

What Authentic Chinese Food is Like

The entire world feasts on "Chinese Food" served in "Chinese Restaurants". This could be a Chinese take-out in Memphis, to a "Dim Sum" restaurant in New York City. As delicious as these establishments are, what is it like to eat real, authentic Chinese food, in China? Well, here we discuss that issue...

Introduction

"Tipping is not expected or encouraged. Anyway, I loved the market, it had everything from cooked duck to live pigeon. Whole pigs cut into pieces. Eels, etc. No dogs or cats. There is only once restaurant serving dog that I am aware of and have not seen cat anywhere except as pets.

On the way home I visited a coconut vendor and a sugar cane vendor. For the coconut they cut off the husk, make a whole and put in a straw. It weights about 2kg and I walked along sipping the milk through the straw. The sugar cane goes in one end of a machine and juice comes out the other end into a plastic bottle. It's all attached to an electric bike. The government does not allow petrol bikes anymore, only electric, due to pollution. Nice one!!!!"

-Expat.com

The Chinese have cultivated the practice and preparation of food to a high degree. In China you can eat the most amazing food, and get exposed to fruits and vegetables that are simply not available in the United States. When I used to travel back and forth to China, my colleagues and myself would prefer to eat at Western restaurants. But we were sorely ignoring such a wide variety of culinary art.

If you want to eat well, you go to china.



In the United States you can get something called “General Tso’s Chicken”. It’s pretty darn good. But, let me tell you, it pales in comparison tot he real thing. In China you can get authentic food. In China it is called gong bao ji ding, and it is friggin’ awesome.

There are some curious differences.

One such curiosity is that bottled soda and beverages are filled to the brim. It is pretty amazing! Truly, when one takes off the cap one must be careful not to spill any of the precious beverage. That is completely different from a soda in the United States. Often times, if not in every bottle, the American equivalent are filled to exactly the proper volume or slightly below it. Or, perhaps more accurately just under the specified volume that is stated on the side. Thus leaving a wide gap of carbonated air that exits the bottle when one twists off the cap.



Sichuan food is very delicious. It is hot and spicy and has a kind of sweet tang to it. I absolutely love it and many a fine meal was enjoyed eating this wonderful style of food.

Anyways, I happen to love Chinese food. I really do. Which is kind of a bitter-sweet issue with me. As I also love American food. Ugh! Many of which is rather difficult to get in China.

A Tomato Sandwich

You know, one of the things that I truly miss in China is the home-made summer tomato sandwich.

"...hands-down, absolute favorite way of eating a tomato in summer is served sliced on white bread with mayonnaise. No chiffonade of basil or tender leaves of oregano. No artisan sourdough bread. No extra virgin olive oil. No hand-pounded garlic aioli. No hand-harvested sea salt. No lemon zest. Not even a slice of crisp, applewood-smoked bacon."

-Virginia Willis

Indeed, one of the pleasures that I do actually miss are fresh, home grown, tomatoes. Fresh tomatoes are hard to come by. Everything appears to be from large GMO farms, and finding heirloom tomatoes is a difficulty. The

result is that all those beautiful big, juicy red color tomatoes all taste like cardboard. Growing tomatoes on the side of a high rise is out of the question, so most expats purchase the very tiny “cherry tomatoes” and make do the best they can.

“...during the height of tomato season, I don't believe in featuring them any way other than front and center--which means a tomato sandwich on white bread with mayo and salt...”

-Susanna Beacom



This is my idea of paradise, a nice heirloom tomato sandwich on fresh bread with miracle whip and salt and pepper. Yum! It can be had in China, but not with heirloom tomatoes. You can only have it with tomatoes that taste like a shipping carton.

Chinese Tomato and Eggs

However, aside from the trials and troubles of obtaining a decent heirloom tomato and hard crusty bread, China has other excellent substitutes. Let me introduce you (my dear reader) to the Chinese tomato and eggs dish.

"The first dish my Mom taught me. Since I immigrated to North America, I've tasted numerous omelets, scramble eggs, poached eggs, but this egg dish is unique in its own and is still my all time favorite."

-MooseCall

This is an exceptional dish that is widely available in China. It is so delicious and easily adaptable to American tastes that it is a wonder that it is not available in the USA. This is a Chinese comfort food. It is also something children would learn to make at an early age. Well, maybe sort of the equivalent of tomato soup and a grilled cheese in the United States.

And... No, it is not simply scrambled eggs with tomatoes added. It is something else all together. It is a tomato sauce that is made with special seasonings, that the eggs are cooked within.

Oh, and here's a hint for all you readers that are in the USA and want to try this dish. Go to your neighborhood Chinese restaurant that is run by real Chinese. If though this dish is not on the menu, ask for it. Ask them to make "authentic" Chinese eggs and tomato dish for you. They will do so and the price will be really reasonable to boot!



This dish is a very big staple and found throughout China. It is the most delicious food that is commonly one of the top things foreigners find that they love about China.

The Food Is Prepared Differently

Chinese food is good; really, really good. But they eat it quite differently than westerners do. They eat everything.

Everything.

For instance, in the west we debone the fish, we throw away chicken heads and feet, we discard the fatty part of meat. But in China they relish the differences. They do not simplify their foods so that a child can eat it. The foods will contain bones, and grizzle and the consumer is expected to know the difference what is edible and what is not.

