

CHINESE COOKING

A chef in a white uniform and hat is shown in profile, focused on cooking. He is holding a long-handled spoon over a large, dark wok. A massive, bright yellow and orange flame erupts from the wok, reaching high into the air. The background is a simple, light-colored wall. In the foreground, there is a wooden countertop with various kitchen items, including a small blue and white plate, a metal strainer, and several other pots or pans. The overall scene is dynamic and captures the intensity of traditional Chinese cooking.

Zhaohua

CHINESE COOKING

Zhaohua Publishing House
Beijing, 1983

First Edition 1983

Printed in the People's Republic of China

PREFACE

"The epicurian civilization is in China." This was the conclusion of a traveller who had eaten his way around the world after a few days' stay in China. China is truly worthy of this praise. This country has a culture that goes back thousands of years. Through the centuries, the Chinese people have continuously worked to enrich the culinary arts, making it a treasured part of human civilization.

There has been an influx of visitors to China in recent years; increasing international exchange and a vigorous growth in tourism. Their eyes are opening to a world of dazzling ancient art and culture, magnificent landscapes in myriad forms, spectacular settings to satisfy the visual senses. Here, they can have a taste of rich and delicious Chinese food in the land of its origin. Chinese cuisine is all conquering.

While in China, some visitors have asked to try their hand at cooking Chinese dishes in a Chinese restaurant, hoping to find the secret to good, genuine Chinese cooking. Others who have not been to China but have tasted Chinese food in their local Chinese restaurants appoint them as latter-day emissaries of culinary art and put in orders for Chinese cook books. Moved by this tremendous interest in Chinese cuisine, we have edited "Chinese Cooking" with the desire to share the science and art of this particular cultural legacy of the Chinese people with our readers throughout the world.

In addition to chapters on the origin and development of Chinese cuisine, the unique features of Chinese food and Chinese nutrition, this book has put particular emphasis on certain points which are especially difficult for people outside China to grasp. In the chapter "Introduction to Chinese Cooking", there are sections devoted to the selection of ingredients, preliminary preparation of the ingredients, cutting technique, preparing condiments, time and temperature in heating and different methods of cooking. The would-be cook is introduced to the fundamentals at each stage of the cooking and to the actual skills. The book also includes 186 recipes to suit both the northern and the southern palate. Most of them are common everyday family recipes. Some are famous dishes, and hors d'oeuvre and sweets which may come in handy in planning for a family feast or a small dinner party.

The book gives the exact measurements of the ingredients and main condiments required for each dish and clear, simple instructions on the method of cooking. The secret to good Chinese cooking lies in the fire. Some people think that so long as they have all the necessary ingredients, so long as they follow the recipe, timing everything with a clock, they will succeed. In reality, they often fail.

Cooking a Chinese dish, especially a fried dish, is a very quick process, taking ten to fifteen seconds at most. The same recipe may come out differently if there is the slightest difference in cooking time or in the intensity

of the heat. These subtle, fine points cannot really be written in the language of a recipe. We advise you to use your eyes, nose and ears, to sense and observe, while you cook, what you cook. If the subtleties of heat control are mastered, you will have taken that big step forward in mastering the Chinese culinary arts.

The colored plates will give you an idea of the kind of tableware and cooking utensils used by a Chinese family, the kinds of vegetables they commonly eat and the dishes themselves.

Acknowledgement must be made to the tremendous assistance we received from the Suzhou Restaurant in Suzhou, Jiangsu Province, and the Air Force Hospital in Beijing in the preparation of this book. To them we extend our sincere gratitude.

