

# Emerald Thai Cuisine In Williamsburg Gets A Fresh Start Under New Ownership

Jen Holden, Peninsula Chronicle

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*Photo of May 'May May' Kline (left) and Thanyathip 'Thanya' Testhanom by Jen Holden.*

YORK-After nearly 20 years in business, Emerald Thai Cuisine changed ownership four months ago on October 15, 2022. The restaurant's new owner, May "May May" Kline bought the restaurant from Ubon "Moony" Chaisongkram a few months after Chaisongkram's husband, Al, passed away.

Kline said she's committed to upholding the restaurant's top-notch reputation while adding a few personal touches along the way as she builds her business. The restaurant is located in the Festival Marketplace near Busch Gardens.

Kline moved from Bangkok, Thailand to the Peninsula in 2010 when she was in her early 20s and began working in restaurants.

"I was working at a luxury car dealership in Bangkok before moving here, so it was a big change," said Kline. "My first job after moving to the area was at Thaijindesu Thai and Sushi

Bar in Port Warwick, where I was a busgirl. I didn't know any English at the time, so my work was limited to bussing tables and filling water glasses.”

Kline picked up the language and worked as a server at Thai Papaya in Hampton for about seven years prior to purchasing Emerald Thai Cuisine. She's grateful for the life-changing opportunity and looks forward to what lies ahead.

“I've made a lot of changes to the restaurant since taking over,” said Kline. “Everything is new, from the glasses and plates to the tables and chairs.”

She's implemented a contemporary ambiance, including cheerful music and a bright color scheme, with the intent of creating a modernized hub where everyone is welcome.

“I want our customers to enjoy an upbeat and happy environment where they don't feel rushed,” said Kline. “From a customer on their laptop having a glass of wine, to families enjoying a meal together, I want everyone to enjoy themselves and relax.”

While the new owner has revamped the menu, she has kept some previous entrees that were popular with longtime customers, including the Emerald Chicken and Wild Emerald signature dishes. The Emerald Chicken includes a grilled and marinated chicken breast on top of a bed of steamed vegetables topped with peanut sauce while the Wild Emerald showcases string beans, bamboo shoots, and basil leaves stir fried in red curry sauce.

“I've added a few special entrees to the menu as well, including the Ka-Prow Gai Kai-Dow and Siam Beef,” said Kline. A spicy dish, the Ka-Prow Gai Kai-Dow includes minced chicken, onions, red pepper, and Thai basil leaves sauteed with ka-prow chili-garlic sauce and served over jasmine rice along with a fried egg. The Siam Beef entrée features sliced beef that's stir fried with an authentic Thai sauce, topped with fresh ginger, and served with broccoli.

The menu boasts an array of traditional Thai appetizers, noodle and curry dishes, salads, soups, and desserts. Emerald Thai Cuisine also has a full bar on site.

“My next goal is to add a sushi bar,” said Kline. “I think the addition would be very popular with our customers.”

Kline does the cooking and relies on a staff of six employees to assist her with producing an unforgettable experience for customers.

“My manager, Thanyathip ‘Thanya’ Testhanom, does a great job while I'm in the kitchen cooking or busy making drinks at the bar,” said Kline. “She makes sure our customers have a good time at the restaurant while they're making great memories.”

Located at 264 McLaws Circle in Suite G next to Maurizio's Italian Restaurant, Emerald Thai Cuisine is open from 4pm to 9pm on Monday, 11:30am to 2:30pm and 4pm to 9pm Tuesday through Friday, and noon to 9pm on Saturday and Sunday. For more information, visit its [website](#) or call (757) 645-2511.