Chinese food is cut up in small pieces and there is little need for the consumer to cut their food up. Thus in the States, you would fillet a fish; remove the bones, tail and head. Not so in China. There, they simply take the entire fish. Rip the guts out, and cut up what's left into tiny chuck-

s. Bones, fins, scales and all.

This has manifested into various mysteries that puzzle me.

For instance, why will the Chinese eat insects and larva (Tastes like mini cabbages.), but not eat turkey? (It is not popular at all.) Or why will they absolutely love chicken feet, chicken gizzards, chicken head and chicken wings, but throw away chicken breast? (It is considered to be too much meat.)

In fact one of the things that I liked about China most was the fact that chicken breast was so cheap there. Speaking of turkey, it is one of the things I've missed the most in China (that, heirloom tomatoes and cheap cheese.).

Thanksgiving Turkey

"Many people that I met were curious about China, but their impressions of China would end up with words like 'communist,' 'pollution' and 'no Facebook.' "

-Awesome Daily

Celebrating Thanksgiving in China is like celebrating The Dragon Boat Festival in Omaha, Nebraska. It's a barren wasteland for the traditional fare because, well, for one, most Chinese aren't all that partial to the Turkey Day centerpiece. They find it too big. To a Chinese person, the tastiest food is the smallest food. Food that is large is just not as delicious.



Scene from the movie "Honey, I shrunk the kids". Here they are having a turkey dinner. In China, turkey is not considered a desirable food because it is too big. The best things to eat, the tastiest ones, are the small foods like shrimp, snails, pigeon, and minnows.

Oh, and by the way, most shared apartments lack ovens, or at least ones large enough to hold a six-kilo turkey (Available on the Internet. Why did it take me six years to find this out?).

Unless you want to grill your gobbler prison-style on the radiator, you're out of luck. And many of those Thanksgiving packages offered by restaurants amount to glorified TV dinners. Oh, the shame! The shame! It's sacrilege for a true gravy-blooded American to buy a set dinner anyway. Ugh! Not everything is all "peaches and cream" in China.

One Chinese restaurateur even asked me how a bird so morbidly obese can have so little fat. Same goes for ham. The Chinese eat pork, but eat ham in the form of spam that is grilled on a BBQ. Ham is pretty unknown here, but not pork. Pork can be found everywhere. Bacon is also a rarity, but that is changing.

Bacon

You can buy bacon everywhere, but typically the Chinese don't know how to cook it. If you go to a restaurant you might find the bacon under cooked. You need to tell the waitress to cook the bacon so that it is hard and crunchy. However, once they find out how to cook it into the thin brittle wafers they become hooked. Today, my wife is a maniac for bacon. Ugh!

She's a little like a female version of Ron Swanson.

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Surprise! Heh heh.

Did you know that the Chinese absolutely love pork and pork-related products? While hamburger (mince) is very popular and cheap in the United States, the same is true for minced pork in China. The Chinese absolutely

LOVE pork.



The Chinese love pork. This is a nation that loves bacon. They love pork chops, and all sorts of pork products.

This is something that both the Americans and Chinese share. It's a love for pork products, especially for bacon. You know, here's an interesting story. You cannot get "American style" pork chops in China. You can get pork chops for certain, but they cook them differently.

One year, I was working in Pago Pago, and the girlfriend of my buddy made us a meal of American style pork chops. Once my Chinese wife took a bite she was hooked. She said that it was the most delicious thing that she ever had (excepting for bacon, of course), and she just ate up all the pork chops to excess. To this day, she still raves about that day...

She looks up at the ceiling. Her eyes get all dreamy. He thinks for a second and says something along the lines of "do you remember when we ate those pork chops..." . Good times. Good times.



What many Chinese think how Americans have breakfast. It consists of “runny” eggs, buttered toast-bread, some bacon, a cup of coffee and a nice firearm.

Breakfasts

Getting a “decent” American style breakfast can be difficult. Good luck finding pancakes. Waffles are everywhere, though. American breakfast food is my comfort food. For me, I just love to have a nice cup of “real” (not Starbucks) coffee, over-easy style eggs, pork and beans, bacon, and crunchy rye toast with real salted butter.

It’s not that easy to get, I am afraid.

In China they eat a different kind of breakfast. Now, these are still pretty delicious things and I have (many times) wholly smunched on these delicious dishes in the early morning coolness. One of my favorites, available all over China, is meat filled Baozi. These are like a soft gummy roll filled with meat and vegetables.

One of my all time favorites for breakfast in China is Shanghai Shao Long Bao. These are little meatball-sized hard rolls filled with a soup and a meatball inside. They are so very delicious. When I have given them to some American friends that have visited from the states, they rave about this dish. My goodness, it is so delicious!



This dish is known as Shanghai Shao Long Bao. It is a delicious dish that is found throughout China. This is just one of those dishes that is absolutely too amazing to describe. You have to go ahead and eat it. Now, you really want to eat it hot. Warm, and cool Baozi's are not really that good. Eat it hot and fresh. Yum!

