by Neal Vitale

Robert Nadeau, *The Real Paper's* self-styled culture commissaire, has made a career of counterintuitive stunts, often unpredictable restaurant reviews. Recently (in *7/30*), Nadeau, who has taken on yet another Cambridge-area Szechuan establishment—Su-Shiang—found it "lovingly placed outside Central Square at 158 Prospect Street.

Unfortunately, Nadeau's report is especially accurate; the biggest complaint to be heard is that he is not sufficiently lavish in his praise. He comes close, but stops just short of awarding his "Boston bychair" for the best formal Szechuan eating place. Without question, despite the ongoing proliferation of new restaurants specializing in spicy, South-east Chinese cookery, Su-Shiang is the host of its ilk in and around Cambridge and Boston.

From their potent Hoi and Sour Soup through to a dessert of firm, sweet fried bananas, the Su-Shiang menu is consistent and often spectacular. The assortment of dishes on both their luncheon and dinner menus is continually changing, and, though dishes may also range a bit in quality (particularly in certain cuts of meats) at differing times of day and from week to week, the combination of inventiveness and uniformly high standards is both admirable and formidable.

The weakest dishes in Su-Shiang's carefully prepared repertoire are the more garlicky/ginger/brown-sauce-based (apparently more Northern Chinese fare than Szechwan), occasionally the ginger dominates completely, with attention, to the exclusion of the meats and vegetables involved, and often to a point where the flavor is overpowering and just "scary." Such dishes are few on the standard menu, popping up only sporadically.

Two dishes are stellar, clearly the standards of Su-Shiang's (non-banquet) menu. They are a whole, crispy, sweet-and-sour fish and a variety of luscious preparations of duck. The fish serves as a particular point of reference with other restaurants, rather than featuring the thick Anglicized and de-boned, glossy red sweet-and-sour sauce which characterizes center MSG havens, Su-Shiang's dish features a sizzling hot (temperature-wise) sauce that is indeed both sweet and sour poured over a whole fish in a crispy, light butter. For the weaker hearts who dare not brave the ravagings of hot oil, such a dish is a superb meal for two or more.

The duck, either in a simpler roast preparation, a citrus-fried version, or in the exquisite Peking Duck form, is tasty and a marvelous diversion from American restaurants' goshy, orange-saturated efforts. Again, non-picky dishes that are delightful.

But not the true Szechuan palate-sparing pleasures. For those who have become acculturated to the wonders of hot, spiced food, any of the Special Szechuan, Su-Shiang, or Curry dishes is educating. Su-Shiang's standard (non-banquet) menu and culinary feel of trying to cater to the hip and/or country dishes and less subtle Hunan dishes (from an adjoining Chinese province) and hitting the milder but sensational Pork with Scallions, the restaurant continues to do a super preparation with a score of others.

Su-Shiang's prices hover in the $3 to $5 range, even for the pungent or hot dishes of the Whole Sweet-and-Sour Fish or one of the less "Chinese" dishes such as Hong Kong specials and weekend pastries are special treats, as are the lavish individualized banquet dishes that are available. Su-Shiang's style and hospitality is refreshing in light of the new wave of Chinese restaurant's emerging in such diverse locales as Medford Square and Arlington Center with little more than obvions hopes to cash in on a popular trend in eating.

While Su-Shiang misses one or two dishes available elsewhere (such as the beautiful Fish in Wine Sauce from Joyce Chen or a Churrasco preparation of Custardine Snails), it also lacks the oppressive American atmosphere apparent particularly in a place like the new Joyce Chen at Medford Pond. Rather than the kitchen's Joyce's relocated home, Su-Shiang offers chops and other meats in a buffet of having a bar which mixes over-priced Jasmimes, Miso-Tan, and Entrees, Su-Shiang invites you to bring your own equipment; instead of a faint, unobtrusive preparation of Chinese dishes, the atmosphere is exceedingly frenetic, lacking any true Szechuan feel of trying to cater to the hip and/or fast and/or intelligent which is apparent in the kitchen and of course the atmosphere is excellent. Su-Shiang's menu and culinary inventiveness is a testament to the fact that the restaurant and it's creativity and authenticity justice. one step is certainly not enough.

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New roles for women

by Emanuel Goldman

Of the more than one thousand members of the Motion Picture Screen-writers Guild, only some one hundred fifty are women. It's no wonder that a universally echoed complaint among actresses these days is that there are hardly any good roles for women. Recently, I met two women who are doing something about it. This year, both were trained for the stage; Wolff gave it up for writing and marriage, while Geer actually stars in her first play was finally produced. Despite such predictions, the companies felt the public wouldn't go for a divorce, and has a son; Wolff has been "Memory of Us, and Ratc Wolff with The Abdicatio.

In style and personality, they are quite unlike each other. Geer is young, glamorous, outgoing, and voluptuous; Wolff is older, simple, reclusive, and shy. Yet they agree on the necessity of having women write about women for a change. Although Wolff acknowledges that men have not always failed in their attempts to create women characters, some relevant issues to women are bypassed. For example, in *The Abdication*, Wolff concerned herself with a kind of sexual hysterical syndrome, and a gross fear of pregnancy. These became the ultimate reasons for the conversion of Queen Christina, a sixteenth century Protestant monarch, to Catholicism. Her fears had been so pervasive, she even gave up a throne in order to take refuge in her virgity, a condition valued among Catholics.

Geer's film concerned itself with more contemporary women's issues. Aimed squarely at the belly of middle America, Memory of Us posed the question: what purpose remains for a housewife whose child has finally left home? The inability to find meaning in her life became the ultimate reason for the breakup of her marriage.

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H. Kaye Dyal, director, and Ellen Geer, writer/star of *Memory of Us*