

# BAR BULLETIN

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## *New Restaurants To Consider in the Year of the Pig*

In celebrating Chinese Lunar New Year — the Year of the Pig — the greater Seattle area has contributed by the springing of a collection of authentic Chinese restaurants for people who have not yet experienced the beauty of Chinese cuisine and who are craving for an authentic taste from home. We have made our way into a few of these newer restaurants to check them out.

### **Dough Zone**

504 Fifth Ave. S. Suite 109  
206-285-9999

[www.doughzonedumplinghouse.com](http://www.doughzonedumplinghouse.com)

Having often passed this restaurant on the way home and always seeing delighted faces in the restaurant's big front window, we knew we had to experience the Dough Zone for ourselves. Hoping to avoid the crowds, we headed in for a late lunch on a Saturday. It was still quite busy with several people waiting for a table — a good sign! And even better, we waited less than 15 minutes because the staff were so efficient. We learned that you can use Yelp Waitlist for the International District location, to avoid the wait in line.

The menu is broken up into several categories: (1) House Specials, (2) Soup Dumplings, (3) Buns, (4) Pan Fried Dumplings, (5) Boiled Dumplings, (6) Steamed Dumplings, and (7) Noodles. There were only two of us, but we did our level best to try as much food as our stomachs could hold. We ordered the green onion pancake, sweet and sour cucumbers, chicken soup dumplings, pan-fried pork buns, dan dan noodle

and yi bin noodle.

The food arrived very quickly. We had a hard time keeping up with the pace without some of the food getting cold. A few of the dishes were real standouts and we would order them again and again. Although a very simple preparation, the sweet and sour cucumbers were spectacular. They were fresh, vibrant and a perfect complement to the other dishes. The pan-fried pork buns (Q-Bao) are noted on the menu as their “most-requested pan-fried buns,” and we could understand why.

The buns were crunchy on the bottom and soft and steamy everywhere else. The pork filling was delicately seasoned, yet flavorful. We also loved the noodles. They had a perfect bite and were both amazing. We would definitely go back again — perhaps with a larger group so that we could try more things on the menu!

### **East Trading Company**

514 East Pike Street  
206-324-2063

<http://facebook.com/easttradingco/>

East Trading Company moved into the space previously occupied by Sun Liquor before it moved farther north on Capitol Hill. The bar has a Chinese Zodiac theme, especially for its signature cocktails. It is a fun concept and a fun location, but unfortunately our opportunity to sample the full menu was limited by the weather, so we only sampled food items from the happy hour menu.

The happy hour menu is available from 4 to 6 p.m. and from 10 p.m. to clos-

ing. We tried the popcorn chicken bites, the beef skewers and the “fancy instant ramen” as well as a few of the libations from the happy hour menu. One beverage worthy of note was the “Ketel One Botanical & Icing Makgeoli.” Do not ask us what it is, but it was light, exotic and easy to drink.

Of the happy hour food items, we would probably order the popcorn chicken again, but that was it. The “Fancy Instant Ramen” was really just a cup of ramen with an egg and some chicken bites added — filling, but not as fancy as we were hoping.

Well, this was the risk we ran by restricting ourselves to the happy hour menu. We definitely feel the need to go back to sample the regular menu to give this establishment a fair shake, so look for a supplement the next time the monthly theme justifies visiting an Asian-themed bar.

### **Dong Ting Chun**

7425 166th Ave. NE Suite C230  
Redmond; 425-882-7311

<http://www.dongtingchunusa.com/>

Dong Ting Chun is known for its authentic Hunan cuisine, also referred to as Xiang cuisine. Xiang cuisine is one type of Chinese cuisine and is famous for its unique spiciness and varied ingredients used. Dong Ting Chun has the most authentic Xiang cuisine in the greater Seattle area.

Although located in the north and east (one in Edmonds, the other in Redmond), it does not stop people from flocking there just for a bite of an authentic

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taste from home. We visited the Redmond location. Catering to the lunar New Year festivities, the restaurant was decorated in large, red wallpaper with couplets on the door. We immediately felt the excitement before even tasting the food. Normally there is a 30-to-60-minute wait on weekends and at nights unless you make a reservation with a big group.

