



# HAMJIPARK: PORK PROUD AND SIZZLIN'

*Koreatown's top purveyor of pig offers sizable portions and lively environs*

» Hwa Shin Kim opened the original Hamjipark in 1993 on the southwestern fringe of Koreatown, naming her restaurant for a traditional carved wooden vessel used to hold food. Customers quickly decided on barbecued pork

spare ribs as her signature dish. Pork-driven profits allowed Kim and daughter Eunji to open a second branch in 2003, in central Koreatown. The newer model, which I recently visited, offers similar food in more stylish confines with a

younger and more fashionable crowd.

To honor the secret to her success, Hwa Shin populated her newer restaurant with numerous pig figurines, highlighted by a smiling swine in a yellow coat and top hat with gold-en angel wings. Twin dining rooms are divided by a glass wall and feature colorful contemporary paintings. Expect hubcap-shaped tabletop grills and stainless steel hoods that vacuum the pungent smoke. A sidewalk patio is bracketed by a metal railing carved with curly-tailed pig designs.

No Korean meal would be complete without bottomless dishes of pan-cham, complimentary appetizers. Hamjipark offers six per meal, highlighted by chile-soaked turnip strands, sliced cucumbers with salted shrimp sauce, and pungent sheets of kimchi, the spicy fermented cabbage that is practically its own food group in Korea.

On the way to our seats, I had spotted pork spare ribs on practically every table. I wasn't about to buck the trend. The flame-red ribs were served on a sizzling platter, sprinkled with sesame

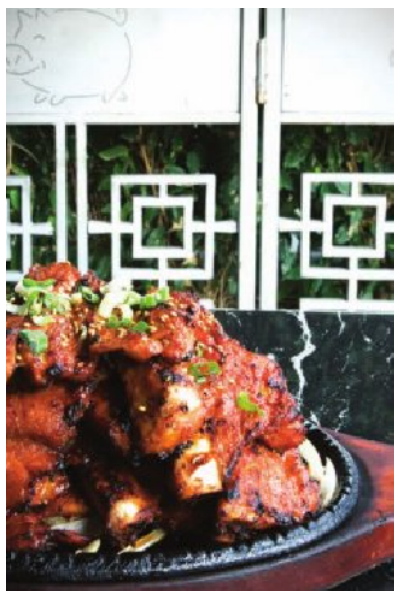
seeds and chopped scallions. They were served with scissors to cut the flaps of tender hog meat that jutted from the ribs like butterfly wings. The sticky ribs tasted so good that I soon abandoned the scissors, tearing into them and gnawing the ribs to the bone. The flavor built with each bite until I was in pork ecstasy. When the ribs were gone, I unearthed caramelized onions, super-charged by residual sauce.

Hamjipark is no one-dish wonder. Marinated sirloin was nearly as satisfying. We were presented with a plate of raw beef medallions that had been marinated in an addictive mix of oyster sauce, sesame oil and garlic. We cooked the meat to our liking on the tabletop grill, then dipped the meat in a dish of sesame oil, salt and pepper. Our waiter brought a three-compartment dish of fermented bean paste, jalapeños and sliced garlic cloves, not that the meat needed anything extra. With the entrée, we received a crisp iceberg lettuce salad dressed with sesame vinaigrette and chile flakes.

Hamjipark's menu identified the

## INFO:

**Hamjipark**  
3407 W. 6th St.,  
Los Angeles,  
(213) 365-8773.



pan-broiled squid with noodle as an "appetizer." I'd call it a meal. The massive bowl featured four piles of springy vermicelli over a chile-soaked stir-fry of tender tentacles and abdomen, sheets of tail meat, sweet onions, mushrooms, zucchini and red pepper strips.

A sizzling stone bowl was deceptively simple to the naked eye: a heap of steamed white rice tossed with black sesame seeds, diced scallions and a single raw egg. I used a large spoon to excavate a base of pungent kimchi, then stirred, spreading red spice. The rice formed a nice crust on the hot stone pot.

For beverages, every table receives a tall pitcher of iced barley tea, the perfect tonic for spicy food. Plenty of diners were downing oversized bottles of OB and Hite beer, both popular in South Korea. We opted for plum wine. The sweet amber was another nice balm for the food's chile heat. Black raspberry and pomegranate wine were also available.

Hamjipark doesn't offer dessert, but Ice Kiss is next door, serving fully loaded shaved ice and frozen yogurt. Still, Hamjipark was sensational, serving beyond-generous portions of flavorful food in a lively setting.

Pork spare ribs \$16.99; Kimchi rice in sizzling stone bowl \$9.99. [NA](#)

## THE HOT CORNER

2nd Street and Main Street

A lot of Angelenos mistake Downtown Los Angeles as a lost cause, but the cranes have camped, luxury lofts are rising, and the city's historic core is speeding toward revitalization. A steady stream of businesspeople, *Times* reporters, gentrifiers and government workers have made 2nd & Main one of the area's most fully realized corners to date.

The 1910 Beaux-Arts Higgins Building currently contains all of the corner's action, both above and below ground. Lili and Cecil Kim's stylish Liliya China Bistro partners Chinese and Korean food with a red, orange and gold color scheme. Expect dishes like black bean noodles with pork and squash, sizzling short ribs, and flounder with soy ginger sauce.

Paul Hibler and David Sanfield imported Pitfire Pizza Company from North Hollywood in August 2005. The contemporary offshoot offers thin-crust pizzas topped with market-fresh ingredients, hearty pasta dishes and seasonal panini.

No stranger to Downtown, third-generation Angeleno Richard Karno succeeded with Groundwork Coffee in the Arts District before opening a branch at 2nd & Main in January 2007. Karno said, "I was always embarrassed about our Downtown, but I've been very excited about this revitalization." His two-story coffee-house introduced

Los Angeles to the deluxe Clover coffee-making machine, and offers up to 30 varieties of organic beans and blends per day. In the basement, Andrew Meieran and partner Marc Smith have transformed the Higgins Building's original power plant into a truly distinctive bar and lounge. Their signature cocktail features lavender-honey-infused liquor, pear liqueur and fresh pear nectar. A bar menu is available Wednesday to Saturday, and includes a lobster corn dog and both deviled and angel eggs (with Osetra caviar).

—Joshua Lurie

**The Edison** 108, W. 2nd St. #101, Los Angeles, (213) 613-0000.

**Groundwork Coffee**, 108 W. 2nd St. #107, Los Angeles, (213) 620-9668.

**Liliya China Bistro**, 108 W. 2nd St. #102-103, Los Angeles, (213) 620-1717.

**Pitfire Pizza Company**, 108 W. 2nd St. #105, Los Angeles, (213) 808-1200.

# Fritzie's

## pasta & grill

**Where Remarkable Dining Has Been Redefined!**

**Exceptional Homemade Pastas, Succulent Seafood, Plus Weekly Culinary Treasures**

**Legendary Service Notable Wine List**

**Now Open for Lunch Weekdays 11:30am to 2:00pm**

**323.664.7979** for reservations • [www.fritziespastagrill.com](http://www.fritziespastagrill.com)  
**2630 Hyperion Ave. Los Angeles** (at Griffith Park Blvd.)

BREAKFAST • LUNCH • DINNER

# cafe metropol

**Enjoy the culinary delights of an authentic European Bistro situated in the heart of the Downtown Artist District**

**Open Mo - Fri 8am - 10pm, Sat 9am - 10pm, Sunday Brunch 9am - 2pm**

[www.cafemetropol.com](http://www.cafemetropol.com) 923 East 3rd Street, Los Angeles, CA 90013, Tel. (213) 613-1537