

Earl's Diary - Monday - February 20, 2012

Dear Readers,

I had an interesting experience today. The church where Carolyn, my sister-in-law, goes was having a field trip to a local oriental market this morning. Naturally I was eager to travel along.

We arrived at the shopping center where Lee Lee Oriental Market is located. This is a TRUE oriental market! As we entered the door, on the left was a real true oriental restaurant. (I'm not sure Chinese would be quite accurate. Was it Chinese, mixed with Vietnamese, Cambodian, or whatever? I couldn't tell!) Most of the menu had oriental language on it. I was glad to see the English translations and pictures also.

Did that help me order for lunch? NOT!!! There was seafood something or other; soups, veggies with strange names, meat dishes also with strange names, fish soups, rice noodle soups, to-fu, and too many other things to describe. I ended up ordering #17. What ended up on the plate was enough to hold me over until breakfast tomorrow morning!

What was on the plate? I recognized the marinated beef strips. Shredded pork was also somewhere on the plate. I think it was mixed among the rice noodles. Also on the plate was a huge pile of broken rice. Still don't know why it was called "broken". AHFFF, Carolyn just looked it up. It's Vietnamese and is called that because its grains are broken and of lower grade but has a good taste! It's also very sticky and held together on the fork real well as I dipped it into some kind of sauce in a little cup on the side. The other strange thing was a wedge shape that looked similar to a piece of quiche wrapped in egg. After much debate I decided the inside contained more egg, pork, mushrooms and rice noodles.

This was truly a dining adventure for me! It was all very tasty and I enjoyed my lunch (which was really dinner size). Carolyn wasn't as adventuresome as I. She ordered a dish of Bok Choy. There was more green leaves on that plate than she could eat! It also came with a bowl of broken rice. One of the other ladies sitting at our table ordered fried to-fu. There was also more than she could eat, and she shared with the rest of us. That was interesting. It was crisp on the outside and soft and mushy on the inside. The flavor was a little bland but soy sauce helped liven it up.

After eating, Carolyn and I toured the grocery store. My!!! What another adventure! The first thing we came upon was the two very long rows of different package noodle mixes - all with very Asian names. Upon leaving those rows we headed straight for the fish counter. Another BIG MY!!! A case, over 20 feet long, contained every possible shape fish. There were big round fish, little tiny round fish, big long skinny fish, little short skinny fish and big flat fish. And - - - they all had their heads (eyes bulging), tails, and scales on! Eight different types of shrimp, most with heads and tails, occupied another case. As I looked behind the counter, there were two huge tanks containing live lobsters. I wondered if the octopus and eels be far behind? We were interested in watching a woman purchasing a large bag of fish - must have been at least 10 pounds in that bag.

On with the tour - We visited the large produce section which contained every possible oriental vegetable. I noted 10 different types of bananas or plantains, and

huge pomelos. More on the tour - aisles that contained Vietnamese canned or bottled goods, aisles of Indian foods, and I noted two very long aisles containing all types of plates, cups, tea pots, cups and rice dishes. Another aisle contained hundreds of different types of kitchen tools. I particularly noticed the cleavers of all shapes and sizes.

This store truly boggles my mind. I'm still buzzing about its size and variety of items. I can honestly say I haven't seen such a place before. This was truly an amazing adventure for today!

After all that excitement, it was time to return to the apartment - AND the required nap time. Thanks for coming along with me. - - Earl