Hannah An
Founder and CEO

For veteran restaurateur Hannah An, The District by Hannah An is a very personal expression of all she holds dear of her Vietnam. It’s the subtle nuances of the cuisine and culture—the sights and sounds permeating the street markets, the friendly hustle of its urban centers, the warmth and smells emanating from the homes of proud cooks, and of course the fundamental flavors of the cuisine that balance salty, sour, sweet, spicy, and bitter in perfect harmony—that inspire her. Rooted in the time-honored recipes of her ancestors and combined with the ethos prevalent throughout Southern California of utilizing the bounty of fresh, local produce and seafood, An’s first solo restaurant project embodies her passion for introducing Angelenos to her native home. “The time is right for The District, as Americans are now more adventurous about ethnic cuisines, and Vietnamese cooking is no longer so mysterious to diners,” An says. “With all its global influences, Vietnamese cuisine provides a lot of room for creativity and gives our guests many familiar points of reference. It’s comfort food in the context of culture.”

An was born in Saigon into an aristocratic family that was forced to flee communist Vietnam in 1975. However, on the strength of their high-achieving women, the Ans ultimately established themselves as culinary royalty in the United States. The eldest of five sisters, An practically grew up in the family’s original restaurant founded by their grandmother: Thanh Long, the first Vietnamese restaurant in San Francisco and the genesis of the An Dynasty.

The An women all have a natural affinity to the culinary arts, as well as the work ethic for being prolific chefs and restaurateurs. An remembers those early experiences at Thanh Long as exhilarating, not only through the camaraderie in the kitchen, but the drama of the dining room as well.

An’s behind-the-scenes leadership has been critical to the family’s success, even as she studied electrical and computer engineering at the University of California, Davis, from which she graduated in 1987. As an engineer, she worked for high-profile companies such as Bell Labs, as well as acquired an MBA from Golden Gate University along the way.

After her mother, Helene An—the current matriarch of the family—founded Crustacean in San Francisco in 1991, An decided to return to her original passion, applying her analytical mind to the family’s restaurant business. She developed a state-of-the-art point-of-sale software program for the restaurants, embracing technology yet balancing it against the traditions she values. Overseeing the family’s aggressive expansion in Southern California, she was instrumental in the 1996 debut of the Beverly Hills edition of Crustacean, a groundbreaking concept integrating food, design, and celebrity. An subsequently focused on the openings of Orange County’s AnQi in 2009 and Santa Monica’s Tiato in 2010. An and her family have received the 2013 “Family Business Award of Excellence” at the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year Awards and the 1999 Jacqueline Kennedy Women of Achievement Award.

In her spare time, An enjoys tennis, golf, hiking, and collecting cooking magazines. She and her husband have two college-age children.

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