Oh, my goodness! Let's not forget Youtiao (this long baguette appearing deep fried totu) and a cup of nice hot Doujung (Sweetened soybean milk.). It is so very delicious. You can get youtiao everywhere. The best is made right on the street by a street vendor. I like to take the youtiao and dip it into my rice porridge (zhou) and eat it that way.



Youtiao, fried tofu, is a staple breakfast food throughout China. It is delicious with eggs and goes well with both Doujung and coffee.

While I am it, one of the basic staples for breakfasts in China is a warm soup. This can be either as a soup, or a bowl of noodles in a broth, or a bowl of rice porridge known as zhou. In Hong Kong, and in many “China Towns” around the globe this dish goes by the Cantonese name; congee.



Congee is the Cantonese name for Chinese Zhou. It is a rice porridge that is flavored with meats, and spices. The most popular types are fish, pork, chicken and beef.

Make no mistake, I do love the rice soup, the dumplings, and youtiao (deep fried tofu bread). The Shanghai ShaoLongBao is truly awesome! However, I would often like to have some “over easy” eggs with bacon and toast.

Not so likely, I am afraid. You can get it at “Hong Kong” style restaurants. However they tend to steam the bacon (or fry it so little that it looks like it is steamed), and microwave rather than toast the bread (What? Nobody ever heard of a toaster?). Though, surprise surprise!, some actually do serve pork and beans with the eggs! (Really! Who would figure? It just seems that coincidentally that the HK restaurants in this section of China serve pork and beans with eggs. Wow!)

Could it actually be that my final world-line slide brought me to a place that had a small geographical region that fit my original world-line preferences? If so, cool!

No one knows what “over easy” eggs are. The restaurant tends to “break the yoke” as a matter of process, and thus you have to specifically ask for Tai Yang Dan style if you want “sunny side up” eggs. I am not kidding. The gals and the chefs will intentionally break the yokes unless you specifically tell them not to.

However, Hunan restaurants make a hot and spicy poached egg dish that has yokes. It’s quite delicious too! You’ll be smiling, going “oh this is so so good”, while sweat is running down your forehead. Heh heh.



Photo by the author. These eggs are cooked over easy to over medium, and allowed to soak in a nice hot pepper sauce. It is terribly delicious, but oh boy oh boy will your stomach complain in a day or two. LOL.

Pizza

Pizza is “hit or miss”. You can pretty much buy pizza all over the place, but “real” pizza comes from a Western restaurant that tends to cater to the expat community. Unless the chef has been to America, they will not know how to make pizza. The dough will be made out of the wrong type of flour. The sauce might be Heinz ketchup, and the cheese might end up being mayonnaise.

I once ate a “New Orleans” pizza at a Chinese pizza establishment in Tangxi in Dongguang. It was just corn, lots and lots of corn, on top of a pizza shell covered in ketchup. No cheese at all.



Bacon wrapped squid and shrimp pizza



Sichuan Beef Pizza



Durian pizza



Purple Potato Crust

Here is a typical selection of pizzas found in a Chinese Pizza Hut. They are most certainly not your typical American pizza. Note that there are no simple cheese pizzas, pepperoni or sausage pizzas. These pizzas are different and tailored for the Chinese market.

Now, you can go to a Pizza Hut restaurant. They are just as popular as KFC is in China. However, they serve packaged dinner meal sets. Pretty good, with real pizza crust, sauce and cheese, but the toppings are all Chinese.

For instance you can get a Durian and potato pizza, or a squid, snail and lobster pizza. The deluxe pizza would have such toppings as corn, cut up hotdog, and spam slices. However, there will be *real* pizza dough, *real* pizza sauce, *real* cheese and options for American-style pizza toppings.



68 yuan for a fixed meal that includes a medium pizza, salad, a side of four chicken wings, a beverage, and a dessert. That is around \$10 in USA currency. If you wanted steak instead of pizza it would run you only 49 yuan. Ah, around \$8 for a steak meal. Notice the picture in the top right side. In China, all establishments can sell and drink alcohol. There are no limits or laws on that. If you do not want to buy it in the restaurant, you can bring your own. Ah, I love China.

Only Pappa Johns maintains a “real” pizza experience.

All that I can say, is that in China, the best place to get real authentic American-style pizza is at Poppa Johns. They are nowhere as popular as Pizza Hut is, but they do have a decent business presence here, and are worth going to. No matter what the progressive social justice warriors in the United States have to say about the matter.

That being said, I do go to the local Pizza Hut and enjoy their thin-crust

seafood pizza. I ask for extra cheese and they are very willing to put it on in globs. (Most Chinese are not big fans of cheese.) For the longest time I wanted to go to Pizza Hut and order a large pepperoni pizza with a pitcher of coke. However, it was not to materialize. Instead, I had to settle for a packaged meal with iced tea, cream cheese cake, and sides of snails and octopus.

The reader should realize that Pizza Hut has adapted well to the Chinese market, and it tends to be standing room only, with lines for seating on the weekends. When I watch what the other Chinese people are buying they are all buying the packaged meals, with a heavy mix of spaghetti as a side, seafood pizza types and a large number of side dishes. It's a fun outing for them, and a little bit exotic. Good for them!



15 yuan is roughly two dollars for a side of teriyaki octopus with quail egg. I am sure that my wife would love this, but me, I don't think so. (Update. She did. I thought it was so-so.)

