffer

NaKorn, a new restaurant at 1622 Orrington Ave., had a grand-opening ceremony last week. The restaurant hopes to feature traditional Thai food with "a twist."

The king's face adorns the northern-facing wall in NaKorn, 1622 Orrington Ave., a new restaurant that features homestyle Thai food. Sudsaard started the restaurant along with Sam Rattanopas, her best friend since the two were in third grade together in Bangkok.

The two immigrated to the United States together in 1996, according to a news release from the restaurant.

"It's been a long journey for us to get here," Sudsaard said at Friday's ribbon-cutting ceremony. "But we decided to do this with love. We love food. We want to tell the story, tell the culture through our food."

The restaurant has been serving customers for a few weeks but officially opened on Friday.

Rattanopas has previous experience in the food business, so the two decided they could combine their skills and open a restaurant with Rattanopas in charge of the food and Sudsaard in charge of the marketing.

Sudsaard said the restaurant's fare is focused on serving the sort of Thai food they would make at home.

"We're bringing back the old recipes, the home-cooked kind of meals, but we are adding a twist to it," she said. "We stay true to the real flavor of Thai food."

Annie Coakley, the executive director of Downtown Evanston, said she expected the restaurant to fare well in Evanston.

The sort of traditional food NaKorn is planning on serving is particularly popular in the city at the moment, Coakley said.

"We are a dining capital of the North Shore, so it's always exciting to get a new restaurant," she said.

Just as they are trying to bring elements of their Thai heritage into the food, Sudsaard said they hoped to honor their birth country with the decor of the restaurant. Bird-cage lights adorn the ceiling, and one wall in the restaurant is devoted entirely to a copper-marker mural depicting a Thai street scene.

Sudsaard said the mural, as well as the lighting, comes from the co-founders' Bangkok upbringing.

"Everything that you see brings of the past," she said. "NaKorn means urban, means metropolitan ... and we both come from Bangkok, so we are trying to showcase ... the city scene."

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