



FOOD

# 40 years on, family-owned Phnom Penh Noodle Shack keeps celebrating Cambodian food and culture



by **Ashley Bolter**  
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Moulino Tan, co-owner, stands in the middle of a bustling dining room at Phnom Penh Noodle Shack in Long Beach, Tuesday,

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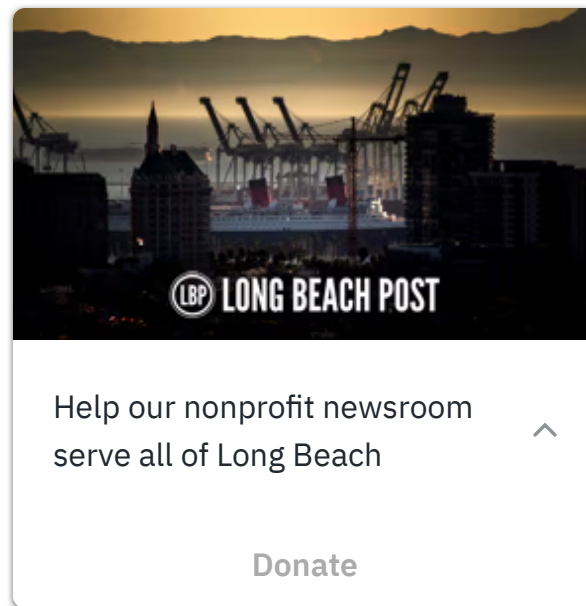
Phnom Penh Noodle Shack when he was 12 years old. He used to peek out through the kitchen window, watching for customers who were getting ready to leave,

waiting for his chance to run out and collect the tip before anyone else could.

Now, he and his four siblings co-own the restaurant where they grew up.

For Mouline Tan, Phnom Penh Noodle Shack has never been just about the food; it's been a place for people to connect and appreciate Cambodian culture for 40 years. That's exactly what the Noodle Shack is celebrating during Cambodian Restaurant Week, which runs from May 18-25.

Mouline Tan's parents, Bun Heu Tan and Maly B. Tan, moved to Long Beach to escape the Khmer Rouge regime. When a small Vietnamese restaurant that Bun Heu Tan loved closed, they bought the 500-square-foot space and opened what is now Phnom Penh Noodle Shack in 1985.



Mouline Tan remembers it being “a very small shack” with only five tables and not a lot of space. He said it was often very loud, but also very lively and energetic.

“Back then, it helped bring memories for the Cambodian community of the times that were good before the war. So it kind of gave them a sense of healing, a sense of connection and comfort and warmth, you know?” Mouline Tan said. “We want to continue to move that forward, to show that warmth, and portray that, not just in our dishes, but in everything we do.”

Bun Heu Tan and Maly B. Tan, who died in 2014 and 2017, respectively, took the time to remember the orders of those that came in often, and Bun Heu Tan would sometimes sit with the customers to “talk with them, get to know them, pour them drinks and just connect,” Mouline Tan said.



Maly B. Tan and Bun Heu Tan opened Phnom Penh Noodle Shack in 1985. Photo courtesy of Mouline Tan.

Mouline Tan loved working with his dad, and some of his fondest memories growing up in the restaurant involve eating dried noodle soup with his father.

Phnom Penh Noodle Shack is known for those dried noodle soups with pork-bone broth, but their house special sauce — a savory sauce made from soy sauce that was Maly B. Tan’s secret recipe — is what really makes them stand out, Mouline Tan said.

“[It’s] what makes our business art,” he said.

Mouline Tan and his siblings took over as co-owners in 2014, with Mouline Tan taking on a role in marketing. Since then, he has built up a social media presence and now helps support other Cambodian restaurants in the area.

“I just want to pay it forward and help them out however I can, whether it’s social media marketing, giving them advice, supporting them, [or] going to their shops and purchasing their products. I care a lot about bringing communities together,” Mouline Tan said.



Mouline Tan, co-owner, outside of his restaurant, Phnom Penh Noodle Shack in Long Beach, Tuesday, May 20, 2025.  
Photo by Thomas R. Cordova.

Family has also always been a big focus at Phnom Penh Noodle Shack.

“I say, food brings people together,” Mouline Tan said. “That’s something that we want to focus on, especially families, [because] my mom, my dad valued family so much. We want to help bring families together, through the food and through our service.”

For Mouline Tan, the most important part is creating a welcoming environment for his community to enjoy.

“Just the feeling when you enter, you know, it feels so comforting. It feels like a home,” he said.

*Phnom Penh Noodle Shack is offering a 10% discount on all orders for customers who mention Cambodian Restaurant Week through May 25. Phnom Penh Noodle Shack, 1644 Cherry Ave., is open Tuesday to Sunday from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m.*