

## **Traveling on empty? Tired of fast food and vending machine cuisine?**

### **It doesn't have to be this way**

Dear Barbara,

Just arrived at your hotel? Tired? Flight was good, nothing but peanuts since the morning-**You're starving!**

In a strange city-you're always at a disadvantage of finding a great place to eat. The hotel staff may direct you to their cousin's café, or an expensive, low quality restaurant nearby. You follow Yelp recommendations. Often, all may be expensive, filling your stomach but leaving all your other senses dulled.

What if you could go to another country for lunch? A dining experience of exotic, brag-worthy foods to your friends? Without spending all of your travel budget? Is that even possible?

If you're like me, you want fresh, delicious food at a value price, an experience that not only fills your belly but stimulates all five senses without costing a small fortune.

The Hee Been Asian Bistro, 6231 Little River Turnpike in Alexandria, VA is that kind of dining experience. Its name translated from Korean means Hee- "fortune" and Been-"customer." The customer is grateful of his good fortune. Entering, your nose is flooded with the aroma of stir-fried beef. The décor is subdued Asian with a gray stone floor, Asian writing on the glass dividing walls and dark redwood rafters. Your host leads you past the buffet steam tables loaded with brightly colored, appetizing food. Everything is marked with Korean and English identification labels. Your stomach growls, your mouth salivates.

Your host leads you to a dimly lit dining room filled with long, family-style, dark, wooden tables. The tables are close together and you hear the conversations of others, some Korean, some English or Spanish. You look at the food they are eating at the next table-your stomach growls louder. A waiter brings hot tea and another sets a tray of eight side dishes of brightly colored vegetables called bancham in front of you.

There's bean sprouts, yellow sliced radish marinated in vinegar, pieces of onion with black bean sauce and the staple-Kimchi, fermented cabbage in hot pepper powder. You somehow manage to lift a piece of kimchi with the chopsticks to your mouth. Your tongue explodes with the crunchy, peppery taste. Your stomach growls even louder! You grab a white plate from the stacks at the corner of the buffet table. You circle the buffet table many times like a starving wolf eyeing its prey.

Your stomach is roaring. Your head is throbbing. You are swallowing constantly. You pile food on your plate. You spot the sushi bar with rows and rows of brightly colored rolls of white rice and various colors of Bluefin tuna, crab, shrimp and salmon. All artfully made by the red head-banded sushi chef behind the counter. You carry your feast back to your table. A waitress is cooking strips of beef and spicy pork on the tabletop grill.

Your chopsticks blur as you talk between mouthfuls. Your tongue is pleasantly confused with each new taste. Your stomach growls are replaced with satisfied sighs. The conversations around you make you feel part of a large family.

Rational thought returns, you ask for a menu to ensure you have enough money to pay for this feast. The menu states the history of this family-owned business since 1994. The top ratings are listed, like the Washington Post, or KoreanDC.com who gave the top rating of all Korean food establishments in northern Virginia, or 3.8 out of 4 points Zagat rating and repeated Washingtonian Magazine top restaurant ratings. Paula White writes, "The food at HeeBeen was a new taste experience for me. Good food and food service" Also noticed that all ingredients are all natural with no MSG added. Your breathing slows as you read the prices for the buffet, a smile breaks out. What a great value for a total dining experience!

Why not make the effort right now to thoroughly enjoy your lunch with all your senses? Or miss it and spend more money and be less satisfied. But don't wait. Reservations are NOT taken. Lunch is served from 1130 to 2:30, then closed until 5:30 pm when the price doubles-IF you can get in. **Call (703) 941-3737 for directions now.** Enjoy the bragging rights of eating lunch in a foreign country without leaving the U.S.A. for less than a meal at a fast food joint.

Sincerely;

John Sickler

**P.S.** This is too good to pass up. Meet me at the Hee Been restaurant at 11:30 a.m. Monday and lunch is on me.