



Seoul Sassy fried chicken at Crisp
KAITLYN MCQUAID FOR REDEYE

WORTH A TRIP

SEOUL SASSY FRIED CHICKEN

Find it at Crisp (2940 N. Broadway 773-697-7610)

By Michael Nigrant

FOR REDEYE

Food writers love to compare delicious food to crack cocaine—I've done it at least 50 times myself—but it turns out we had it all wrong. A recent study at Connecticut College demonstrated that lab rats preferred to spend as much time on the side of a maze that awarded them Oreo cookies as they did on the side that awarded them a shot of cocaine or morphine. Furthermore, when the rats ate the Oreos, the cookies activated more neurons in the pleasure center of the brain than the drugs did. Apparently, likening really addictive food to Oreos is the comparison I should have been using.

I bring this up because I am about to tell you about one of, if not the most, addictive dishes in Chicago. Based on what I know now, I'll call it the Oreo of fried chicken.

The Seoul Sassy fried chicken (\$14.95 for a whole chicken; \$8.95 for a half) at East Lakeview restaurant Crisp is undeniably amazing. I don't know exactly what makes it so perfect (maybe they lace it with Oreo dust?) because the last time I asked owner Doug Funke, he wouldn't tell me the secret recipe. He did humor me while I guessed a bit, and one of the things I suggested is that they achieve the shattering crispness of the

breazing by dusting the chicken in rice flour. While he wouldn't confirm or deny, he said, "You've done your homework." He did tell me that his hormone-free birds are twice-fried in a pressure cooker, which ensures a juicy interior and that killer mahogany-colored crust.

Here's what really gives the Crisp bird an edge: It's drizzled with a soy, garlic and ginger marinade and tossed with crunchily scallions. (There are other sauces on offer, including buffalo, but Seoul Sassy is what you want.) Funke and his partner, Jae Lee (Lee's family runs Budaki's hot dog stand in Lincoln Square) came up with the sauce by taking traditional Korean recipes from their mothers and tweaking them for an American palate. Funke estimates they gave away a thousand pieces of chicken with different sauce formulas before they found one that stuck.

Funke also told me another goal of his was to bring Korean food to the masses. "My mother thinks it's embarrassing what we've done [to authentic Korean food]. But you see people, friends of our family, people from her church, coming in sunglasses and what not. So we know we're on to something."

MICHAEL NAGRANT IS A REDEYE SPECIAL CONTRIBUTOR. REPORTERS VISIT RESTAURANTS UNANNOUNCED AND MEALS ARE PAID FOR BY REDEYE. REDEYE@TRIBUNE.COM | @REDEYEATRINK

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Doug Funke of Crisp told RedEye he's in final negotiations with a franchisee who he expects will open a second location of Crisp in Chicago next year.

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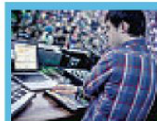
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