



## AMERICAN-STYLE CHINESE FOOD AT PF CHANG'S CHINA BISTRO HAS ONE HOBNOBBING WITH TERRACOTTA WARRIORS

BY BRIAN SALTER

If proof were ever needed that the economic crisis is receding quickly into recent history, one need only witness the amount of overseas restaurant chains heading towards the UAE to

its second venture into the Middle East.

Their marketing blurb says it all: "... offering an authentic American experience with a blend of outstanding Chinese cuisine". Upscale their food may well be, but one would be hard-pressed to describe it as authentic Chinese cooking. But don't let that put you off for one moment.

As you enter, you can tell that a great deal of thought has gone into the décor, that includes Chinese-looking lanterns, life-size replicas of the terracotta Xi'an warriors and narrative murals depicting scenes of life in ancient China.

We are positively whisked to a table by smiling waiters who explain the many and varied culinary creations on offer. My companion and I are warned the portions served are gargantuan — a fact that we verify a little later on.

We decide to start with pan fried chicken dumplings — a good choice as it turns out. While we wait for them to be served, our waiter enquires whether we like hot and spicy, sour or sweet condiments as he lays down a selection on our table. We both enjoy spicy food, at which point he starts vigorously mixing a sauce from the condiments in front of us.

Is it just me, or is anyone else upset that the waiter proceeds to make his mish-mash blend with a scoop

of this and a dollop of that? Personally if I want to mix up the sauces, I would rather do it myself.

Next to appear is a selection of plates featuring ginger chicken served Cantonese-style on a bed of fresh steamed broccoli; lemon pepper shrimps, tossed in a tangy sauce and served on a bed of leeks and bean sprouts; egg noodles tossed with garlic and chilli peppers; and a bowl each of rice.

It is at this point that the warnings of "gargantuan" come to mind and we are pleased that we avoided the temptation of some of the other offerings such as richly spiced marinated lamb, wok-caramelised and tossed with cumin, mint, tomatoes and yellow onions; or Sichuan-style beef tossed with chillies and fresh orange peel.

One problem with doling out such generous portions is that the food is in danger of turning cold before one has a chance to munch one's way through it all. If the bistro were to serve it out on hot plates, this would certainly have helped; but by the time we were only half way through, my companion and I were eating quite tepid food.

But that said, the overall experience of dining at PF Chang's China Bistro is highly enjoyable and there were certainly no unhappy faces in the packed out bistro!

**What we liked:** Good food; huge portions; décor; happy smiling staff  
**What we didn't like:** The selection of mains  
**Price:** Dh300 approx  
**Contact:** PF Chang's, Mirdif City Centre, Dubai, 04-2316660

set up operations and take advantage of the burgeoning market for eating out.

PF Chang's China Bistro recently opened at Mirdif City Centre. Avid fans of the animated sitcom *South Park* will recognise the name — testimony to the fact that its creators Trey Parker and Matt Stone frequently dine there. The American chain, headquartered in Phoenix, Arizona, operates more than 200 restaurants in the US, Mexico City, and Kuwait City, with this Dubai outlet

