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# EAST BY NORTHEAST

a culinary  
tour of  
asian maine

*interviews* Kristy Townsend ★ *photography* Douglas Merriam

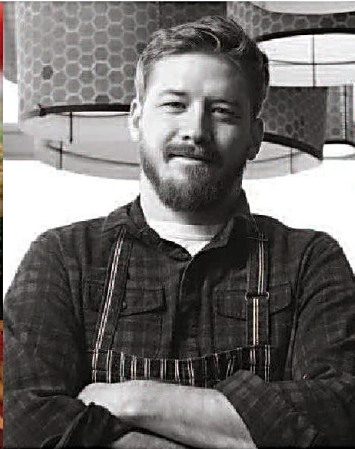
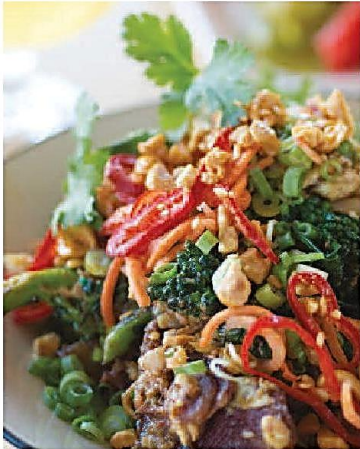




Co-owner-Chef Alan Hoang, Lemongrass.



Owner-Executive Chef Cara Stadler,  
Tao Yuan & BaoBao.



Chef de Cuisine Lars Taylor, The Honey Paw.



Owner-Chef Masa Miyake, Miyake.

# The Honey Paw

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## How would you describe your cuisine? Is it fusion?

I would say that most American restaurants could fall under the category of fusion. The cultural diversity of this country has ensured that we have developed a vast repertoire of culinary influences, drawing from many different places. The term itself has developed a negative connotation over the years, possibly because many restaurants have failed to merge different cuisines in a thoughtful manner. At The Honey Paw, we strive to draw inspiration from previous knowledge and experiences to create dishes in which the ingredients work well together in new and exciting ways.

## How do you re-create traditional Asian recipes? What flavors are prominent?

At The Honey Paw we try to identify why certain ingredients are in a traditional dish, what role they play in the dish as a whole and why they make that dish delicious. Then we re-create the dish using the ingredients available to us in Maine. It is super important that the food is delicious first and "authentic" second. So when we want to re-create a dish like Singapore Fish Head Curry, we go for the familiar spices of curries for that region, but we may sweeten it with maple instead of palm sugar. And when it's winter, use rutabaga in the curry. We don't hold back on the chilies or fish sauce.

## Is your cuisine seasonal? What ingredients are featured?

Surrounded by so many incredible farms, our cuisine is very much shaped by seasonal changes. For example, we like to have wok-fried vegetables on the menu, which change depending on the season. We may have cabbage or Brussels sprouts at one point and shishito peppers or fiddleheads at another. Although winter still has a lot to offer, we do a lot of preserving so that we can still have things like green strawberries, hush cherries, corn, tomatoes and so on in the off-season.

## Small plates or traditional plates?

Honestly, we don't think in terms of small plates versus traditional. Some of our dishes, like our whole fish, are conceived to feed two to four people; some of our food is portioned smaller and meant to be snacked on, either alone or shared with others. I've seen three people share a bowl of noodles and I've seen one person eat a two-pound pork chop, so I think it varies. Ideally, I think our food is best enjoyed shared—order a ton and then have fun reaching over each other and enjoying the act of eating together.

## What are your three most popular dishes?

I would say the Lobster Wontons, Vietnamese Masa Crepe and the Khao Soi are our most popular dishes. The Lobster Wontons are our handmade wonton wrappers filled with lobster and scallop and served with miso dashi and pickled kombu. The Vietnamese Masa Crepe is a play on Bánh Xèo, a savory pancake made with rice flour and turmeric. In our version, we substitute local masa flour for some of the rice flour and serve it with a spicy tomatillo sambal and fried Bangs Island mussels. The Khao Soi is our take on a Northern Thai

classic. We take whole lamb from nearby North Star Sheep Farm and smoke and braise it in a stock made from the bones. We then build the base of the curry with that same stock, coconut milk and a fragrant chili paste. The smoked lamb and coconut curry is then ladled over handmade egg noodles and topped with fermented mustard greens and crispy fried noodles.

## How do you translate your style to desserts?

We have an amazing pastry team led by Chef Kim Rodgers. Early on we knew we wanted dessert to be fun, delicious and approachable. We got hold of a second-hand soft-serve machine and let Kim go nuts. Our Honey Soft Serve is an awesome standby and her creative brain and palate have given us flavors such as baked bean, corn, sesame and jackfruit. She also makes killer layer cakes.

## What do diners drink with your cuisine?

We have a tremendous beer selection curated by John R. Myers, our beverage director. Most of our beer is from away—not because we don't love local beer, but Eventide next door has that market cornered. The Honey Paw features more imported and rare beer offerings with an emphasis on interesting and food-friendly beers for our cuisine. We also have a small, yet very interesting cocktail program and a really incredible selection of spirits. Our wine list focuses on some lesser-known varietals, with a lot of crisp aromatic whites and well-balanced, nuanced reds. And we have wine on tap that is really easy drinking and fun and available by the carafe, as well.

## What is your personal favorite dish?

My favorite dish changes frequently, but I think currently the Lobster Tartine and the Khao Soi are my favorites. The Lobster Tartine is a play on shrimp toast, but more refined. A slice of pullman loaf is topped with a lobster and scallop mousse, fried and then topped with pickled sunchoke, radishes, hijiki and celery leaves. I also love the Khao Soi, which recently won the Lamb Jam competition in New York. The lamb really shines through in this dish, which I find to be very nicely balanced and texturally delicious with the crispy egg noodles.

## What is behind the name of The Honey Paw?

Owner-Chef Andrew Taylor worked at a restaurant in Boston with a Chinese gentleman who told him in Chinese lore it is said that when bears scoop honey, they use their left paw—the honey paw. Frankly, we always just loved the image and the phrase.

## Chef de Cuisine Lars Taylor

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Fried Smoked Beef Tongue with wild rice noodles, dried shrimp, cilantro, curry peanut and preserved radish.