

; ; Chinese restaurants in metro Atlanta see steep drop in business

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

February 29, 2020 Saturday

Main Edition

Copyright 2020 The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution
ajc.com

Section: NEWS; Pg. 3A

Length: 491 words

Byline: Ligaya Figueras

Staff

Body

Large Georgia corporations aren't the only businesses grappling with the complexities caused by the spread of the coronavirus. The little guys are hurting, too. And in the food service sector, it's a tough time to be the owner of a Chinese restaurant.

Patronage at Chinese restaurants in metro Atlanta has dropped dramatically in the last few weeks amid mounting concern about a COVID-19 outbreak in the U.S. There have been no confirmed cases in Georgia.

Cam Vuong, owner of Canton House on Buford Highway, said that business has declined as much as 50%. "We noticed it after Chinese New Year," Vuong said. "Then, my God! Monday, I had only a few tables at night.

"In general, all the Chinese restaurants that I know of dropped. Also the Chinese supermarkets. They all dropped," said Vuong, who has been in the restaurant business for 26 years.

Anna Hsu of Hsu's Gourmet echoed similar observations. Lunch traffic is down at least 30% compared with the usual traffic at the restaurant.

"We used to have a crazy-busy lunchtime," said Hsu, whose location in Peachtree Center caters to downtown office workers.

Vuong and Hsu both hope the steep decline in business is temporary, but they are concerned. "This is only the first two, three weeks," Vuong said. He has considered doing a special promotion to attract more business. "Even if we do a promotion, people are scared. They don't come out. We need to think about pickup, to-go orders. That's another option," he said.

Metro Atlanta is home to nearly 450 Chinese restaurants. According to the latest U.S. Census Bureau statistics, 19% of all Georgia restaurants are Asian-owned.

; ; Chinese restaurants in metro Atlanta see steep drop in business

Georgia Restaurant Association President and CEO Karen Bremer has fielded concerns from some of the organization's Chinese members.

"Chinese and Chinese-American restaurants are reporting a sudden and swift decline in business due to inaccurate correlations drawn between dining in these restaurants and coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)," Bremer said in a statement. "It cannot be overstated that all restaurants, regardless of cuisine or ethnic origin of its owners, are required to operate at the same rigorous health standards required by the state of Georgia. It is imperative to understand that while anxieties may be high, we should not target any one group or operate in a climate of fear that is not based on facts. I ask the great people of Georgia to continue to patronize these restaurants across the state."

Bremer noted that every restaurant needs to adhere to its employee health plan and how employee sickness is handled. "If an employee comes in sick, you send them home. In certain instances, they need to get a doctor note to come back to work. There has been nothing to substantiate or definitively state that this is a food-borne illness."

(Box)

Metro Atlanta is home to nearly 450 Chinese restaurants. According to the latest U.S. Census Bureau statistics, 19% of all Georgia restaurants are Asian-owned.

Load-Date: February 29, 2020

End of Document