



SHRIMP AND CHICKEN COMBO



CRAB RANGOONS



RIBEYE AND CHICKEN COMBO WITH FRIED NOODLES

Hibachi Time

By Bryce Parks

So, it was 3 p.m., and we hadn't eaten yet, and a lot of lunch places closed at 2 p.m. So, what to do? Well, since we started the 365ink Food Truck Finder on Facebook, which we update regularly on our page ([facebook.com/dubuque365](https://www.facebook.com/dubuque365)), we decided to check out or info to see if there were any trucks out. Sure enough, there were two. Go figure, they were both hibachi trucks. As you likely know, Happi Hibachi has been around Dubuque for many years now, and we've been there scores of times. So, it was high time we finally visited the new kid in town: Hibachi Time!

We caught up with them outside Clean Getaway Car Wash on JFK on Dubuque's west side, a spot they must find a lot of success at as they set up there quite often. At 3 p.m. though, as you might imagine, we didn't have to wait to place our order, and it was ready in less than 5 minutes.

In case you live under a rock, let me quickly remind you what hibachi is. Although the name comes from a traditional Japanese heating device, a brazier which is a round, cylindrical, or box-shaped; open-topped; made from or lined with a heatproof material; and designed to hold burning charcoal. Today, I think it means you put a Blackstone in the back of a commercial van. I'm kidding. It now

mainly refers to the kind of food being prepared which is usually flattop griddle seared steak, chicken, or shrimp with grilled vegetables and garlic- and a soy-sauce-based glaze over fried rice or noodles. And indeed, that was the centerpiece of the Hibachi Time food truck's menu.

All of the main dishes come with mixed vegetables consisting of zucchini, carrots, and onions, and a serving of fried rice with egg. On top of that, you choose your meat or meats; You have a variety of combinations to choose from. And right after our visit, they added some new options to the menu. Ribeye steak, chicken, shrimp (with sriracha), and teriyaki steak are now joined by spicy chicken and salmon options, or various combinations of two or three. Tofu is also a vegetarian option. Additionally, you can add extra meat of any kind to your order. We thought the shrimp were particularly good. Fresh tasting. They weren't precooked or rubbery. We suggest them. The steak was also not overcooked or tough. We found a touch of salt and pepper gave it a nice boost. It also comes with "yummy sauce" that you can choose to pour over, dip into, or ignore as you like. It's a light, sweet, and tangy mayo-based Japanese sauce often served with such dishes... at least in America.

The overall hibachi experience was very good. I quite enjoyed mine. When I say that it was not particularly spicy, heavily seasoned, or "unique," that's not an insult. It was a safe, savory, Asian-inspired lunch. There was nothing in the mix to make it weird or unusual, and many people appreciate that. By that I mean there was no strong pop of fresh basil or

ginger or hot peppers to raise eyebrows. The newly-added spicy chicken might change the game and, well, you might wish there was exactly that element of heat or unique spice, but in my opinion, that's not what this is about. You can enjoy the mild Asian flavors while your co-workers who hate everything that's not burgers or pizza will also be able to enjoy it without complaint. There is a broad appeal here to appease most palates.

The main dishes range from \$8 (veggies and rice) to \$15 (steak and salmon) with combos available for \$15-\$17. I found my shrimp and chicken combo had plenty of meat to get me through the whole meal. It was a good-sized serving. I had enough that I could share with my sidekick, a 9-pound, grumpy, old, miniature poodle. Coco turns his nose up at everything, but he absolutely loved the meats. So, that's a big vote of confidence.

The appetizers at Hibachi Time take the meal over the top as you can order up fried gyoza (that's pot stickers to the undercultured), crab rangoons, and pork egg rolls. I found the egg rolls to be nicely flavored, a good size, and with a nice crunch. Again, nothing weird or spicy or noticeably out of left field flavor-wise, but just a good, American-style egg roll as I was expecting it would be. And the crab rangoons were much the same: triangular cream cheese-stuffed wonton wrappers. Both came with sweet Thai chili sauce for dipping.

Side orders of fried rice, veggies, and fried noodles are also available. Add them to a main dish or combo for \$2. And for dessert, maybe the new funnel fries

offering. Soda and water a just a buck more. We got a little bit of everything and brought it all the way back downtown to do our very scientific tasting at the 365ink office. The crunchy stuff stayed crunchy the whole time, and the food was still piping hot when we lifted the lids. When all was said and done, the ultimate test is, "Do I want this again?" And for me, the answer was, "Absolutely." I was quite full and happy with my super-fast food to go. The shrimp was my favorite, and I liked having the crunch of one of the appetizers as a kicker. I prefer a bit of salt and pepper. And now, a quick nap. After all, it was 4 p.m. when we finished eating, and now dinner's in three hours! ■



Hibachi Time
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