

In the Gourmet Spirit

A World of Fine Restaurants in Beijing

Lilian Lee



FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS

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Foreword (1)

In the world of finance or more precisely investment banking, food is a particularly hot topic! The only “fish” we are comfortable with is to fish for companies or businesses! It’s the art of the deal rather than the art of the chef that matters! Not in China! The art of the deal is as important as the art of dining. In fact, as my Chinese friends will even say, having a fine dining experience is sometimes as important, if not more important than the deal! A fine dining experience is definitely the prelude to the deal. Or prelude to more deals. Deal origination can then be said to originate from the dining table especially after a few glasses of that deceptively harmless “bai jiu”!!

Over in China, dining is indeed an art form. Here, dining together is more than a gathering of fellow private equity professionals, deal makers or entrepreneurs. It is a social lubricant that builds relationships and strengthens ties that we so often take for granted or overlook. Through my exchange and interactions I have come to realize the real significance of China’s food culture! Over here, dining is a process. A journey. Not a destination.

You might ask, “What is that elusive dining experience?” To me, it

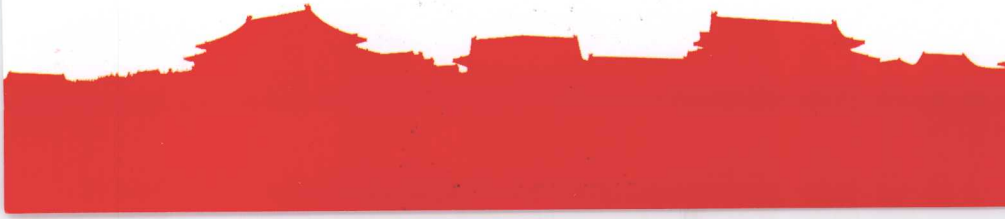
would encompass aspects that go beyond good food. As you might already find in the culinary capitals of the world, good food is a given, and that is the same in the majestic Chinese capital. A fresh, well prepared and adequately balanced dish of any cuisine is the very basis of this dining experience. An experience which cuts across cultural barriers and dare I say, literally puts differing political viewpoints on the backburner.

Points for this elusive experience stem from a slew of factors, both the tangibles and intangibles. From the decor, ambience, location, quality of service to cutlery, a restaurant's floor plan and table ornaments. The list could go on and on. But as I realize through my treks to the countless Hutongs and restaurants around the city, it is often the smallest of all details that serve as tipping points that takes one beyond a mere culinary experience — but a gastronomical feast beyond the stomach, one that nourishes both the body and the soul while at the same time making the process of dealing and wheeling all the more delectable, if not delicious.

Alas, how often do we all hear expressions like “gosh, the food is just too oily or has a ton of salt!”

This is where my colleague and good friend, Lilian, comes to the rescue. Lilian has brought together a definitive guide of what is currently the best of Beijing i.e. wholesome, healthy and yet delightfully delicious! But like any fast growing metropolis, I would expect Lilian to write revised editions of this guidebook and take both you and I on a journey that sets our senses alight!

*Victor Ng- Co-founder &
Group Executive Director of London Asia Capital Plc*



Foreword (2)

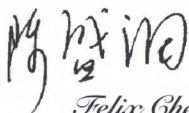
I have known Lilian for seven or eight years. She has always been an intellectual woman of the new age, who is conscientious toward work and diligent in pursuit of learning. I am familiar with her years of devotion to the protection of the Earth's resources and the natural environment, along with sustainable development of public welfare. I did not discover the gourmet in her until I read Lilian's writings effectively introducing the world's delicacies to be found in Beijing. In particular, her *In the Gourmet Spirit — a World of Fine Restaurants in Beijing* was selected by Chinese publishers for the series, "Good Food for Life Guides for the 2008 Olympic Games," and published in China and internationally in different languages. I really feel happy for her.

Food is a symbol of the culture and economic strength of a country. Attention to and improvements in food, in a sense, demonstrate the enhancement of national culture and progress of social enlightenment. Over the past 30 years of reform and opening-up, China has undergone rapid economic and consumer growth, accompanied by swift development and changes in its food culture, especially in its capital city of Beijing. People from other countries often marvel at and speak highly of dining in China for its increasing diversification, enrichment and delicacies, including the abundant variety in terms of local cuisines.



