

GUILT FREE GOURMET

Authentic Thai Food makes for delicious, healthy meal

by **Tanya Barham**



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Nestled behind the MAC club, Mai Thai (1126 SW 18th Ave.) is a cozy little Thai restaurant with unassuming décor and a host of delicious dishes for the health-conscious.

The Papaya Pok Pok (\$7.95) is Mai Thai's version of traditional Thai raw papaya salad. Served atop a pinwheel of cabbage leaves, they make the salad's marinade by pounding chili, lime, garlic, palm sugar, fish sauce and peanuts in a large clay mortar and wooden pestle.

"Pok Pok" is owners Lily and Aor's play on the sound that the mortar and pestle makes as they pound the ingredients and then add fresh green beans, long strands of raw papaya and tomatoes to finish the dish.

Firm, cubed tomatoes and garden-fresh string beans represent traditional salad fare, but that is where the similarities end. Raw papaya has the consistency of a vermicelli rice noodle cooked *al dente*. The chili lime marinade blends a dash of sweet palm sugar and a hint of salt from the fish sauce and tiny dried shrimp, with a final impression of the chili's spicy tingle on the lips.