As an aside, the same company that owns KFC in China also owns Pizza Hut in

China. Both are famously busy and popular. It is good, but a little sad that those are the only real outlets (aside from hamburger joints) where people can get “American Food”.

Yes. China is the place that you can go to eat delicious food cheaply. If you want real good and tasty food, you can go to China or other nearby nations such as Japan, Thailand, and Vietnam. All provide delicious food. However, you won’t find “authentic” Western food there. The only possible way is to go into a Western enclave such as Shanghai, Singapore or Hong Kong. Aside from that, your best bet would be in the expensive hotel restaurants.

For instance, in the Zhuhai Holiday Inn, is a Western restaurant, which offers an authentic American pizza, which is actually quite delicious. Sure, they don’t call a pepperoni pizza a pepperoni pizza; they give it some other exotic name. However, let’s face it; a real pizza is a REAL pizza.

About pizza, though...

I mean, we all know that wacky toppings are the norm throughout Asia. Truly, who *wouldn’t* want to eat “European-style Abalone Mushrooms Bacon” pizza or “Chi Heart Crown Shrimp” pizza? Now, that is fine and good, but what about the really unusual stuff... like beef tongue, and chicken feet pizza?

So, if you want to get to the *really* wacky stuff, you’ve got to go to the custom order page on the Chinese Pizza Hut page. There among the Gentle Wind Vegetable Salad and the Mango Sago Sweet Soup, you’ll find gems like “Marinated Brain Dough,” and “Jew’s Ear.” Sorry, in case you were planning on ordering for a group, the latter is only available individual. Check out the order page here.

Aside from Pizza Hut, most local Chinese restaurants serving pizza would not use pizza dough. Instead, they would make the crust out of regular bread dough. They would skimp on the cheese, and maybe substitute cheese sauce (squirted over the top in a zig-zag manner), with hotdog, corn, and pineapple toppings. It’s a big disappointment, let me tell you.

Alcohol

It goes without saying, but the reader will be unaware of this, that you can drink alcohol in the restaurant. China does not have beer and wine licensing requirements like the USA does. You can either buy the wine or beer in the restaurant, or bring your own. The restaurant doesn't care. It's one of the things that I love about China; the freedom to drink *what* you want, *where* you want and *when* you want.

You can't do that in the USA.

Bringing in your own wine or alcoholic substance is very common. Many families and groups of friends bring a bag full of white wine to drink. BTW, white wine (Baijiu) is actually 53 degree "moonshine". I have written elsewhere about booze in China, and a lot more can be said. For now, let's leave it simple and just say that the Chinese love to drink alcohol in abundance.



How to tell if Wine is Fake in China

There are many fake things made in China. From fake designer purses, to fake mouse-traps. If someone can make some extra money by making something fake, they will try it. Here, we talk about one of the most dangerous of fake goods; fake red wine.

Sichuan Food

One of my favorite styles of food is the very, very, VERY hot and spicy Sichuan style Chinese food. This style uses a lot of hot peppers and certain hot spices (known as "*ma*") that are generally not commonly available in the States. Typically, the restaurants are decorated in a kind of wooden / country style that immediately makes you feel at home.



Zha jiang mian – A spaghetti like dish that is served with ground pork cooked like it came from a sloppy joe, only with very spicy Mexican-style sauce. This is a very wonderful dish. I could eat this in the morning or at the night.

The only thing about this style of food is that if you are unused to eating spicy food, your body might protest.

I love the food, but I can only take it in periodic meals. The people naturally from Sichuan eat like this all the time and to them, everything without spices is terribly bland. My Chinese friends tend to shy away from the food as well. Not because they don't like it, but rather how the strong spices and hot peppers wreck their stomach and bowels.



Ma po dou fu is a delicious Sichuan pork and tofu dish that is spicy, and warm. It is like eating sloppy joes with soft bread. It is very, very delicious and I just absolutely love eating it with rice and a nice cold beer. You haven't lived until you try this most amazing dish.

The first time that I ate this style of food was on one of my first visits to China. The gals that I were with asked me if I liked spicy food. Well, I do, so I said yes, and they took me to a Sichuan restaurant in Shenzhen. You know, you could smell the delicious aroma drifting outside, and I was immediately lured inside.

The funny thing is that they warned me that the food was spicy and that we should order lightly spiced food. But, No NO NO! I wouldn't have any of that, and I said that I wanted the real authentic experience. I said to give me the full-on "ma la" experience.

Oh, let me tell you, I most certainly got it too.



Here's another picture of mapo tofu. As you can see, it is colorful and very delicious. You should try it with a ice cold beer. It is so wonderful.

Now, don't get me wrong. It was so very delicious. I ate, and then I ate, and ate more. It was so tasty. The food was rich and full of flavor. It was tasty and had a blend of spices that warmed my stomach and filled my heart with happiness.

Anyways, all was fine until that night...



This is gong bao ji ding. This is the Chengdu city version of this dish. I love the spices, the chicken, the peanuts and the overall aromatic flavors that waft upwards to the heavens. It is so darn delicious.

My body, most certainly was not used to the powerful mixture of explosive peppers and burning spices. I had to make an emergency detour to the nearest public bathroom stall, and there I found God...

Lordy!

