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Allentown's first urban oasis

June 27, 2008

From well-traveled Susquehanna Street, Asia -- which opened about a year ago -- looks like a tavern, unassuming and rather pedestrian.

Inside, the small restaurant is comfortable and attractive -- simple, but unmistakably Asian, in its decor. Thankfully, this Oriental cuisine restaurant has a full-service dining room.

Yes, takeout is available, but Asia also offers the opportunity to enjoy Chinese-style fare hot and on-the-spot in a real sit-down-with-service atmosphere, rather than carrying it home. or eating on disposable dishware.

In Asia's dining room, Oriental-inspired prints hang here and there, and bamboo stalks parade along one windowed wall. Those dishes many expect at a Chinese restaurant are available at Asia, including varieties of sweet and sour, sesame and moo shu preparations, to name just a few, along with lo mein, fried rice and egg drop soup.

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True to its name, however, Asia serves samplings of Thai, Vietnamese, Korean and Indonesian fare -- for example, Hong Kong-style pan fried noodles, Vietnamese summer rolls and Thai curry chicken -- along with its classic Chinese offerings.

The restaurant also offers its own creations, and here it really shines -with features such as filet of grouper in ginger sauce (sliced fish stir-fried with snow pea pods, carrots and shiitake mushrooms in clear ginger sauce) and strawberry chicken (sliced breast meat with a crispy coating sauteed in a fresh berry sauce).

RESTAURANT REVIEWS appear in The Morning Call's "Go Guide" every Thursday.