



Ni hao, y'all!

BUDDHA-TO-BUBBA

Chinese Southern Belles' dishes will wok your world



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Wok and roll

Chinese Southern Belles blend cultures through food

By Sally Litchfield | MDJ Features Editor | sallylit@bellsouth.net

Ni Hao, y'all! Chinese Southern Belles Natalie and Margaret Keng connect people through adventures in food and culture.

The unique mother-daughter business brings people and food together for fun, networking and learning about different cultures, healthy living and social issues.

CSB's popular offerings include hands-on cooking classes and demonstrations, Asian market tours, private dinner parties, and special events. The Kengs enrich these events with their family Buddha-to-Bubba stories from China to the deep South.

CSB's vision goes beyond cooking and the kitchen. "We see food as a gateway to learn about different cultures," said Natalie. "We are creating experiences for folks by bringing people together from different backgrounds and cultures."

"You can learn about a country, a population, a geography, a climate through the food, even politics," Natalie said, pointing out that business and politics in Asia are often done in connection with dining. "In some ways, (the dinner table) is like the golf course."

Natalie's parents, who came to Atlanta when her father attended graduate school at Georgia Tech, have always lived in Smyrna. According to Natalie, he co-owned the first Chinese restaurant in a mall — Cumberland. Her mother, a Cobb County school teacher for 17 years, taught the area's first Chinese cooking class in the 1980s.

Natalie, an Atlanta native, recalls growing up in Smyrna in the '70s.

"I was the only Asian kid in school, and they didn't sell soy sauce at the local Winn-Dixie grocery. My mom made Hot Hunan Catfish and Pepper Steak and Rice-a-Roni," she said.

CSB uses food as the platform to help people learn about the Asian-American experience and to be comfortable with peo-



Photos special to the Marietta Daily Journal

Above: Margaret and Natalie Keng's business, Chinese Southern Belles, brings people and food together for fun, networking and learning about different cultures, healthy living and social issues. **Top:** One of Natalie's favorite dishes, sweet and sour cabbage.

UPCOMING CLASSES

HANDS-ON COOKING CLASSES

TIME: 7-9 p.m.
WHERE: Buford Highway Farmers Market, 5600 Buford Highway
COST: \$15
CONTACT: (678) 873-7447

JULY 15: Creative Sushi (Black/Brown Rice, Veggie, California, Traditional)

JULY 20: Homestyle Springrolls (Three varieties)

AUG. 5: Wontons & Dumplings

AUG. 24: Wild About Rice! (Demo, tasting, cookware)

SATURDAY EXPRESS DEMOS

WHAT: Drop-in, get a sample, tips, recipe and shopping list — all in 10 minutes.

TIME: 1-4 p.m.

WHERE: Buford Highway Farmers Market, 5600 Buford Highway

COST: Free

WEBSITE: www.chinesesouthernbelle.com

JULY 24: Express Sushi

JULY 31: Asian Noodles!

AUG. 21: Stir Fry Tips!

AUG. 28: Homestyle Springrolls

ple who are different than they are, Natalie explained.

A graduate of Vassar College and the Harvard Kennedy School, Natalie recently left her Fortune 500 marketing job to move closer to family and is compiling a family history documentary.

Natalie said, "This has always been a passion, connecting food, family, culture and community. We realized it was some-

thing people were asking for.

"We seem to have a knack for food and sharing and hosting. We have a lot of fun doing (CSB). My ultimate vision is to see (CSB) as multi-cultural. Eating is the starting point."

For more information, visit www.chinesesouthernbelle.com, call (404) 494-0088 or e-mail info@chinesesouthernbelle.com.



A participant at 'Let's Wok and Roll' sushi class



Natalie's purple rice veggie roll



Asian Hot Pot: A traditional and popular family meal