That being said, never eat Sichuan food with a lot of spice unless you have been eating it for some time. Most Westerners cannot handle the strong spices and powerful peppers. When asked you say loudly "*yi dian la*". This means "just a little bit of spice please." If you feel up to it, you can ask for "*zhong la*", which is "middle" or a normal amount of spices. Of course, if you have a stomach made of cast iron, go ahead and ask for "*da la*". They will certainly oblige you.



Here is some wonderfully spicy beef served Sichuan style. This dish is very wonderful and the peppercorns really make the beef flavor “pop out”. This is great to eat, and I really think that rice with this dish is mandatory.

Hunan Food

There are many Hunan restaurants all over China. I like the food because it is tasty and flavorful. It is also unique. They like to use a lot of spicy peppers in the dish, and a different arrangement of spices. The Hunan food that I have eaten has been deeply flavorful and wonderfully tasty.

Hunan Province is located in central China, surrounded by lakes, rivers and mountains, with a subtropical climate ideal for agriculture. A classic vegetable dish is string beans with cured meat, often ham or ground pork. It usually has a pickled or fermented tang not unlike olives that helps balance the hot-pepper punch.

When the chili plant first made its way to China from the West, the Huna-

nese were one of its earliest adopters of it back in the late 17th century. However, Hunan food sets itself apart from Sichuanese in two big ways: [1] It doesn't use the tongue-numbing Sichuan peppercorn, and [2] savory dishes lack the sweetness of their Sichuan counterparts.

"So while the Sichuanese have all kinds of spicy-sweet-savoury combinations, including the 'fish-fragrant' and 'garlic paste' flavors, the Hunanese tend to go for bold savory tastes, chilli-hot tastes, and sour-hot tastes."

-Chef Dunlop

Us Americans are pretty confused about what Hunan food means and how it differs from other regional cuisines, even though "Hunan-style" restaurants in the U.S. date back to the 1970s.



Here is a chicken dish made in Hunan style. Notice the tasty peppers, the nice colorful and oily juices and the well cooked, but tender morsels. Wonderful!

Here is another dish. This one is pork belly. I like to think that pork belly is bacon that is cut into big fatty chunks. What they do is braise the meat using a blow-torch so that the outside is tough, and the fat on the inside is soft and juicy, then they cook the entire together. Personally, it took me a while to get used to this kind of meal because I wasn't used to

so much fat. But, let me tell you, once you try it, you will love it.



This particular dish is called Chairman Mao pork belly. I have no idea why it is called this. However, I have read that This dish is so linked with Mao Zedong that today on menus in China and the U.S. alike it still bears his name. The Chairman is said to have loved the braised pork belly fragrant with star anise, ginger, chilies, and cassia bark so much he insisted his Hunanese chefs prepared it for him in Beijing. □However, what ever it's name, it most certainly is delicious. Yum.

Where Sichuanese cooks combine Sichuan peppercorns with chilies for the classic “numbing-hot” *ma la* flavor, the Hunanese prefer the sharp combination of vinegar-pickled chilies with salt for something called *duo la jiao*. This hot, sour, and salty concoction is used as a relish for noodles and steamed fish heads.

Here is the real authentic version of “General Tso’s Chicken”. The story goes that it’s based on a dish called cu ji, or vinegar chicken. This was a dish that was served way back in the Tang dynasty.

Its more modern legend is familiar to anyone who’s heard the origin stories of nachos and Buffalo wings: Some merchants paid a visit to a restaurant run by three old ladies who’ve just run out of everything in the kitchen. So the ladies went out back, slaughtered some chickens, added in some pantry staples, and called it dinner.

The merchants loved the dish and told everyone they knew about it, and thus that is how it was invented.



Dong an zi ji (Dong’an chicken): One of Hunan’s most famous poultry dishes is this delicate creation of chicken flavored with chili and clear rice vinegar, which is said to have originated in Dong’an county.

One of the things that I ended up falling in love with is Hunan style potatoes. Here, the potatoes are neither mashed, or fried. Instead, they are cooked and sliced into real thin strands, and mixed with oils and spices. Anyone who loves potato chips, mashed potatoes and french fries would fall in love with this dish.



Hunan potatoes. I just love the way that this dish looks and tastes. It is perfect companion with all other spicy Hunan dishes and has graced my table many times. Try it with an icy cold beer. OMG!

Seafood



Seafood is very popular in China. This does not include fish. Instead “seafood” is a classification for all things living in the sea except for fish. That includes snails, shellfish, crabs, oysters, lobsters, mussels, and shrimp.

As an American, my exposure to seafood has been rather shallow. Up until the early 1970’s we would eat fish on a Friday. Eating shrimp was reserved for bars and diners. I never ate shellfish. Crabs and lobsters were far too pricey for my parents.

When the Catholic church announced that eating fish on Fridays would no longer be observed, but that you would need to have a good-thought fast all day, us kids just thought of it as “no more fish on Fridays”. Thus, my only exposure to fish and seafood were the deep fried fish fillet sandwiches that we would get out of McDonalds.

And, that was that.

When I got married to my Chinese wife, I was surprised at how different her diet was from mine. It wasn’t a matter of spice, sugar, or bread. It was something else. She was used to having meals that predominantly contained shellfish, snails and crabs. Whereas I was used to a diet that mostly consisted of hamburgers, pizzas and traditional American fare like Mac-n-

cheese.