Editor

January, 1983

CONTENTS

HISTORY OF CHINESE CUISINE	1
DIET AND HEALTH	8
INTRODUCTION TO CHINESE COOKING	13

Preliminary Preparation of Ingredients

I. Cleaning and Washing	13
II. Preparing Dried Foods	14

Cutting

I. Basic Requirements in Cutting	15
II. Cutting Technique	15
III. Shapes of Cut Ingredients	18

The Use of Ingredients

I. Quantity	20
II. Flavor	20
III. Texture	20
IV. Shape	21
V. Color	21

Time and Temperature in Cooking

Seasoning

I. Commonly Used Sauces and Condiments	21
II. Steps in Seasoning	22
III. Principles of Seasoning	23

Batters and Thickening Agents

I. Making Batters	23
II. Thickening Agents	24

Cooking Methods

1. Quick-boiling "Cuan"	25
2. Instant Boiling "Shuan"	25
3. Stewing "Ao"	25
4. Fraising "Hui"	25
5. "Ban" Salads	25
6. Cooked Salads "Qiang"	25
7. Pickle in Salt "Yan"	25
8. "Jian" Frying	25
9. "Ta" Frying	25
10. "Tie" Frying	26
11. "Zha" Deep-frying	26
12. "Liu" Frying	26
13. "Chao" Stir-frying	26
14. "Bao" Quick-frying	26
15. "Peng" Frying	26
16. "Dun" Stewing	27
17. "Men" Braising	27

18. "Lu" Stewing in Gravy	27
19. "Jiang" Stewing	27
20. "Shao" Stewing	27
21. "Pa" Stewing	27
22. Boiling	27
23. Steaming	27
24. Roasting	27
25. Smoking	27
26. Mud Baking	27
27. "Wei" Slow Cooking	28
28. Candied Floss	28
29. Sugar Frosting	28
30. Honey Syrup	28
<i>Gravy Recipes</i>	28

RECIPES

I. Vegetables

1. Stewed Cabbage	31
2. Creamed Cabbage	31
3. Pungent Cabbage	32
4. Stir-fried Cabbage	32
5. Deep-fried Spinach Fish	33
6. Braised Cabbage	33
7. Sautéd Celery	34
8. Stir-fried Green Peppers	34
9. Sautéd Water Spinach	37
10. Cauliflower on a Lotus	37
11. Braised Eggplant	38
12. Fish-flavored Eggplant	38
13. Sautéd Broad Beans	39
14. Sautéd Bean Sprouts	39
15. Chinese Mushrooms and Cabbage Hearts	40
16. Sautéd Mushrooms and Bamboo Shoots	40
17. Four Precious Vegetables	41
18. Sautéd Greens of Winter	42
19. Sautéd Cucumber with Shrimp	42
20. Creamed Winter Melon	43
21. Deep-fried Radish Balls	43
22. Sautéd String Beans	44
23. Sautéd Shredded Potato	44
24. Stir-fried Spiced Potato	45
25. Wosun Salad with Spicy Dressing	45
26. Stir-fried Bamboo Shoots and Pickled Mustard Greens	46
27. Bamboo Shoots in Pungent Sauce	46
28. Stir-fried Vermicelli with Minced Pork	47
29. Fried Lotus Root and Minced Pork Sandwiches	48
30. Spicy Bean Curd	43
31. Stir-fried Main Jin and Shrimp Roe	49
32. Stir-fried Bean Curd with Shrimps	49
33. Stir-fried Bean Curd and Shrimp	50
34. Stir-fried Bean Curd with Crab Meat	51

35. Bean Curd en Casserole	51
36. Stewed Gluten	52

II. Meats

37. Red-cooked Pork Shoulder	53
38. Steamed Pork Shoulder	54
39. Red-cooked Pork	54
40. Stewed-Fried-Steamed Pork	55
41. Steamed Rice Flour Pork	56
42. Stir-fried Sliced Pork	56
43. Twice Cooked Pork	57
44. Spiced Diced Pork	58
45. Diced Pork with Peanuts	59
56. Stir-fried Pork with Egg	59
47. Stir-fried Shredded Pork	60
48. Fish-flavored Pork	61
49. Slippery Pork Slices	61
50. Sweet-and-Sour Pork Tenderloin	62
51. Sweet-and-Sour Pork	63
52. Braised Anise Spare Ribs	64
53. Deep-fried Pork Tenderloin	64
54. Soft-fried Pork	65
55. Roast Pork	65
56. De-fatted Pork	66
57. Braised Soy Sauce Pork	66
58. Stuffed Winter Melon	67
59. Boiled Meat Balls	67
60. Precious Pork	68
61. Lion's Head with Crab Meat	69
62. Dongpo Braised Pork	69
63. Crackling-fried Tripe	70
64. Stewed Tripe	71
65. Sautéd Pork Liver in Sauce	71
66. Sautéd Kidney	72
67. Red-cooked Beef	72
68. Shredded Spiced Beef	73
69. Fried Crispy Meat Balls	74
70. Beef in Oyster Sauce	75
71. Curry Beef	75
72. Stewed Five-Flavor Beef	76
73. Shredded Beef with Onions	77
74. Beef Toast	77
75. Stir-fried Beef with Scallions	78
76. Steamed Mutton	78
77. Tasimi	79
78. Mongolian Fire Pot (rinsed lamb)	80

