
Visoth Tarak Ouk is an executive chef who's working to uplift the cultural district known as Cambodia Town where he was raised. (Spectrum News/Parker Collins)

HUMAN INTEREST

Cambodian Restaurant Week organizers hit cultural roadblocks

BY [PARKER COLLINS](#) | LONG BEACH

PUBLISHED 7:27 AM PT NOV. 10, 2022

LONG BEACH, Calif. — Long Beach's large Cambodian community has overcome incredible hardship. Obstacles — both historic and current — won't stop the celebration of their culture and cuisine.

What You Need To Know

- The older generation fled Cambodia during a bloody genocide, so there's a feeling that trust has to be earned

Originally, the inaugural [Long Beach Cambodian Restaurant Week](#) was going to be this year. It would have just wrapped up a couple of weeks ago. After dealing with a few challenges, they've rescheduled it to start March 19, right before the Cambodian new year.

To most people, he's simply known as "Chef T." Visoth Tarak Ouk is an executive chef who's working to uplift the cultural district known as Cambodia Town where he was raised.

"I want people around the world to know what Cambodian food is," said Chef T. "Not a lot of westerners know what Cambodian food is. They live here in Long Beach and they don't even know."

Earlier this month, Chef T and a team shot a promotional video for the upcoming Cambodian Restaurant Week with Moulino Tan, whose family owns Phnom Penh Noodle Shack. It's a little shocking because over several decades they've gotten a lot of recognition, but never a showcase like this.

"I'm just blessed. I'm just fortunate in that I get to experience all this and sharing it with my family," said Tan.

Tan's parents came to America fleeing a bloody genocide — a widely shared story in Long Beach, seeing as the city has the most Cambodians outside the country itself.

Before his mom and dad died, Tan made a choice to continue their legacy.

"We wanted to help our parents out because we see they are struggling and they needed help too, so we decided to just step in and just come together," said Tan.

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even had to push back their original dates as they tried to personally convince more people to join.

“A lot of the older generation, the generation that came from the Khmer rouge era, they’re a little bit more skeptical in believing people. They think that we might be in it for the money. We might take their money and run. They don’t see the modern concept of everybody spreading the love,” said Chef T.

Long Beach Food and Beverage is the nonprofit behind the event. This same organization put together a [Black Restaurant Week](#) in Long Beach earlier this year, and they’re planning the next one for this January.

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