

TREASURES FROM THE EAST (OC)

BY ANNA TRAN

The greatest thing about this melting pot we live in is that we can truly take a bite out of every culture without having to step foot into SNA or LAX. I just came back from a three-week trip to Asia where I ate almost everything in sight. Vietnamese rice dishes, noodles from Thailand, Korean barbecue – you name it, I devoured it. Envious much? Don't be! You sure don't have to cross the Pacific to get the authentic taste of eastern cuisine when you have everything from Little Saigon to Koreatown at your fingertips. So put your passport away and make sure you've got an empty (and willing) stomach, as I guide you through the real OC, Asian style.



THAI NAKORN RESTAURANT | 11951 BEACH BLVD | STANTON | (714) 799-2031

Upscale Asian: AnQi Bistro by Crustacean



It's no secret that Madame An knows how to handle her seafood. Her first eatery, Crustacean, is an L.A. institution—a delicious fusion of Asian cuisine with a little bit of Hollywood glamour. But what makes AnQi at Bloomingdales so special is that An continues to uphold that unctuous Vietnamese flavor and gives it an upscale, Orange County edge. At AnQi, you'll of course find An's Famous Garlic Noodles (it's a must-have at the Q Noodle Bar), Asian tapas and seafood platters, and a plethora of fancy martinis at the sleek red bar. But while you're there, venture off and select an AnQi-styled Vietnamese snack, such as the Steamed Bao Bun and Braised Pork Belly (banh bao, in Vietnamese) and finish off your decadent dinner with the Vietnamese Banana Fritter. AnQi is right on cue. **NATIVE KNOWLEDGE:** One Wednesday per month, AnQi hosts an evening of cuisine and couture. What more can a fashionable foodie ask for?

3333 S. Bristol St., Costa Mesa, (714) 557-5679
11-11:30 Daily | www.anqibistro.com

The Hot Pot: California Shabu-Shabu



Consider Shabu-Shabu as a boiling bath where raw meats and veggies cook before being devoured. With choices of delicately sliced beef (choice, prime, or sumptuous Kobe), chicken, or seafood, udon noodles and vegetables, the chef (you), is in complete control of the meal. Season your bathwater with scoops of minced garlic and scallions, marinate your beef with ponzu, boil your broccoli and carrots al dente, dip everything in the signature peanut sauce, and wash it down with a bottle of sake. Their claim to fame as the "most visited" Shabu-Shabu spot in OC is no shocker - just look at the line! But don't let that deter you: the flat screen TV, walls of awesome art, and drinks in the waiting area will help pass the time. **NATIVE KNOWLEDGE:** Lovers of spicy food, ask for their lethal Hot Drops for your dipping sauces; the more drops, the more you will sweat. Try their black sesame ice cream for dessert to cool you down.

801 Baker St Ste A, Costa Mesa, (714) 540-1888
Mon-Sun 11:30 am - 2 pm; Mon-Sun 5 pm - 10 pm | www.californiashabushabu.com

Pho Real: Pho Thang Long



The quintessential Vietnamese comfort food is a large bowl of tummy-warming pho (pronounced like "fun" minus the "n"). If you have ever driven through Little Saigon, you probably noticed a pho spot on just about every corner. So, how do you choose? Stop by the modernized Pho Thang Long in the heart of Bolsa and call for a bowl of Pho Tai, a.k.a. pho with filet mignon. Within five minutes of ordering, out will come a hefty bowl of vermicelli noodles in freshly-stewed broth, a plate of healthy greens to garnish, and a platter of thinly sliced, raw filet mignon that cooks once you throw it into the soup. Add Sriracha and Hoisin sauce to taste, and there you will have one *pho-bulous* meal.

NATIVE KNOWLEDGE: Unlike most mom-and-pop Vietnamese diners, like local favorite Pho 79, Pho Thang Long takes credit cards, and stays open late-night.

