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## NEWS



### NUM PANG'S BEN + RATHA FOR SUPPER.

POSTED NOVEMBER 22, 2014

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Num Pang (<http://supper.mx/places/num-pang-sandwich-shop-new-york/>) has quickly spread it's wings across NYC.

Co-founders Ben and Ratha – old college buddies – come from two very distinct backgrounds and that's clear in everything Num Pang do. 90s hip-hop inspired splashes on the walls, a healthy dose of the same era beats blaring from the speakers and quality Cambodian, Southeast Asian style sandwiches (like the epic Coconut Tiger Shrimp Roll (<http://supper.mx/recipes/num-pang-new-york-coconut-tiger-shrimp-roll/>)) – safe to say it's not your typical sandwich shop.

Since opening their first location in Union Square back in 2009 they've topped lists, grown to 5 locations

(<http://numpangnyc.com/>) and have become a must-try food destination in NYC.

As they plan to open their new location in Union Square (well, not entirely new. It's the same hood as their OG store which was closed due to new condo developments) we wanted to know how they get the vibe so right and the food so good.

### **How do you go about creating the 'right' atmosphere in the Num Pang shops?**

Ben: It is a blend — we try and keep some of the original character and soul of the space, and add our signature touch with things like the graffiti, subway tile and soundtrack of classic hip hop.

Ratha: We always start with the flow of service, where guests will stand in line, order their food, put the menu boards so that they're in the right spot for easy reading, and just the basic comfort of the room. As for the décor, we work with what the space provides organically, but of course we have to have our graffiti, blackboards, and a killer soundtrack.

### **Do you think atmosphere and vibe you have created at Num Pang has played an important part in your success?**

Ben: I do, it feels non-pretentious, straight forward and fun which makes it approachable for our customers.

Ratha: As a guest at other restaurants, there are certainly vibes I feel more comfortable with. It's not just the physical, it's the music, the lighting, the aura and vibe of the staff that all play important roles in the experience.

### **Ben and Ratha you both come from fairly different backgrounds to each other. How do these backgrounds manifested themselves in the Num Pang experience?**

Ben: I come from a classically trained, fine dining background which effects the way I do things. Ratha brings his knowledge of authentic Cambodian flavors and dishes,

and use apply the techniques and skills I learned in culinary school and restaurant kitchens to successfully execute and update them for a modern palate — it is a true collaboration of efforts.

Ratha: I grew up with Cambodian and southeast Asian flavors in the kitchen, and I try to bring similar flavors to Num Pang through ingredients and techniques. It's even how I cook at home with my son now.

**Your stores are all adorned in epic graffiti — what's the inspiration behind that?**

Ben: We both have a love for 80s and 90s hip hop, and growing up in UWS during the east coast b-boy craze, graffiti art was a huge part of that era and genre of music.

Ratha: It's colorful like our food — bold, sweet, spicy, tangy and explosive.

**You guys are self-professed hip-hop fiends. If you had to give me an artist (or two) that sums up the Num Pang vibe or ethos, who would it be?**

Ben: From that era, I would say Biggie Smalls (<http://open.spotify.com/artist/5me0Irg2ANcsgc93uaYrb>). For present day, definitely Action Bronson (<http://open.spotify.com/artist/7BMccF0hQFBpP6417k10tQ>) — especially given his love of food.

Ratha: KRS-One (<http://open.spotify.com/artist/2gINJ8xw86xawPyGvx1bla>) bitches!

**Is there an album (or two) that you'd consider to have been formative in the Num Pang journey?**

Ben: Ready to Die — Biggie Smalls (<http://open.spotify.com/album/2HTbQ0RHwukKVXAITmCZP2>), What I Got — Sublime (<http://open.spotify.com/album/1vArGLTIdI71TVyqlh2hD5>), The Best of The Clash — these were the albums we listened to while we were building out our first store, so they definitely have some meaning behind them for us.

Ratha: Sublime – 40 oz to Freedom (<http://open.spotify.com/album/1kfsT09vANwXuntylaQUT3>), for sure.

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**You guys were one of the first to put together a recipe & playlist combo (<http://supper.mx/recipes/num-pang-new-york-coconut-tiger-shrimp-roll/>) for Supper. Did you have fun putting that together? (i know we did!)**

Ben: Yes, music and food are two of my biggest passions so it was fun to work on a project that combined the two. I dial into Spotify and listen to that mix we made quite often, actually...

Ratha: Absolutely! Music is such a bit part of who we are and you guys were so great to work with. Total professionals. Plus, we're big fans of Spotify and Supper, so we were excited to be a part of it.

**The Num Pang empire is expanding pretty quickly! How far do you see it going?**

Ben: We are committed to building out NYC first. We get invited to open stores all over the world, but we want to make sure our growth is sustainable so we want to make sure to take our time.

Ratha: New York is home to us, and so it was a natural place to start. We're going one store at a time, but maybe one day we'll have one on the moon. Who knows!

**What other NYC food spots do you admire? Is there anyone that you think is currently nailing it in terms of combining food/drinks and great atmosphere?**

Ben: My buddies at The Meatball Shop (<http://themetballshop.com/>) do a great job of that — it is a nice approachable concept that you feel good about and know that you are getting a quality, fast experience — similar to what we do here at Num Pang. I love Mile End (<http://mileenddeli.com/>) for the same reason, but it is even a bit more personal for me, as it reminds me of some of the food I ate growing up.

Ratha: Too many to name, but I'll try. I love all of Mario Batali (<http://www.mariabatali.com>)'s restaurants for perfectly executed, soulful Italian food. I also love what they're doing over at The Nomad (<http://www.thenomadhotel.com/#/dining>). Every time I go, it's a perfect experience from start to finish.

Stream the Num Pang (<http://supper.mx/places/num-pang-sandwich-shop-new-york/>) playlist on Supper, curated by Ben and Ratha for Supper.



<b>1. London Calling - Remastered</b> The Clash	
Num Pang (at the table)	
<b>1. London Calling - Remastered</b> The Clash	3:20
<b>2. Simmer Down</b> The Skatalites	5:38
<b>3. Bonita Applebum - Includes 'Can I Kick It' Intro</b> A Tribe Called Quest	3:50
<b>4. Under The Bridge</b> Red Hot Chilli Peppers	4:26
<b>5. What I Got</b> Sublime	2:51
<b>6. Groove Me</b> King Floyd	3:04
<b>7. The Payback</b> James Brown	7:27
<b>8. What's Goin' on</b> Quincy Jones, Marvin Gaye, Renaldo Benson, Al Cleveland	9:58
<b>9. Positive Vibration</b> Bob Marley & The Wailers	3:34
<b>10. Ting-A-Ling</b> Shabba Ranks	3:52
<b>11. Ghetto Red Hot</b>	

By Michael Wilkin (<https://twitter.com/elcapitanwilkin>). For Supper.

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