

Discover  
**MEKONG**  
Restaurant  
Vietnamese Cuisine

Walking into Mekong Restaurant is a surprising and welcome break from busy West Broad Street. An unassuming exterior gives way to a tinkling fountain, pleasantly low lighting, and a wealth of interesting and elegant Asian decorations. Though the restaurant is large, strategically placed screens and large potted plants make for a feeling of intimacy. There is room and atmosphere here for both a romantic dinner for two and a big birthday party (you can even rent out their banquet room for a really large celebration). The restaurant will celebrate its 10th anniversary this summer and is family owned and operated.

On our visit, we were seated quickly by smiling wait staff, despite a busy night. The menu was extensive, and prices extremely reasonable. We were especially impressed by the beer selection, with interesting microbrews along with more standard offerings, plus two full pages of Belgian beers – all with helpful tasting descriptions. The wine list was excellent, too. We had some tough decisions to make.

We started with two different spring rolls – the crispy and the soft. The crispy roll was nicely crunchy and served hot with a delicious light sauce, and the soft roll was cold, paired with a slightly sweet peanut dipping sauce. We also tried and loved the rocket shrimp, which were wrapped in rice paper, fried and served with a mildly spicy red dipping sauce. Yum!

For the main course, we sampled a House Grill Platter with grilled shrimp, beef, chicken and pork. The platter comes piled high with all kinds of goodies, including rice vermicelli, lettuce, cucumber, shredded carrots, fresh basil, scallions, rice paper for rolling your own rolls and a peanut sauce for dipping. The meats were very well-spiced, especially the pork (we finished off every last piece), and the portion size was enormous. We also tried the jumbo shrimp, scallops and calamari sautéed with onion in a spicy lemongrass sauce. The sauce had a nice kick to it, and the scallops were perfectly done. There was almost enough food for two. We noticed that were not the only ones asking for take out boxes! For an unusual and delicious after-dinner treat we tried the fried bananas, served with a side of honey.

Service was well-paced, friendly and responsive. We especially appreciated the frequent water refills. Our only regret is that we didn't try the basil chicken, which we overheard a fellow diner raving about. This is a great place to bring a big group because everyone is sure to find something they'll like – whether they're new to Vietnamese food or have tried every Asian restaurant in Richmond. Our conclusions: Mekong is easy on the pocketbook, tasty on the tongue, and a classy dining experience to boot. A winner!

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