

I Love Chinese Food

Mary and I love Chinese food. Good Chinese food. Living in the Chicago area for many years, we had a great selection of good Chinese restaurants within easy driving distance. We like Chinese food so much that we went to a Chinese restaurant right after our wedding. Somehow, we never got to eat any of the finger food that was served throughout the afternoon reception.

We also started an annual tradition we called Chinese Thanksgiving that we have brought to Tennessee. On the Friday after Thanksgiving we would gather a group of friends and go out for Chinese. After all, what is the antithesis of all that turkey and carbohydrates. Time enough for the leftover hot turkey sandwiches on Saturday. But I digress.

When we moved here we set out on a mission to find a great Chinese restaurant. One of our foremost criteria in addition to the food is a good Mai Tai. Our early forays were somewhat of a disappointment. There are certainly plenty of places, but so many seemed to be the generic buffet or the tiny storefront in a strip mall. Due to Tennessee's convoluted liquor laws, most of these places either had no liquor license, or only served beer. Despite that, a couple notable places where the food was good included the Szechuan Garden on Chapman Highway in South Knoxville, and the Dragon Den on Kingston Pike in West Knoxville. Some folks mentioned P.F. Chang's as an option. Frankly, I was unimpressed with the one in Chicago, and I think they are a bit overpriced. I also tend to be one who avoids national chain restaurants for the most part.

Finally, we found our place. Fulin's Asian Cuisine. I know what I just said about chain restaurants, but at the time we didn't know it was part of a chain. There are actually three locations in the Knoxville area, but we stick with the one that is closest to us in the Town Center Shopping Center at the intersection of North Shore Drive and the Pellissippi Parkway (I-140). The other area locations are in Oak Ridge (1556 Oak Ridge Turnpike) and North Knoxville (I-75 & Cedar Lane / Merchants Drive).

Back to our favorite. The actual restaurant is an attractive out building on the eastern edge of the shopping center. The décor is understated, with quite a few booths and tables, including some nice round ones that will seat eight comfortably. There is a nice combination sushi bar / regular bar when you first walk in. They have a private room in the back that seats up to 12 people. At a non-busy time they can accommodate up to 24 people (see below).

Now to the food and drink. The Mai Tais and food are both excellent. In addition to many Chinese menu mainstays, they have a number of chef's specials, as well as some Thai curry dishes. We are egg roll and pot sticker fanatics, and they do not disappoint. The soups are excellent. I have not tried the sushi, but Mary says it is excellent. We both love the Orange Beef, and the Crispy Shrimp and General Tso's Chicken are also great choices. Have I made you hungry yet?

I mentioned the capability for large parties above. For those new TCC members (or those not paying attention) we have hosted a dry land raft off lunch to Fulin's the past two years in February. A great time was had by all, and I'm sure they gathered many new customers. We will definitely be doing it again next February.

To visit Fulin's web site go to www.fulins.com