

Delicious dim sum and authentic Chinese fare at Oriental East

Oriental East
1290 East-West Highway

Silver Spring

(301) 608-0030

Oriental East is open Sunday through Thursday from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m., Friday and Saturday from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Dim sum is served daily from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Carry-out is available. Parking is free.

My friends Jessie, who is Chinese, and Dean introduced me to dim sum recently. Without their help I would have been at a loss to know how to choose and what I was eating.

We dined at Oriental East, which is open late every evening but serves dim sum only from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Servers wheel trolleys of dim sum items through the two long aisles of the restaurant, and diners select whatever appeals to them. The server notes -- in Chinese -- each selection on the bill, which is left on the diner's table. Every few minutes another trolley passes by.

At least 80 percent of the customers were Chinese, a tribute to the authenticity of Oriental East's menu. Every table was occupied.

According to Jessie, "dim" means "point" and "sum" means "heart," so that one chooses with one's heart from the assortment of appetizer-sized delectables. We sampled -- or devoured -- a total of 12 different dim sum items. I was familiar with only one, spring rolls, crisp and tasty and one of my favorites.

We ate them in no particular order, except for saving three for dessert -- sesame ball (lotus paste), big white cubes of coconut custard and sweet almond jelly topped by fruit. Shui mai (shrimp and pork) and beef rice noodle crepe were delicious, as was sticky rice (Chinese sausage, green onion, fried egg and dried shrimp).

My friends giggled as I tried Beef Tripe in Black Bean Sauce -- not bad, but not at the top of my list for the future. I forget what fried fun-gor is, but I know I liked it.

Prices for dim sum range from \$1.95 to \$3.05. Our bill -- once or twice we ordered two of an item -- reached \$35.40 plus tip after more than an hour of leisurely eating.

The regular dinner menu offers entrees scores of selections ranging from "mein" variations (\$5.75 to \$9.95) through 18 fish, mostly shrimp, 20 beef and pork, six lamb, 16 poultry and seven vegetable dishes to sauteed giant clam (\$15.95).

Combinations platters including egg roll, fried rice, choice of three soups plus dessert run \$6.95 to \$8.95. Family dinners for two, three, four or five run \$18.50 to \$47.25. The carry-out menu is also

extensive.

There are plenty of other dim sum choices I'd like to try in the future. Oriental East has an atmosphere that welcomes families, couples and anyone with a yen for genuine Chinese cuisine. □

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