

The Boston Globe

FOOD FROM RICE VALLEY SCORES A **10** FOR TAKEOUT

By Galen Moore, Boston Globe Correspondent

August 20, 2008

Rice Valley in Newtonville has tried to reinvent Chinese takeout almost as thoroughly as China itself has tried to change its image. "It is traditional," insists owner Kent Chen, speaking of his approach to his native cuisine. He wants Chinese food that has flavor, but isn't heavy, he says. "We are taking a big risk to have this style of Chinese cooking. Our goal is to train our customers to like a lighter food."

To that end, minced chicken with lettuce leaf (\$10.95) is an entertaining meal. The chicken comes simmered in aromatic stock. Leaves of iceberg lettuce serve as crisp containers that can be dipped in hoisin sauce. Also on the menu are crisp and hot salt and pepper prawns (\$14.95), tossed with sauteed peppers and onions. Water chestnut flour is the secret, Chen says. Vegetables come nearly whole: Entire shoots of baby bok choy and fresh black mushroom caps (\$10.95) are braised just until tender. You can taste the bok choy's radish-like core.

The restaurateur wonders why more Chinese cooks don't aim for a lighter touch. "American people eat fish from the grill with no sauce and they enjoy it," he says. "Why should we have to prepare it so heavy?"