Going as a group of six, we ordered a variety of dishes. As opposed to the numbing spicy taste which is representative of Sichuan cuisine, Xiang cuisine is on the side of dry spicy with sour touches of pickled peppers. We ordered mashed eggplants with preserved eggs, stir-fried smoked ham with bamboo shoots, beef with wild chili pepper, braised pork belly with preserved vegetables, lotus and pork rib soup, and Dong Ting fish, all of which are representative of Xiang cuisine.

The food came at a moderate pace and we could immediately tell the variety of ingredients used. Knowing the geographic features of Hunan province, this is a result of the various high agriculture yield in the area. Besides spiciness, some dishes came with a smoky taste, a result of frequent use of smoked ham and bamboo shoots. All dishes are very authentic in taste because the restaurant owner directly transports all spices and chili peppers from China.

The mashed eggplant came in a brown ceramic bowl. We used the pestle tool to mash all cooked ingredients before tasting it. It was an interesting experience and mixing the ingredients gave out a very flavorful taste. Another very notable dish was the Dong Ting fish. The whole fish was marinated in sour, green chili pepper and boiled in a rectangular pan. The fish was very tender and, since it was marinated, the

sour-spicy taste went deep into the fish. It was very tasty and we could not help noticing that at least five tables around us ordered this dish. We would definitely come back for that.

Dong Ting Chun also has various non-spicy authentic Xiang food such as braised pork belly with preserved vegetables and smoked ham with bamboo shoot to cater to customers with various spice tolerance. The service was relatively tentative. We plan to come back to try more dishes. The Dong Ting fish is a must-have.

### **Taste of Xi'an**

4523 University Way NE

206-231-9999

<http://www.tasteofxianwa.com/>

Located on the University of Washington's "Ave.," the Taste of Xi'an provides an authentic Chinese ambiance that few places in this area can rival. The restaurant's aura immediately greeted us with a vibrant environment that we were able to join upon arriving, thanks to the many tables and spacious layout.

The menu, written in Mandarin and English, includes pictures that accurately depict the food that would soon arrive at our table. Our meal included the stir-fried noodle with beef; stir-fry steamed cold noodles with spicy sauce; sweet-and-sour pork short ribs; deep-fried, whole chicken with Xi'an style seasoning; and red willow lamb skewers.

Both noodle dishes provided a great contrast of flavor — the aptly named stir-fry steamed cold noodles were light and springy, and provided a lingering spice that was not overwhelming. The stir-fried noodles with beef consisted of hearty noodles and chopped beef lightly

seasoned with chili oil, salt and pepper, and pieces of boiled cabbage. The latter noodle quickly became the favorite dish on the table.

The sweet-and-sour pork short ribs appeared to be deep-fried to provide a crispy surface with an enjoyable tender texture. Cut into single ribs and covered with sweet and sour sauce, the dish provided a subtle sweet flavor to our palate. The ribs paired well with both noodle dishes.

The "meat on the stick" red willow lamb skewers were grilled and seasoned with cumin seed and chili flakes. The meat was flavorful, and the spices added a kick that we enjoyed, but a slightly shorter grill time would have ensured the savory juice of the meat was preserved.

The deep-fried whole chicken with Xi'an style seasoning seemed to have a touch of salt, garlic powder and cayenne pepper. The presentation of the dish was memorable, but the meat was slightly dry and could have used a shorter cooking time.

The Jing yang hot tea was flavorful and refreshing — a great way to end a meal that provided a lot of different flavors and textures. The delicious stir-fried noodles with beef and short ribs warrant another visit in the future, and the kind and attentive staff ensured our visit was enjoyable. The food left us feeling satisfied, but did not bring out the post-lunch fatigue that meals of this size are known to cause. ■

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*What is your discovery of the new Chinese restaurants in the greater Seattle area? Contact Keyi Wang at 206-407-1549 or [kwang@schwabe.com](mailto:kwang@schwabe.com), and tell us about your adventure exploring these restaurants or any recommendations.*