

DINING

Wong Gee brings Hong Kong style to Wheaton

WONG GEE ASIAN RESTAURANT

2417 University Blvd. West, Wheaton
301-933-9277, fax 301-933-4882
Hours: Sun.-Thurs. 11 a.m.-1 a.m.,
Fri.-Sat. 11 a.m.-2 a.m.
Style of cuisine: Hong Kong style Chi-
nese
Dinner entrees: \$6.50-\$17.95
Credit cards: MC, V
Accessible
www.wonggee.com

Dining Review BERNIE AUBOST

Wong Gee brought Eat First's former owners from D.C.'s Chinatown to downtown Wheaton. Catering to night owls — with hours to 1 a.m. on weekdays and 2 a.m. on weekends — and parties, the 10-month-old restaurant can accommodate 150 guests.

Its ample and appealing menu features standards and selections new to the area. The chefs are from Hong Kong by way of New York, says co-owner Sophie Tan Wu.

Check the lighted board at the entrance for specials such as a pair of lobsters with ginger and garlic for \$23.95. Large fish tanks on the rear wall are kid magnets. Here, silvery tilapia play tag, lobsters repose, and ugly, but soon to be tasty, fish glare. Meet your dinner.

Wong Gee is strong on noodle dishes, thick and thin, rice and wheat, and Hong Kong-style noodle soups. Congee (rice soup) welcomes condiments from frog (a popular ingredient here) to shredded jelly fish and duck. Traditional barbecue and authentic Chinese delicacies abound. Think pig's knuckle in chef's special sauce, beef tripe with five spice or marinated cattle fish, if you will. New to this diner is the Cross Bridge rice noodle soup Yunnan-style



Sautéed lobster with ginger and scallion is a signature dish at Wong Gee Asian Restaurant in Wheaton.

PHOTO BY THE GAZETTE

with a pho-like variety of choices. It will have to wait for next time.

Nibbling on a complimentary dish of peanuts, we cut to the heart of the menu, some two dozen house specialties almost evenly divided between spicy and non-spicy dishes. We consider chicken and beef with golden mushroom in satay sauce. Instead, we take our server's advice and order the Hong Kong-style shrimp with walnuts. Super-size shrimp are the stars here, with a mayonnaise glaze adding a hint of sweetness and broccoli crowns adding color. Ginger and garlic enhance a plate of pencil-thin asparagus, succulent smaller shrimp and white meat chicken in the standout

sautéed asparagus with chicken and shrimp.

The kitchen executes more complex flavors with skill in dishes like the sweet and savory Kingdom pork chop, a people pleaser, and one of the dozen clay pot casseroles chosen to supplement the specials. The eggplant with minced pork in spicy sauce arrives in a metal rather than a clay pot. But this small detail does not detract from the wonderful play of flavors in the thumb-size Chinese vegetable.

Portions are plentiful; sharing is a good idea. Service is friendly, but questions sometimes encounter a language barrier. Weekdays, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

(except holidays), patrons can choose from 15 entrees served with steamed or fried rice for \$5.50.

Din sum (\$2.75 to \$3.75 per dish) is available every day between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. The best time to experience these bite-sized pastries is on weekends when Wong Gee's parade of carts presents a moveable feast. All you need do is point and choose. Weekdays, you can enjoy deep fried dishes, but you will have to order sight unseen from the menu.

The perennial favorites — har gow (shrimp dumplings), shiu mai (pork and shrimp dumplings), steamed pork or steamed chicken buns, roast pork buns, spare ribs

Check the lighted board at the entrance for specials such as a pair of lobsters with ginger and garlic for \$23.95. Large fish tanks on the rear wall are kid magnets. Here silvery tilapia play tag, lobsters repose, and ugly, but soon to be tasty, fish glare. Meet your dinner.

with black bean sauce — are all well represented. The har gow are particularly succulent, and the steamed shark fin dumpling (the name refers to the shape, not the ingredients) is winning. One diner pronounces the shi mai the best ever, and the youngest among us gives the house special lo mein with chicken and shrimp her seal of approval.

Lemon yellow walls, orange tablecloths and native crafts create the modest decor. Family groups will welcome a number of large circular tables. In addition, most four-tops open to accommodate six to eight. Dark wood high back chairs are extremely comfortable.

With ample parking behind the restaurant and spaces in front, parking is not a problem. A rear door provides access to the dining room. Whether you come for a dinner or din sum, Wong Gee makes your trip worthwhile.