

Jade Palace Chinese Restaurant
\$8.95 all you can eat lunch buffet

{written November of 2007}

At \$8.95 the Jade Palace Chinese Restaurant's lunch buffet from 10:30AM to 2:00PM is an excellent value.

The Jade Palace is located in the KTA shopping center in beautiful downtown Waimea near Charlie's Thai Cuisine and is a delightful place to eat lunch. It changed ownership late in 2006, so if you haven't eaten there lately, you haven't really eaten there at all.

Let me run down what they had available for the lunch buffet when I ate there recently, so you can get an idea of what a meal at The Jade Palace might be like.

There was, of course, stir fried rice, a little crunchy for my tastes, but who goes to a buffet for the rice? If you're willing to overlook the general dryness of the dish, it had plenty of inclusions by way of corn, peas, and char su pork to keep it interesting. Next to the rice, was the ever present chow mein noodles, adequate, but nothing to write home about... as was the broccoli beef, sweet and sour pork in a light sauce, and a Japanese Eggplant in a thick sweet brown sauce... but then I'm not much of an eggplant person... and don't get me wrong. I'm not saying that these dishes weren't acceptable... done, you know, OK. But if that's all that there was, I don't think I could give the restaurant the rousing recommendation I feel it deserves.

So what was wonderful? The hot sour soup was simply divine. Everything I want in a hot sour soup. Thick with lots of tofu, bamboo shoots, and other ingredients I can't name. I could have done without the mushrooms that looked like they came out of a can, but I must confess, this is more of a general statement about mushrooms than anything specifically derogatory about this particular dish. If you find yourself going to the Jade Palace for

supper, open till 9:00PM, I can definitely recommend the hot sour soup as an appetizer. Simply delicious.

I can also recommend the pot stickers. Vegetarian with ginger and not all cabbage and sprouts like some places use, but a nice mash of cooked down something or other. I was too busy enjoying the flavor, to try and deconstruct the ingredients. I went up for seconds, twice, and each time I grabbed another pot sticker and another bowl of the soup to boot. Oddly, I may have been the only person in the restaurant who was eating the hot sour soup. Their loss.

I was also pleased with the sweet stewed pork. Plenty of fat and bones like any other place, and at times tough, but overall worth the effort. If I was a gourmand, I might point out that the hunan chicken had been in the warmer a bit too long (I ate towards the end of the service at 1:30), but I'm not a gourmand, and in my opinion the flavor held up well. The fried chicken drummetts needed a bit of salt, but once you added that, they were superb and succulent. The best I have had in several months. All the same, I couldn't help but notice that when the chicken ran out, they didn't refill that particular tray, but let it stay empty despite the fact that they were still seating new customers for lunch. By this time I was done, so I don't know what they would have done had I asked for more. Still, it was disappointing to see, and if I was keeping score, this would knock against them, all the more so, since there were only two banks of warmers.

By the way, I'm listing out all the food here folks. If when I'm done, you haven't heard something you want, maybe the buffet isn't for you... but I say that with some trepidation, since a group who came in later opted to eat off of the regular menu when they found out the buffet didn't have any ribs!!! Ribs??? I like ribs... alas there was none to try.

What else was there? An egg foo young that was a bit too spicy for me, stuffed as it was with an over abundance of leeks. Probably very tasty if you like that sort of thing, but it didn't work for me. They also had a bit of dim sum in the form of a bean roll

covered in sesame seeds. No real complaints or praise on that one. And, finally the meal came with the complimentary pot of tea, which I didn't try, but which looked hot. What more is there to be said about tea anyway? I don't know if they would have charged us for soft drinks or not since we opted for water.

The wait staff was friendly and took our money with a smile. There was plenty of seating available. The place was clean, well kept, nicely decorated if a tad plain, and though the restroom was not a thing of wonder, one need not draw attention to it. It simply was, which is perhaps the most one can expect of a restroom at this level of dining.

The true measure of this restaurant can be summed up by the phrase, I am looking forward to going back soon. Having said that, next time I'm going to try and show up at 11:00AM on the theory that all of the food will be fresh and they won't run out of chicken. Did I mention just a pinch more salt and, "Oh! that hits the spot."

And whatever you do, don't forget to try the soup. Simply divine.

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