III. Fish, Seafood

79. Braised Fish in Brown Sauce	81
80. Braised Spiced Fish	81
81. Fragrant Fried Fish Sticks	82
82. Steamed Mandarin Fish with White Sauce	83
83. Steamed Mandarin Fish	83
84. Sweet-and-Sour Carp	84
85. Home-style Yellow Croaker	85

86.	Fish Filets in Brown Sauce	86
87.	Fried Squid Rolls	86
88.	Squirrel-Fish	87
89.	Chrysanthemum Black Carp (sweet-and-sour)	88
90.	Sweet-and-Sour Yellow Croaker	89
91.	Yellow Croaker in Soup	89
92.	Whitefish with Shrimp Roe	90
93.	Shad in a Net	91
94.	Stewed Black Carp	91
95.	Clear Simmered Soft-Shelled Turtle	92
96.	Fried Crucian Carp	93
97.	Braised Shredded Squid	93
98.	Fried Prawns in Sauce	94
99.	Soft-fried Prawns	95
100.	Sautéd Prawn Sections	95
101.	Sautéd Whole Prawns	96
102.	Steamed Crabs	96
103.	Sautéd Crab Roe	97
104.	Sautéd Crab Meat	97
105.	Sautéd Shrimp and Crab Meat	98
106.	Fried Shrimp Meat Balls	99
107.	Salt Boiled Prawns	99
108.	Stir-fried Shrimp with Pork	100
109.	Shrimps with Tomatoes	100
110.	Braised Sea Cucumber in Brown Sauce	101
111.	Tremella Soup (Silver Tree Ear Soup)	102
112.	Tremella in Rock Sugar Soup	102
113.	Braised Fish Lips in Brown Sauce	103
114.	Stewed Shark's Fin in Brown Sauce	104
115.	Osmanthus Scallops	105
116.	Red-cooked Monkey Head Mushrooms	105
117.	Ten Ingredients Fire Pot	106

IV. Poultry

118.	Steamed Chicken	107
119.	Crisp-fried Chicken	107
120.	Soft-fried Chicken	108
121.	Fried Whole Chicken	108
122.	Three Meals in a Chicken	109
123.	Diced Curried Chicken	110
124.	Chicken in Brown Sauce	111
125.	Smoked Chicken	111
126.	Chicken Curry	112
127.	Sautéd Chicken Gizzard and Liver	112
128.	Stewed Chicken Feet and Winter Melon	113
129.	Sautéd Diced Chicken with Peppers	114
130.	Sautéd Shredded Chicken	114
131.	Chicken Velvet	115
132.	Braised Chicken	116
133.	Roast Chicken, Shandong Style	116
134.	Beggar's Chicken	117
135.	Pressed Duck with Walnuts	118
136.	Braised Duck in Rice Wine	119
137.	Stir-fried Duck Slices	120

138.	Duck's Feet in Clear Soup	120
139.	Fried Duck Legs in Tomato Sauce	121
140.	Roast Beijing Duck	122

V. Egg, Desserts, Soup

141.	Steamed Egg Custard	123
142.	Egg Velvet	123
143.	Scallion Omelet	124
144.	Whole-fried Egg	124
145.	Sautéd 1000-year-old Eggs	125
146.	Scallops with Egg	125
147.	Shrimps with Egg	126
148.	Ham with Eggs	126
149.	Stir-fried Eggs with Tomato	127
150.	Toffee Apples	127
151.	Honey Yams	128
152.	Glazed Lotus Seeds	128
153.	Egg Pancakes	129
154.	Tomato and Egg Soup	129
155.	Shredded Chicken Consommé	130
156.	Pork and Cucumber Consommé	130
157.	Meat Balls in Clear Soup	131
158.	Winter Melon Soup	131
159.	Radish Soup	131
160.	Mushroom Consommé	132
161.	Chicken and Ham Soup	132
162.	Bean Soup	133
163.	Pork and Bean Curd Soup	133
164.	Fish Ball Soup	134

