



'Sweet Thang,' a chicken taco with grilled pineapple, pico de gallo, queso fresco and a specialty sauce at Love Taco.

ALLISON TERRY / TRIBUNE FILE

worth a trip

SWEET THANG TACO FROM LOVE TACO

By Michael Nagrant | FOR REDEYE

Whoa-ah-oh-a-oh. Sweet thiiiiing! Go ahead. Try to take a bite of the Sweet Thang taco (\$3.50) from Bronzeville's Love Taco—featuring roast chicken, grilled pineapple, red onion, queso fresco, jalapeno and pico de gallo slathered in the house secret sweet sauce—without the chorus of Chaka Khan and Rufus's 1975 single clanging around inside your brain.

I hum because the juicy meat, the smoky pineapple, the tang and acid of the onion and the fire of chili perfumed with wafts of corn blasting from the freshly griddled El Milagro tortilla makes me blissful. It's like a

honey-kissed al pastor taco without the pork.

The Sweet Thang is not the only great thing at this new Bronzeville taco shack. I love the Bob Marley taco (\$3.50). And even

if the "I Believe I Can Fries" (\$3.35) (drizzled with Sriracha mayo, topped with ground beef and nacho cheese) didn't taste good, which it does, I'd forgive that, because the name rules.

Owner Raymond Jones, once an MC for the hip-hop group HotStylz and also a former writer for Comedy Central's "Key & Peele," grew up in the area. A student of tacos, he said, "There's this breakfast taco at Velvet Taco I love. I don't just eat it for breakfast. I'm usually eating at 1 a.m. after going to the club."

So far, the success of Love Taco has surpassed Jones' expectations.

"I talked to a lot of restaurant people before doing this, and they said how many places fail in the first year or don't make money for at least a year. So, you can imag-

ine how surprised I am that we're already making money so quickly. There's been a lot more traffic than I expected."

Though he still works in comedy and splits time between Chicago, Atlanta and Los Angeles, opening the taco spot was the fulfillment of a dream.

"I grew up in Bronzeville. This community had a bad reputation for violence, but mom always said all the neighborhood needed was a little love," Jones said. "I wanted to do something meaningful

here, and so that's what I'm doing: bringing the love."

Michael Nagrant is a RedEye special contributor. Reporters visit restaurants unannounced and meals are paid for by RedEye.

EAT

Love Taco
109 E. 51st St.
312-650-9635