

Koi Fusion

Intrigued by the buzz surrounding a new roving Korean taco truck, Koi Fusion, I hopped onto their website to find the current location and ventured down to an abandoned parking lot near Portland State University. My curiosity was spurred more by the clever use of the social networking internet site, Twitter, than by the idea of fusing Korean and Mexican flavors. Using “tweets,” the truck feeds up-to-the-minute location information to its 1,100 plus followers. This, and the website, are the only sources of locating the truck.

Waiting for twenty minutes in the drizzling rain to buy lunch is not my idea of fun, but with ten others, who were giddy in anticipation, I decided to hold out for the delayed truck. By checking Twitter from my cell phone I was reassured it was on its way. The tweet read, “Stuck behind train! eta 8min PSU!”

As the truck finally pulled up, a line amassed and owner Bo Kwon posted the menu: tacos for \$1.50 each or a burrito for \$5. He verbally announced to the crowd that the day’s special was spicy pork sliders, and with that he opened for business.

Kwon discovered the “Korean taco movement” on a trip to L.A. and brought the concept home, with a twist of Oregonian ethos: all vegetables come from local farmers’ markets. Short ribs, pork, chicken, and beef are given a Korean treatment – each marinated in their own special soy, ginger, and sesame oil based sauce – then grilled and heaped into handmade corn tortillas. Sounds like an odd combination, but to my surprise and delight I found the pairing complementary. Ingredients like lime, spicy chilies, cucumber, cilantro, scallions, radishes, and cabbage are shared by both cultures’ cuisines, thus marrying the flavors in harmonious bliss.

Though this is a city known for innovative street dining, a roaming cart certainly adds to the fun, but calling it “fusion” beckons a defunct trend I’d sooner forget. After tasting Koi’s fusion, I’ll forgive the term. The combination of Korean barbecued meats and Mexican street food is worth the chase.

koifusionpdx.com