

Calgary's Chefs

Chef in Profile: **Vallen Yau, Executive Chef**

Restaurant:

Chowder House Seafood Restaurant

Over the years many restaurants have come and gone in the downtown area, but restaurateur Steve Beddoe seems to have the magic touch when it comes to staying power.

The seafood Chowder House is one of those restaurants. It has served the business crowd for lunch from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. for 18 years now at its central location at 609 1st Street SW. It's the perfect place for anything from a quick informal lunch to a more formal executive lunch with over 80 people coming through daily, Monday to Friday, for some of the house specialties.

One of the most popular menu items at the restaurant is the fish and chips, made with seasonally available fresh halibut. And, of course, the New England style chowder is a favourite as well. Other popular dishes include the seafood combination platter and seafood lasagna all made with fresh seafood. And, for dessert, the cheesecake made with Bernard Callebaut chocolate is not to be missed.

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- Vallen Yau

The man Steve relies on for all this wonderful fare that the business crowd has enjoyed over the years is Vallen Yau, executive chef. Yau, who has been there for almost as long as the restaurant, has developed and finetuned the menu over the years to its popular picks of today.

"I like to taste all kinds of foods and I enjoy the creativity," says Yau. "I really like to create different dishes."

Surprisingly, Yau came from a banking background before becoming a chef. He spent six years in the banking industry, in Hong Kong first and then in Canada, before realizing he could make as much money, if not more, in the restaurant industry.

He soon left the bank and started working in the kitchen at Marlborough Inn as a prep cook and then worked up to a saucier. Next, he quickly moved up to the banquet chef position at the HI Hotel (now the Delta) on MacLeod Trail.

"That's the other thing about this industry," says Yau. "After I'm done here, I can still work in the evenings."

Although the Chowder House is mostly American cuisine, Yau, who specializes in French cuisine, still likes to sneak in an



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occasional French dish such as the Chicken Cordon Bleu and Coquille St. Jacques, another very popular item on the menu.

While Yau keeps quite busy running both the Chowder House and Green Bean Catering next door and working as banquet chef at Standen, he still finds time to read, often looking at recipe books to get ideas and study other chef's styles. He is also passionate about sports and enjoys watching movies.

With Yau's strong interest in various European cuisines such as German or Swiss, he hopes to one day open more restaurants to give his clients more choices.

"My clients are number one," says Yau. "I would like to give them more variety so they can compare and try different cuisines." **BIC**