

# THE HOT SPOTS FOR ASIAN CUISINE

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Sick of Panda Express? Try some of these Asian joints!



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PHOTOS COURTESY OF REVIEWERS

■ = deliciousness / 5  
 = Asian-ness / 5 (authenticity)

## a. Tofu Ya, Sawtelle

2021 Sawtelle Blvd.  
Los Angeles, CA 90025.  
(310) 473-2627  
<http://www.tofuyabbq.com>

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A Korean restaurant located in a predominantly Japanese area may seem questionable to even the least picky of eaters, but one taste of Tofu Ya's warm and flavorful soon-tofu soup will quell any doubts one might have. Located in Sawtelle, Tofu Ya boasts a friendly atmosphere with mouth-watering combinations that will give you a kimchi-laden bang for your buck. The side dishes alone are worth sitting down for (vegetarians will get a kick out of the zucchini in chili paste and the delicious fishcakes), and the soup comes with a raw egg that you crack and stir in yourself. For just \$14, you can get your choice of soup and an order of sizzling B.B.Q. pork ribs - and you don't even have to make your way to Koreatown. Because the restaurant is small, it makes for a more intimate eating experience, one that you'll definitely want to share with loved ones. -SM

## c. Top Island International, Alhambra

740 East Valley Blvd.  
Alhambra, CA 91801-5216  
(626) 300-9898  
[www.yelp.com/biz/top-island-seafood-restaurant-alhambra](http://www.yelp.com/biz/top-island-seafood-restaurant-alhambra)

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Located at a strip mall that also houses the Sunday Café, an Asian fusion place for hip youngsters, Top Island is near the top of restaurant row in Alhambra. You can get private rooms for formal occasions, and the service is great compared to other Chinese places. The shark's fin soup comes with more fin in it than we're accustomed to, and once you put in vinegar, the flavor is quite savory. While most of the seafood is delicious, the scallop deserves some special recognition. Perhaps the best part about their seafood is the way they cook the fish. We got a snapper with meat that came off the bone easily, laden with a special onion-blended sauce. The dishes range from \$7 to \$15. They also do dim sum in the mornings, and there's a \$1.39 special before 10 a.m. -RL

## f. Gate of India, Santa Monica

115 Santa Monica Blvd.  
Santa Monica, CA 90401  
(310) 656-1664  
<http://www.lataco.com/taco/gate-of-india-santa-monica>

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On the corner of Santa Monica Boulevard, there's a petite-looking restaurant called Gate of India. There are several 6-foot gates posted up against the walls, decorated with engravings of elephants surrounded by detailed floral designs. Inside, my friend and I were greeted warmly by a waiter. The food was served in metal bowls with a small flame underneath them to keep them warm. Portions were generous, but the so-called homemade spices weren't spectacular. The tea is a bit expensive and the chicken too dry, but the restaurant's eye-catching decorations do provide a welcoming ambiance that makes everything taste just a tiny bit better. For high quality Indian food, however, it might be wise to look elsewhere. -SA

## b. Daikokuya, Little Tokyo

327 E 1st Street.  
Los Angeles, CA 90012.  
(213) 626-1680  
<http://www.daikoku-ten.com>

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Daikokuya, a Japanese ramen restaurant located in the heart of Little Tokyo, boasts only one kind of ramen, yet customers keep coming back for more. Known for its specialty, the Daikoku Ramen, featuring mouth-watering pork broth and tender chashu pork (I recommend asking for kotteri flavor, which is a rich flavor of soup extracted from pork back fat—yum!), Daikokuya is arguably the most popular ramen restaurant in Little Tokyo. The wait is long, even on a Tuesday evening, but the food is well worth the wait. It's an old-fashioned underground ramen joint, but service is consistently good. For those who aren't in the mood for hot soup, their Tsukemen, a variation of Daikoku Ramen, consists of cooled noodles with soup on the side as a dipping sauce. -KL

## d. Sushi Mac, Sawtelle

8474 W 3rd St.  
Los Angeles, CA 90048  
(323) 653-3959  
<http://sushimacla.com>

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For students in L.A. without a car, finding good, cheap sushi can be a formidable task, especially if you're tired of frequenting the places in Westwood. Luckily, Sushi Mac, a small, hole-in-the-wall restaurant located on Sawtelle (easily reachable by taking the green Culver City 6 bus) satisfies sushi cravings with a wide selection and a convenient price. Every plate in the restaurant - whether it's unagi, sashimi, or a California roll - costs exactly \$3, and there's no limit to how much you can eat. The service is friendly, the food comes quickly, and most importantly, the sushi tastes good. For good, cheap eats, Sushi Mac is the place to go - you're just a short bus ride away. -SM

## g. Santouka, Centinela

3760 S Centinela Ave  
Los Angeles, CA 90066  
(310) 391-1101  
<http://www.santouka.co.jp>

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Although its menu is simple, Santouka boasts one-of-a-kind ramen that will surely beckon you back for more. There are a total of four broth bases: salt, soy, miso and spicy miso. The salt base is, ironically, the least salty of the four. Definitely choose their special pork to go with your bowl of ramen - it's the perfect balance of lean and fat and melts in the mouth. Their broth isn't too oily and contains just the right variety of flavors. Great and filling with generous portions... who would have thought this comes from a place nestled inside a food court? Prices range from \$7 to 15, but they only accept cash. -AM

## e. Mama's Lu Dumpling House, Monterey Park

153 E Garvey Ave.  
Monterey Park, CA  
(626) 307-5700  
<http://chowhound.chow.com/topics/636207>

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Located next to the Monterey Park landmark that is a local restaurant favorite, this economical option is usually jam-packed every day of the week. Yet people come out satisfied, partly because the food portions are large for a reasonable price. Favorites such as pot-stickers, pork dumplings, chow fun and noodle soup are less than \$5 an order, while traditional dishes like pork chop, string beans, smoked fish and tofu skin with fish are as little as \$4. Their hot and sour soup comes with came trimmings such as tofu strips, fungi and pork. Nestled in the heart of San Gabriel Valley, it features a menu imported straight from China. -RL