

Sunday Lifestyle

Sunday, August 19, 2007



Asian Fusion

One sure sign we're living the good life is our hunger for new experiences, new sensations, new tastes. And what better region to explore than our own? Asian cuisine is unrivaled for its diversity, unique flavors and — lately a very important consideration — healthiness.

Podium has every Asian cuisine you'll ever crave: Gloria Maris for Chinese, Akiga for Japanese, Kaya for Korean, Healthy Shabu-Shabu for fusion (shabu-shabu started out as a Japanese concept but has since been adopted by most Asian countries). Banana Leaf completes, the menu with Malaysian, Indian, Thai, Singaporean, Indonesian and Vietnamese.

Yes, the world is now looking towards Asia for its centuries-old secrets on how to live healthier, happier, longer lives. Maybe we should tell them it's mostly in the great eating.

Whenever I miss Asian food, which is often, I head to Banana Leaf. I know that their dishes from Malaysia, India, Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia and Vietnam are the real McCoy because, well, you can see their Malaysian and Indian chefs cooking through the kitchen window. Ordering my favorite Asian breakfast, roti canal, is an excuse to watch the Indian chefs put on a show, tossing the freshly made bread into the air as the accompanying curry sauce bubbles on the side. Another favorite is thosai, a South Indian flat bread made of rice flour that you dip into mint, coconut or tomato chutney.

At this Hong Kong franchise, the most satisfying way to eat is pan-Asian, taking each course from a different country. For instance, the office crowd from the Asian Development Bank think nothing of ordering spicy torn yam goong soup from Thailand to start, followed by Penang char kway teow, delicious flat rice noodles sauteed with shrimp, fish cake and vegetables. Plus, the experience of eating on real banana leaves lets Asians be themselves, freeing them to eat with their hands if they so please. One thing manager Joel Ignacio has learned during his employ is that Pinoys really love spicy food.

“Especially the Filipinos who've come from abroad, they say that the taste, the quality of the food is really authentic.”

Banana Leaf is located on the 2nd level, tel. 687-6808 or 687-5896.

—TJG



**Noodle heaven:
Penang char kway teow**



**Thosai with mint,
coconut and tomato
chutney**



**Malaysian Chicken
Curry**