



# SHOGUN rises from the ashes

by Megan Rowe

**BAEK-IL IS A KOREAN** celebration held 100 days after a child's birth, originating from a time when infant mortality rate in South Korea was extremely high.

"After having a new baby, for 100 days their care is very intensive because they are weak," says Joseph Lee, Shogun owner. "After 100 days there's a big celebration."

Shogun—a Japanese teppanyaki grill and sushi restaurant located in Spokane Valley—has had many periods of fragility as well, Joseph says. Originally opened in 1992, Joseph took over from a previous owner in 2004, the restaurant changed location, and then a fire in 2018 forced yet another change in location.

Joseph is Christian, and when Shogun burned down Easter Sunday, he didn't know what to make of this—but then again, Easter is Resurrection Day, he points out. When faced

with difficulty, Joseph chooses a positive interpretation.

There is a strong emphasis on family in Korean culture, especially on the role of the eldest son. Toward the end of his life, Joseph's father needed intense care, and Joseph dutifully sent money to his family in South Korea to ensure his father wanted for nothing. Not long after the fire, Joseph's father, who was 100, passed away.

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*I have a strong responsibility to them to be successful, a responsibility to the community to be successful. It's not my restaurant, it's for the community.*

To some, this series of events might feel crushing. But Joseph saw a special connection: he had performed his duty by caring for his father, and now his father had given him a new restaurant.

Shogun reopened, and there is no denying the upgrades: new grills, a beautiful bamboo bridge complete with a water feature, ornate screens providing privacy for an expansive private room—both functional and a suiting nod to Shogun's status as a place you go for an important milestone, like a birthday or an anniversary.

For Brooklyn Frock and her family, Shogun is their celebration restaurant.

"Oh, geez, well, I'm almost thirty, so twenty-nine birthdays," Brooklyn says. "Let's see, my sister is twenty-six.



I mean, we've probably been to Shogun at least over two hundred times."

Brooklyn says she went back to Shogun only a few days after the restaurant had its reopening after the fire. But Joseph's plan was to hold the grand reopening at the restaurant's Baek-il. He delayed, and then COVID-19 forced restrictions of indoor dining. Suffice it to say, Shogun has gone through a lot, and Joseph admits that coronavirus has hit fine dining

restaurants particularly hard—the type of food these restaurants serve does not fare well in a to-go container.

For a restaurant like Shogun, this obstacle is more difficult because the entertainment portion is key. The chef cooks in front of customers on the teppan—a metal plate—putting on a show.

But Joseph isn't one to give up; he bought two grills for on an outside patio, installed a gazebo, and even created a drive-thru for his restaurant. This move is something he never would have considered before COVID but decided to do so after witnessing the lunch rush at Senor Froggy across from him. Joseph's customers are loyal, following him wherever he goes, and no matter the twists and turns in his journey.

Shogun is a celebration place for Jamie Miller, as well. A mother of six with a foster baby, date night is challenging in normal circumstances. Since the initial lockdown, she and her husband haven't dined indoors. But much like Brooklyn, Shogun is a special occasion place for Jamie and her husband, where they have celebrated Valentine's Day a few times.

"It was just so unique from any other place," Jamie says. "I've even gone there a few times with my sister just for a girls' day when you're having a hard time. You just feel like you're somewhere else."

In fact, Brooklyn dined at Shogun as recently as February 20, just days after Spokane moved into Phase 2. This time, it wasn't for a birthday or a holiday, but just celebrating that she could.

Joseph's wife, Sun Lee, is the chef in the family, while Joseph jokes that he's the dishwasher.

In fact, Sun decided to offer cooking classes. Joseph says it's good for people because Asian food is tasty, but also very healthy. His partnership with his wife is wonderful, but Joseph says all of the people who work at Shogun are like family.

"I have a strong responsibility to them to be successful, a responsibility to the community to be successful," Joseph says. "It's not my restaurant, it's for the community."




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