Over the years we both have adapted. Today, she eats bacon like a maniac, insists on cooking home made pizzas, and appreciates Parmesan cheese. While I have adapted to insisting on fish twice a week and at least one meal of fresh seafood.

If you ever come to China, please kindly be advised that seafood is very popular with all Chinese. They love to eat shellfish, oysters, snails, shrimp, and other denizens of the deep. So, as a word of advice to anyone who is interested in moving to China or getting a girlfriend out here, you all had best be ready to eat some seafood, because that is one of the reasons why the Chinese are so thin, trim and healthy.

BBQ

While there are many, many kinds of foods and styles of food in China, we will keep the list rather short. I could write books on this subject.

One of the most common types of food is the Chinese BBQ, or Shao Kao. This is typically (but not always) an outside open flame pit where food is grilled. It is very cheap, and often served with beer or Chinese "white wine". Usually, the grill will not open until after 9 pm, at which time these really flimsy and cheap card-tables would be set up on the sidewalk. Along with them would be these super cheap polypropylene stools that you can sit on.



Authentic outdoor shaokao in China. Usually it is a set up something like this where things are grilled over an oven fire at night. The costs are very reasonable. In the South of China, where daytime temperatures are very hot, a evening meal of BBQ is very welcome.

It's a simple system. You order the food. It is cooked and served to you at the table where you sit down and drink beer. The prices are very cheap.

Typical items are chicken wings, mutton, hotdogs, vegetables of all types, bread, mantou, corn on the cob, and fish. In general, most Chinese love to eat BBQ, but everyone considers it to be unhealthy because it is made outside in the smoke and cooked over a grill of questionable cleanliness.

GuangDong Style

Guangdong is in the South East of China. It is a large semi-tropical area that is the home of a major portion of the Chinese industry. Most Chinese restaurants in the West served largely Cantonese dishes. This type of food also goes by the name of Cantonese cuisine (粤菜), or as Yue cuisine (粤).

To the people of Guangdong, everything that walks, crawls, flies, or swims is edible. Many of these strange foods no longer appeal to today's refined tastes, and some have been eliminated out of respect for the eating habits of people in other areas, but some strange foods still remain.

The food that you find in Hong Kong is Guangdong style, with some serious Western influences. I, for one, love the egg sandwich and the Horlicks drink.

In Hong Kong , Horlicks is known better as a café drink than as a sleeping aid. It is served at cha chaan tengs as well as fast-food shops such as Café de Coral and Maxim's Express . It can be served hot or cold, and is usually sweetened with sugar.

-Horlicks

This style of cooking is very healthy. It is considered to be "light". For instance the fish is steamed and then seasoned very lightly. The result is a very tasty and fresh dish. The vegetables are all lightly steamed and fresh. When eating this style of Chinese food, you cannot help but feel energized and healthy.

Many foods served in Chinese-American restaurants in the USA originated out of Guangdong. For instance...

Sweet and sour pork is probably the most famous of Hong Kong foods. As such it has made its way into Chinese take away menus around the world.



Sweet and Sour Pork, or 糖醋肉, hails originally from Guangdong province. There are different versions of this dish, but the most common ingredients are pork tenderloin, pineapple and bell pepper. As might be guessed, this dish combines sweet and sour flavors with a hard to resist morsels of deep-fried pork.

Wontons are known as chāo shǒu (literally means “crossed hands”), added to a clear soup along with other ingredients, sometimes deep-fried. Several shapes are common, depending on the region and cooking methods. In general, these are tasty dumplings that are served inside a nice fragrant broth. Or, they can be deep fried. I happen to love both styles.

Come on! Who wouldn't want to eat some of these right now?



Crispy cream cheese wontons, more popularly known as crab rangoons or crab puffs, are a popular American Chinese appetizer with a crispy outside and a creamy, delicious inside filled with cream cheese.

Wind Sand Chicken. (“Wind Sand Chicken” 风沙鸡.) You can get this at most deli counters in Chinese supermarkets. A whole chicken is flavored and put into the oven for about 20 minutes until the chicken’s skin turns brown. What makes it so unique is that garlic pieces are added and it looks like wind-blown sand. The chicken is roasted and crispy on the outside and very smooth and tender inside. The smell of the garlic pieces is exactly to the right degree.



Wind Sand Chicken is another favorite dish that is found in the South of China. The chicken is very delicious, though it often includes the head and the feet.

Shrimp and Chicken Balls. Firstly, shrimp and chicken meat are chopped finely and kneaded into balls, then they are deep fried with bread crumbs. The balls are crispy and tender. Salad sauce is often used to provide a sweet and sour taste. If you like chicken, and meatballs, this is similar only very delicious when warm. Yum!



Hong Kong style Chicken and shrimp balls. This is a staple in Dim Sum restaurants. It is extremely tasty and very delicious.

DongBei Style

Dōngběi 东北 refers to the north-eastern part of China which covers 3 provinces: Heilongjiang, Jilin and Liaoning. It used to be known as Manchuria.



North East China – Dongbei.

东北

Dōngběi cài

Dongbei-style food

Dongbei-style food is perhaps one of the most underrated Chinese cuisines compared to Sichuan, Cantonese or even Xinjiang food. Dongbei cuisine consists of different types of pickled ingredients and mainly wheat and maize, instead of rice. So you will see more dishes with noodles, steamed buns or cornbread.

