

EATER

Cali Import Dog Haus Is Nice, But NYC-Style Hot Dogs Are Still Superior to LA's

By Robert Sietsema
June 29 2018

New Yorkers exist in a figurative hot dog prison of their own making. The bars are slender all-beef franks, limited in circumference by the size of the sheep's small intestine that forms the snappy natural casing. Yes, our weenies are wonderful, despite their limited utility, especially when mustard and sauerkraut are applied. But don't you sometimes pine for the elaborately dressed franks other places have?

By not fetishizing the sausage itself, these other hot dog destinations have built complex topping systems. In these traditions, the frank becomes a vehicle for posh build-outs that make one wiener an entire meal. The catalog of the Chicago red hot is too lengthy to mention here, and many South American countries heap a frankfurter with things like pineapple, guacamole, ham, a fried egg, and potato straws. The buns are prone to innovation, too.



Probably no place has carried the art of the hot dog further than LA. There's [the legendary Pink's](#), where franks sometimes have blockbuster movie themes, and there are street dogs wrapped with bacon and smeared with mayo, along with other toppings unique to each vendor. At Oki-Dog, [the signature frank](#) comes topped with pastrami — that quintessential

New York ingredient — then gets wrapped in a flour tortilla. Why can't we do that here?

Which is why the summer pop-up of **Dog Haus** at **Chef's Club Counter** in Soho sounded like a good idea. [Dog Haus is a frankfurter chain](#) founded by **Hagop Giragossian**, **Quasim Riaz**, and **André Vener** in Pasadena in 2010, now counting 28 locations in seven states. The New York pop-up is apparently part of a plan to expand to 450 locations in 18 states.

The chain manufactures its own skinless all-beef franks with no nitrates, and tops them with themed ingredients, then drops them into a toasted King's Hawaiian roll. Pork and chicken sausages, a chicken sandwich, milkshakes, and tater tots are also available.



Apart from a few Dog Haus logos strewn around, and some spiffy black tabletops, little has been done to customize Chef's Club Counter, located at 62 Spring St. at Lafayette Street, to welcome the franchise. And while I'd expected a line, on my three visits the place was nearly empty, though signs warned of a \$15 charge per person per half game during the World Cup. Nonetheless, I was surprised by New Yorkers' blasé attitude toward these franks from afar. (I'd seen the place mobbed during the [Bob's Burgers pop-up](#), for example.)

The frank I liked best was the one called "one night in Bangkok." The quarter-pound beef sausage that formed its basis was impressive — of large diameter, fine grained, firm, and rich tasting, with black pepper as a predominant note. This was topped with red curry sauce, som tum slaw, kaffir peanuts, pickled jalapeños, and Vietnamese mint, which lent a particularly pungent flavor. The dish is even better if you substitute the Thai red currywurst for the regular beef frank. Either way, the charge is \$9 plus tax and tip, which seems steep for a hot dog.

Four other complex topping combinations are available at the same price for each of four sausages. I didn't like the "sooo Cali" (wild arugula, avocado, tomato, crisp

onions, and basil aioli); the toppings sank down into the bun and didn't add much flavor. In this case I'd picked the chicken sake sausage, a longer, thinner frank that didn't taste very Japanese.



Another dud was the huli-huli, said to have been invented by Top Cheftestant Ilan Hall. Its catalog of ingredients included ginger glaze, “bouillonnaise,” pineapple and jalapeño relish, fried onions, and scallions. It demonstrated the “one too many ingredients” ethos that mars much of the *Top Chef* output. On the other hand, I loved the “little mule,” which featured white American cheese melted into the roll, avocado, pickled jalapeños, grated Mexican cheese, and chipotle mayo, with a runny fried egg on top. It was the only hot dog that required a plastic knife and fork, and seemed very LA.

But I had a breakthrough when I wondered what the sausages would be like without all the toppings. Unfortunately, Dog Haus didn't offer any price break when the bacon-wrapped beef frank is ordered with no toppings (\$10). When it arrived, I squirted it with mayo and discovered something approximating the LA street dog. It was hot dog bliss, especially given the high quality of the frank. The vegetarian hot dog, modeled on a spicy Italian sausage and called “beyond hot Italian,” is similarly great. It too tastes good with no additional topping, except maybe a squirt of mustard or mayo — proving that at the end of the day, perhaps the accoutrement-light, more New York-like method of eating a hot dog is better after all.



<https://ny.eater.com/2018/6/29/17506456/dog-haus-nyc-pop-up-review>