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Jenni's Noodle House

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POWERS**
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Like any great story, there is always a beginning, which goes a little something like this: Once upon a time, there was a girl named Jenni, who loved her Mama's noodles. And Jenni's Mama rocked noodles for eight hungry, tiny noodle maniacs. As the noodle maniacs grew, a "Lucky Star" began to emerge among the brood, Jenni. What would the future hold for this young "Ray of Light"? If you hadn't guessed, Jenni is a Madonna-maniac, too. As Jenni sat in her room listening to Madge, she dreamed of a future of noodles.

Many years later: On a summer afternoon, as Jenni was working her usual shift at Ohio Grange, a boy named Scott yelled out: "Who's That Girl?" Jenni turned around and looked over at that man and sang out: I think I could be "Crazy for You," call me sometime. Scott did call, and so it goes, "Dress You Up," and the two were wed. The noodle future was not far away, for the very next year, the first Jenni's Noodle House opened on Jefferson. The recipes and menu were comprised of the recipes Mama Tran passed down to her "Candy Perfume Girl," and Jenni has added a little spice from her travels around the globe. And, the rest is history.

As for the food, Jenni's has a great menu, but first, you need to know this – Jenni's has a BYOB policy with a small corkage fee. Now, begin your meal with some Crispy Tofu with Ginger Soy. Another starter I really

savor is Disco Dumplings. You can order them crispy or steamed, but I think crispy tastes so much better. You must have a soup. In fact, you can make a meal of soup. Pho is a Vietnamese beef noodle soup served with bean sprouts, fresh jalapeños, hoisin sauce and a lime wedge. Things are really starting to heat up – spice-wise, I mean. The next dish I had, another soup, was Angry Udon with thick udon noodles, straw mushrooms, tomatoes, fresh tofu and cilantro in a spicy sour soup. No doubt about it, Jenni knows noodles!

For the next course, my table shared Ginger Chicken with red onions, ginger and jalapeños served over jasmine rice with a side of cucumber-seaweed salad. This was followed by Super Fried Rice with grilled chicken, sprouts, green and red onions. If you've never had these Vietnamese/Asian dishes, you must try them for many new taste treats with a multitude of colors and textures. Vegetarians will love the large selection of veggie dishes on Jenni's menu.

I'm already planning my next visit with Infernal Chicken Curry high on my list, followed by Lemongrass Beef Salad. If you have the kiddies with you, check out the section called Logan's Five. It's a bunch of kid-friendly meals that will appeal to smaller appetites. Finish off your meal with Vietnamese-style coffee with condensed milk.

No private room for your special party, but you can rent the entire restaurant and it seats up to 96. Two locations, open every day for lunch and dinner, at 2027 Post Oak north of Westheimer, just past Sports Authority, 713-621-4100, and 3111 S. Shepherd at Alabama, 713-523-7600, or go to www.noodlesrule.com.

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