



## Anh Vo: The Woman Behind Cindi's

The Vietnamese native and her New York-style delis are at home in Dallas

AT CINDI'S NEW YORK DELI and Bakery in Dallas, the aroma of fresh-baked breads, steaming hot breakfasts and traditional deli plates fill the room. Attorneys and legal personnel take a lunch break from work at the downtown courthouse; journalists from the nearby *Dallas Morning News* confer about the day's events; and workers from high-rise offices enjoy conversations over coffee. "We've worked hard to appeal to a diverse group of people of all different backgrounds," says owner Anh Vo. "We want them all to feel comfortable and at home."

Vo launched her business in Dallas in the late '80s after a deli on North Central Expressway closed. The Vietnam native

moved into the existing space, changed the restaurant's name from Cindy's to Cindi's, brought back some of the deli's employees and began forging a first-class reputation for herself.

By combining New York deli staples with down-home Texas favorites, Vo has built an empire of lox, Matzo-ball soup, blintzes and chicken-fried steak. Today, the entrepreneur runs five thriving restaurants, four in Dallas and another in Carrollton. All locations specialize in comfort foods made on site. "Cindi's restaurants are one part New York neighborhood deli, one part coffee-and-pancake house and one part Southern mom-



and-pop diner," she says.

Transplanted New Yorkers and natives alike have called Cindi's cuisine as genuine as that of established delis in Greenwich Village, Brooklyn and midtown Manhattan. "I think we're very competitive with the best New York delis," she says. "While we offer some traditional items that remind native New Yorkers of home, we also offer other dishes that are unique to Cindi's and appeal to a diverse crowd."

Vo stands as a survivor of challenges. When she was 18, Viet Cong soldiers invaded her home in Saigon and captured her husband, a South Vietnamese military man. He was sent to prison, and Vo worked diligently for the next three years to secure his release. Eventually, she was successful, and the reunited couple began plotting their escape to freedom from war-torn Vietnam. Their

daughter Minh-Hai was not yet three weeks old in 1979 when the young family and 200 others boarded a ship destined for America, and Vo and her husband had to leave behind siblings, cousins and other extended family.

"My mother was also a great businesswoman; she owned a fabric store before the Communist takeover," Vo remembers. "She taught me that, with hard work and common sense, anything is possible."

The Greater Dallas Asian American Chamber of Commerce named Vo Woman Entrepreneur of the Year in 2012. "I'm honored and very humbled to receive that award," she says. "I love showing others what's possible with hard work and persistence, especially when others are skeptical that one can't succeed in an unconventional way."

"America and Dallas, Texas, represent freedom, opportunity and possibility to me," says Vo, who proves daily The American Dream is alive and well.

— PETE NORTHWAY