



RESTAURANT NEWS & REVIEWS

Dining review: At Good Harvest, the main attraction is the Chinese hot pot, a sort of fondue on steroids

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CARY — Don't let the name fool you. Good Harvest is not a farm-to-fork restaurant, and it is most emphatically not about celebrating local flavors.

Unless by "local" you mean China. And I suppose you could call the focus fish-tank-to-chopsticks, though the live lobsters and king crab in the tanks just inside the door at Good Harvest only account for a small part of the offering.

In fact, the sheer number and variety of options can be bewildering, especially if you're new to the Chinese hot pot experience that is the specialty at Good Harvest. The menu on the restaurant's website, where some entire sections are entirely in Chinese, doesn't help.

Fortunately, the menu in the restaurant is bilingual, and the eager-to-please wait staff are by and large sufficiently

conversant in English to show you the ropes. That said, it's a good idea if you're a novice to check out the helpful and witty instructional video on the Good Harvest website before your first visit.

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The main attraction is the Chinese hot pot, a sort of fondue on steroids in which you cook food in a broth that's simmering away in a large communal pot set on a hotplate built into the tabletop. You customize every element of your hot pot by checking off items on a sushi bar-style menu, starting with the type of broth you want and the spice level.



The yuan-yang (aka yin-yang) combo is a good place to start: two broths – spicy Szechwan and a mild, milky brew made from long-simmered pork bones – in a large, partitioned pot that resembles its namesake symbol.

Then things get really interesting, when you select the items you want to cook in the broth. Choosing from a list of nearly 70 meat, seafood, tofu, vegetable, noodle and dumpling options, you can make your meal as comfortably familiar or as daring as you like. Play it safe with napa cabbage, potato, corn, hand-pulled noodles, shrimp (trigger alert for the truly squeamish: they're head-on) and petal-thin slices of rib-eye. Or dial up the adventure level as high as you like with any of the nearly two dozen more exotic options, from lotus root and enoki mushrooms all the way up to pork blood and fresh duck gizzard.

A handful of items have English names (or transliterations) that you may not recognize. Google comes to the rescue, informing you that tong ho (which, if you don't recognize the term, your solicitous waiter will try to steer you away from) is chrysanthemum leaves. If you like collard greens, you might want to give these a try.

While you're waiting for your hot pot to arrive, you'll want to visit the condiment station, where you can create your own sauce(s) from bins filled with chopped scallions, garlic, Chinese BBQ sauce, chile-spiked soy sauce and sesame oil, to name a few. Once you've cooked a morsel of food to your liking in the broth, dip it into the sauce you've created before popping it into your mouth.

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At Good Harvest in Cary, spring for an order of charpati. Flatbreads with fillings ranging from spring onion (reminiscent of scallion pancakes) to pineapple; these are a delightful and accessible way to kick off the adventure.

Greg Cox - newsobserver.com

If cooking isn't your thing, turn your attention to the Fish Pot section of the menu, where you'll find the dry hot pots (or simply, dry pots) that are the restaurant's other specialty. These shareable pots, essentially stir-fries or stews made with your choice from a varied selection of fresh fish and shellfish (in a few cases, taken straight from one of those tanks near the entrance), arrive fully cooked at the table.

But that doesn't mean you won't have your work cut out for you if you've got your eye on one of those lobsters in the tank. Cooked to the spice level you specify and showered with chopped scallions and sesame seeds, the lobster is served in pieces in the shell, with nothing but chopsticks and your fingers to get at the meat. It's worth the effort, though, and you can finish cleaning up what little juices you aren't able to lick off your fingers with a large moist towelette that's provided at the end of the meal.

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Live barramundi, a mild, flaky white fish also known as Asian sea bass, is another tempting option. There were no fish in the tanks either time I visited, though, so I opted instead for a dish that, according to the restaurant's website, is its trademark: Golden Pepper Crisp Fish. Turns out "crisp" doesn't refer to the texture of the fish, which is cut into bite-size filet pieces and stir-fried with an assortment of vegetables and moderately spicy round peppers that resemble cherry peppers. According to our server, if I understood him correctly, "crisp fish" doesn't refer to the texture or cooking method, but to the variety of fish. Once I got past the confusion, I found it to be a thoroughly enjoyable dish.

Regardless of whether you opt for the fondue or the dry pot – or round up a party of four or more and get a combo that includes both – by all means spring for an order of charpati. Flatbreads with fillings ranging from spring onion (reminiscent of scallion pancakes) to pineapple, these are a delightful and accessible way to kick off the adventure.

According to the restaurant's website, Good Harvest is a restaurant chain that started in China in 2006 and has quickly grown to more than 50 locations in that country. The Cary location, which opened last summer, is one of only three in the United States. The other two are in New York. I'd say that's yet another sign that the Triangle's culinary scene is moving up to the big leagues.