9550 Bolsa Ave # 115F, Westminster
(714) 839-4955 | 9am-3am Daily

Miso Hungry: Santouka Ramen



Hidden in Costa Mesa is a Japanese supermarket where you can find native food products, specialty drinks, and even a bookstore straight from overseas. But, this mini-mall-like market is more than just a grocery stop - the better half of Mitsuwa is its FOOD COURT where you can find the most authentic selection of Japanese fare. It's always buzzing during lunch hour, and Santouka Ramen is notorious for having the longest line and the longest wait. Situated in the corner of the food court, Santouka is known for its spicy miso ramen (big, round white noodles), but if you can't take the heat, try their salt ramen, and don't forget an extra slice of meat.

NATIVE KNOWLEDGE: With such great lines, avoid weekends, or drop in after 1 p.m. to enjoy your ramen in peace. Cash only please!

665 Paularino Avenue, Costa Mesa
(714) 434-1101 | Mon-Sun 11 am - 7:30 pm
www.japaneserestaurantinfo.com/santouka

Euro-Asian: S Vietnamese Fine Dining



Most Vietnamese restaurants specialize in one particular dish from its respective homeland region, but at S Restaurant, they take all types of traditional Vietnamese fare and give it a French and American twist. While its contemporary decor speaks as high-end, and the plates are fancifully presented, there's no doubt that the Asian influence is apparent in every course. From the heavy-iron hot pots, to the house-made eggrolls, to the Bo Luc Lac (rice with shaken beef, a Vietnamese staple), S will give you the experience of fine dining with the luxury of tasting traditional Vietnamese food. **NATIVE KNOWLEDGE:** If you want to taste Vietnamese food herbivore style, S has a savory vegetarian menu you will surely fancy.

545 Westminster Mall Dr, Westminster
(714) 898-5092 | Mon-Thu 11 am - 9 pm;
Fri-Sun 11 am - 10 pm | www.sfinedining.com

A Never- Ending Story: Cham Sut Gol Korean BBQ



Carnivores, rejoice! Of all the Korean BBQ spots in Garden Grove's K-Town, Cham Sut Gol's all-you-can-eat meatfest is toughest to beat. For those who are KBBQ virgins, here is the breakdown: one tableside grill, two tongs, ten bottomless Korean sides (kimchi, rice paper, mashed 'tates, et al), an obscenely unlimited serving of pork belly, bulgogi, chicken, and brisket, four varieties of free self-serve ice cream for dessert, and one less notch on your belt. Sounds overwhelming, but don't fret, just combine and dine! This place is beyond guilty pleasure, and is coma-inducing goodness. **NATIVE KNOWLEDGE:** Not a place you want to take non-meat lovers. And to maximize flavor of said meat, ask for sesame oil to dip.

9252 Garden Grove Blvd Ste 10, Garden Grove,
(714) 590-9292 | 11-9:30pm Daily

Tom Yummm: Thai Nakorn



Thailand prides itself in its strong heritage, beautiful temples and palaces, and of course its amazing food. Luckily, Orange County can take pride in our own piece of Thailand. At Thai Nakorn (Nakorn is the city we now know as Bangkok), you can feel the authenticity in the air the moment you walk in and are greeted by one of the family members who own the restaurant. From the most popular signature dish Pad Thai (pan-fried flat noodles tossed with spices and other goodies), to the chicken satay, to the tom yum soup, the tastes of this foreign cuisine is equally comparable to its original homeland counterpart.

