

# Asian Restaurant SUCCESS STORY



A WINNER IN ALL CATEGORIES`

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## ASIA RESTAURANT

**Location:** 1102 E Susquehanna St. Allentown, PA

**Cuisine:** authentic Chinese, American Chinese and sampling of Thai, Korean and Japanese

**Capacity:** 50

**Offers:** Dine-in, Carry-out, Catering and Private Parties

**Signature Dish:** Hoi Sum Gai, Strawberry Chicken, Ma Po Tofu, Pickled Cabbage, Cellophane Noodles in Hot Pot, Sake Beef & Chicken, Miso Shrimp & Chicken

**Year of establishment:** 2007

**Phone:** (610) 798-7777

**Website:** [www.asiaorientalcuisine.com](http://www.asiaorientalcuisine.com)

## A WINNER IN ALL CATEGORIES`

■ Interview by Jun Wang ■ Written by Elise Krentzel

Tucked away in the recesses of Allentown, Pennsylvania away from the hustle and bustle of the shopping centers or malls where traditional Chinese restaurants are located sits Asia Restaurant. Owner Alex Zhong has his own opinions why he chose a location that isn't so obvious to his competitors. He asserts, "People may prefer to start a business in a place buzzing with streams of people, but to me, if you give your guests delicious food and friendly service, they will find their way to you."

Although shopping centers, both indoor and outdoor strips may attract passersby, those are usually one time users. Whereas those who frequent Asia Restaurant know how good the food and service are. They are familiar with the amicable ambience and therefore will travel a bit out of their way for what they consider worthwhile. Mr. Zhong boasts that most of his customers are regulars!

Asia Restaurant really does serve up authentic Chinese cuisine without compromise. Perhaps the name ought to reflect that, yet customers who are not used to the spiciness of real Chinese cooking try it here and return for more. For example, the traditional Ma Po Tofu is normally served with minced meat topped with a spicy chili oil. At Asia, they top the tofu with a thinner layer of red chili pepper powder. The result is a spiciness without greasiness.





is the only healthy way of dining. His philosophy is a harmonious combination of ingredients along with a health conscious preparation, something like yin and yang. His standards to this end include a specific list.

1. Steaming or flash boiling ingredients instead of cooking in oil like many Chinese restaurants.
2. Using fresh vegetables as opposed to canned ones whenever possible.
3. Using high quality vegetable or canola oil in moderation when cooking or making sauces.



### AUTHENTIC MEANS TRUE BLUE

For Chinese cuisine lovers who are able to read Chinese, a true blue menu containing foods that are not typically known such as Jia Jiang Noodles, Pickled Cabbage, and Cellophane Noodles in a Hot Pot or Ma Po Tofu is available. The average American diner typically cannot read Chinese so these signature dishes are of course translated, as is the entire Chinese menu. Some surprises on the menu include tributes to loyal diners like Moran Dumplings and Arlene's Eggplant. How are they prepared? It remains a mystery to ARN.

chestnuts, carrots, baby corn and mushrooms. This tempting creation with a twist has won the allegiance of customers. Another winner is the Firecracker Chicken characterized for its four alarm hot flavor. Crispy chunks of chicken are wok seared with chopped garlic, onions, water chestnuts and fresh jalapeño peppers in an extremely spicy Sriracha chili soy sauce. Anyone who wants to challenge their spice tolerance would really go for this dish, says the owner.



Hoi Sum Gai (Happy Chicken) is sliced chicken breast dipped in a seasoned egg wash and lightly pan fried. It is then served on a bed of mixed vegetables and topped with a tasty ginger chicken gravy. The chicken is so tender that many believe they are eating fish. This has become one of Asia's most popular entrees for both Chinese and American customers.



As to healthy options, Asia owner Mr. Zhong doesn't believe that steaming food

### CUSTOMER SERVICE IN THE FORM OF COMMUNICATION

Customer service defined by Alex Zhong is all about communication. The menu clearly states that anyone who has dietary restrictions or food allergies should speak to the manager before ordering. This way, they can ensure that the customer will get a meal that is custom made to his or her requirements. The head chef, Alex himself, will accommodate a customer by preparing off-menu items. Furthermore, most menu items have a very clear description of ingredients and flavor so customers know exactly what they are ordering.

As head chef, Alex Zhong makes the rounds and greets customers on a regular basis. They show their appreciation with compliments to the chef. If a customer is not satisfied with the meal for any reason, Alex will replace the item without any hassle. He wants every customer to leave happy and most importantly with the intention of returning on a regular basis.

At holidays the owner offers one of a kind dishes, especially for Chinese New Year which has become a tradition at Asia. When Mr. Zhong knows of a customer's birthday they will be granted a wish with a birthday treat presented by Asia's staff. In this manner, promotions crossover to fulfill a need on the customer service level.

On the community level Asia has sponsored some activities at local universities such

as Lehigh and DeSales and has donated generously to the earthquake victims in Sichuan.

### ABOUT ALEX ZHONG

Despite being an honorable winner in the Top 100 Chinese restaurants, Alex Zhong will not rest on his laurels. He will continue to update the menu and has plans to enlarge the dining room and has already added a new parking lot to his restaurant. He will beautify the environment and replace staff uniforms with newer ones.

In November of 2008 Alex Zhong won silver in the International Chinese Culinary Competition that took place in New York city. Chefs from around the world prepared entrees from one of five Chinese regional categories. Chef Zhong competed in the Northeast China division. In China he was a superior chef and granted with the title National Second Grade Chef. Many local newspapers have claimed Asia to be the "best oriental restaurant" in the Lehigh Valley. In 2007 and in 2008 Asia was selected as Top 100 Chinese Restaurant in the USA awards in the category of "Asian Fusion" and "Overall Excellence".

Mr. Zhong is a firm believer and advocate of uniting Chinese restaurants to compete on a fair basis. He calls upon them not to lower prices that result in a price war. He'd like to bolster all Chinese restaurateurs by building a platform for them to convey ideas, in the hopes of bettering the restaurants.

ASIA RESTAURANT

