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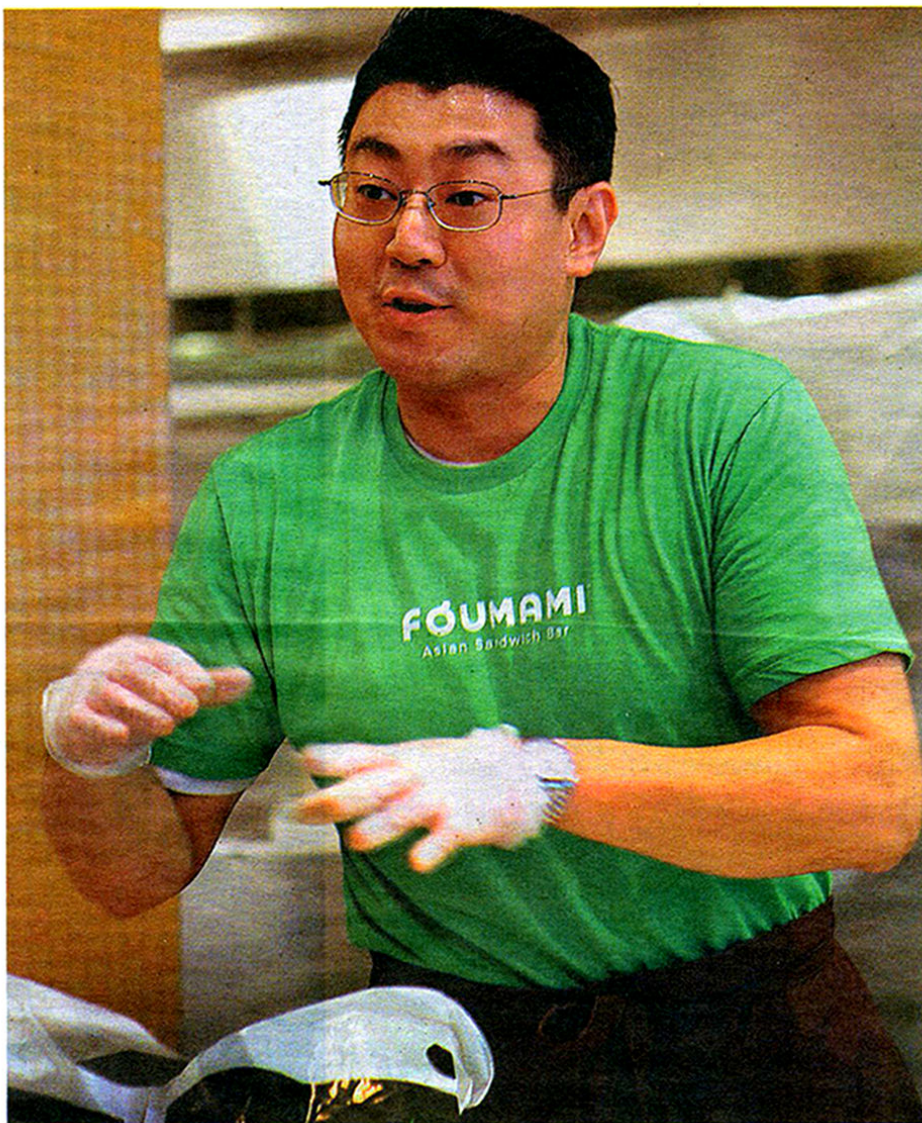
Tradition tucked in a sandwich

WHO
Michael Wang

WHAT
Taking inspiration from his family, which has operated restaurants since his grandfather founded a boiled dumplings hot spot in China, the third-generation restaurateur weaves these traditions into the menu of Foumami. His Asian sandwich bar in the Financial District is running several specials to mark the Chinese New Year, which began on Monday.

Q. What is an Asian sandwich?
A. Most people don't realize there is such a thing as an Asian sandwich. The main star of our sandwiches is the bread, which is called a shao bing bread, a very traditional Chinese bread that originates from the Shandong province, but you'll find in the northern provinces and in Taiwan. We hand-make these breads in the restaurant every day. All of our sandwiches are filled with meats that we make here from scratch; we don't use any processed meat. When most people think of Asian sandwiches, they think of the banh mi, which is a Vietnamese-style sandwich. But the banh mi is just the crust of what an Asian sandwich is. The sandwiches that we serve are so much more than what a banh mi is, because we don't use French baguettes, we use our own breads.

Q. What special items are you serving for the Chinese New Year?
A. This year is the Year of the Dragon and one of the sand-



WENDY MAEDA/GLOBE STAFF

wiches we'll be offering over a couple of weeks is called the La Long sandwich, which translated means "The Spicy Dragon sandwich." It's basically a pulled pork sandwich braised in our red spicy Chinese barbecue sauce, put in our bread, topped with shredded cabbage, scallions, and spicy jalapeno-based hot sauce. There's a lot of symbolism behind the sandwich. We decided to use pulled pork because pork is one of the foods that's traditionally eaten at the Chinese New Year and it represents strength, abundance, blessings, and wealth.

'I have this huge recipe book that stems from my grandfather, when he started a restaurant in his 20s.'

And because the Chinese dragon is normally red, green, and gold, the colors red, green, and a yellowish-gold are exemplified in the sandwich. Also, the pulled pork, because of the texture and the way it lies, is supposed to resemble the twisting and twirl-

ing body of the dragon.

Q. Do any traditional New Year recipes regularly appear on your menu?

A. There's a seared-steamed chicken sandwich that I serve here which is based on this chick-

en dish where we take a whole chicken and it's stuffed with scallions and ginger and anise. And then the whole chicken is fried so it's seared. Then, it's taken out and put on a bed of herbs, again with scallions, ginger, garlic, and some anise. And then it's steamed until it's fully cooked. Once it's cool, it's pulled with the hand into strips and we make a garlic-based sauce that has sugar, cilantro, and scallions, that's drizzled over the chicken. This is actually a very traditional dish that people eat during the Chinese New Year.

Q. What food does your family typically prepare to celebrate?
A. Food is a huge part of the Chinese New Year. So for my family and a lot of Chinese families, eating dumplings is one of the traditions. Some of the dumplings have red dates or little coins inside, and when family members are eating it, whoever eats a dumpling that has one of the red dates or one of the coins inside, that means that you're going to have good fortune.

Q. How has your family influenced Foumami's menu?
A. I don't have any formal cooking training. Most of my experience really stems from learning at the various restaurants that my family has operated. At Foumami, the majority of the recipes that we use are recipes that have been used within our family. I have this huge recipe book that stems from my grandfather, when he started a restaurant in his 20s. So I have all these recipes, some of them written on very old paper from years ago, where I basically pick and choose recipes that I feel works for the concept and for the demographic here in the Financial District.

GLENN YODER

Interview was condensed and edited. Glenn Yoder can be reached at gyoder@globe.com.