



FEAST from the East



Left to right: Vinh with his traditional sweet and sour prawns; Hotel manager Sonia McGee; Dat with his signature fillet steak and fresh prawns.

“The whole community has welcomed the two men with open arms and the pub’s duty manager Mary is teaching Dat to drive.”

Vinh arrived in WA a month after Dat and before landing was training in Japan in preparation for his trip. He had 16 chefs working under him at the five-star Omni Hotel in Ho Chi Minh City and is waiting on the arrival of his wife Mai and two daughters Hai Yen, 5, and Thu Hien, 1.

He says he is pleased to be in Australia but misses his family. “I am very happy to be here, the future is in Australia,” he says. “My family is very happy that I am here and I am very proud of myself for being here.”

Always quick with a smile, the pair have warmed the hearts — and bellies — of the Dongara community. The hotel menu highlights the local specialty, crayfish, while keeping its hugely popular steaks. The Asian Corner includes seafood curries, sweet and sour prawns and wok-fried Hokkein noodles.

The chefs say they are amazed at the quality and size of the lobster they cook with in Dongara.

“It is very good,” Vinh says. “It is much smaller in Vietnam.”

Eating out on a wintry Sunday afternoon, the hotel’s dining room was a welcome escape from the elements.

Two entrees were served to start and included garlic prawns served in a rich, creamy sauce and Vietnamese-style spring rolls.

My dining partner says they were the best spring rolls she had ever tasted.

Lightly fried in rice paper, the pork mince spring rolls were delicately garnished with crispy fried noodles and served with a chilli sauce dip.

The garlic prawns were juicy and served with fresh and light jasmine rice — a warm, heavy meal for a wintry Sunday.

Well fed ahead of our main dishes, I still managed to fully appreciate a tender steak fillet with crunchy green beans, cooked to perfection.

My partner found it hard to finish the traditional sweet and sour prawns served on a bed of rice. Again the prawns were juicy and tender and the chefs used local seafood to create a dish that encompasses what the pub is all about.

The hotel now has an international flair which can be experienced through its kitchen.

Visitors and locals should drop into Dongara’s best-kept secret for a hearty and delicious meal — or just to say hi to Vinh and Dat.

PICTURES: Gary Warner

Above: Vietnamese chefs Vinh and Dat cook up a storm at the Dongara Hotel. The two have proved hugely popular with the locals. Below: Expansive umbrellas create a perfect beer garden.



Oriental cuisine won’t be the same again in Dongara following the arrival of two talented Vietnamese chefs.

VIVIENNE RYAN reports.

A TRANSFORMED Dongara Hotel is an eclectic mix of the old fishing village with modern, international influences. So the addition of two high-class Asian chefs fits right in.

In what was traditionally a men’s pub, there is now a polished feel to the hotel, which has come with a makeover to the exterior and the dining room.

There is a fresh menu, too, and along with fresh paint on the walls and new artwork hanging on the walls, the small pub is on the up and up.

Starting our dining experience in the hotel’s beer garden with, what else but a cold one, we found shelter beneath the oversized umbrellas.

Browsing over the menu, we were impressed with the variety of the town’s famous crayfish on offer, while an ‘Asian Corner’ indicated the influence of chefs Vinh and Dat.

Having arrived less than a year ago, the chefs are quickly finding their feet in their first WA kitchen.

Leaving behind senior jobs at international hotel kitchens in Ho Chi Minh City, Vinh and Dat are enjoying the change.

Head chef at the Park Hyatt in Ho Chi Minh City before emigrating to Australia, Dat concedes Dongara is a little different to his home town.

“It is a little quieter up here. There are a lot less people,” he says. “Our city has eight million people ... here there are not so many!”

Dat was sponsored by hotel owner Robert and came to Australia with his wife and five-year-old son Anh.

He says he found it hard at the beginning but now really enjoys the country town. Dongara Hotel manager Sonia McGee says Dat suffered from homesickness at the beginning but the arrival of Vinh helped cure it.

“It is great to have them together,” she says.

Sandy Harrison Jewellers welcome Cameron Marshall to their team

Cameron is now available to devote his talented workmanship to all past, present and prospective clients. Cameron is available for all your individual design, repair and manufacturing requirements



Sandy Harrison Jewellers

Shop 4, Chapman Way Arcade GERALDTON 6530
Tel: (08) 9964 4000 Fax: (08) 9964 3300