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Reservations Recommended

Heir Apparent = Scion

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by Alexandra Greeley

Whether the owners had cars or legacies on their mind, naming a restaurant “**Scion**” is a sure way to grab attention. Another way is to launch yourself — this newcomer is only about three months old — in a corner location that has seen its fair share of comings and goings. That would be at the corner of 21st and P Streets, just a couple of blocks away from Dupont Circle’s Sunday Farmers’ Market and down the street from some big-hitting old-timers. Think Obelisk, for one.

So it is with crossed fingers and plenty of good cheer that you should drop by for a meal. The menu is a pleasant mix of Asian and American specialties with a few Italian offerings, such as the pumpkin-goat cheese ravioli added for good measure. Surprisingly, the mix succeeds, and that can’t always be said of others’ pan-Asian efforts, which are often a mish-mash of textures and flavors, without any standout stars.

The appetizer selection is a good place to get your bearings as you wonder what to eat. (By the way, the menu changes seasonally, it seems, so what’s here one month may be gone the next, assuming seasonal changes.) So, it’s a toss-up: seared scallops or rosemary-basil roasted lamb chops? Or something lighter, like, say, the vegetable spring rolls. Why not? Even though the spring roll is a ubiquitous Asian offering, as spring rolls go, these are really delightful (and reasonable at \$3.95), perfectly crisp and filled with crunchy veggies. You might even consider adding one of the sides as a starter as well. A good choice would be the grilled asparagus spears accented with a balsamic glaze.

Another thoughtful way to approach this eclectic menu is to summon a full meal from select appetizers. Why not combine shrimp tempura with seared scallops on a white bean succotash, and add as a final treat a wedge of honey-glazed baked Brie? As an “entrée” add a wasabi Caesar salad with grilled shrimp and then head to dessert.

But for several of us at lunch recently, the choices were simpler. Yes, the crispy spring rolls and the grilled asparagus served as appetizers, but for someone on the lookout for the best burgers in town, who could pass up the Scion burger, which trumps the standard fare. A blend of Kobe beef and ground sirloin, then cooked medium-rare, the patty graces a plump bun and is accented by fried pickle slices, smoked mozzarella, and a peach ketchup — definitely a worthy choice unless you are tempted by the very unusual sweet, salty, and crunchy lobster Reuben.

True, lunch fare tends to be lighter and somewhat salad- and sandwich-centric. But think about what dinner might do for you: buffalo osso bucco (a braised buffalo shank slow-roasted with vegetables), coconut-mango duck breast, and Syrah-braised beef short ribs with garlic mashed potatoes and baby bok choy. If you live locally, you might turn Scion into a nighttime favorite with its broad range of comfort foods from its eclectic menu.

The dessert menu is so diminutive that it's whittled down to just three choices at \$4.50 and one at \$5.50. So what do you get? Only a cheesecake, fresh strawberries with sabayon sauce, and a better-than-average chocolate mousse called a "martini" as it comes in a stemmed martini glass. Intensely chocolaty, this makes a fitting if somewhat European closure to your Pan-Asian, sort-of-Italian meal. And as you depart, keep your fingers crossed that this newcomer becomes a neighborhood old-timer.

Scion | 2100 P St., NW; (202) 833-8899. Hours: Mon.-Wed. 11am-11pm; Thu. & Fri. to 12 midnight; Sat. 10 am-12 midnight & Sun. to 11pm. Dinner entrée price range: \$9.95-\$24.95.

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