VI. Cold Dishes

165.	Sweet-and-Sour Cucumber Salad	135
166.	Celery Salad	135
167.	Hearts of Cabbage Salad	136
168.	String Bean and Red Pepper Salad	136
169.	Green Pepper Salad	137
170.	Cucumber with Scallion Oil Dressing	137
171.	Bean Curd and Cedrela Salad	138
172.	Jellyfish Salad	138
173.	White Cut Pork	139
174.	White Cut Chicken	139
175.	Stewed Duck	140
176.	Stange Flavored Chicken	140
177.	Bon Bon Chicken	141
178.	Beef in Chilli Sauce	141
179.	Braised Beef	142
180.	Mutton Cake	143
181.	Shredded Chicken with Agar-agar	143
182.	Spicy Chinese Cabbage	144
183.	Pickled Vegetables	144
184.	Nanjing Pressed Duck	145
185.	Stewed Pork Shoulder	146
186.	Boiled Duck	146

Family Menu	147
------------------------------	------------

Snacks and Desserts

1. Steamed Pork Dumplings	151
2. Roast Pork Steamed Buns	151
3. Steamed Pork and Shrimp Dumplings	152
4. Small Steamed Pork Buns	153
5. Boiled Dumplings	153
6. Fried Dumplings	154
7. Wonton Soup	154
8. Stir-fried Noodles with Shrimp Meat and Shredded Pork	155
9. Dan Dan Noodles	156
10. Eight-Treasure Rice Pudding	156
11. Sweet Red Glutinous Rice	157
12. Lotus Cakes	158
13. Scallion Shortbread	158
14. Crisp Cakes	159
15. Peach-shaped Steamed Buns	159

Appendix

1. Pork Filling	160
2. Roast Pork Filling	161
3. Jujube Paste	161
4. Red Bean Filling	162
<i>Weights and Measures</i>	163
<i>Table of nutritive values of meat</i>	164
<i>Table of vegetables and fruit</i>	166
<i>Table of cereals and beans</i>	168
<i>Cholesterol content of major foods</i>	169

History of Chinese Cuisine

Chinese cuisine is famous the world over. Its fame was not achieved in a day. China's is an ancient civilization and the cuisine developed with it through its 5,000 years of recorded history. Chinese cooking is a crystallization of the imagination and diligence of Chinese cooks these thousands of years.

In the remote, primitive beginnings of mankind's existence our ancestors led a life eating what has been described as "raw meat with fur and blood." There was no such thing as cooking. Archaeologists have conjectured that cooking began with forest fires. Lightning storms naturally caused forest fires. Primitive man would flee from the conflagration and return to the forests when the fire was over. The animals which had not escaped were now cooked, as it were and hungry primitive man found the smell of a burned carcass appetizing and the cooked meat better tasting than raw meat. Man came to know that cooking made his food tasty. He preserved kindlings for fire, and discovered methods to make fire by rubbing sticks together, striking flint and stone. Cooked food became a universal phenomenon, the Chinese word "peng" from "peng tiao" meaning the art of cooking originates from the use of fire in cooking.

People learned to cook food but they did not know how to flavor their food. It is possible that after many years primitive peoples living in coastal areas left their kill on the seashore by chance. The meat may then have been covered with salt crystals from evaporated sea water. When these salt covered meats were cooked, they tasted better. As a consequence primitive man learned to collect salt for flavoring. The word "tiao" of "peng tiao" means flavoring and flavoring originated from the use of salt.

The discovery of cooking and flavoring played a significant role in the evolution of mankind and the development of human society. The fact that man no longer ate raw meat differentiated humans from other animals. Cooking and flavoring killed germs in food, made it more digestible and nutritious. People gradually cultivated the taking of meals at regular times of the day. Cooked food improved man's physical and intellectual abilities and this led to the development of his productive forces. Mankind gradually emerged from the age of barbarism and moved towards civilization.