The best part about Dongbei food is they tend to be relatively cheap and come in big portions. Similarly, they also tend to have a big, extensive menu. We're talking about 50-70 dishes at least! It could be quite overwhelming to look at the menu and try to decide what to order.

-Five Top Dongbei dishes

The food known as “DongBei” comes from the Northern section of China. It is

based on wheat and corn, as opposed to rice in the rest of China. Because the weather is so cold during the Winter, the food is hearty with crusty bread, thick dumplings loaded with meat, and savory soups.



Dongbei has some nice and delicious food that adapts well to the American tastes. The food is rich and hearty and involves meat and rolls and breads. Most Americans love this style of cooking.

As such, it is considered to be very compatible with American and Western tastes. For instance, the chicken is cooked in a manner similar to how an American would cook chicken. It's not lightly cooked like "GuangDong style" with the yellow fat still intact. Instead, the fat is cooked away and the chicken is juicy and moist. Dongbei chicken reminds me a lot of what "Rotisserie chicken" is in the states.



Dongbei food often consists of various types of flatbread. This flat bread is fried in a pan sort of like it is done in India and often contains spices and vegetables such as leek. This particular dish is sliced braised pork with spring onions in small triangular flat bread sandwiches.

This food style has many elements that are very delicious. For instance they have this kind of sloppy-joe style hamburger, only that the bun more resembles an English muffin. It's full of tasty beef or pork filling.

They have a salad that would feel perfectly fine on any family table. Their dumplings (pot suckers) are large and filled with delicious beef, pork, mutton or chicken. Their noodle dishes use the same kind of noodles that American have been buying in stores for generations.



地三鲜 (Di san xian): Commonly rendered on English menus as “triple delight vegetable,” this trifecta of stir fried potatoes, hot green peppers, and eggplant slicked in a slightly sweet soy sauce is a hearty Dongbei classic that warms both palate and body. The name loosely translates to “three delights from the earth.”

If you, as an American, wants to visit China, and you want to eat authentic Chinese food, but don't want to be too overwhelmed by the differences, do this. I would suggest you ask your Chinese sponsor for some authentic Dong-Bei style Chinese food. Tell them that you heard a lot about it and would like to try some.



La pi (green bean sheet jelly): A cool tangle of wide, flat mung bean noodles served with various accouterments makes for a refreshing salad of sorts, and a test of chopstick skills. Photo by Robyn Lee.

Video Links

Some great video links;

- How does Chinese Breakfast work?
- DEEP Chinese Street Food Tour in Beijing, China
- Chinese Girl Tries American Chinese Food

Conclusion

If you like American style Chinese food, then you would absolutely LOVE the authentic versions in China. Just take note that the Chinese eat many things that have not ported well into America. Therefore, be open to experimentation and just have a great time eating away at all the delicious items found everywhere.

Take Aways

- Chinese food is delicious.
- American versions of Chinese food tend to be a little toned down for the American tastes.
- Chinese love seafood, and that includes everything out of the ocean.
- The Chinese can drink alcohol with all their meals everywhere. It is considered normal, and they are often amazed that Americans are unable to take part of this simple freedom.

Links about China



How a Business KTV Works in China

KTV's are all over China. They range from tiny booths, to family affairs to fancy palaces for friends. Here we discuss a kind of "seeder" side of the KTV phenomenon. We discuss the KTV used to discuss business and to reward high-performing employees; The Business KTV.



The Dance Craze that is Sweeping China

China is a big country, and as such it has passing fads and events that everyone seems to participate in. The latest is a dance craze that is based on a silly song involving Tarzan like yodeling. Everyone is doing it from kids, to policemen, doctors and entire school classrooms.



The Tale of the End-of-the-Day Potato

When you finish a good day's work, how do you like to be rewarded? How about a nice beer, and a nice well-cooked meal? How about your dogs or cats near by? How about a kiss on the cheek, a nice frosty alcoholic beverage in your hand? Or, as I have found, my end-of-the-day potato.



News as Every-Day Dog-Shit

Has the news that you read every day benefitted you? Has it made your life better, happier, calmer or helped you to make more money? What benefit do you derive from reading it? Chances are that it provides no benefit at all; you are just a slave to habit for others to manipulate.



Attack of the Dancing Grandmothers

One of the things about China is that the old folk love to dance and exercise. They get up at the crack of dawn and dance to loud disco until every goes out to work. Then they rest. They return to dance at dinner time until night. Here is my take on this crazy and popular Chinese pastime.



When the SJW Movement Took Over China

Many people are unaware that the SJW movement is not regional to the United States. It is global. It reoccurs in a generational cycle. China has experienced three such cycles in my lifetime. This is the sad story of what happened when the SJW's were permitted to run amok in China.



The Importance of a Family Meal Together

One of the most important things that I have learned is that friends, family and close-ones should share meals together. Further, they should do so with some sense of formality and purpose. Here is my take on this issue, and how I prefer to structure my family meals.



Freedom and Liberty in China

As Americans we have been raised into believing that America is an oasis of freedom in a world of chaos. We have been taught that other nations are shit-holes and that communist nations are the worst. Well, the 1960's narrative doesn't play well in the 2020's reality.



