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SPRING DINING 2015



Peony Pavilion

**Bespoke Catering
at Its Best**

Imagine this. You are seated for tea at Peony Pavilion. A server places a glass teapot on the table and drops a tea ball into the vase. Within a minute the Jasmine Fairy tea ball begins to open, gradually releasing delicate beautiful petals. To your delight, it literally blooms before your eyes. Until now, you had no idea that the tea ball had been hiding a gem, a beautiful flowering marigold.

Like the flowering tea, Peony Pavilion is a hidden gem just off southbound Route 1 on Farber Road between Market Fair and Whole Foods. Because the restaurant isn't visible from the highway, many people don't know it exists, says owner Lisa Shao. But that's starting to change as word is getting out about the restaurant, opened in 2013, serving East Asian cuisines with a contemporary flair. "We use only the freshest, finest ingredients," says Shao, noting that people in the greater Princeton area want food that is not only delicious but healthy.

Guests can choose from several menus offering Japanese, dim sum, Thai, Chinese, and fusion. "We use Asian and local ingredients with a French presentation," says Shao, who created the menu along with master sushi chef Yoshi from New York's Sakura, and chef Zhe formerly from Tokyo Boat, Nobu, and Dao.



Dinner items run from \$10 to \$24; lunch items, from \$9 to \$13. Although Peony Pavilion is a BYOB restaurant, guests can enjoy wine from New Jersey's Alba Vineyard in Milford, which is sold at the restaurant.

One of the more popular menu items is the miso-glazed Chilean sea bass, served with black rice and sauteed vegetables. A popular item from the sushi bar specials is the Mummy Roll, a combination of king crab, shrimp, avocado, ginger pickle; tempura fried and topped with spicy lobster, white sauce, miso, and eel sauce. The regular sushi menu includes 24 different rolls.

The restaurant's spring specials include ahi tuna tartar, miso eggplant, stuffed scallion pancake, seafood hot pot, and seafood ceviche. A popular signature dish is the Thai basil filet mignon, and there are also American favorites like General Tso's chicken or sesame chicken.

On Mother's Day the restaurant is offering a special menu with four courses: appetizers, entree, dessert, and a presentation

of special Asian teas. The cost is \$40.

Peony Pavilion is named after a famous 16th century Chinese opera love story. The peony, which symbolizes good fortune, peace, prosperity, and nobility, is interwoven throughout the restaurant's interior design, along with a large collection of photos and art representing the opera.

There are two dining rooms and a party/meeting room with a beautiful 1,000-crystal chandelier. Perfect for business meetings or private celebrations, the room includes a modern AV system for presentations and videos.

In addition to dining, Peony Pavilion offers occasional classes on cooking, Chinese culture, and more. Plans are in the making for a weekly Saturday music night featuring jazz and Chinese music, starting May 30.

Peony Pavilion, 15 Farber Road, just off Route 1 South between Market Fair and Whole Foods. 609-580-1850. www.peonypavilionprinceton.com. **See ad, page 19.**