

What disappoints me most looking back is that I didn't take my fried rice to go. It was good. So good it stands out as an important piece of the memory, even if some parts have disappeared into a hidden closet somewhere, shoved away by my brain like a kid who says he's cleaned his room.

It must've been phenomenal. It fought all the other memories of that moment, sitting in that little asian food restaurant, grappling with reality. It fought them like a valiant warrior, as if I needed to have something to hold onto in the future, a lifeline to let me dive back into the memory and process it without completely drowning.

My brave, heroic fried rice. I barely touched it, a round scoop of yellow-brownish amalgamation of grease. The good stuff. I had a couple of bites—that's how I know it was good—before becoming too preoccupied with dissociating into a particular corner of my plate.

It was a waste, and I'm disappointed with myself. You never leave good food behind. That was a philosophy I'd grown up with. My family was never poor, nothing close. We were more like the bottom of the middle-class tier, you know, the one where you don't make enough to afford things but you make enough to not get help for it? Yeah.

Well anyway, you know that saying from Lilo and Stitch: "never leave family behind"? It's actually never leave food behind—it's a non-negotiable. Period.

But I did, a first. I never went back, honestly I don't even remember where exactly it was. Who wants to go back to where they broke down and left before even finishing their meal? Yikes.

That was the first and last time I ate at that little hole-in-the-wall asian place.