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MY TURN

■ Wayne Chan



Fusion and fried rice — a match made in heaven

Beef noodle soup, Asian tapas & sushi?
Thanks, but no thanks.

I try not to be a foodie elitist, but I've never
been attracted to restaurants that mix and match
cuisines from two or more cultures. And don't get me
started on fusion restaurants. Szechuan tostadas
topped with a green curry coleslaw? I think I'll pass.

My theory on fusion food is that the entire menu
was created by some chef in New York who was
bored and just started experimenting with things.
He wanted something new and suddenly he
thought, "I wonder how Peking Duck would taste if I
added chili sauce and put it in a tortilla?" And thus,
"fusion" cuisine was born.

It's hard enough making one dish well. Who has
the gumption or even the skills to make two or three
cuisines at the same time? Well, I was about to find
out.

We recently stopped at a restaurant specializing
in Taiwanese beef noodle soup as well as a wide
range of sushi. To top it off, they had fried noodles,
fried rice, and Korean BBQ too.

I knew which one I was trying first — fried rice.
Basic fried rice — it'll tell you everything you need
to know. In the movie, *The Hundred-Foot Journey*,
the owner of the Michelin-rated restaurant asks her
apprentice to make a simple omelet. If he can
prepare a simple omelet, that tells her a lot about
his basic cooking skills. Well, with Chinese food, it's
fried rice.

It's such a simple dish, but I can count on one
hand how many times I've truly had great fried rice.
And if the fried rice is working, you can bet

everything else on the menu is probably working
too.

I'm not a food critic, but I know my fried rice. It
needs to be glistening in oil — not swimming in it.
The rice needs to be loose and not clumpy. If you can
easily form fried rice into respectable looking
snowballs, you might as well start a fried-rice
snowball fight because that rice is not worth eating.

Getting back to the meal. I dug my chopsticks into
the bowl of freshly made fried rice and gave it a little
sniff — the steam from the shrimp and barbeque
pork seemed enticing. But now for the real test — I
took my first bite.

It was awesome. It was one of the better plates of
fried rice I'd had in years. And the fried rice was
prepared by a restaurant that serves sushi along
with an Asian taco thing I've never seen before.

Now I don't know if their sushi is any good, and I
would not be the best judge of that since I'm not a
huge sushi fan, but the beef noodle soup was
amazing too. My friend even tried the Asian taco
and let me take a bite. While it didn't taste like any
taco I'd ever eaten, whatever was in it was pretty
darn good.

Apparently my whole disdain for Asian fusion
food may have been misplaced. Perhaps I need to
give this whole fusion culinary thing another try.

I'm all in. Give me your best shot. Bibimbap pizza
— I'd love a slice! Chicken fettuccine kung pao style?
Don't mind if I do! Clam chowder with matzo balls?
Just try to stop me.

But please, don't mess around with fried rice, OK?
I'm a reasonable guy, but don't push me.

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