



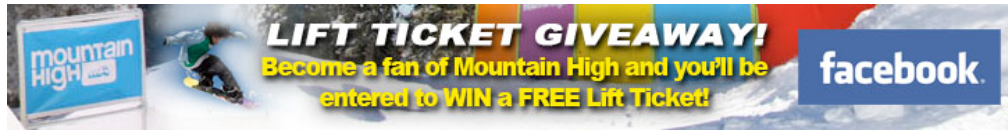
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FOOD: DATE NIGHT

Gobi Silver Lake: 2827 W. Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles

By Scott Bedno

Archives



Gobi

One of my favorite food memories, of which I have many, is when I would visit Los Angeles from my childhood home in Chicago and experience the plentiful and various Asian options the city had to offer. It was here where I tried Thai food, sushi and had my first Mongolian barbecue.

Me and Mongolian barbecue – a match made in heaven. Fresh meat and vegetables, served quickly and ... all you can eat! Are you kidding? Short of a Las Vegas buffet, it's a gourmand's dream.

When I moved to Los Angeles permanently, I found I didn't have Mongolian as often. Maybe I got older and my tastes changed. Or maybe Mongolian seemed a bit low-rent in comparison to more intricate barbecue options, which I was finding in Koreatown. Either way, my love for fresh food served quickly and in abundance has never waned.

Fortunately, a new restaurant has opened in Silver Lake, which combines the taste of Mongolian barbecue but adds a sophisticated twist: Gobi's Mongolian BBQ House.

If you're not familiar with Mongolian barbecue, let me give you a quick tutorial – you get an empty bowl (the bigger the better) and it's up to you, the consumer, to fill the bowl as high as possible with thin slices of meat, vegetables and noodles. When you've piled as high as you can go, you ladle on your choice of sauces and then hand the entire concoction to a waiting chef who cooks it in a matter of seconds on a large round iron grill. Simple stuff and you are in control of your flavor destiny.

One thing that sets Gobi apart from other Mongolian restaurants is the choice of ingredients and the sauce options. Meat options include beef (rib eye cut), chicken, pork and lamb, and there are over 20 types of vegetables, most of which are sourced from local farmers' markets.

On the evening I went, the vegetable options included sliced squash, asparagus and one of my personal favorites, Shiitake mushrooms. Most Mongolian places only offer the standard white "button" mushroom, which I don't think cooks very well in a stir-fry, so I appreciate the extra expense to procure Shiitakes.

Gobi offers 11 daily house-made sauces that can be combined in a variety of interesting ways. All sauces are MSG-free and use low-sodium soy sauce. You can go traditional by combining garlic, lemon, Asian barbecue, oyster and medium or hot sauce, or go crazy with the smoky pesto, which combines Asian pesto, smoked oyster and lemon sauce. Heck, it's your bowl – sauce it any way you like!

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Gobi's intimate bar offers fresh mixes of pomegranate martinis (fresh pomegranate juice infused with Soju) or a ginger blossom (ginger, Soju, lime juice with a splash of soda). They also have a well-rounded selection of beer and artisan ales including local and organic favorites Hair of the Dog (Oregon) and Uncommon Brewers (Santa Cruz). ?Sake and wine are also available.?

While Gobi does not offer the "all you can eat" option I remember from my youth, the dinner bowl holds a whopping 40 ounces, so one bowl satisfied even my hearty appetite. Also, it's fun to see just how high you can pile on your ingredients without tipping it over!

For you vegetarians, tofu is available, and I'm told the chefs take extra care to clean the grill of residual meat juice, if that's a concern.

The owners of Gobi (which includes the owner of after-dinner date spot extraordinaire, Pazzo Gelato) know that having great food is only part of the game. Having great ambiance is important, too. The dining space of Gobi is warm and inviting with a Zen-influenced ambiance. Local designers and historic restoration specialists were brought in to make sure the restaurant stayed true to the local neighborhood.

Gobi is located on a burgeoning strip of East Sunset Boulevard, which includes hot spots such as Pho Café and Local, making Gobi not just a neighborhood hang out, but a destination for all Angelenos hungry for something different.

The lunch bowl costs \$9.95 and the dinner bowl is \$13.95, which is a lot of great food and great ambiance for the price.

For more information, call (213) 989-0711 or visit gobimongolianbbq.com.

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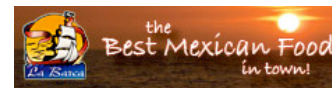
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