I

Chinese culinary arts have gone through thousands of years of refinement and development. When man first learned how to cook, the methods were very simple. They simply put food on the fire to bake on hot stones. Pottery was eventually invented, and with it came a variety of cooking utensils: the "ding", the "li", the "yan" and the "zeng". These were combinations of pots

Cooking vessels of ancient China



Ding was a cooking vessel with two loop handles and three legs. It was made of bronze.



Li was a cooking vessel with hollow legs.



Gui was a pitcher with three hollow legs. It was an earthenware cooking utensil.



Yan was double boiler made of bronze or clay.



Bu was a vessel made of either clay or bronze used for holding wine or water.



Zeng was an earthenware utensil for steaming rice.

and stove. Different methods of cooking developed at the same time. Man began to cook by wrapping his food with mud and straw before roasting; roasting food directly over the fire; first slicing the meat and roasting the sliced meat on a spit; putting the food in a cooking utensil with water to boil; putting food over water to steam it. Oil in cooking came much later. Before the Han dynasty (206 B.C.) only animal fat was used. According to "Zhou Li" (a book on the governmental system of the Zhou dynasty) the kings of the Zhou dynasty ate lamb and piglet cooked in butter in the spring. They ate dried chicken and fish cooked in dog fat in the summer. In the autumn they ate veal and fawn cooked in lard and in the winter, fresh fish and wild geese cooked in sheep fat. In the Han dynasty (206 B.C. — 220 A.D.) plant seeds were pressed for their oil. The use of these oils for cooking accelerated the development of culinary art. People learned first to fry and then to crackle fry, sauté or stir fry over a blazing fire.

With progress, the increasing varieties and abundance of foods, experimentation and study, the Chinese culinary arts have been perfected through the ages. Ancient history books, the "Zhou Li" and the "Li Ji" mention 8 precious foods prepared for kings. They may have been ways of preparation or they may simply have been eight famous dishes. One of them was roast ewe. Its preparation is more complicated than today's "roast suckling pig". The preparation involved roasting, frying and stewing. Ingredients included rice flour, thick soybean paste, vinegar and spices. The recipes show the sophistication of the culinary arts at that time. During the Warring States Period, Qu Yuan, the great poet of the State of Chu, (340-278 B.C.) wrote an essay entitled: "Call Back the Souls". It was a tribute to the dead generals and soldiers of Chu. The essay contained a long menu including such dishes as Beef, Roast Soft-shelled Turtle, Roast Lamb, Wild Goose, Steamed Duck, Spiced Chicken, Braised Turtle, Fish Soup, Pork Meatballs and Quail Soup. Flavorings included soy-sauce, vinegar, salt, plum, molasses and honey to make the dishes taste salty pungent or sweet. Cooking techniques were complicated and numerous. The only methods absent were the frying techniques. By the late Warring States Period, an essay on culinary theory appeared. This was the "Chapter on Natural Tastes" in the "Annals of Lü". The essay pointed out that the control of the flame and mastery of seasonings were crucial to good cooking. The right flame, the proper cooking time and the appropriate use of seasonings would eliminate the unwanted and bring out the best flavors in food. During the Han dynasty, Zhang Jian (?—114 B.C.) brought back alfalfa, grapes and other new foods from his travels to the west. Walnuts, broad beans, carrots, onions, pepper and cucumbers were also introduced to China. Meanwhile beancurd and many bean products were invented in China. With the increase in the variety of foods, cooking techniques developed.

During the Wei, the Jin, the Northern and Southern Dynasties (220—587) there was, in China, a massive migration and mixing of peoples of various ethnic origins. The resulting meeting of cultures and customs naturally included an exchange of foods and cooking styles. Roasting and quick boiled meat slices came from the peoples of Xinjiang and the Central Asia. Hot pepper oil and a fish flavor sauce came from the peoples of southwest Hunan

and Sichuan. From Fujian and Guangdong in the south came roast pork and raw fish and from the southeast coast of China came distinctive seafood cooking. The various styles of cooking complemented and enriched each other. The book "Qi Min Yao Shu" written by Jia Sixie, a well-known scholar of Northern Wei Dynasty describes a number of cooking techniques and includes many recipes. It is an important work on the agriculture and culinary arts of China.