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GOOD HARVEST

1104 Ledsome Lane, Suite 105, Cary

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goodharvestny.com or facebook.com/GoodHarvestNC

Cuisine: Chinese

Rating: ☆☆☆ 1/2

Prices: \$\$\$

Atmosphere: colorful contemporary Asian

Noise level: moderate

Service: attentive and eager to please, by and large overcoming the language barrier

Recommended: hot pot, fish pot, charpati

Open: Lunch and dinner daily.

Reservations: accepted

Other: beer and wine; accommodates children; limited vegetarian selection; parking in lot.

The N&O's critic dines anonymously; the newspaper pays for all meals. We rank restaurants in five categories: ☆☆☆☆☆ Extraordinary ☆☆☆☆☆ Excellent. ☆☆☆ Above average. ☆☆Average. ☆ Fair.

The dollar signs defined: \$ Entrees average less than \$10. \$\$ Entrees \$11 to \$16. \$\$\$ Entrees \$17 to \$25. \$\$\$\$ Entrees more than \$25.

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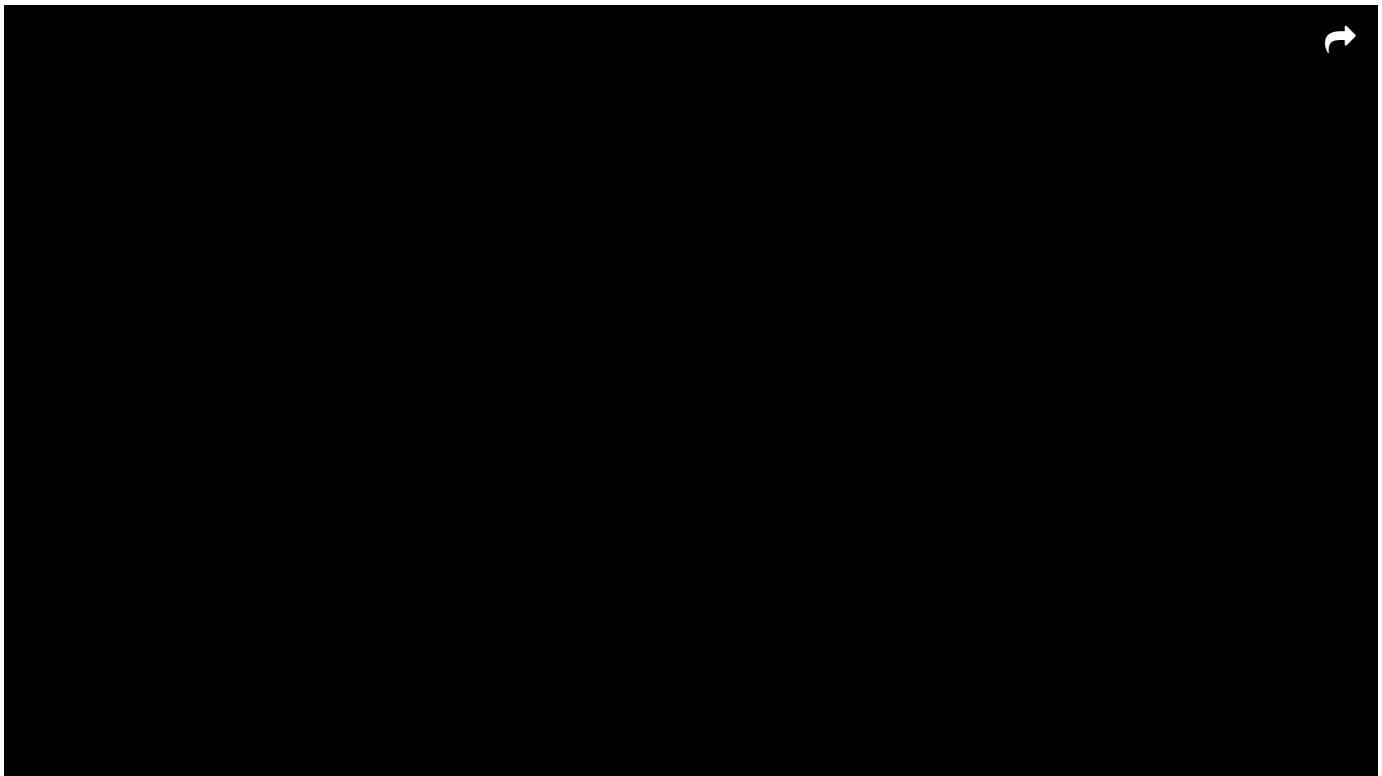
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