

Chef Lon Bounsanga to Open SAAP, a New Laotian Restaurant Outside Raleigh, N.C.

The longtime chef at Bida Manda, Brewery Bhavana will open his own restaurant next to new Cary, N.C. park.

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- Chef Lon Bounsanga, who has spent the last decade as executive chef [at Bida Manda](#) and Brewery Bhavana, a James Beard semifinalist for Best New Restaurant, will open his own Laotian restaurant, SAAP, in downtown Cary, N.C. later this year.

SAAP, which in Laotian means delicious, will occupy a 2,600-square-foot space on the first floor of [The Walker](#), a luxury apartment building on the edge of the Downtown Cary Park, a new \$68 million park slated to open this summer. The 70-seat restaurant will serve the fresh, clean Laotian cuisine that Bounsanga is known for from his decade as executive chef at Bida Manda. SAAP will serve classic Laotian dishes as Green Papaya Salad, Crispy Pork Belly Soup, crispy rice, satays, curries and more. The menu will be designed so guests can sample and share as many dishes as they would like in the restaurant, on the patio or in the park. The bar will offer wine and beer as well as hand-crafted mocktails and cocktails that pair well with SAAP's bright Laotian cuisine.

Bounsanga, a native of Vientiane, Laos, started working in restaurant kitchens as a teenager in Philadelphia. He moved with his family to North Carolina in 2007 to work as an executive chef. In 2012, he was hired to open Bida Manda, one of only a handful of Laotian restaurants in the United States at the time. In 2017, he also became executive chef for Brewery Bhavana, a Chinese dim sum restaurant next door to Bida Manda. During his tenure, Brewery Bhavana was named one of the ["10 Coolest Places to Eat" in the world by Forbes magazine](#) in 2017, one of Bon Appetit's Ten Best New Restaurants in 2017, and as a semifinalist for James Beard Foundation's Best New Restaurant in 2018. After more than a decade, Lon will leave Bida Manda and Brewery



Chef Lon Bounsanga at The Walker in downtown Cary where he will open SAAP, a Laotian restaurant. Photo credit: Forrest Mason

Bhavana at the end of May to focus on opening SAAP this fall.

"It's the right time for me. As a seasoned chef, all the ingredients and resources are available to make this dream a reality," Bounsanga said. "I think that Laotian food, which is influenced by Indian, Thai, Vietnamese and Chinese cuisines, is a perfect fit for a community that is as diverse as Cary. So when developer Bill Zahn approached me about opening a restaurant next to what is going to be a world-class park, it made sense immediately."

Bounsanga is partnering with Walker Walnut Hospitality, a group of investors, including Zahn, who is the lead developer of The Walker and a key developer in downtown Cary. "We have been holding onto two restaurant spaces at The Walker for the right chefs and great concepts," Zahn said. "I was thoroughly impressed with chef Lon Bounsanga - not only is his food phenomenal but his kitchen is one of the happiest workplaces I've ever seen. I'm excited to be able to partner with chef Lon and bring his amazing food to one of our spaces in downtown Cary."

SAAP will be located at 370 S. Walker St., Cary, 27511.

For images of Chef Lon and Bill Zahn: <https://bit.ly/ChefLonportraits>. Please credit Forrest Mason.

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