By the Tang Dynasty (618—907) China was the most powerful empire in the east. Domestic stability and a flourishing culture attracted many people from other countries and they came to learn. Culinary arts were flourishing as well. Not only were color, smell and taste important, shape and design of the dish had become essential to gourmet cooking. Evidence of this can be found in "Recipes" by Wei Qu Yuan of the Tang Dynasty; in "Yu Gong Pi" written by palace chefs of the Song Dynasty; and in "Zhong Kuei Lu" by Wu Shi of Pujiang also of the Song dynasty. The Tang Dynasty "Recipes" mentions a dish called, "Fragrance Through the Doors". The style of cooking is similar to the "Quan Bao" frying method found in Beijing cooking. It is evidence of the sophistication that frying techniques had reached by that time. During the Ming and Qing dynasties (14th—20th century) the development of sea transportation brought such delicacies as shark's fin, sea cucumber and bird's nest to the banquet table. These were usually preserved in dried form and had to be soaked and reconstituted in water or other liquids before cooking. The skill was a special one and the chefs of the Ming and Qing Dynasties had mastered it. Shark's fin, sea cucumber and bird's nest are themselves very bland. Their delicacy is in their texture and the balance of seasonings to complement the texture. "Menus of the Sui Garden" written by Qing Dynasty scholar Yuan Mei (1716—1798) is a masterpiece on Chinese cuisine. The author describes not only the preparation of the many delicacies and sumptuous foods he had sampled, he expounds on the theories of cooking and his own analysis of them. In the Qing dynasty, a luxurious Manchu-Han banquet was made up of six major courses, six minor courses, four accompanying courses, two or three desserts and 24 trays (4 of dried fruits, 4 of fresh fruits, 4 of preserved fruits, 8 cold foods and 4 hot foods). In addition, the guests were served appetizers and two courses of tea before the meal. The banquet was extravagant and wasteful, but it brought together the best of Han-Manchu cooking and was a magnificent display of the exquisiteness of Chinese cuisine.

II

Chinese food appeals to the senses through color, shape, aroma and taste. To achieve perfection in Chinese cooking, one must understand the techniques underlying the art.

A. Cutting

Shape depends in the main on cutting. Cutting will also affect the color, aroma and taste. Raw materials should be sliced, diced, shredded, cubed, minced or puréed depending upon the requirements of the dish and the character of the

raw food. Cutting has been an integral part of the art for centuries. Confucius, the great philosopher and educator said 2000 years ago, "I will not eat food which is not properly cut." We can not fault Confucius for being too particular here. Improper cutting makes food unattractive and causes an unevenness in color and taste. In stir-frying, improper cutting will result in the small pieces being overcooked and big pieces remaining raw.

A famous dish called "Thick Soup of Perch and Water Shield" made its appearance some time around the Jin Dynasty. The above-mentioned "Qi Min Yao Shu" describes a preparation of the dish that calls for precise cutting. The bones of the perch must be picked out and the meat cut into slices 6 centimetres long. Water shields had to be shredded. "Perch and Shield" was so delicious that according to one historical text, a man named Chang Han chose to abandon his official post in Loyang so that he could return to his native Wuxian County in Jiangsu province to taste the famous dish. Emperor Yangdi of the Sui Dynasty was said to have praised "Perch and Shield" highly. The many recipes left to us from the Tang Dynasty show that dexterity with the knife was required of all good chefs. And today we enjoy a rich variety of cold and hot foods which are presented in intricate design and artful arrangement.