The Ben Ming Nian – The 12 Year Curse

The Chinese believe that all life have both a physical reality and a non-physical reality. As such it goes through a twelve year cycle. Every twelve years it sort of resets itself. A new phase of life thus begins. Here we discuss this from the point of view of interactive quanta and patterns.



Beware the Expat

There are a handful of expats that have left America to explore a new life outside of America. We do so for many reasons. Some of us want a new quiet life, while others want excitement. Still others want to unleash their criminal skills on an unsuspecting public. Be aware.



How to tell if Wine is Fake in China

There are many fake things made in China. From fake designer purses, to fake mouse-traps. If someone can make some extra money by making something fake, they will try it. Here, we talk about one of the most dangerous of fake goods; fake red wine.



How China Deals with Obesity

In the modern world, obesity is a real problem. People all over the world are getting fatter and heavier. The American solution is to ban fattening things, and make laws to control behavior. Here we discuss the Chinese solution; to provide areas to dance and exercise.

China and America Comparisons



Democrat Busybodies and the Destruction of Freedom

Wouldn't life be wonderful if you could just be left alone and live your life in peace? I think so. The founders of the United States thought so, however there is an army of busybodies who disagree. They have this vision of utopia where everyone listens to their commands.



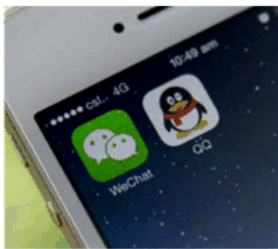
Comparison between American and Chinese Playgrounds

The differences between American and Chinese playgrounds couldn't be more telling. It is a tale of how things are handled differently and the roles that parents take. In China the role of the parent is to equip the child for life. While in America it is to protect the child from life.



The Last Straw – Why I Left America

We all come to cross-roads in our lives. We experience life in all of it's glory and pain. This is the story why I left the USA and moved to China. It's not that I hate the USA, I love it dearly and miss it terribly. However, a series of events and changes pushed me out. This is my story.



What happens when you try to implement Diversity Initiatives in China

This is a very good story in what happens when a young millennial tries to implement diversity initiatives in China. There are many lessons here. From how pompous SJW's are to misconceptions about what China is.



What High School taught me about Democracy

Yes, I know, the United states is supposed to be a Republic. However, running for president in school was set up as a Democracy with majority vote. I learned a lot about the follies of a Democracy and what eventually befalls it. I wish to share those experiences with you.



Why an American man should leave America and Travel

America is great. It is large and wonderful. However, we all need to set outside of it to really appreciate what we have, and to face what we do not have. Only then can we really understand where our problems originate from and how to resolve them



Top Ten Misconceptions that Americans have about China

There are many misconceptions about far-away places. China, due to it's size, and relative importance as a source of manufactured products is often the target of many a ill-defined comment. The disconnect between reality and perception is enormous. Here we discuss it.



The Top Ten Misconceptions Chinese have about the USA

When the Chinese come and visit the United States, they are often spellbound in shock and amazement. They find that they LOVE, absolutely L-O-V-E the United States. I have many friends who have told me this. Another thing that they have told me is that it was not what they expected.



Comparisons Between American and Chinese Girls

Here we compare the differences in beauty between Chinese and American women. Since beauty is in the eye of the beholder, we spend some time looking at what makes women attractive to the opposite sex and why. Then we look at attractive girls comparatively.

Learning About China



Learning About China through Looking at Pretty Girls -1

Here we discuss elevators, eating at work, subways, residential areas, apartment building hallways, riding on boats, family KTV's, getting out of cars, tennis courts, department stores and restrooms. It's pretty amazing what you can learn by looking at pretty girls.



Learning About China through Looking at Pretty Girls -2

Here we discuss suburbs and memorials. We discuss malls, Arabic culture, parking garages, bedrooms, living rooms, and living in Guangzhou. We discuss walking and talking. Finally a nice hypnotic dancing video for fun. It's pretty amazing what you can learn by looking at pretty girls.



Learning About China through Looking at Pretty Girls -3

Here we discuss more malls, farms and their kitchens, pools, apartment (3rd floor) parks and open areas, dance studios, military barracks, riding on a yacht, beaches, waterslides, and the garages outside a housing development. It's fun talking about China with all sorts of pretty girls.



Learning About China through Looking at Pretty Girls -4

Here we discuss public parks, gyms, work offices, apartments in Shanghai and the excellent views there, the Southern Chinese coast, Pizza Hut, speaking and singing in English (as a second language), sofas, safety at night, the ideal face, and buying gold in Hong Kong.



Learning About China through Looking at Pretty Girls -5

Here we discuss Shanghai, highways, hotels, exercise, and elementary school students dance-exercising, after-school dance classes, public squares and dancing and carrying on in public. We talk about rural kitchens, doors in apartments, and Chinese apartments in general.

Articles & Links

- You can start reading the articles by going [HERE](#).
- You can visit the Index Page [HERE](#) to explore by article subject.
- You can also ask the author some questions. You can go [HERE](#) to find out how to go about this.
- You can find out more about the author [HERE](#).
- If you have concerns or complaints, you can go [HERE](#).
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Notes

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