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Chef Chao at 30

By Dean Okamura



Henry Chao (back, right) with long time employee Kenney Lau (back, left) and the senior Chef Chao (seated) Photo Andy Scheck

"We replaced the Jade Tree (restaurant)," Chao explains. Success was not immediate, however, "the original menu was too authentic," Chao says. After years of trial and error, Chao finally found the right formula.

"Nixon helped us a lot," Chao speculates, acknowledging the former President's visit to China in 1972 as an aide to getting his cuisine accepted in America.

When asked about the Americanization of Chinese food, Chao explains proudly, "balance, harmony, and popularity are the hallmarks of Chinese cuisine." To accentuate his point, Chao explains that he is developing an array of health conscious dishes including organic, vegetarian, and steamed plates.

Chef Chao's 30th anniversary is more than a business hallmark to the Chao family. It represents the opportunity to raise a family, share in his neighbors' celebrations, and give back to the community that has supported him. With both his children destined for the business world, Chao faces the future without a successor. "I will continue as long as I can," says Chao. He still finds joy in feeding his neighbors.

Moraga families have grown and children have become adults right before the eyes of the entire staff. Chao motions to two of his longest tenured employees, "Kenney has been here for 23 years and Johnny has been with me for 15 or 16 years."

Chao continues his support of the Moraga Educational Foundation and Campolindo High School, where both his children graduated. "When Campo parents come in, I donate a portion of the proceeds back to the schools," says Chao. To further give thanks to the community for their support, Chef Chao will offer select menu items at a 30% discount during the celebration near the end of May.

It is very rewarding when a community and restaurant bond themselves to each other so seamlessly. By giving back, Chao insures that everyone reaps the rewards of his success. "I have lived in Moraga for more than 30 years," says Chao, "I love Moraga."

Chef Chao

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www.chefchaorestaurant.com

Monday - Saturday

Lunch: 11:30AM - 2:30PM

Dinner: 4:00PM - 9:30PM

Sunday

Dinner: 4:30PM - 9:30PM

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