

RESTAURANT REVIEW BY CHARLES MARCANETTI

# Lucky Inn

*Lucky for Diners Loving Duck*

**ONE OF THE MORE DIFFICULT** reviews to write is for Chinese food. Why? Because we Americans know that pretty much all Chinese restaurants offer the same fare. Even the names of the dishes are the same: Buddha's delight and General Tao's chicken. There aren't many different ways to prepare shrimp in lobster sauce (my personal favorite) or moo goo gai pan. What results, and what is likely better for you, is that I am forced to be more detailed in my examination, more precise in my analysis, and more exact in my criticisms.

Of course, I was obligated to find a Chinese restaurant worthy of being reviewed. I needed to find a restaurant that stood out among the dozens and dozens (and dozens) of mediocre Chinese eateries that proliferate in this environment. I needed to find one that didn't fit the stereotype of dark and dingy, red and black, box-

car-like boring beyond belief, come in, sit down, order, eat and leave with a doggy bag of leftovers that won't ever get eaten but stink up your refrigerator for days on end, Cantonese/Szechuan/Mandarin, none of us really knows the difference (or cares), standard, run-of-the-mill Chinese, call-it-what-you-like but is actually fast food which arrived on our golden shores decades before McDonald's, (breathe...).

I know what you're thinking (besides that I write run-on sentences)—that such a place doesn't exist, right? Wrong!

I offer for your eating pleasure the Lucky Inn at 5639 Coral Ridge Drive (954-510-7561) in Coral Springs in the same plaza as L.A. Fitness. Phoebe, the manager, is a delightful professional with a perfect blend of Chinese inscrutability and American friendliness. One of the well-trained and perfectly groomed servers, and our waitress for the evening, was Amelia (somehow I think these are adopted names but that adds to the mystique), who offers explanations of the food with a certain charm that makes even the better known dishes seem fresh and new to our palates.

This is what I learned. The Lucky Inn uses only vegetable oil when the dishes require oil. It uses only white meat chicken for the chicken dishes. You'll have to check for monosodium glutamate or MSG being added, but

remember that many Chinese foods and ingredients come prepared from suppliers with MSG already in them. If you're sensitive to this substance, use caution. I didn't feel anything unnatural or uncomfortable, but, then again, I was already two carafes (they're little) of sake into the evening by the time the food arrived.

As you can see from the photos, the presentation was done well and thoughtfully conceived. The dishes were pretty to behold and abundant enough to satisfy the almost obligatory doggy bag syndrome.

Several signals on the menu led me to believe that the restaurant is sensitive to trends and food fashions. First, it added a wonderful dish sort of new to this country—Mongolian beef. It has been around in the larger Chinese/Asian chains, but not in the home-style local Chinese eateries. This dish of beef and

scallions is peppery and tender. It is every bit as good as in the chains and, for some I'm sure, even better, as the chain restaurants cater to a larger population and usually serve blander foods. I really like this dish and I think you will, as well.

The second addition I noticed and sampled was a duck section with roast duck Cantonese (it is NOT the stereotypical Peking duck), and I found it flavorful and tender, as were the braised duck, teriyaki duck, and, as it turned out, my favorite, pineapple duck.

I recently dined in THE place to be in Miami Beach. I ordered a duck appetizer and out came what I can only describe as duck tartar. It was red to the point of

uncooked. Duck cannot be too rare or too well-done. On either side of the cooking chart, it is tough and boring. Yet, anywhere in between, it is soft, succulent and even sweet. The upscale Miami Beach eatery failed miserably. The Lucky Inn succeeded superlatively. It is not easy to cook duck correctly. The Lucky Inn does it right and that is symbolic of how the restaurant pays attention, not only to the new trends, but to the best way to serve their dishes.

The restaurant delivers to the local area. It is open seven days a week and takes all major credit cards. In this clean, well-lit environment, standards are maintained because the owners are our neighbors and they are proud of the food they serve. ☛

