

## Galbi

The manager looked a little surprised to see us when we walked into Galbi, the Korean BBQ restaurant in Fosshótel Baron. Shrugging his shoulders, he asked if we could wait a few minutes; it seems that no one else had turned up to work yet. We did, and after a short wait we were ushered to a table with a gas element built into the centre.

I had only tried Korean BBQ once before, in Almaty, Kazakhstan. Oddly, Galbi reminded of my first time. The soundtrack was provided by tacky tunes from some nameless Asian country (Korea, I suppose), yet felt eerily appropriate. Plastic flowers adorned the tables, the vases crammed so full that some even achieved a wilting effect. The service was confused, apologetic, and slow - yet utterly endearing. Galbi is like no where else in Reykjavík - and I mean that in the nicest way.

The concept behind Korean BBQ is that dishes of marinated meat and fish are presented on the table for the diner to cook him or herself, using a large metal "BBQ" that is the gas element in the centre of the table. Mushrooms, ripple-cut cucumbers, lettuce leaves and an unorthodox soupy kimchi (spicy pickled cabbage) are provided as accompaniments. The idea is to cook the meat and combine it with the vegetables on a giant lettuce leaf which is then dipped into soy or sweet chilli sauce.

It wasn't long before I abandoned the effort of piling, rolling and dipping and just picked away at my plate. Everything (and there was beef, pork, lamb, vegetables and fish) was tender and tasty, in particular the creamy mint sauce of the fish and the soy-ginger marinade of the beef.

Dessert was a creamy mango cheesecake (recommended) and a frozen apricot-pistachio concoction which was encircled with an amateur looking whipped cream and chocolate sauce Star of David. It was yet another marriage of the eccentric and the charming which made me like Galbi so much.

Despite a grim sign pasted to Galbi's front door which warns "Reservations are HIGHLY recommended during the busy summer months," only one other table was occupied during our two-hour meal. Frankly, I am not confident the earnest young staff would cope if they actually had a full house. Nevertheless, I heartily endorse Galbi and hope they have the opportunity to face that challenge.

After all, the food was excellent, the prices were reasonable, and the service has some sort of eccentric charm. This is not fine dining, but it's a fine time.

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