

# MONSOON - ASIAN KITCHEN AND LOUNGE BRINGS WINDS OF CHANGE TO THE TOWN OF BABYLON

By Venus Quintana

**THE BOHLSSEN BROTHERS** have aptly named their latest culinary creation. Monsoon - Asian Kitchen and Lounge boldly breezes into Suffolk County transforming the building that formerly housed the Bank of Babylon. The name represents a wind of change in concept and cuisine for the brothers, who also operate the highly successful Prime in Huntington, H2O Seafood Grill in Smithtown and Tellers Chophouse in Islip, to name a few. Monsoon is their first Asian-themed restaurant and the sixth in their portfolio of leading establishments on Long Island. The prolific pioneers, Michael and Kurt, have once again set the stage for a most dramatic dining experience. Arresting designs blend with ambitious and inspiring cuisine to create the perfect destination.

The renovated 1920s building makes a bold statement on one of Babylon's busiest streets. Bright white lights illuminate the majestic grey stone exterior, accented with deep red-tinted windows and traditional pillar statues. The 9,500-square-foot interior is equally impressive, showcasing a bi-level eatery with 35-foot ceilings, dressed in red tile and black lattice. Traditional designs are accentuated with modern twists to create a unique ambiance that stays true to its deep-rooted heritage. A trendy lounge area boasting a 30-foot long, gleaming bar and three large communal tables invites you to relax, drink and gather with friends. Beyond the lounge, you will find the main dining area and two more semi-private dining rooms complete with special effect lighting and high-tech entertainment. The second floor provides access to a balcony dining area and private room complete with a 20-foot viewing window, where diners can take in all the action of a state-of-the-art kitchen created by award-winning designer Jimi Yui.

Guiding the kitchen at Monsoon is executive chef Michael Wilson, formerly of Prime in Huntington where he served as sous chef. Wilson's inception helped create imaginative and colorful fare that pays tribute to four Asian cuisines - Chinese, Japanese, Thai and Vietnamese. The Asian-inspired menu is a collection of sorts, motivated by the experiences and travels of the Bohlsen brothers and their admiration for the culture and cuisine. On my first visit to Monsoon, I requested to eat at the mercy of what transpired to be a most extravagant tasting menu. Adding to the experience was the delight of being served each dish by Chef Wilson himself.

For dim sum, the pork gyoza, edamame and vegetable dumplings were tasty treats while plump steamed buns filled with pork, beef short rib and duck were outstanding starters. Bibb lettuce wraps with chicken, coconut and Thai peanut sauce refreshed the palate and was followed by tender skirt steak yakitori (marinated steak on a skewer) and crispy calamari dotted with sweet chili sauce. Some of the most notable entrees included the miso-glazed black cod with baby spinach and spicy eggplant and the 'Shaking Beef' - a classic Vietnamese dish that effortlessly balanced spice and herbs. Desserts dazzled with American and Asian flavors; lemongrass crème brulee, perfectly fried oreos and ginger crusted cheesecake ended the meal on a full, but most pleasurable note.

The Bohlsen brothers have once again pulled off another great bank job. It's safe to say that it would be a crime not to go.



MONSOON - ASIAN KITCHEN AND LOUNGE  
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