

TAY DO RESTAURANT

11201 Bellaire Boulevard, Houston Texas 77072

This delightful Asian restaurant shares a shopping center with the awesomely huge Hong Kong Supermarket – worth a sightseeing trip in itself – and with the two story Ocean Palace Restaurant, which has an acre of seating space, including banquet halls. Although Ocean Palace is world-class, we always seem to return to Tay Do. Its menu has over two hundred selections of Chinese and Vietnamese cuisine including: Dungeness crab, Maine lobster, quail, frog legs, soft shell crab, crispy duck, whole steamed fish...hot pots, vermicelli bowls, beef, pork & shrimp noodle soup...plus dozens of other seafood, pork, chicken, vegetable, and beef dishes prepared in a staggering and palate-tempting variety of ways. Tay Do is a large restaurant too, seating over three hundred, and on a recent Sunday evening Lisa and I were the only European-Americans in the crowded dining room (always a good sign!). Notwithstanding the popularity of Tay Do and its size, service is smiling and prompt, and prices are surprisingly reasonable given the high quality of the product. Tay Do is one of many good Asian restaurants on Bellaire Boulevard, strung along both sides of Beltway 8, and it is hard to go wrong if you are feeling adventuresome just walking into the busy ones and making your own new discovery!

ZIMM'S MARTINI & WINE BAR

4321 Montrose, Houston Texas 77006

This hip meeting spot is a fun way to wind up an evening, sipping on a powerful martini and looking at the hip, well dressed crowd. Zimm's is owned by Steve Zimmerman's (La Colombe d'Or) ex, Becky, who decorates her chic watering hole with just the right mix of striking art and attractive people. Near the intersection of Montrose and Richmond Avenue, Zimm's has a small terrace facing Montrose, which provides a relaxing setting when the weather is mild. Drinks are strong, portions are generous, and prices are somewhat aggressive. Bartenders and waitresses are clad in theatrical black, and the low lighting and the throbbing background music set a civilized-not-decadent mood, which reflects the influences gathered by Becky and Steve over the years from similar haunts near their home in the south of France. In fact, staff and clients often include a sprinkling of international types who are drawn to Zimm's by a common comfortable feeling. Besides the massive and richly built bar, there are numerous clusters of seating, ranging from low-slung sofas to Victorian chairs and love seats. But half of the crowd remains standing at or near the bar, where it is easy and comfortable to "meet and greet."

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Note: By way of qualifications for reviewing restaurants, Hankamer has owned and operated numerous restaurants, coffee shops, hotels, discotheques and banquet halls over the last forty years; he has travelled to over 70 countries and has studied and lived in Europe for over three years; he was co-owner of a home delivery wine of the month club and imported his own wine labels for years.

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