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DAILY NEWS



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Eating Along the M Line: Elmhurst Ave. station



JOHN TAGGART FOR NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

Chef and co-owner Roy Suwuh of Pondok Jakarta in Elmhurst

The M train's Elmhurst Ave. station sits in the middle of the neighborhood of the same name, which is also one of the city's lesser-known Chinatowns. Tucked in between Elmhurst's longstanding Asian supermarkets, Cantonese hot spots, dumpling houses and real Thai takeout, these three spots offer something new.

Island cooking



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Satay chicken prepared by chef and co-owner Roy Suwuh of Pondok Jakarta at 86-20 Whitney Ave. in Elmhurst.

For 25 years, Indonesian native Roy Suwuh worked as a Manhattan chef, cooking American or Italian food in kitchens like David Burke at Bloomingdale's. Last March, he finally made good use of the food of his homeland, becoming the head chef and co-owner of tiny **Pondok Jakarta**.

The restaurant — named after both the huts where farmers relaxed in their fields and the capital of Indonesia — serves food from all over the country's 17,000 thousand islands, says Suwuh.

There are great versions of the peanut-sauce topped chicken satay (\$6.50), but also sapi balado, soft rags of filet mignon stewed with sweet and hot peppers and served with vegetables in coconut curry broth and fried soybean cakes (\$7.50). Other items worth trying are a silky oxtail soup called sup bun tut (\$9.50) and a whole fish, smothered with a complex spice and chili paste and steamed in a banana leaf for three hours (\$13.95).



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JoJu features speciality Vietnamese banh mi sandwiches, loaded banh mi french fries and more.

Everything is beautiful, fresh and flavorful. If you want to eat like a real Indonesian, ask for a little sambal terasi, a traditional hot sauce made of chilies and fermented shrimp.

Pondok Jakarta: 86-20 Whitney Ave., near 88th St., Queens; (718) 606-8025 .



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Loaded banh mi French fries at JoJu in Elmhurst

Super sandwich

Named after sisters Joanna and Julie Wong, **JoJu** takes what was already a fusion food to the next level. This two-year-old modern banh mi sandwich spot — run by Julie and her brother-in-law — applies Chinese, Taiwanese and even Japanese flavors to a hoagie that was already French-Vietnamese.

The results are exactly what you want to cure a hangover or perk up a bleary winter day. The \$5.99 “Lin-Sanity” pairs Taiwanese basil chicken with a creamy green hot chili sauce. There’s also a banh mi with fatty pork belly that is slow-braised Japanese-style (\$5.99), and the oversized (\$7.49) “Bulgogi Bomb Me” is loaded with thinly sliced Korean beef, kimchi and the JoJu calling card, a runny-yolked fried egg.



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Chinger specializes in Chinese-style burgers in Elmhurst.

You can get any sandwich with egg or the house spicy mayo, which along with the pickled vegetables and cilantro, also gets slathered on the “banh-mi” fries (\$4.99).

JoJu also serves bubble teas, Vietnamese-style iced teas made with condensed milk, and the “chiller,” a fruit slush, iced tea and jellied fruit concoction that tastes like the tropics in a glass.

JoJu: 83-25 Broadway, near Dongan Ave., Queens; (347) 808-0887 .



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Chinger features Chinese-style burgers including beef, pork, vegetable, and meat-vegetable combos.

In between the bun

Last month the Elmhurst hot pot restaurant called Shell Cove converted part of its storefront into a tiny “Chinese burger” joint wittily called **Chinger**. It isn’t American-style patties they’re slinging, of course, but rou jia mo, the soft, pork and meat-filled flat buns from Xi’an in northern China, first made popular in New York City by the Xi’an Famous Foods chain.

There are five cheap and filling burger options at Chinger: slow-cooked pork or beef, both topped with cilantro; cumin-spiced beef with fresh jalapeños; one filled with veggies only; and a veggie-meat combo that’s the most expensive option at \$2.60.

It’s also the most exciting, as the vegetable topping includes a wonderfully cool and crunchy mix of Japanese seaweed salad, chopped fermented long beans, cilantro, lettuce, carrots and daikon radish.

Just be sure to splash on a bit of the vinegar out on the tables before you go — it’s spiked with tingly Szechuan peppercorns.

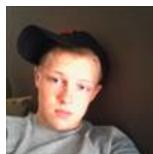
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