

AS SEEN IN

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紅姜 Red Ginger

By Charles Marcanetti



Some Asian bistros, in fact, most Asian bistros, seat up to fifty people. One reason is that one cannot have the intimacy a bistro suggests and offer more seating. Red Ginger, located at 9710 West Sample Road in Coral Springs (954-752-1850), somehow manages to offer both the intimacy and the accommodations (230 seats). How? Well, in this case, the staff is critical. We were greeted by two lovely young ladies, Nicole and Ashley, whose pleasantness and warmth told us, without words, that we were in for a fun and mellow evening. Then the waiter, Carlos Abreu, soft-spoken and unintrusive, explained the several specialties and added clear recommendations for our liquor service. We ordered a Tokyo Tea (à la Long Island Iced Tea, but with Sprite, etc.) which was sweet and sneaky but refreshing; a Lychee Martini that actually allowed the lychee to permeate the liquid, making it a delicious beginning, and a Patron Margarita, always smooth and dreamy. After a while, the owner's sons introduced themselves. Notice that they waited before coming over. It was a sign of good manners and good management skills because they wanted us to get the feel of the place before saying hello. The brothers, John and Steve Kim, didn't hover and allowed the food and service to represent the restaurant. We never got to meet their dad, Tai, but we all knew that he must be a confident professional to allow his well trained sons to oversee his well trained staff serving wonderfully prepared food from across the Asian Continent.

We started with one of the most delicious dishes, and one I urge you to try; the beautifully presented Polynesian Fried Rice (\$9.00). It is served in a half pineapple. It consists of fried rice prepared with a hint of curry and flavored with the pineapple cradle, shrimp, chicken and pine nuts. We absolutely loved it and we couldn't get enough of this overly generous delicacy.

We simply had to try the Steamed Shrimp Dumplings (\$4.50) served with a Ginger Sauce, and the Agedashi Tofu (\$4.00) which is Fried Tofu with Ponzu Sauce topped with Bonito Flakes and Scallions. We loved each Appetizer.

Let me share a quick story. Women in Japan have historically had an easier time of the bodily changes that come with age. It was always a confusion for Western physicians and scientists. Then several studies were conducted independent of each other and unbeknownst to each other. One was estrogen levels in Japanese women compared to Western women, and the other was the beneficial effects of soy (tofu, as one type) on the human body. The first study found that Japanese women, for some reason, had higher levels of estrogen for years longer than Western women. The other concluded that the chemical process of digesting soy resulted in the body "believing" that the soy was an estrogen trigger and, thus, the causing it to produce estrogen. Someone, likely a soy-loving scientist, noticed that the two studies seemed to indicate that because Japanese women eat so much soy they make estrogen longer and hence the non-scientific conclusion that eating soy products helps women stay younger (please don't hold me to the accuracy of the details or the accuracy of any conclusions to be drawn...it is simply a story worth sharing, but check it out for yourselves).

Anyway, as I always do when there is Sushi involved, I started by checking for "smells". The rule is simple. When you walk into a restaurant serving Sushi, if you can smell fish, turn around and walk out. Fresh Sushi doesn't have strong smells. Here it was odor free...a very good sign. We ordered a Spider Roll Appetizer (\$9.00). The breading was crisp but lightly colored; that is a sure sign of clean cooking oil. The soft-shell crab was sweet and crunchy, just the way it should be. It is served with Cucumber, Asparagus, Japanese Mayo and Sesame Seeds. We loved it! I then ventured to the Sushi choices and selected an assortment that would indicate what the rest would be like. I sampled Sake (Salmon, \$4.50/2 pieces), Maguro (Tuna, \$4.50/2 pieces), Tako (Octopus, \$5.50/2 pieces) and Ikura (Salmon Roe, \$6.00/2 pieces). The Salmon Roe was explosive and popping; a perfect example of how to judge Salmon Roe. It was delicious. The fish pieces were very large and the rice was kept to a minimum. In fact, that is exactly how truly authentic restaurants serve Sushi: be proud of the fish and allow the rice to be a complement, not an overpowering force.

In the friendly atmosphere and sitting among many happy diners, we eagerly awaited our main courses which proved to be well worth the interval. In fact, the main courses arrived as if choreographed to coincide with our finishing the preceding service.

Harkening back to my childhood, I decided to try the Lobster In Lobster Sauce (since it was Lobster, it is priced according to market. However, if we had the Shrimp In Lobster Sauce it would have been \$13.00). It is created with a blend of White Wine Sauce, Peas, Mushrooms and Eggs. It was exceptionally light and, yes, we did suck on all the juicy shells...and we had a blast doing it! Next we felt compelled to check out one of the signature dishes, Pine Nuts Shrimp (\$14.00) which consists of Jumbo Shrimp lightly dusted on a bed of Steamed Broccoli topped with Honey Wasabi Mayo and Pine Nuts. It should be a signature because not one of us ever had this blend of taste sensations before and it was a wonderful treat.

Our next entrée, and quite arguably, our best culinary decision for the evening, was the "You don't have to order a day in advance, they'll prepare it for you immediately" Whole Peking Duck (\$40.00, or if you prefer, 1/2 duck for \$22.00). It was roasted to perfection. Wow! It was crisp, sweet, tender, moist, and flavorful and presented beautifully with Lotus Buns, Scallions, Cucumber Slices and Hoisin Sauce...sweet, like candy. It's a must for duck lovers and those of you who would want to try a different taste treat.

We finished the evening with three desserts: the Chocolate Cake, which was very sweet and creamy; the Chocolate Ice Cream; and, a fine and sexy Tempura Cheesecake served with cold, cold berries and a sweet sauce. Clearly my favorite and one I must recommend to anyone who still has room left over after their gastronomical extravaganza.

Red Ginger was opened about six months ago and, judging from the mid-week crowds, will be around for a long, long time. This food critic certainly hopes so.



RED GINGER ASIAN BISTRO
9710 Sample Road, Coral Springs, FL 33065
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Hours:
Sun-Thurs: 11:30 am - 10:00 pm
Fri-Sat: 11:30 am - 11:00 pm