



Aloha Poke

Rocka Poké Noodle Bar has brought the latest Hawaiian food trend to Morgantown.




Ton Sittichaimanee

— DISHES IT OUT —

HOLY BASIL CHICKEN

TRADITIONALLY KNOWN AS KRAPOW

Main ingredients

- 1 cup jasmine rice
- 1 chicken breast
- 1 bell pepper

For the sauce

- 5 cloves fresh, peeled garlic
- 10 Thai basil leaves
- 3 tablespoons chili garlic sauce
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon ground pepper
- 3 tablespoons oyster sauce
- 3 tablespoons cooking oil

- 1** Cook rice as recommended on your packaging.
- 2** Puree sauce ingredients together and gently warm to a simmer.
- 3** Cut chicken breast and bell pepper to desired size.
- 4** Saute chicken with bell pepper, then cover in sauce.
- 5** Fry egg sunnyside up at slightly higher temperature for crispier texture.
- 6** Plate fried egg on top of rice, chicken to the side.

“I wanted to be the first person to have a poke shop in the state of West Virginia.” Ton Sittichaimanee sits at a table in his Morgantown restaurant, RocKa Poké Noodle Bar, a handwritten family recipe in front of him. All around him is evidence that he has succeeded at his goal and, at the same time, introduced Morgantown to a food trend that is sweeping the nation.

In 2017, *Business Insider* called poke “the next phenomenon in fast-casual food.” Poke (“po-kay”) is a traditional Hawaiian dish that combines raw seafood—think sashimi—with a wide array of fresh vegetables, spices, and delicious sauces. Hundreds of poke restaurants have opened in the continental U.S. over the past several years as more and more mainlanders come to appreciate the dish.

“There are poke shops all over

big cities like New York and D.C.,” Sittichaimanee says. “Even Pittsburgh has three or four of them right now.” His brother owns a restaurant in D.C. with a poke shop right next door. “I saw it and liked it,” he says.

In many of these places, poke is becoming popular as a healthy and tasty takeout meal. It’s also less expensive for business owners, who don’t need industrial cooking equipment or major ventilation. “The concept itself is very easy,” Sittichaimanee says. But despite the fact that he refers to his new place as a “shop,” he has definitely aimed for something grander.

RocKa Poké is large and totally renovated with modern decor that emphasizes dark surfaces and moody lighting. Its two dining rooms offer a variety of seating options with more than a dozen seats at the bars alone. And while poke itself requires little equipment, the restaurant is operating with a full kitchen.