

A taste of the Orient for le movers and Shakers



Illustration by EORNA WALTON

IN THE 1970s, Mr Chow's in Knightsbridge was the first Chinese restaurant in London to break away from traditional Oriental decor. At last it has filtered through to Dublin with the extraordinarily named Diep Le Shaker restaurant serving Chinese/Thai food.

Located on two levels in a mews in Pembroke Lane, it is a smart, bright, unfussy place with a yellow and maroon colour scheme, large round tables, de rigueur wooden flooring, and a conservatory-style glass roof.

We were first in and were shown by Simon, the maitre d', to a nice large table in a corner and that's always a healthy start with me. The sun was shining, the lilac was in bloom, there were large champagne coolers on the bar and it was my birthday, so a snipe of Veuve Clicquot champagne (£10.50) seemed the order of the day and a Paddy (£2.80) for himself.

Sixteen starters included spring rolls, aromatic lamb and sesame prawn toasts, from about £5. The Diep hors d'oeuvre (minimum two people) was £6.25 per person, which is more than the average popular Thai "combination platter" — generally under a tenner for two.

I had two steamed scallops with ginger and garlic (£7.50) in their shells, a tad on the small side. Topped simply with crushed garlic and ginger, they looked a trifle anaemic but, with a side sauce of the ketjap manis/fish sauce/chilli variety, were tasty, but bad value at the price.

His Lordship opted for exotic Thai salad with chicken (£5.50) which wasn't very exotic or exciting — it had chicken with lime and mint mixed with lollo rosso, frisee, mint leaves — fresh and great if you were counting calories! The

Diep Special Soup (£5.50) — Thai chicken — could pass for the "diet special soup". Very light with coconut milk and a little bird's eye dried chilli floating decoratively on top, but redolent nevertheless of kaffir lime leaves, lemongrass, and strips of chicken and mushroom at the bottom — delicious.

His Lordship had Tom Yum soup (£4.50) which is Thailand's best-known soup — hot and sour combinations with button mushrooms or chicken or prawns. Pla Pao Numpla Wan — fresh marinated catch of the day — seabass (£20) grilled in a banana leaf with lemongrass and spices was a fine specimen; fresh, well-cooked and delicious with two side sauces, chilli base and tamarind/palm sugar. A side dish of Singapore noodles (£7) with pieces of Char Sui and decent Tiger Prawns were excellent. His Lordship had the traumatic sounding Sia Rong Hai — tiger cry (£14.50). Never fear, it wasn't a lump of the protected feline but very tender delicious slices of beef seared on the outside and pinkish in the middle anointed with lime and chilli, and a side dish of fried rice (£2). It was all very fresh, clean and light food, nothing tacky or heavy but then we didn't have any really "saucy" items.

With coffees (£3) and a bottle of Schlumberger Gerwurztraminer 1995 (£20.50), our bill came to £99 including 10 per cent service charge. By the time we left, two live musicians had taken over from Francis Albert. There was lots of air kissing and the atmosphere was brill. It is sure to attract the movers and shakers and the ladies who lunch.

● *Diep Le Shaker*, 55 Pembroke Lane, Dublin 2. Tel 661 1829.