NATIVE KNOWLEDGE: Don't just limit yourself to the main course. Thailand is also known for its sweet drinks and fruity desserts, so order up a Thai Tea to go along with your meal and top everything off with sweet sticky rice and fresh mango. 11951 Beach Blvd Stanton, (714) 799-2031
Mon-Thu 10:30am-10pm; Fri-Sun 10:30am-10:30pm | www.thainakornrestaurant.com

Boba Head: Tastea



Once upon a time, boba did not exist and fruity, blended concoctions were never available to quench our thirst. Then came Tastea - a little boba shop that wanted nothing but to make drinks that made people happy. Ten years later, Tastea is synonymous with "let's get something to drink" and has since been a local hangout spot during especially warm weather. When entering the original shop in Garden Grove (there's also one at The Block at Orange), you'll be greeted with a team of enthusiastic youngsters working behind the bar, and you may be a little overwhelmed with the rather large beverage menu on the wall. May we suggest an Ooh La La, a Peach Me Freezy, or perhaps some Krypteanite? If the quirky-clever names don't win you over, wait until you slurp one!

NATIVE KNOWLEDGE: Tastea is the only place that makes their boba green! Also, ask for their off-menu favorite, Yummy Gummy. It tastes just like a white Gummy Bear.

10189 Westminster Avenue, Garden Grove
(714) 539-1832 | Mon-Thu, Sun 10am-11pm; Fri-Sat 10am-12am | www.tastea.net





Japanese, please: Anjin

In the little clump of SoBeCa is a bevy of Japanese restos, but none other than Anjin draws a larger dinner crowd. Because of its do-it-yourself aesthetic, plus the particularly petite size of its limited seating area, the table turnaround is a tad delayed but worth the wait. Once you're in, start with the fresh apple and seaweed salad. Then select some marbled rib-eye and side-skirt, a side of bacon-wrapped asparagus, or ask for the seafood medley if you're feeling oceanic, and order the kimchi rice hot pot as your carb. After dousing your dipping sauces with spoons of minced garlic, you'll be set to cook dinner at your tableside grill.

NATIVE KNOWLEDGE: Although they don't take reservations, you can leave your number with the host and he'll call you while you kill time shopping at the Lab.

3033 Bristol St, Costa Mesa | (714) 979-6700 | 5pm-1:00am Daily



Dim Sum and Then Some: Seafood Cove #2

Dim sum is the quintessential Asian breakfast-slash-brunch choice if you're looking to get some serious grub on. Modeled like Spanish tapas by the way each tin plate is served in small portions, this Chinese breakfast for champions is not your typical bacon and eggs. At Seafood Cove #2, breakfast is served the traditional way, a la cart → as in, ladies pushing their little carts full of freshly steamed har gow (shrimp dumplings), veggie gyoza, juicy shu mai (meatballs), and banh cuon xa xiu (pork rolls) up and down the aisles, all for your taking. Go with the family, or have a morning-after pow wow with your group of friends. The bigger the group, the more you can order and taste!

Every plate is just a few bucks, so go ahead, try the chicken feet! I dare you.

9211 Bolsa Ave #106, Westminster, (714) 893-1976 8:30am-9:30pm Daily | www.seafoodcove.com



Hot Buns and Coffee: 85 (degrees) C Cafe Bakery

The age-old tradition of afternoon tea was the inspiration for this Taiwan phenomenon. In 2004, master chefs from Taipei came up with a concept of making 5-star quality baked goods and coffee available to the masses. Six years and over 325 locations later, Irvine's very own 85° (the only one outside of Asia!) is the place for the best bread, pastries, cakes, and drinks! So when you get there (you'll spot it by the line out the door), grab a tray and a set of tongs, and maneuver your way through the buffet of freshly baked sweet and savory bready snacks; and once at the register order up their signature Sea Salt Coffee. Anyone with a sweet tooth will agree that 85° is 360° of deliciousness.

NATIVE KNOWLEDGE: The cafe is named for the perfect temperature to enjoy a cup of coffee (that's 185° to us!) All the breads and cakes are baked fresh throughout the day, so come by anytime to get some hot buns.

2700 Alton Pkwy Ste 123, Irvine (949) 553-8585 | Mon-Thu 7am - 10pm; Fri-Sat 7am - 12am; Sun 8am - 10pm | www.85cafe.us