

Enso Bakery Owner Sparks Conversations About Recent Asian American Struggles

Posted by [Zach Hill](#) On 04/16/2021

ST. MARY'S CITY, Md. -- Recently, important discussions about race have frequently reached a boiling point. Friends Wynne Briscoe and Chris Hill have decided to sit down as friends to tackle the tough topic and, as Briscoe says, "Embrace togetherness and celebrate uniqueness" with their own podcast.

Hill says, "This is our podcast. Two people, two friends, having conversations about race and our experiences surrounding race. We'll be dealing with some uncomfortable topics and some things that we want to learn from one another about."

Their conversations will be available exclusively on [TheBayNet.com](#), and they look forward to hearing your comments, suggestions, and questions.

The pair's first guest for their inaugural episode was Rubing Yen owner of Enso Kitchen artisan bread bakery in St. Mary's City.

Struggles for Asian Americans

Yen said that over the past year there have been a lot of struggles for the Asian/Pacific Islander community.

"There's been a marked increase in hate crimes and violence towards the Asian American Community."

Hill said, "There's a lot of stuff that I don't know. This is an opportunity for us to share with other people and learn."

Yen said he and his wife came up with the idea of holding a fundraiser at the bakery to raise funds for organizations that are raising awareness about the issue of violence against Asian Americans. "We are putting on a fund-raising dinner. A four-course prix-fixe meal happening in Historic St. Mary's City where the bakery is located." Yen said the menu will examine the Chinese/Taiwanese cuisine and situate it within a broader American context. "Hopefully, we'll have some good conversations about how Chinese cuisine and American cuisine have come together."

The meal will raise funds for The National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum. Yen said he was inspired by the recent shooting at three Asian massage businesses in Atlanta where eight victims, including six Asian women, were killed. "For me, I have a daughter who just turned 10. She is an Asian woman and she's going to have to deal with misogyny towards Asian women and the hyper-sexualization of Asian women and various harassment and assault issues that come along."

Hill said, "This brings the subject in line with all the conversations we've had. I'm so grateful that you've come here to give us an opportunity to understand that. It probably never would have dawned on me to have this conversation with anyone. That's what this show's about."

"That's the biggest thing we struggle within society," Briscoe added. "Our silence and the bubbles and silos that we are all in. People need to become conscious and aware of their actions or their inactions. Because both of those things can be a detriment. Education is really key. We're really hoping that TheBayNet community that is viewing this will support the Asian community."

Yen said, "Have the conversations with the ones that you love. The Asian American community is a small fraction of the population. I think the Asian American community is pretty vulnerable because of the pervasive idea of Asians being weak or meek. They are a really easy target."

"It's a tough conversation," Hill said.

Innovative Menu

Due to the small size of Enso Kitchen, he decided it was best to break the dinner up into two events. Yen said there will be 20 seats available for both fundraising dinners happening over the next two weekends.

The first course will be crispy scallion pancakes with locally sourced crabs and local radishes and microgreens. The second course will feature Taiwanese-style beef noodles.

"We're going to make all the noodles in-house," Yen said. "Serve it with a condensed bone broth, braised beef shank, and pickled local mustard greens."

He said he was in the process of locally sourcing as many ingredients as possible.

"The third course is three-cup chicken. A very popular traditional dish in Taiwan. We're going to prepare it in a way that showcases what happens when traditional Chinese dishes come to America and blend with American culture," Yen said. "We're going to serve it over Texas long-grain rice, which is really special to me. My father came to the U.S. from Taiwan for his graduate studies in Louisiana. Growing up, he told me the rice in Texas was cheaper. So, he would get on his bike and ride to Texas to get his 20 pound sack of rice."

The fourth course will be mochi flavored with hibiscus made by Chef Kevin Davies, a third-generation Japanese-American, served with homemade strawberry ice cream.

Wynne said she and Chris will be attending the dinner on May 1.

"I'm super excited to support you and this cause," she continued.

Yen said, "We love good food and want to bring it to the people but I certainly want to showcase this organization, which is based in D.C."

Enso Kitchen

Enso Kitchen is a micro-bakery located in a re-created 17th Century Colonial building in Historic St. Mary's City.

"It's a beautiful building," Yen said. "On the inside, it is a very modern commercial kitchen. We make artisan bread, pastries, and other baked goods."

As the owner and head baker, Yen arrives at work every day at 3 a.m.

"The main thing we make there is sourdough. It's a three-day fermentation process." The bakery also makes sandwich loaves, cookies, and pastries from scratch. "It's a labor of love for sure. Quantities are very limited."

You can pre-order bread and baked goods online the day before. "We're super lucky to have partnered with Melanie's Pick Me Up Snacks for delivery service. It's a 20-mile radius."

You can check out the menu and order online at <https://www.ensokitchensomd.com/> or keep up with them on their Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/ensokitchen/>.

Yen said he's also recently become more active on Instagram at https://www.instagram.com/enso_bread/

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