

Ginger Beef

Favourite Chinese restaurant continues to flourish

For the last decade, Ginger Beef has been among Calgary's favourite Chinese restaurants in the annual Calgary Herald Readers' Choice Awards. This year, the restaurant chain takes home the gold for the ninth consecutive year.

With seven locations in Calgary and an eighth in Edmonton, Ginger Beef has come a long way since the day the first restaurant opened in Brentwood.

"Back then it was three brothers: Daniel, Stanley and myself," says James Leung, vice-

president of operations for Ginger Beef.

"We were really young, all in our early 20s, and we put up all of our savings to start our very first restaurant. A lot of our early success was thanks to our former landlord, and our banker, who had a vision to give three young entrepreneurs that chance to try and make their way in the world."

In an industry where many restaurants survive only a few years, Ginger Beef has continued to flourish. The business now includes three Peking House restaurants, two Ginger Beef Express take-out outlets, two Express food court branches downtown, a location in Edmonton, and a thriving manufacturing plant that produces a line of packaged Ginger Beef products.

"This business was successful because of a lot of hard work," says Daniel Leung, who manages the Ginger Beef Peking House restaurant

at Willow Park Village.

"For me, personally, I'm always involved in the operations of this restaurant, days and nights."

Ginger Beef has been around long enough that it is now welcoming a new generation of Chinese cuisine aficionados.

"Children who came to our restaurant with their parents are now bringing their children," says Daniel.

"Hopefully, we'll soon be serving our third generation."

Adds James: "A business like this depends on repeat customers to be a success."

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Ginger Beef prides itself on supporting the local food industry, says James. "A lot of the produce we use and the meat we cook is purchased locally."

Added to the mix is Ginger Beef's two-year-old manufacturing plant, which produces many of the items served at the restaurants, such as Ginger Beef's famous dumplings.

"The whole idea of the plant was to give our restaurants some support," says James. "When we first started, our spring rolls and dumplings were made by hand, which was very time-consuming."

"When we decided to open a manufacturing plant, we travelled to Japan and bought a dumpling-forming machine that can really do the job around the clock. By hand, you can maybe make 300 to 400 dumplings a day, but in one eight-hour shift our machine can make 50,000 dumplings, no problem."



Ginger Beef takes pride in fresh ingredients prepared to perfection by its chefs.

Of course, with a name like Ginger Beef, it comes as no surprise that one of the most popular menu items at the restaurant is exactly that.

"We're very well known for ginger beef in Alberta," says James. "Former customers who have moved to other provinces always come back here when they visit. They tell us the first thing they want when they return to Calgary is to come to our restaurant because they missed the food."

Other popular menu items include Szechuan chicken and beef, and salt-and-pepper squid.

Ginger Beef's Express take-out service has also proven to be very successful. James Leung says this is thanks to the popularity of televised sports such as football and hockey.

"This is a very sports-oriented country," he says. "And we have to move with the market. A few years ago, the take-out market wasn't very strong, but now it is — and it generates a lot of business for the restaurant."

"People enjoy watching sports on TV and they'd rather not go out, or they're inviting friends over and they want a good meal while

they watch the football game."

Customers also enjoy taking a few extra meals home with them after a satisfying dinner so that they can recreate the Ginger Beef experience in their own kitchens. Both the Brentwood and Willow Park restaurants have display coolers allowing customers to buy some of the ingredients for their own meals.

James, Daniel and Stanley Leung say thank you to the Readers' Choice respondents who took the time to vote for Ginger Beef as their favourite Chinese restaurant.

Ginger Beef Peking House is located at Brentwood Village off Crowchild Trail N.W.; in Willow Park Village off Macleod Trail S.; and in Sunridge Mall in the northeast.

Ginger Beef Express is located at 1515B 14th St. S.W.; in Beddington Town Centre at Centre Street N. and Beddington Boulevard; and at Whitemud Crossing in Edmonton. The two Express food court locations are at Fifth Avenue Place and Sun Life Plaza.

For more information on Ginger Beef, visit www.gingerbeefchoice.com



Ginger Beef boasts a total of eight restaurant locations.