

Chang's enchanting flavor

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MONROVIA - I love soups - during all seasons of the year - but for me, especially during autumn and winter, there's nothing more satisfying than a boiling pot of the good stuff on a cool afternoon or evening.

My top three soups of all time are: 1. Fil Gumbo. And I've never found an incarnation that tops our family's more than 80-year-old recipe. 2. Clam Chowder. It's gotta be New England Style. And 3. Thai-style Tom Kha soup, or one of it's many variations.

I opted for the latter as an appetizer at Chang Thai Bistro in Monrovia, where it goes by the name Tom Kah Gai and is available with chicken, shrimp, vegetable or tofu.

About a quart of the soup arrived shortly - I chose chicken - which is an entire meal in itself for someone dining alone, but still makes a decent appetizer when split among as many as four.

Carrots, chili peppers, lemongrass, lime leaves and mushrooms all simmered in coconut milk never tasted so good.

Next I had the stir-fried Heavenly Pepper Garlic Chicken dish.



Now, for me, it usually takes about 13 cloves of garlic in a recipe before things get heavenly. Sadly, I didn't really taste much garlic. That's not to say that it wasn't good. It was, in fact, a very tasty dish with a slightly tangy flavor, and served with lots of crunchy cabbage. My expectations from the title, however, had me expecting a Stinking Rose or Versailles Cuban Food kind of experience.

Finally, I had the opportunity to taste the Chicken Pad Thai, which was definitely up my alley, because it came from the kitchen exactly at the degree of spiciness that I love. Somehow, the chicken in the Pad Thai was super-juicy - much more than the other chicken dish and the soup - which is a conundrum I can't exactly get my head around, but I'll take it gladly.

Chang Thai Bistro is located at 614 S Myrtle Ave., in Monrovia. For information call (626) 357-9658 or visit changthaibistro.com.



THAI TIME: A flaming pot of Chicken Tom Kha Gai soup from Chang Thai Bistro, 614 S. Myrtle Ave. in Monrovia. Below, heart-shaped rice accompanies Heavenly Pepper Garlic Chicken. (Photos by Lafayette C. Hight / Staff)