



## Reviews



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SMOKELESS grills and kimchi ice cream are **the** big draw at Da On Fine Korean Cuisine, writes TAN BEE HONG.

Da On Fine Korean Cuisine is a refreshing change from **the** many Korean restaurants in Kuala Lumpur.

You won't find noren cloth curtains over **the** doorways or waitresses wearing **the** hanbok. Instead, **the** decor is kept minimalistic with a lean towards zen and **the** employees in muted shades of cream.

Nor will you find ugly suction vents hanging over **the** barbecue grills. Instead, **the** management has invested heavily in an ultra-powerful suction system buried under **the** floorboards. "We don't want our customers to leave with **the** smell of **smoke** clinging to their hair and clothes," say **the** affable restaurant owner Lee Nan Kyoung.

After all, Da On in Hangu means may all good things and fortune come your way and **the** smell of **smoke** is not a good thing. Having said that, **the** biggest draw at Da On is barbecue, which Koreans show a national passion for.

Every table is equipped with a round grill filled with charcoal. This is fired up after orders are taken. Then **the** waiter will place a cooking grid over **the** fire and rub it with a sliced onion before placing **the** meat or seafood on it.

While all this is going on, get your appetite going with nibbles of ban chan. With orders of barbecue items, customers are served as many as eight small dishes containing a variety from kim chi, omelette, eggplant fingers, ikan bilis in sweet, sticky sauce, fish cake, squid with carrot, stirfried spinach, potato leaf stems and more.

I love **the** surprise element served with ban chan. One never knows what one is getting as ban chan is based on seasonal availability of ingredients but they are almost always delicious.

We start with Daeha Gui (RM72). As **the** king prawns are grilled, I sniff for that aroma of crustacean but **the** suction system works so well there's not even a whiff.

**The** waiter shells **the** prawn on **the** grill and divides it between **the** diners. Barbecues are accompanied by a dip comprising sesame oil, sea salt, pepper and sesame seeds for non-marinated meat, a soya sauce dip for marinated meat, sliced garlic and doen jang (fermented red miso paste) as well as fresh lettuce. You can wrap **the** prawn with **the** lettuce, a slice of garlic and **the** bean paste.

Garibi Gui (RM75) is fresh scallops, done perfectly for a luscious treat. With this and **the** meat selections, just tell **the** waiter if you prefer them medium or well-done.

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Lamb Galbi (RM59) cutlets are so well marinated they don't need the dips. Use your fingers to hold them and chew the meat off.

To wash all this down, have some Korean tea (RM10) concoctions like ginseng, citron and persimmon.

Then try a glass of Seol Jung Mae Gold, a Korean Winter Plum wine with gold dust. It's mildly sweet with a slight piquant flavour from the plums. Baek Se Ju is a ginseng wine with herbs like wolfberries and is said to be good for those with hypertension.

Sol Galbi (RM67) is marinated beef ribs sliced thinly. These are deliciously tender. For the even more discerning, there's the beautifully marbled wagyu, best done without prior marinating.

"We marinate with fruits like pear and kiwi instead of commercial marinades," says Lee. "And we prefer to keep the Korean flavour authentic instead of tweaking to suit local palates."

If you don't like barbecues, there's plenty to choose from. Galbi Jjim (RM120) is a hearty Korean beef ribs stew, chockful of flavour from the chestnuts, radish, red dates, ginkgo and carrots.

Yukhoe (RM60) is sliced raw beef served with julienned pear and a raw egg. Or have a steaming bowl of hot Kimchi Jjigae (RM25) soup and vegetables, served with rice.

I love the Bibim Naengmyeon (RM28), a bowl of cold buckwheat noodles with a spicy sauce. This is satisfyingly filling and just right for palates weaned on chili.

For something mild, there's Japchae (RM30), a vegetarian dish of sweet potato noodle that looks like suhoon but has a crunchier texture. It's stirfried with vegetables.

There's plenty more to try at Da On but that's for another day as we're keeping a corner of our tummies for ice cream. We try three - the infamous kimchi, lemon soju and black sesame.

"The kimchi ice cream is made specifically for us by an Italian gelato master," says Lee. "We're probably the only ones serving it in this country." Wow, it's a refreshing take on gelato. The contrast between the icy cold gelato and the fiery kimchi is an amazing experience. And you can actually bite into bits of preserved cabbage in the ice cream.

Da On is open daily for lunch and dinner. There are set lunch menus from RM40.

#### DA ON FINE KOREAN CUISINE

Level 6, Pavilion

Jalan Bukit Bintang, KL

Tel: 03-2141 2100

By TAN BEE HONG., New Straits Times , 28 Sep 2010



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### Da On Fine Korean Cuisine

Fine Dining

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