

**SHOP the DOG.ca**  
BROWSERS WELCOME

**CAPITAL**  
• GMC • BUICK • CADILLAC •  
Call 1-800-603-1978



**2012 CHEVROLET CRUZE LT TURBO**  
From \$16,998

search

prairie dog web

# prairie dog

REGINA'S INDEPENDENT VOICE EST. 1993



2010 \ 2011 \ 2012

## restaurants



photo: Daniel Hoffmeister

### You Have To See This

Fusion Hero is one crazy good-looking place

by Aidan Morgan

#### FUSION HERO

16-5875 Rochdale Blvd

757-3737



Back in the 18th century, long before everyone but Dracula was born, wealthy Europeans began to decorate their estates with buildings designed to look like ruins from antiquity or 'exotic' cultures. A neatly ordered garden path might end in a crumbling Roman temple. Or maybe you enter a linden grove to find a miniature Egyptian pyramid proudly poking its nose into the branches.

These structures, designed to add ornament and atmosphere to a property, were called *folies*. Some were clearly the expression of aristocratic boredom, but others had a kind of eccentric grandeur that punched through their frivolity. Those folies are the result of a

singular and obsessive vision.

Regina, welcome to your folly. You can have supper there. And it's called Fusion Hero.

By the way, is there an award for Most Grandiloquent But Charming Restaurant Name?

Whatever your taste in food, you should visit Fusion Hero at least once, just to look at the place. The exterior is unassuming strip mall frontage next to a Subway Restaurant, but once inside, you're plunged into a vast black warehouse of design ideas, a hypnagogic dream of a restaurant that jumbles a lifetime's worth of Asian dining experiences into one laquer-and-glass whole.

Just take a stroll down the curved path leading from the entrance, flanked by a bar on one side and a narrow koi pond on the other, then wait to be seated next to the long, low glass partition embedded with pressed stalks of wheat. If you're lucky, you'll have a view of the glass-enclosed bamboo wine rack garden, or maybe the curtain of blinking blue lights that hang over the open kitchen.

Everything in Fusion Hero is designed to within an inch of its life, but it's so focused on detail that nothing holds together. It's kind of exhilarating, actually.

The other thing that strikes you about Fusion Hero is its size. Owner Fred Wai has done his best to cut up this monstrously large space into several sections with glass partitions and raised areas, while still keeping everything more or less open. What he really needs, though, is a big crowd to cut into all that space, and I haven't seen anything like that on my visits. It's a shame.

Actually, this is a restaurant that would do well with a casino or other big attraction attached to it to ensure a lively flow of people.

**ULTRASONIC ALARM CALL**  
THE PRAIRIE DOG PODCAST

PRAIRIE DOG'S 2012 **BEST OF FOOD** SEE THE WINNERS

**ECONOMY CAR RENTALS**  
**BOOK NOW**

  
PRAIRIE DOG  
TYPO WIENER

**DOG BLOG**  
OPINION  
NEWS  
STUFF

  
QUEEN CITY  
CONFIDENTIAL

**what's going on**  
MOVIES  
EVENTS  
MUSIC

On to the food. The menu (which is just as disorienting as everything else in the place) offers an extremely wide range of dishes, from "Hero Tapa" to sushi, panini sandwiches, Asian noodle dishes, fondues, steaks and main courses like Peking duck and paella. When we opened our menus and went through the choices, it felt like we should have been saying, "Oh my god, there's something for everyone here!" but it felt a bit directionless. A kind of decision-fatigue dampened our table's mood a bit.

Once we got down to the business of ordering our food, though, things went well enough. For appetizers, I tried the gyoza with kimchi (\$9) and I split the Siam royal lettuce cup (\$14.50) with a friend. Others at the table had the veggie spring rolls (\$8.50), the chicken satay skewers (\$9) and the Japanese beef rolls (\$12).

My favourites of the bunch were the gyoza, which came with a little side of spicy kimchi (that's Korean fermented cabbage to you), and the Japanese beef rolls, thin slices of grilled beef in a sweet sauce wrapped around asparagus. The lettuce cup - stir-fried vegetables and chicken chunks meant to be spooned into lettuce leaves - was decent, but it felt like a missed opportunity for a more interesting dish.

For more substantial fare, I tried the Malaysian stir-fried Pelang noodle (\$16), a big heap of noodles with slices of Chinese sausage, clam and (I think) egg. It tasted of fishy salt, and it was probably the only dish I didn't enjoy.

We also tried a couple of the rice bowls, which were presented with appealing creativity and flair. The grilled lemongrass chicken (\$16) came bowl-less, a round of rice with a flattened grilled chicken breast placed on top like a Portobello mushroom. Some of the accompanying vegetables felt a little underdone (the carrots in particular) but they had a nice sesame oil flavour, which I always love.

The Malaysian curry lamb in Singapore style (\$18) is good for fans of lamb stew (although many of the lamb pieces turned out to be potato in disguise. Fiendish potato). The big pieces of lamb in broth reminded me of some Malaysian restaurants I've visited in my travels. I made a disappointing discovery, though, when I ordered the lamb dish "Super" hot, only to discover that, as my friend put it, the "super" was more of a "sub". As far as I could tell, there wasn't a single speck of spice in my dish. When I mentioned it to the server, she talked to the chef and told me that people had complained about the level of spiciness in the food, so they'd toned it down. Waaay down, apparently.

The blandness of the dish suggests that Wai faces a challenge: he wants to offer Regina diners a unique experience and a mix of familiar and innovative cuisine, but he isn't attracting a crowd with the taste buds to match his vision. Right now he seems too willing to pitch his food to the most timid tongues in the room, which I suppose makes sense from a short-term business perspective.

This may explain why Fusion Hero shies away from offering fusion cuisine in any meaningful sense. You can get European cuisine or Asian cuisine there, but a burger with mango or nachos with curry sauce isn't breaking any moulds. It's the sort of thing that your average Earls-style restaurant offers.

The Asian-style fondues for two, such as the Korean Spicy Kim Chi and the Malaysian Curry La-Sak (\$35 each), are closer to the fusion spirit, but Wai isn't really bringing new flavours together - it's a fusion of styles that he's after. But I can't taste style. I can only look, and marvel, until the novelty wears off.

Fusion Hero's wonderful, eccentric décor loudly proclaims its independence from all those designed-by-committee chains, franchises and fried food huts out there. The food should do the same.

Fusion Hero, you are the anti-Moxie's, the counter-P.F. Chang's. Taste as crazy as you look.

*Fusion Hero is open Monday-Sunday, 11:00 a.m.-close.*

[share](#)

[RETURN to cover \ lifestyle](#)