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Interview with Tyler Adams (Bok Choy)

Pradnya Chavan

Gaurav Singh

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Interviewee: Tyler Adams

Interviewers: Pradnya Chavan, Gaurav Singh

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Overseen by: Dr. Dustin Wright

Biography: Tyler Adams is American born and is the Dining Director at Chartwells company that serves food at the CSUMB campus.

Interview Transcript:

07:07:15 TA: Okay, I'm ready whenever you are Boss man 3, 2, 1 go.

07:07:25 PC: Hello! My name is Pradnya, and I am here with my partner.

07:07:30 GS: I'm Gaurav Singh. PC: and today we are interviewing for a final project, Food for thought, oral history of the California Asian Pacific Foodways. Joining us today is Adams Tyler, the manager, for the

07:07:44 Asian cuisine restaurant Bok Choy on CSUMB campus.

07:07:49 Thank you for joining us.TA: You're welcome.GS: So can you tell us a little about yourself, Tyler.

07:07:58 TA: Yeah. So I'm the director of dining services here at Csumb.

07:08:01 I've been with chart wells for about 5 years now. I've been at 2 other universities besides Csumb.

07:08:08 I was at Johnson, and Wales University in Denver Colorado, and then I was also at Missouri State University in Springfield, Missouri.

07:08:16 So i've worked on 3 different college campuses and i've done a lot of different kinds of restaurants on all those different campuses.

07:08:25 GS: Alright. So can you tell us a little about the history of Bok Choy like

07:08:30 How did it start? TA: Yeah. So I came to the campus just a little bit after we had decided to start Bok Choy, but from my understanding Bok Choy

07:08:57 GS: Lag out? TA: I think there was a lot of drive from students from different countries that wanted that cuisine.

07:09:05 And so that's what brought about Bok choy. It was just having something new and exciting and different.

07:09:10 They could resonate with people from different countries and different cultures.

07:09:14 GS: Okay, So what does Asian food mean to you exactly?

07:09:21 TA: Oh, man, Asian food, Asian food means a lot of things to a lot of people.

07:09:25 But to me Asian food is big portions and fresh varieties of flavors.

07:09:30 Right like it should really pop it should really give you a lot of flavor. A lot of spice, and just it should hit all the different notes on the palette.

07:09:38 But it's also about having the right kind of food, the right things that are authentic to the culture, and the right chicken.

07:09:46 There's a lot of chicken production in China and Japan.

07:09:50 So a lot of the foods are chicken based but there's also pork based or beef-based items.

07:09:55 too so that's that's kind of where that came from, but authentic to me, just means you know good good size, portions, and bright

07:10:16 GS: Hello, Tyler!

07:10:33 TA: Oh, yeah, Now again, I'm gonna switch my Internet connection for you really quick, gaurav, I think I'm having some Internet issues.

07:10:42 Give me 1 s Here, Buddy

07:11:42 Gaurav Can you hear me? GS: Yeah, I can hear you clearly now.

07:11:46 TA: Okay, perfect. There we go. Sorry about that guys. GS: So do you want to continue on with the question?

07:13:12 TA: What was that question? GS: Hmm. I think you lagged out again

07:13:14 TA: Pradnya. Can you hear me? I can hear you for some reason I can't hear gaurav, but when you talk

07:13:26 Okay, So , yeah, we could continue. TA: Okay, so what's your favorite type of Asian cuisine?

07:13:34 Oh, man. my favorite type of Asian cuisine is probably Japanese.

07:13:39 I really like Hibachi, and I really like sushi.

07:13:42 But I love Chinese food, it's too awesome. GS: And Do you think the recipes at Bok Choy

07:13:50 have changed over time or have they stayed the same?

07:13:53 It opened last semester. right? So you think you have adapted for the new semester?

07:14:00 TA: Yes, I think that it..the recipes have definitely changed a little bit.

07:14:04 We have added some new menu items but we've also dialed in the recipes a little bit more right.

07:14:10 We've started to realize how spicy people like their food versus not spicy

07:14:16 So we change the amount of spice just based on the feedback we get from the students.

07:14:19 So. Yes, the recipes have definitely evolved over time.

07:14:23 However, the standard, like orange chicken, that one pretty much stays the same, because everybody loves orange chicken the way it is.

07:14:29 But we do adapt their recipes over time based on feedback.

07:14:34 GS: Okay. And so what do you think? What do you define as authentic food?

07:14:40 TA: Authentic to me would be like really, really authentic with

07:14:50 GS: Tyler you lagged out again

07:15:01 TA: The right kind of oils and the right kind. GS: Tyler Tyler.

07:15:07 TA: Can you like repeat that answer? because you lagged out in the middle of that

07:16:34 To do. enter your meeting. Id

07:16:58 GS: You are in the meeting now today,

07:17:14 GS: Guess every now, yeah, we can hear you

07:17:31 Yeah, that's a little better

07:17:36 Get rid of my computer. There, now, there should be no

07:17:44 TA: Okay, where were we talking about authentic food? GS: Yeah. Can you repeat that?

07:17:54 Answer,

07:17:55 TA: Yeah. So what I was saying was and thought to me means like an authentic recipe.

07:18:01 Right using a recipe that was passed down from generation to generation.

07:18:07 But it also means using authentic food right like things that come from that area.

07:18:12 You know, Chinese spices and different sauces and herbs that grow there.

07:18:18 Those are. Those are what makes food authentic. Okay, So would you say that the food at bok choy is authentic?

07:18:38 I would say that the food at bok choy is not the most authentic when it comes to Chinese food only because we use a lot of pre-made ingredients right?

07:18:50 We don't make sauces from scratch and we don't marinate chicken.