With a distinguished, all-embracing culture, Beijing has absorbed the many food cultures of the world. Such a diversified gathering of international cuisine is also evidence of the openness and broadmindedness of China. After its successful bid for the 2008 Olympic Games, Beijing became an international metropolis. Through the opportunity of hosting the Olympics, Beijing has become the focus of world attention, with its diversity and gourmet spirit also carrying forward Chinese culture. It is hoped that this book will not only serve as a gourmet's guide, but also introduce to the world, the open harmonious spirit of Beijing and the profoundness of all-embracing Chinese culture.

Hopefully, readers will get a chance to try all the restaurants mentioned in this book and join the "gourmet spirit movement." As Lilian says, "Delicious food is a way of living, and a way of savoring life." With sustainable development of the natural environment attracting greater worldwide attention, we hope that we will be able to join hands and help build an eco-friendly home through our own inner harmony and a gourmet's spirit toward life. We also look forward to the next and even more wonderful books on fine dining in Beijing by Lilian Lee.



Felix Chen

President of Sampo Group



Preface

A modern metropolis as well as historical capital of several ancient dynasties, Beijing is a blending of the old and the new, the East and the West, a fact perhaps best testified by the great diversity of local food. The city displays the cuisines of places from across the country as well as the world, each accompanied by the distinctive setting and service found at their origins. Everyone, whether with a penchant for haute cuisine or home-style cooking, has a choice of delightful places to eat.

I speak from my experience of treating a good number of friends who come to Beijing from all around the globe on business or sightseeing trips. I believe that the question of what, where and how to feed them has much significance in the demonstration of my hospitality. Exulting over my lush offers, many of my pampered pals suggest that I take them to still more restaurants in the city, and press me to promise further pleasant surprises for their palates during their subsequent visits.

In my opinion, one is most impressed by what one eats during a visit to a new place. In this sense, trying out different restaurants in Beijing is a way of learning more about the regions or countries where the cuisines come from. The delight of dining comes to a great extent from ease of mind, graceful settings and exquisite tableware. It is said that

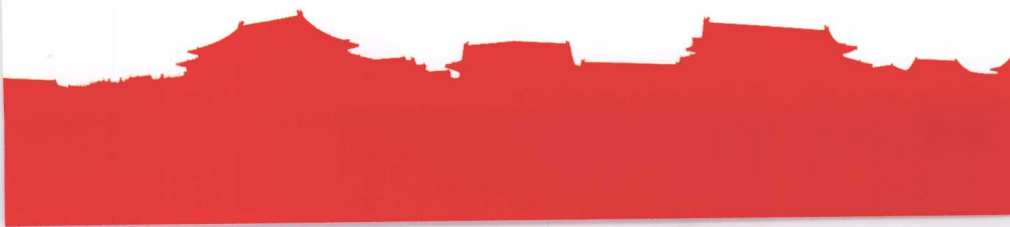


only a dish prepared with a sincere heart can truly and fully gratify the diners. The flip side of that is, a diner also cannot truly and fully appreciate a dish without a sincere heart. Good food is not only about good taste, but also about the culture, art and philosophy that lie at its root. Life is not complete without enjoyable food, which nourishes people's stomachs and hearts as well.

I never think of myself as a gourmet, despite the fact that I have visited hundreds of eateries during my six years in the city. But I believe I can give some good advices to those who are keen on dining and wining. I will be only too happy if this book can help enhance the pleasurable stays in Beijing of those who come for the Olympic Games.

I know Beijing through hunting out its diverse cuisines, along with the people and happenings I encounter in the course. That's a process full of pleasant surprises and revelations, during which I become fully involved in local life.

I feel grateful for the many kind suggestions for this book from my friends in and outside of China.



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Postscript

Acknowledgement



Choice of Chinese Dishes

When for the first time in my life I frolicked on a dining table, I found myself filled with joy as I found full expression for my passion. It is not bad to do something extraordinary every now and again. Don't be afraid of being different, and never hesitate to try something new. Life is an adventure itself.



Da Dong Roast Duck

大董烤鸭

Restaurant Information

Address: 1st and 2nd floor,
Nanxincang International Building,
22A Dongsishitiao (东四十条桥西南
甲 22 号南新仓国际大厦 1-2 层)

Tel: 51690329

Price: average RMB 100 per head

Payment: cash or credit card

Open Hours: 10:00 am to 10:00 pm

In Da Dong's Nanxincang restaurant, customers can watch the whole process of their duck roasting in a stove set right by where you are dining. The decor is imperial, while the food is superior. The best reward for the visit is the roast duck, crispy outside, succulent inside and not greasy. And it can be supplemented by a fine variety of duck