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In the Kitchen: Jayd Bun's Annie Parisi

Husband-and-wife owners dish on bringing traditional Chinese fare to South Kingstown

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Made-from-scratch buns are a staple of this authentic Chinese eatery
PHOTOS COURTESY OF JAYD BUN

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By Jenna Pelletier

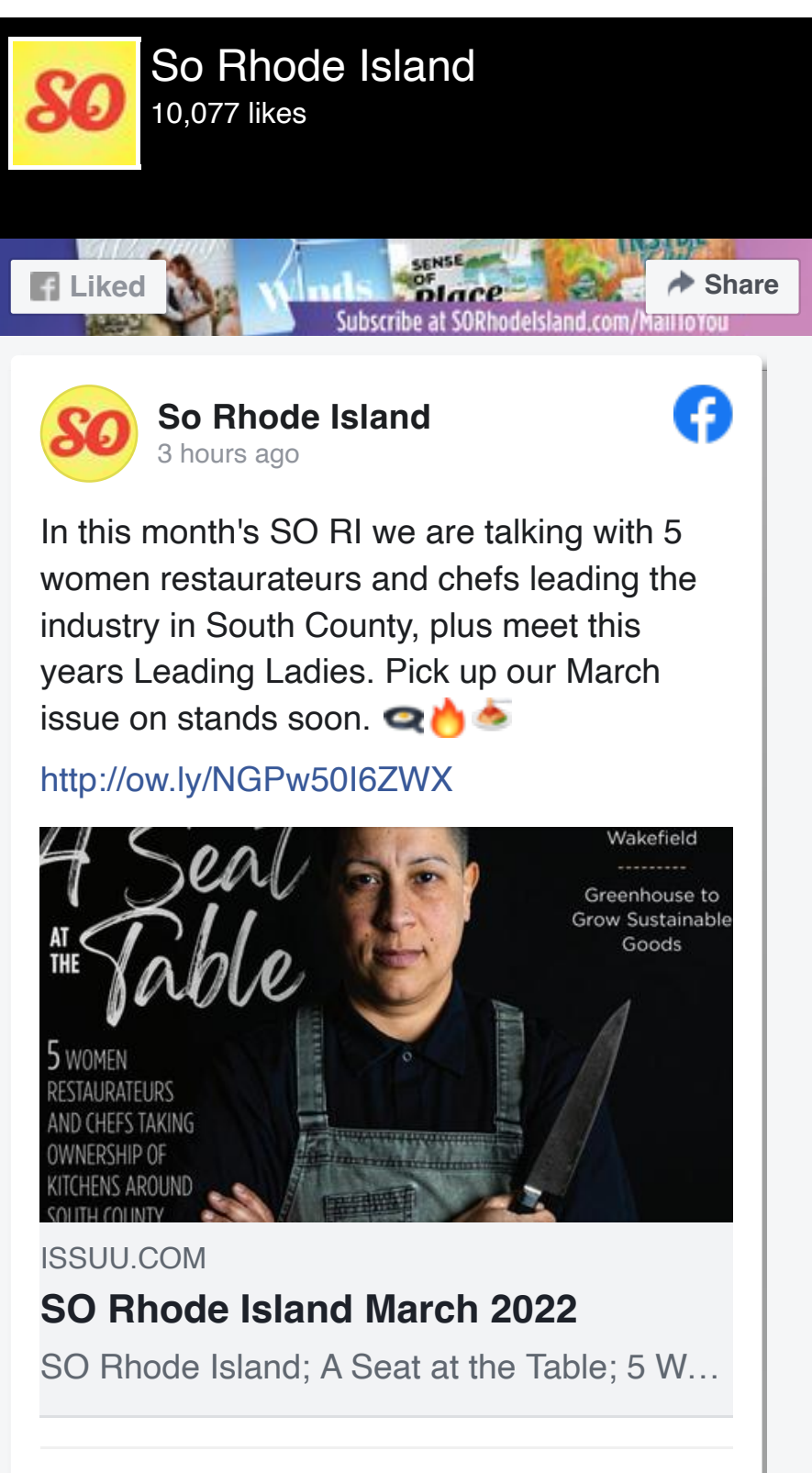
The story behind South Kingstown restaurant **Jayd Bun** starts with love.

Now married with a baby daughter, Annie and Joe Parisi met by chance seven years ago while each was on vacation in Las Vegas. At the time, he was working as a dealer at Foxwoods and she was a tour guide in Beijing. Soon after, Annie followed her heart and moved from her native China to Connecticut to be with Joe.

But there was one problem. Annie soon started feeling homesick, and she especially missed the food. "My husband suggested we go to a Chinese restaurant to make me feel better," Annie says. "I opened up the menu and got really confused. What is pupu platter? I've never seen this dish in China."

No matter how good it was, Americanized Chinese food just didn't taste like home, Annie says. Eventually, her craving for traditional Chinese cuisine inspired the couple to start experimenting in the kitchen to recreate the dishes she loved. She spent years perfecting recipes at home, and at one point traveled back to China to study cooking for a few months.

"Her food was so good I kept inviting our friends over the house to try it," Joe says. "So then I started thinking, why don't we open up a small spot."



Jayd Bun was born in late 2019. The menu is inspired by the home cooking and street food Annie grew up eating in Tianjin, which is about a two-hour drive south of Beijing. Annie makes all of the restaurant's dishes, including noodles and buns, from scratch on a daily basis. Joe also assists with cooking, often doing prep work and making house sauces.

With each dish made to order by the two of them, they emphasize that their offerings – currently available as take-out only at the South Kingstown base – are not fast food. Customers are encouraged to order an hour or more ahead. "We only make a certain amount a day, so when it's gone, it's gone," Joe says.

Popular menu items include the Rice Porridge Congee, with ginger and chicken; Scallion Pancake; and Ja Jen Men Noodle Dish, with minced pork and vegetables. There are several other noodle options, including chilled noodles with peanut butter sauce and Spicy Yo Po Noodle, topped with bok choy and a fried egg.

In keeping with the restaurant's name, Jayd Bun is also known for its buns, made with yeasted dough and available filled with chicken, pork, or vegetables. They are pan fried, which results in simultaneously crispy and soft exterior.

Annie points out that none of the food is deep fried, and she's careful to use minimal oil in her dishes. "I want to show people that Chinese food can be healthy," she says.

While the couple says they are happy with their success so far, they haven't gone without challenges. They opened the restaurant soon before the COVID pandemic started, and they are also juggling running the business with little outside help while also caring for their newborn daughter.

"It's hard work, but the customers make it worth it," Annie says. "When people tell me they love my food, sometimes I get so happy that I cry."

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