

The Salt Lake Tribune

Restaurant review: Dishing up authentic Taiwanese food in South Salt Lake

Dining out • Out-of-the-ordinary Chinese at Mom's Kitchen.

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SPECIAL TO THE TRIBUNE

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I don't speak Chinese, which put me at a decided disadvantage when I visited Taiwan. Fortunately, my gracious hosts and I were able to bond and share experiences through the universal language of food as we passed around plates of noodles and stir-fry dishes.

I hadn't thought about my trip to Taiwan in years until I visited Mom's Kitchen recently. Although I sat in the dining room I had formerly frequented when it was The Bagelry, everything seemed foreign again — from the Chinese television programs playing on the flatscreens to the vast menu.

Those menu choices are an adventure themselves — all directed from the kitchen by Mama Chen and Mama Zhang, according to restaurant information. There's a section for Taiwanese food, noodles (all handmade in the kitchen), fried rice and chow mein and homestyle dishes, all served family style. The first one to catch my eye was Asian Delights. A note on the bottom of this page explains that all items are made fresh when you order and that good food deserves a longer wait.

And that's absolutely right. Mom's dumplings (\$10.99) arrive in chewy little dim sum packages known as shumai that are stuffed with a savory mixture of pork, leek and shrimp. The order includes 15 pieces, so there are plenty to share with your entire table.

Mom's pan-fried stuffed buns or bao (\$6.99) are much larger, making the four-piece order an excellent start to either lunch or dinner. The pillowy dough envelops a fragrant ball of ground pork and herbs that left a memorable impression on our party.

Another surprise favorite was the simply named beef roll (\$6.99). Best described as a pan-fried tortilla or pancake rolled around moist slices of beef, scallions, shredded lettuce and a flavorful brown sauce, this sharable appetizer was satiating.

If less adventurous dining is more to your liking, a good place to start is the weekly lunch menu offered Monday through Friday from noon to 4 p.m. A handful of choices range from \$6.99 to \$8.99 and include steamed rice, fermented cabbage, a fried egg and a flavorful stewed tofu along with a protein option. The boneless fried pork chop (\$7.99) had nice flavor but was otherwise unremarkable.

Better options exist on the special board, which one day advertised eggplant (\$11.99) with garlic sauce and lots of fresh basil tossed with spicy ground pork.

This same pork was found in numerous items we enjoyed. Taiwanese-style noodles with ground pork (\$6.99) featured housemade noodles with an ideal chew, while the broth offered meaty depth with a few leaves of cabbage for color and texture.

Chinese meatballs (\$10.99) are in the soup section of the menu. Large, luscious pork meatballs are surrounded by glass noodles and cabbage in a rich broth that was surprisingly filling.

Finally, the bean thread noodles with pork (\$9.99) were the spiciest item we ordered and also our least favorite at the time. But, after taking them home and giving them a taste cold out of the refrigerator for lunch, I was able to appreciate the layers of chiles and spices much more and would make this order again with the intention of eating them as leftovers.

For dessert, give the shaved ice with mangos and condensed milk (\$8.99) a try for a sweet finish to your meal. Like nearly everything on the menu, it's a generous portion, so be prepared to share.

A small selection of sodas along with teas and Taiwanese beer is available to accompany your meal. Authentic boba milk tea (\$3.49) offered up plenty of chewy tapioca pearls and was perfect on a hot afternoon. All the glasses at Mom's Kitchen are from Pappas Seafood House 2012 Mardi Gras celebration, but regardless of what's in them, your server will be diligent about keeping them filled regularly.

For an experience unlike anything you've had in Salt Lake before, and a vast departure from typical American Chinese food, head to



Rick Egan | The Salt Lake Tribune Mama Chen and Mama Zhang run the kitchen at Mom's Kitchen in South Salt Lake City.

South Salt Lake for authentic Taiwanese food at a modest price. It's a dining adventure your taste buds will appreciate.

Heather L. King also writes for www.theutahreview.com and can be found on Twitter @slclunches.

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Mom's Kitchen

Food • HHhj

Mood • Hhj

Service • HH

Noise • b

Authentic Taiwanese food from Mom's Kitchen in South Salt Lake includes dumplings, buns, noodle dishes and more.

Location • 2233 S. State St., South Salt Lake; 801-486-0092

Online • ginran0924.wix.com/mmsk#!home/mainPage

Hours • Monday-Saturday noon - 11 p.m.; Sunday 1 – 8 p.m.

Children's menu • No

Prices • \$-\$\$

Liquor • Beer

Reservations • No

Takeout • Yes

Wheelchair access • Yes

Outdoor dining • No

On-site parking • Yes

Credit cards • All major

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