

Xe May eatery opens in St. Marks

by ANGEL CHANG

Davis Ngo and Alan Woo, owners of St. Marks' sandwich shop Xe May — meaning scooter or moped in Vietnamese — have known each other for approximately 13 years. They have built a place that serves tasty sandwiches for the hungry and smaller tacos for those who want to eat before going drinking — representing St. Marks's emphasis on food and drink.

Ngo, who is Chinese and Vietnamese, explained the foundation of their current two-month-old food venture and partnership.

"We're both big foodies. We have big appetites. I grew up eating sandwiches, and we love sandwiches," Ngo said.

Woo said, "We've traveled a lot before settling down with the shop — Thailand, Canada, Peru, among other places — and our eating experiences on those travels have definitely influenced menu items."

Glancing at the menu, which is chalked onto a floor-to-ceiling blackboard and bordered by brick walls, one can identify various choices inspired by southeastern Asian flair. There are elements such as pineapple, coconut and curry in many of their dishes.

With names inspired by motorcycles and bikes, Xe May sandwiches include the Super Cub Classic, a sweet and sour toasted roll with BBQ pork, headcheese and pork roll; the Hog, which is filled with grilled pork, scallion oil and fried shallots; and the Pilot, a lemongrass chicken creation. All sandwiches are served on a baguette with cilantro, pickled carrots, daikons, cucumbers and chili mayo.

"We have many regular, loyal customers," Woo said. "Lots of NYU students come around here too, and we've catered at a student event before."

Woo studied photography and worked as

an advertising producer for five years. Davis, on the other hand, has more of a restaurateur background.

"I used to work at a more traditional shop with my family in Chinatown, but we closed down later on," Ngo said. "After that, I had nothing to do. Alan didn't either, so that's really how we decided to start a sandwich shop."

And they have started one that requires a lot of work — 115 hours per week, starting at eight in the morning until well past 11 at night. Even though it's a form of work that limits their freedom, it's one that has been a rewarding experience.

"Cooking is a great form of art," said Woo.

"We serve good food, and we have great customers," Ngo said.

The most important thing of all is "the sense of accomplishment," Ngo said.

The shop's is open from noon to 11 p.m. Monday through Thursday and from noon to 1 a.m. Friday through Sunday.

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JONATHAN TAN/WSN

The new sandwich shop offers southeast Asian cuisine.