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## DINING/HICKSVILLE

### It's Pan-Asian Dominance In East-West Cuisine



By JOANNE STARKEY

**T**HE West East Bistro in Hicksville might more aptly be called East West, given its cuisine. Yes, there are a few Western entrees like rack of lamb with honey-mint sauce, grilled asparagus and roasted rosemary red potatoes, and familiar desserts like cheesecake and chocolate cake. Still, the vast majority of dishes are Eastern.

The appetizer list reads like a Pan-Asian hit parade, with Chinese soong (diced chicken and vegetables served in lettuce leaves), Korean barbecued short ribs, Vietnamese summer rolls, Japanese edamame, shumai, sashimi and sushi and tom yum goong, the spicy Thai shrimp soup.

The five-month-old restaurant is the sole occupant of a new strip mall, which is set back from the road and a bit difficult to spot. Inside, the subdued décor has a geometric theme, with circles in the form of cutouts on the walls and rectangular lanterns hanging from the ceiling. An abstract black and white photograph echoing those shapes is a close-

up of a playground's curved slide and rectangular ladder. The focal point of the room is the backdrop to the small service bar: an aquarium and shelves displaying porcelain.

The amuse-bouche of marinated cucumber sticks and chunks of Japanese pumpkin, both a bit spicy, woke up our taste buds. The spicy Thai soup with shrimp, lemongrass, mushrooms and cilantro kept them tingling.

My favorite opener was the Chinese soong: sautéed diced chicken, vegetables and smoked tofu accompanied by hoisin sauce and lettuce leaves for wrapping. The steamed edamame were standard, as were mussels steamed in white wine with coconut milk, lemongrass, tomato, basil and Vietnamese rice noodles. We liked the shumai sampler of two mixed seafood dumplings, two of pork and two of shrimp. Unlike the classic shumai, these delicate morsels were fried rather than steamed.

We ordered the barbecued spare ribs, but our server made a mistake and brought us kalbi, Korean barbecued short ribs. We were happy with the dish: warm slices of tender beef atop



PHOTOGRAPHS BY PHIL MARINO FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

**ON THE MENU** At West East Bistro in Hicksville, where the majority of dishes are Eastern. Upper left, pineapple glazed pork chop with mango salsa, grilled asparagus and mashed yams.

cold vermicelli with kimchi and crowned with a bit of egg seared in sesame oil.

The restaurant's version of pad Thai is outstanding. The stir-fried rice noodles were moist and tasty, with big shards of chicken and three jumbo shrimp on top. Another flavorful entree was a stir-fry of chicken, crunchy zucchini, yellow squash, shiitake mushrooms, onion and red peppers in a garlic sauce.

The juicy rib-eye steak comes closest to a fusion dish with its Asian five-spice seasoning, baby bok choy and very Western cheddar mashed potatoes. Other successes included a special of miso-glazed Chilean sea bass with a pyramid of stir-fried wild rice with shiitake mushrooms and grilled tuna crusted with sesame seeds and drizzled with a flavorful creamy wasabi sauce. Inari sushi (sushi rice in fried tofu pockets) was an interesting accompaniment to the fish.

The fried jumbo shrimp were cooked correctly, but the lemon sauce that topped them was too sweet; it would have been better on the side. In addition, the vegetable tempura on the plate had a less-than-crisp coating.

The chocolate lava cake with vanilla ice cream was far above the average rendition of that ubiquitous dessert. The creamy tiramisù and the equally creamy cheesecake swirled with strawberries were also compelling. The mango flan, however, was rubbery, with little mango flavor.

### West East Bistro

758 South Broadway  
Hicksville  
(516) 939-6618  
www.westeastbistro.com

#### VERY GOOD

**THE SPACE** Clean-lined storefront. Wheelchair accessible.

**THE CROWD** Couples and large family groups.

**THE BAR** A service bar. There are 30 Western wines by the bottle (\$22 to \$98) and 13 by the glass (\$7 to \$8), 8 sakes (\$7 to \$49) and 8 beers (\$2 to \$4).

**THE BILL** Lunch entrees, \$5.95 to \$10.95. Dinner entrees, \$12.95 to \$20.95. American Express, Visa and MasterCard accepted.

**WHAT WE LIKE** Soong (diced chicken lettuce wrap), kalbi (short ribs), shumai sampler, tom yum goong (spicy shrimp soup), grilled ahi tuna, rib-eye steak, Chilean sea bass, chicken stir-fry, pad Thai, chocolate cake, tiramisù, strawberry cheesecake.

**IF YOU GO** Monday through Thursday, 11:45 a.m. to 10 p.m.; Friday, 11:45 a.m. to 11 p.m.; Saturday, 4 to 11 p.m.; and Sunday, 4 to 10 p.m. Reservations are a must on weekends.

Reviewed March 2, 2008