

Sample Restaurant Review
Brett Paufler
www.paufler.net

---- ----- Chinese Restaurant
\$8.95 all you can eat lunch buffet

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

The ---- ----- is located in the --- shopping center in beautiful downtown ----- near ----- 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.

So you can get an idea of what a meal at the ---- ----- might be like, let me give you a rundown of what they had available on the lunch buffet when I ate there recently,

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). Now 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 on the buffet table, 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. It was everything I want in a hot sour soup. Thick with lots of tofu, bamboo shoots, and those other ingredients I can't name. Personally, 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. Anyhow, if you find yourself going to the ---- ----- 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, but a nice mash of cooked down something or other. I must admit, 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 one of those delicious pot sticker and another bowl of the soup. 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 well 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 lunch seating at 1:30), but I'm not a gourmand, and in my opinion the flavor held up well. The fried chicken wings 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 item on the buffet: this despite the fact that they were still seating new customers for lunch. But by this time I was done eating. 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 heavily, all the more so, since they only have two banks of food warmers.

By the way, I'm listing out all the food here folks. So if when I'm done, you haven't heard something you want, maybe this buffet isn't for you. But then, I say that with a little trepidation, because there was a group who came in later and they opted to eat off of the regular menu when they realized that the buffet didn't have any ribs! Ribs? Did someone say ribs? I like ribs. Alas, there were none on the buffet to try.

But by consolation, there were other dishes. The egg foo young was a bit 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's attention was not drawn to it either. It simply was, which is perhaps the most one can expect of a restroom at this level of dining.

But then, 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.