07:18:55 We don't do a lot of the things that would be considered authentic.

07:18:57 This is more Americanized Chinese food. GS: Okay, Alright. Okay.

07:19:05 PC: So next question is, what do you say that the availability of ingredients has affected the food at Bok choy?

07:19:15 TA: That's a great question. So the availability of food has definitely been a problem with all of the supply chain issues caused by Covid.

07:19:26 A lot of our suppliers are behind on production so a lot of times when we order food, we get whatever they can send us.

07:19:34 It's the closest product right so normally we order one brand of chicken.

07:19:40 One specific type of chicken and that's all we use for bok choy.

07:19:45 But any time that they run out of that then I get a substitute product, and that product doesn't taste the same, doesn't have the same texture.

07:19:53 So that definitely affects the quality of the food and the food that we're putting out.

07:19:56 So I would say the supply chain has everything to do with the authenticity of our food, and the quality of our food, because if we can't get the product, then we can't make the food

07:20:05 That we want to make

07:20:14 GS: So, what are some of the best dishes that you think is representative of Chinese food at Bok Choy

07:20:27 TA: I would say that the vegetables, the Wok Fried vegetables are very authentic. The veggies that we use are a good variety of aids and vegetables that grow in that area. The sauce that we use

07:20:45 for it is actually homemade, very authentic, very heavy with Soy sauce and different Chinese spices.

07:20:53 So that's one very authentic item another very authentic item would be fried rice.

07:20:59 We use a very generic fried rice recipe.

07:21:05 Most Chinese restaurants use, and then some of the other items like tofu and shrimp.

07:21:12 Those are pretty authentic, too. The bang bang shrimp

07:21:14 recipe that we use, You would find at most Chinese restaurants, too,

07:21:22 PC: I see Which menu Item: do you think brings more customers, or is more popular than the other food items that you sell?

07:21:35 TA: Orange chicken is definitely gonna be the number one item that brings most people to bok choy

07:21:41 I think that's just kind of and I comfort food for a lot of us who grew up meeting Panda Express and other Chinese take out orange chicken and lo mein are definitely our number one Sellers and definitely what bring

07:21:54 people to Bok choy. but I think once people are here and they've had the orange chicken a couple of times.

07:22:00 They do like to try other things and experiment with the other options.

07:22:07 GS: So does it get stressful at times like because of the rush, or maybe like something doesn't arrive on time because of stuff like that.

07:22:18 TA: It definitely does get stressful. That's just part of the food service industry, you know, trying to do a lot of things in a little amount of time with a lot of people.

07:22:28 It does get very stressful. but it's all about the mindset.

07:22:33 Right, making sure that your staff is happy, making sure that they have everything that they need to do their job.

07:22:42 And that makes their job less stressful. But I won't lie to you and say it doesn't get stressful.

07:22:45 It definitely does it sometimes. GS: So what's your favorite dish at Bok choy?

07:22:52 TA: My favorite dish is the grilled Teriyaki chicken.

07:22:57 Just because I love grilled items and I love teriyaki sauce, and it's just not as heavy as some of the other fried items.

07:23:04 I love grilled chickens, but orange chicken is definitely my second favorite.

07:23:11 GS: Okay, So do you feel like the food at bok choy is Americanized, or like modified to like, Americans who are not familiar with Asian food,

07:23:25 TA: Yes, Absolutely. I would say that everything on the Bok Choy has been Americanized to 1 point or another.

07:23:34 Just to kind of meet the palate taste of our population that we I think if we served our lot of very, very authentic Chinese food wouldn't have as many sales, and we wouldn't get as much business because

07:23:50 that those flavors don't necessarily meet everybody's profile So we're trying to serve food.

07:23:57 That everybody will like and so that's Why, we've Americanized it, but not to a point where it's unrecognizable from the authentic dish right.

07:24:11 PC: So you said that it does get stressful at times, and a good mindset helps you with it.

07:24:18 So there, any other secret tips that you think lead to good management of this business and to better customer service?

07:24:28 TA: Yeah, absolutely. So I think the first thing is making sure that you train your staff right?

07:24:34 Your customer service, and the quality of service and give up to your customers is only as good as your staff, or been trained.

07:24:42 So it's very hard to expect your staff to do something that they don't know how to do, or they've never been shown how to do so.

07:24:48 I think hands-on training and just making sure everybody knows what's going on, and what's expected of them is always the number one priority to make sure that you're given the best service.

07:25:01 That you can, but like I said earlier it's also about making an enjoyable work environment and having a place where people want to come to work, and they want to do a good job. and that's what we have at at Bok choy we have a lot

07:25:12 of students who work there who really do care and they really do want to do a good job, and that's why it's been so easy

07:25:23 GS: Okay, So last year, with the pandemic still around.

07:25:29 Were there any difficulties you faced with running the place?

07:25:33 TA: Yes, So the pandemic presented a lot of difficulties for us.

07:25:37 Number one was the supply chain being able to get the products that we need. That's been a struggle since day one of Bok Choy. We've had we've always struggled with trying to get the products and the sauces and

07:25:50 the different vegetables, So that has been a struggle.

07:25:53 But we have fixed our supply chain with multiple vendors for those things which makes it easier.

07:26:01 However, the other big issue that we have from the pandemic is staffing. It has been incredibly difficult to hire and train cooks, who have a lot of experience because the job market for them right now is just ridiculous.

07:26:16 You know people can go out and get a job as a cook for \$28-30 an hour and We can't afford that at the school, so that's that's what's really making it difficult is not being

07:26:26 able to hire experienced people. So I would say the pandemic definitely had a huge effect on our business.

07:26:39 GS: Okay. So that was it for the interview. Thank you for your time TA: Oh, you're welcome.