

# CASTRO VALLEY FORUM

A COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER SERVING CASTRO VALLEY SINCE 1989

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Headlines

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## Thriving in Pot Pie Paradise



From Indonesia to Castro Valley by way of Germany, chef Theresia Gunawan has had a remarkable life. Once a doctor in Germany, she now sells high-quality pot pies at our Farmers' Market in Castro Valley.

“Things will turn out if you do what you like and give your heart to it,” she says.

Raised on the Island of Java in Indonesia, Gunawan and many students from her country went to college in Germany in the 1970s.

“Everybody wanted to go there. The educational system was better in Germany, and they offered free tuition at that time,” says Gunawan. “I went to medical school, graduated in Munich, and became a doctor for a couple of years.”

Then she got married, and moved to the U.S. with her husband. She discovered that to enter the medical field here, she would basically have to start her studies all over. She took college classes, but found it too expensive to continue. There was also the language issue, with English being her third language (after Indonesian and German).

“So I looked for a job where I could pursue my hobby, which was cooking. My first job here was in a German restaurant,” she says.

She also worked in food service for schools and Mills College, while raising her two children. She discovered that kids really liked pot pies, which in those days were mainly chicken. Gunawan tried out different recipes, eventually coming up with 20 different “flavors”.

She had a dream of selling gourmet pot pies that were flavorful and healthy, balancing calories in the crusts and filling. That dream came true in July 2006, when she started

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Pot Pie Paradise sales were so successful that in 2007, Gunawan was able to quit her other food service job and open a brick-and-mortar kitchen and deli in Hayward. She thinks her business has thrived even during the pandemic because it's quality comfort food — including vegetarian, vegan and fruit pies. She makes all her broth and gravy from scratch, hand cuts the fresh vegetables and meats, and is careful not to put too much salt, fat or sugar into her foods.

“It’s my job to pick good ingredients for my customers. I created my own recipes, and my knowledge and experience with Asian, European and American cooking helps me balance the flavors,” she says.

Every Saturday morning for the past 16 years, Theresia Gunawan and her husband have manned her Pot Pie Paradise booth at our Farmers’ Market across from the Castro Valley BART station. On Sundays they do the same thing at the Temescal Farmers’ Market, 5300 Claremont Ave., Oakland.

Then Monday through Friday, Gunawan runs her busy Pot Pie Paradise restaurant, lunch deli and catering business at 3522 Arden Rd., Hayward. That store features a rotating menu of sandwiches, salads, soups, and weekly specials in addition to gourmet pot pies.

“People ask me if I miss working in medicine,” says Gunawan. “But I enjoy what I’m doing and have confidence that I can do it for a long time.”

Castro Valley • farmers' market • pot pie • food

Linda Sandsmark

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