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La Mint serves Vietnamese favorites and other Asian dishes in a casual setting.  
 PHOTO/ALLISON YOUNG

## Minty fresh

**With bamboo parasols hanging from the ceiling** and a prominent mint leaf motif, La Mint offers a menu of Vietnamese favorites and other Asian dishes in a pleasant, casual setting. With prompt service and plenty of room for the whole family, my frequent young dining companions wasted no time studying the menu.

Starting with an order each of grilled pork and shrimp spring rolls (\$6, four pieces), the tightly rolled rice paper was stuffed full of vermicelli, lettuce, mint, bean sprout and cilantro. The pork rolls had a bit more meat than the shrimp, but both were great dunked in an exceptional, slightly spicy peanut sauce. These were followed by the twin boys' favorites, pot stickers (\$8, six pieces) and crispy calamari (\$9). The deep-fried pork and vegetable dumplings were pretty big, remaining crispy through a dip in house soy sauce. The squid was lightly battered, tender and almost outshone by its accompanying stir-fry of jalapeño, bell pepper, scallion and garlic. I didn't bother with the provided sweet and sour sauce. There was already plenty of flavor going on.

A bowl of wor wonton soup (\$10) included plenty of pork and shrimp fried dumplings, plus shrimp, chicken, barbecued pork, broccoli, bok choy, cabbage and carrot swimming in a suitably savory chicken broth. I thought the wontons were a little tough, but my daughter seemed pleased. My friend's rare beef and brisket pho (\$9.50) was similarly loaded with tender meat, scallion, cilantro, fried onion and vermicelli in a rich beef broth. The optional toppings of bean sprout, Thai basil and jalapeño were put to use, though a lemon wedge was substituted in place of the expected lime. All in all, it was a very decent bowl of pho.

We had to caution one of the lads not to touch his sizzling cast iron platter of barbecued pork (\$13), lest he receive a lesson he hadn't planned on. The mix of broccoli, mushroom, bamboo shoot, bok choy, baby corn, carrot, celery and water chestnut—stir-fried in brown sauce—was pretty good once it settled down, but the sliced pork was a bit tough and overcooked. However, his brother's Korean short ribs marinated with honey and lemongrass (\$14) were tender and packed with flavor. Served with a simple salad of lettuce, tomato, cucumber and a side of chicken broth laced with fresh scallion and cilantro, I was glad I got a taste before he dug in.

Though there are plenty of noodle bowls offered, I was lured by the promise of shrimp pad Thai (\$14). Unfortunately, this turned out to be the one real disappointment of the meal. Instead of slightly broad rice noodles stir-fried together with egg, bean sprout, scallion and tamarind, I received a glued together pile of thin strands sitting atop the shrimp, with what amounted to a side omelet of egg and raw white onion. I fruitlessly tried to mix the egg and veg into the noodle nest, but probably should have left it alone. The shrimp were large and plentiful, but the hint of tamarind was completely overwhelmed by onion. Definitely the only example of pad Thai I've ever left on the plate, and I doubt I'll want anything else with onion for a while. □

### La Mint Vietnamese Kitchen

770 S. Meadows Pkwy., 470-8400  
 La Mint is open from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.  
 Learn more at [la-mint.com](http://la-mint.com).