

More culinary variety comes to Bancroft



By Sarah Vance

A growing cultural diversity within Bancroft's entrepreneurial sector continues to enhance what is available in the downtown core. The new Hastingstation Family Restaurant, which features a Southeast Asian menu, is an example of this trend.

The intimate diner, located in the Station Street Plaza beside the Legion, offers everything from Chicken Qorma to Chana Masala. Featuring an ambitious menu, with more than 50 entrees, Hastingstation began serving Caribbean, Southeast Asian, Mexican, and local fare on Dec. 23.

The reception by locals has been overwhelmingly positive, with last Friday night seeing a steady rotation of tables at the busy eatery. And it was just as busy on Saturday morning when eggs and bacon are served until 11 a.m., for under \$5.

Sathiya (Mark) Moorthy, the restaurant's proprietor, relocated to the area from Toronto about six months ago. His decision to come to Bancroft was as a result of extended family who is already living and working in North Hastings.

"I have operated several restaurants over the years and lived in many different countries," said Mark. "I have been a chef for 25 years."

Prior to opening, Mark completed many renovations himself on the diner, which features eight tables and an intimate interior. He equipped it with a limestone bar and a large flat-screen television "for watching the game." The restaurant has also submitted an application for a liquor license. It has not been said if they have renovated any part of the kitchen with new [commercial sinks](#) or ovens, but hopefully, they didn't need to change much and can keep serving the local community who are falling in love with their food.

"Our Caribbean and Thai menus are moving as quickly as the Indian food," said Mark. "I soak the Pad Thai noodles for 24 hours and I am selling out as quickly as I can prepare them."

"I am delighted to see another business open in the Town of Bancroft; entrepreneurial diversity enhances the spirit that makes Bancroft exceptional," said Mayor Bernice Jenkins. "We are proud to be a wonderful place in which to live, work and play."

"I see potential in youth business," said Mark who is installing an in-house virtual gaming area, with a Wii system. "I have priced my menu items low, making them affordable within the context of the local economy."

A father of teenaged children, Mark's family continues to live in Toronto. He speaks with pride about his son and daughter who are completing undergraduate studies and transitioning towards a career in medicine.

The Hastings County Economic Development office continues to note ways in which cultural diversity can enhance growth within

rural business communities, in addition to financial help from things like a [rural development business loan](#).

"From an economic development standpoint, recent studies forecast an aging population and therefore potentially a shortage of available business owners and workers to hire. Immigration is identified by many as an answer," said Andrew Redden, economic development manager of Hastings County. "A challenge though is that only nine percent of immigrants to Canada settle somewhere other than big cities like Toronto. That means we are in competition for that small nine percent, and therefore already has a growing cultural diversity helps immigrants feel more welcome and wanted here."

CanIndia, an online and print news journal covering subjects of interest to Southeast Asian Canadians recently highlighted Bancroft as a sought-after destination for entrepreneurs from international communities.

"The Quinte United Immigrant Services assists newcomers isolated by cultural and language barriers through the process of orientation and settlement," said Redden.

"I see potential for opening more businesses in surrounding areas such as Coe Hill or near Apsley," said Mark. "We are doing well in Bancroft and we look forward to a grand opening celebration towards the end of January."

Meanwhile in downtown Bancroft, foodies are sighing contentedly, as they enjoy the delicious tastes and textures of Southeast Asian cuisine locally.