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By Henry Bury
THE INTELLIGENCER

There is a new grocery store in Belleville's west end that is enabling shoppers to expand their taste buds with everything exotic from Wasabi peas and Dim Sum dumpling to soybean milk and fresh tofu.

Alex Nguyen opened Asian Groceries at 62 Dundas St. West this week, just a couple of doors down from the Pho Viet Restaurant he has been running the past three years.

The 27-year-old native of Vietnam said his store specializes in selling fresh, frozen dry and canned foods and spices from such Asian countries as Vietnam, China and Japan and is a natural extension of his restaurant.

"Because of my restaurant, I can see that people enjoy Asian food and many customers said they can't get different food products here," he said. "There is a demand for Asian food products and I'm trying to fill the gap."

The shelves and coolers inside

his 800-square-foot grocery store are filled with food products and even other cultural items one would be extremely hard-pressed to find anywhere else in the Belleville and immediate area.

"This is a mini-version of an Asian grocery store you would find in Chinatown in Toronto," he smiled.

In fact, Nguyen travels to Chinatown two or three times a week to pick up supplies for both his grocery store and take-out restaurant.

Nguyen rhymes off his list of products. There is fresh fruit shipped from Vietnam and fresh vegetables from Toronto.

There is such frozen specialty seafood as shrimp and fish balls, crab meat, fish cakes, cooked shrimp, fresh frozen oyster, clams, Pacific salmon steak and Japanese Tempura shrimp; Japanese noodles and vegetable spring rolls and everything needed for Sushi.

He carries Basmati (Indian) rice, Japanese rice, other rices and beans, such exotic Asian drinks as soybean milk, Japanese tea and Jasmine tea, Asian candies and cookies, snack

foods, instant noodles, Asian spices and sauces, and desserts like mango pound cake.

Nguyen also sells cultural items, things like Asian wind chimes, Asian lanterns, pots and vases, Japanese sushi and bake set, Bamboo steamers, chopsticks.

"Anything Asian I like to stock because you can't find it anywhere here," he said.

Nguyen said customers can place orders for products — and amounts — they want and he will get it for them. He will also supply retailers and wholesalers.

"I will also fill orders for fresh fruits and vegetables on request and for barbecue meats," he said.

He is even making it easier for people to order Asian food products. They can go to his website at phoviet.ca and place their order.

"Anything can be placed on order because I go to Toronto two or three times a week."

Nguyen said he eventually plans on expanding his store to stock different ethnic food like Indian spices and South American products.

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