

# MOUTH OF THE COLUMBIA

Coast Weekend's local  
restaurant review

## A packed menu (15 pages long) but few enticements at Long Beach Thai Cuisine

Review and photos by  
**THE MOUTH OF THE COLUMBIA**  
MOUTH@COASTWEEKEND.COM  
FACEBOOK.COM/MOUTHOFTHECOLUMBIA

Arriving with a thud in a three-ring binder, the menu at Long Beach Thai Cuisine is 15 pages long.

Fifteen pages.

That's a North Coast record.

Contained within those 15 pages are something like 115 choices, though there are but a handful of lanes: noodles, curries, fried rices, sautés, soups, specials and so on.

The menu gets its sprawl in minutia. A veggie here, a sauce there, ad infinitum. It's too much to keep in your head at once.

So good luck deciding what to order. And try to keep your head from exploding when you ask for recommendations and receive the dreaded response: "Everything is good."

Most of what I tried ended up simply serviceable. The bedrock of flavors at LBTC — of fish sauces, garlic, soy, ginger, coconut, Thai chilis and so on — fulfills the Thai's basic promise but stop short of surprising or exceptional.

After flipping back and forth between menu pages for far too long, I went with my Thai standby; indeed it doesn't take long for my coconut curry itch to need scratching.

The chicken in the Panang Curry (\$10.95) came as flat, cardboard-thin, dry strips. The veggies were a little dull and the portion middling. But the creamy broth subdued my craving. It would keep the curry wolves at bay for at least a few more days.

Those same thin, dry insubstantial strips of unseasoned chicken made their way into the Fresh Rolls (\$6.50), wrapped with iceberg lettuce, a few shards of



Happy Duck

carrots and a tiny prawn tail inside gummy rice paper. Flat on their own, a sweet and spicy peanut sauce pepped them up.

Most entrées at LBTC are available on the 5-star scale of spiciness. A devotee of foods that might make you sweat, I was most content around a 3-star level, which made me straighten up my spine and dab my reddened cheeks. It was pretty intense for middle-of-the-road. Indeed, I witnessed some diners being bowled over by the heat, their tongues hanging out of their mouths between slugs of ice water.

After some prodding for recommendations, the Lard Nah

was proffered. With broccoli, the basic beefy gravy included tinges of soy and sweetness. I ordered it "monster," which for \$13 instead of \$10.95 included "a larger portion of meats." Near the size of cardboard dominoes, the flat, wide slices of beef were like the chicken: body-less.

While LBTC's meats generally missed their mark, the deep-fried, spicy chicken wings — aka the Peak Gai Lao Dang (\$7) — hit the bullseye with a brittle, crispy crust sealing in tender, juicy flesh. (The wings came with a house sauce that was another corn syrup catastrophe. Ask for something else.) Of everything I tried at LBTC, the

wings is the dish I'd most likely order again.

From the upper end of the menu — the pages dubbed "specialties" mostly feature spendier proteins like salmon, halibut and the unholy combinations of too many different meats — I chose the Happy Duck (\$16). It came smothered in a shiny slick of salty, sweet oil and beneath a hailstorm of diced garlic. There was too much sauce by half. Underneath, a thin, crispy, deep-fried crust gave way to a thicker layer of viscous, shivering fatty skin. The leg meat was scrappy, but the breast offered a few almost entrancing bites. The dish hinted at what it could become

### LONG BEACH THAI CUISINE

Rating: ★★

1003 Pacific Ave. N.  
Long Beach, Wash.  
98631

360-642-2557

Hours: 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.  
everyday

Price: \$ – Dishes average \$12

Service: Both inscrutable and brightly charming

Vegetarian / Vegan Options:  
Plenty

Drinks: Premixed Thai iced teas and coffees, hot teas, soda (no alcohol)

#### KEY TO STAR RATING SYSTEM

- ★ Poor
- ★★ Below average
- ★★★ Worth returning
- ★★★★ Very good
- ★★★★★ Excellent, best in region



Peak Gai Lao Dang



Fresh Rolls

were it given more refinement and development.

Which is pretty much LBTC in a nutshell: in need of some serious spring cleaning. I'd start by cutting pages of dishes from the bursting menu, then distilling, focusing on and elevating what's left. **CV**