



VEGAS'S ASIAN VANGUARD

If you want the tastiest, most inspired fare in Las Vegas, you have to get off the Strip—and sometimes away from Chinatown.

by ANDREW PARKS

For 20 years now, the Spring Mountain Road corridor north of the Las Vegas Strip, the city's Chinatown, has been a hotbed of hot pots—and every other Asian dish under the desert sun. When celebs such as Anthony Bourdain and Penn Jillette raved about the real-deal northern Thai cuisine at **Lotus of Siam** or smoky grilled offal at **izakaya Rakū**, the chowhounds followed. But these days, intrepid travelers must look beyond those staples to unearth the city's most innovative Japanese, Chinese, and Thai food.

Tail & Fin, about 10 miles south of the Strip, is one of a half-dozen sushi-burrito and poke-bowl joints taking over Las Vegas. (See also: **Jaburritos**, **Sweet Poké**, and **Pokéman**.) The difference here is the wild card in the kitchen: former Nobu executive chef Karu Wedhas. His fusion combinations are as creative as his fish is fresh. The “Crabby Bastard” rolls soft-shell crab in nori along with cucumbers, tomatoes, *furikake*-seasoned rice, pomegranate seeds,

avocado, and sweet *unagi* sauce.

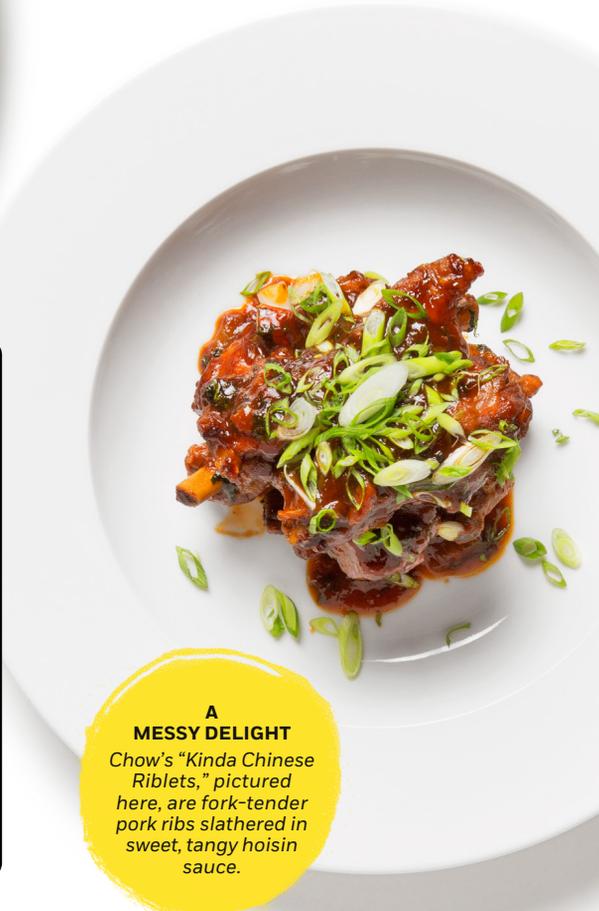
For something more indulgent, say hello to **Chow**, a homey “Chinese and chicken joint” in the Fremont East district run by chef Natalie Young of Eat, a popular Vegas brunch spot. Young coats her General Tso's in honey sambal and tosses her shiitake-and-long-bean stir-fry with riced cauliflower.

In the Gateway District, under the shadow of Interstate 15, Sheridan Su and Jenny Wong serve traditional Hainanese chicken rice at **Flock & Fowl**. The eatery lays juicy poached chicken on a bed of airy rice with marinated cucumbers, preserved mustard greens, and a trio of homemade sauces (ginger-scallion, soy, and fiery chile).

Last, but certainly not least, there's **Chada Thai & Wine**, the Chinatown solo venture from star sommelier Bank Atcharawan, formerly general manager at Lotus of Siam. Never has a plate of crispy fried pig tongue paired with a glass of riesling made so much sense.



IF YOU DON'T WANT TO DRIVE
Many of the restaurants mentioned here will deliver to hotels on the Strip. You can find a sampling on postmates.com.



A MESSY DELIGHT
Chow's “Kinda Chinese Riblets,” pictured here, are fork-tender pork ribs slathered in sweet, tangy hoisin sauce.

IF YOU ARE ON THE STRIP
You'll find higher-end Asian food at Morimoto in the MGM Grand and at Momofuku in the Cosmopolitan.



NEW IN TOWN
L.A. Exports
Two popular and critically acclaimed Los Angeles restaurants are pumping new life into Las Vegas's Chinatown. **Chengdu Taste**, a Sichuan micro-chain from the San Gabriel Valley, opened in late 2015; the udon-centric **Marugame Monzo** landed in December. At the former, try the diced rabbit with fermented black bean sauce. At the latter, give the tempura-fried chicken skin a go.