B. Flavoring

Taste depends in the main on flavoring. The proper use of seasonings and spices is extremely important. There are many tastes — salty, sweet, sour, pungent, fragrant, bitter and so forth and of them salty is predominant. Salt can not only improve the flavor, it can eliminate fishy or gamy flavors in food. Sugar sweetens and it can dissolve fats and eliminate or offset bitter flavors in some foods. Vinegar dissolves calcium found in food and it cuts the greasiness of a dish. Peppers have their unique pungent aromas which make food more appetizing. Bitter tastes are not usually desirable in a dish, but a little bitter can eliminate certain undesirable flavors and can enhance the deliciousness of other ingredients. The proper use of seasonings will produce a variety of dishes to suit a variety of appetites. In cooking a good cook must know what to add, how much to add and when to add it. Different spices should be added at different stages of preparation. Mastery of the condiments, spices and seasonings is mastery of the art. The ancient text "Shang Shu" or "The Book of History" notes that salt and plum were necessary ingredients in making soup. Vinegar did not exist at the time and sour plums were used instead. In the Spring and Autumn Period, Duke Qi Huan, the leader of five states, (?—720 B.C.) was recorded to have felt unwell one night. His mouth was hot and dry and his heart was pounding, Yi Ya, his favorite subject, a chef famous for his use of flavors, made a bowl of soup for the Duke. The soup cured him of his condition and he recovered quickly. Regardless of the taste of the original ingredients, a truly delicious dish depends on the seasoning. By varying their use of flavorings, Chinese chefs have created new tastes: tingling spiciness of "Mala", the combination of sweet, hot and salty of "Yuxiang" (fish flavor), the spicy, sesame of "Guaiwei" and so on.

C. The Fire

Chinese chefs pay particular attention to the control of the fire, manipulating it to bring out certain flavors and to cook, raw foods to just the right degree of doneness. Chinese chefs have known the importance of controlling the fire since the earliest recorded recipe. (The “eight delicacies” of the “Zhou Li” and “Li Ji” call for stewing or braising, cooking over a slow fire for a long time. In the “Chapter on Natural Tastes” of “The Annals of Lü” control of the fire was pointed to as affecting the taste of food.) A proper fire meant a delicious dish. Su Dongpo (1037—1101), the great writer of the Song Dynasty, was also expert in cooking. He created a way of stewing pork and it has been known ever since as “Dongpo Pork”. The great writer even immortalized his pork in a poem. “A slow fire, a little water and it will be delicious.” Generally speaking, where the food is cut in large pieces it should be cooked over a small or tiny fire for a long time. Such cooking methods are essentially stewing or simmering. Foods cut in small pieces are cooked quickly over a high flame and these cooking methods are all a form of frying or stirfrying. There are other cooking methods to use all depending on the dish you want to prepare. In stewing or simmering particular attention is paid to the pot or cooking utensil. Instead of the common everyday pot, special pots are used and they are sometimes sealed before the heat is applied. For instance, there is a dish called “Earthen Jar Pork” in Beijing cooking which is stewed in a sealed earthenware jar. The famous Fujianese dish “Buddha Jumps over the Wall” is prepared by putting the ingredients in a Shaoxin wine jar, sealing the jar with lotus leaves and then cooking them over a slow fire for a fairly long time. The ingredients should be soft, glutinous and fresh with a delicious aroma. It will assault your senses as soon as it is put on the table. A poem has described it: “The aroma perfumes the air the moment the jar is opened; Buddha will give up meditation and jump over the wall.” The name of the dish came from the poem. Its success depends on controlling the fire.

D. Regional Styles

China is a big country. Different regions enjoy different climates, natural resources and different foods. The variety of regional styles and dishes is enormous, calling on special condiments and cooking techniques to produce different flavors. For condiments, Sichuan is known for its broad bean paste; Guangdong has oyster sauce; Fujian has “Hongzao”, a red fermented grain; and Hunan has fermented soya beans or “black beans”. For regional styles, Beijing is known for its fried foods, crisp and tender. Suzhou style is noted for its simmering and braising techniques. Suzhou cooking is a bit on the sweet side but very heavy in flavor and favoring a melt in your mouth tenderness. Sichuan cooks specialize in chilis and hot pepper and are famous for aromatic and spicy sauces. Guangdong cooking makes use of many, many ingredients and looks for fresh, tender, crisp textures. Fujian cooks work with clear broths and different frying techniques favoring light sweet and sour flavors. Hongzao, a red fermented grain, is frequently used to flavor Fujian dishes. Anhui cuisine is famous for its use of game. It stresses the natural flavors of the in-