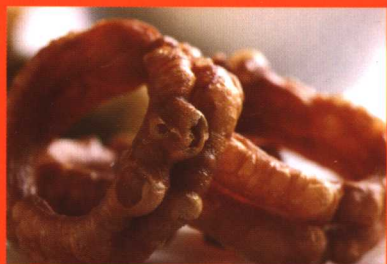
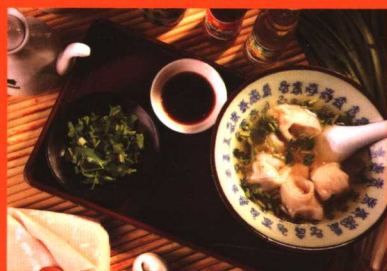


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BEIJING LOCAL DELICACIES



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摄 影: 卢 筱等

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Text by Song Weizhong, Wang Jiayan, Zhou Shuo

Photographs by Lu Xiao, et al.

Translated by Wang Yufan



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Text by Song Weizhong, Wang Jiayan, Zhou Shuo

Photographs by Lu Xiao, et al.

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LEGENDARY SNACKS OF OLD BEIJING





A traditional Beijing-style snack street



The storied cuisine of Beijing sources from cultural elements as diverse and historic as the city itself, and of its myriad and integral culinary elements, Beijing Xiaochi (traditional snacks) remain a common but treasured part of day-to-day life within the remarkably multiethnic metropolis.



Tang-Dynasty-style dumplings and pastries

Also known as “meeting pastries” or “teatime pastries”, the snacks are typically enjoyed by those who desire a light and lighthearted bite between meals. The colorful and festive dishes are inexpensive and often relished in part for fun, not necessarily to fill stomachs. In days past the time-honored snacks were primarily vended by street peddlers and stall merchants, and their strolling, stationary and sometimes noisy merchandising was a charming and beloved part of the Old Beijing streetscape.



An earthen kitchen range dating to the Eastern Han Dynasty

The snacks of Beijing, composed of Han, imperial, and Islamic dishes, primarily fall into three categories: pastries, non-staple food, and fruit products and beverages. Many of the snacks are based on recipes handed down over the centuries, and some can be traced back more than 1,000 years. The more senior snacks are considered by some historians to be “living fossils,” a part of Beijing’s cultural history.

Beijing’s truly signature snacks came into their own during the Yuan

BEIJING LOCAL DELICACIES

(1279-1368), Ming (1368-1644), and Qing (1644-1911) Dynasties. During those periods, the increasing population of multiple ethnic groups in the city brought together the essence and flavor of foods from different places and different nationalities. It was during then that *Qingzhen* snacks (deemed clean and pure food according to Islamic dietary law) and imperial-style snacks emerged and matured, and finally formed the fundamental structure of Beijing snacks, together with the Han-flavor snacks.

Beijing's Islamic snacks combine the essence of food cultures originating in far-flung and varying regions, and they feature their own characteristics based on Muslim dietary habits. Representative dishes include instant-boiled mutton, which showcases the valiant and unconstrained characters of the nomadic people; sweet sauce paste with sliced scallions; which is imbued with Shandong flavors; eight-treasure porridge, which contains the elegance of South China; deep-fried dough twists, which is fused with the charm of China's western regions; stewed

marinated beef; seasoned millet mush; tofu custard; soup of chopped entrails of sheep or ox; crispy fried dough ring; and mung bean milk. Catering to patrons of all classes, ranging from imperial family members to humble tradesmen and potters, Islamic snacks surpassed other types of Beijing snacks in range of variety.

The peddling of Islamic snacks became the principal way of making a living for the people of the Hui ethnic group in



A painting depicting the Qianmen City Gate during the Ming Dynasty.



A snack peddler of the Hui ethnic group in Old Beijing



old times. With a humble sum of start-up capital, a wok, a knife, a bag of flour, a bottle of oil, and some seasonings, many of the Hui earned their way by cooking and merchandising various snack food. To curry the ongoing favor of the patrons, the cooks strived to constantly improve, and so were conceived a number of famous, special, and tasty dishes.

Imperial-style snacks are considered the most elaborate of Beijing snacks. The dishes and snacks prepared in the imperial kitchens of past dynasties integrated outstanding cuisines from around the nation and featured fine raw ingredients, exquisite culinary skills, and superb excellence in color, smell, taste, and shape. The imperial snacks, in particular, are a splendid blending of varying cuisines of past ruling ethnic groups and the folk food of different regions around China. These include cheese and instant-boiled mutton brought by the Mongolian rulers of the Yuan Dynasty, various pastries brought by the Han rulers of the Ming Dynasty from South China, and Manchu flavors brought by the Qing Dynasty rulers from the northeast. Some folk snacks were introduced to the royal kitchen, and after improvement these became imperial snacks,



An imperial banquet of the Qing Dynasty

such as kidney bean roll, pea flour cake, and small corn bun. Meanwhile, imperial snacks also exerted an influence over folk snacks. Research shows that meat pie and eight-treasure porridge derive from meat cake and lotus seed porridge—imperial snacks of the Yuan Dynasty.

Imperial snacks feature a wide range of varieties. Pastries, alone, can fall into any of dozens of categories. According to historical records, the snacks and pastries served for the royal family of the Ming Dynasty varied daily each month, and in different seasons

and during various festivals, snacks were prepared in light of folk customs. On the basis of the Ming imperial snacks, the royal kitchen of the Qing Dynasty added Manchu-flavor pastries, thus expanding the range of imperial snacks in variety. The Manchu-Han Banquet, for example, comprises a total of 44 varieties of pastries, such as plum-blossom steamed dumpling, steamed bun, and pancakes with various fillings, as well as eight kinds of porridges, such as rice porridge, millet porridge, and cowpea porridge.

The period from 1840 through 1949 was prime time for Beijing snacks. During that period there were nearly 300 kinds, including dishes to be served with wine, such as *Baishui Yangtou* (Boiled Sheep's Head), *Baodu* (Quick-Fried Tripe), and *Jiemedun* (Mustard Chinese cabbage); flour-pastry desserts, like *Xiaowotou* (Small Corn Bun) and *Roumo Shaobing* (Pancake with Meat Fillings); and others, such as breakfast or midnight nibbles like *Aiwowo* (Sticky Rice with Sweet Fillings) and *Ludagun* (Ralls made of glutinous rice flour).



Kao Rou Ji Restaurant (Ji's roast meat) today



It was also during that period that the most famous Beijing snacks and time-honored restaurants specializing in those snacks sprang up in the city. In addition to delicious entrees, well-known restaurants and cake bakeries also offered special small dishes, some of which became their signature products, such as the Gualu Roast Duck (fire roasted) of Quanjude Restaurant; Menlu Roast Duck (oven roasted) of Bianyifang Restaurant; barbecues of Kao Rou Ji and Kao Rou Wan

Restaurants; instant-boiled mutton of Donglaishun and Xilaishun Restaurants; water-boiled pork of Shaguojia (Casserole House); small corn buns, pancakes with meat fillings, pea flour cakes, and kidney bean rolls of Fangshan Restaurant; silver-thread rolls of Fengzeyuan Restaurant; cream fried cakes of Donglaishun Restaurant; filled sausage of Heyizhai Restaurant; roasted buns of Tongheju

Restaurant; steamed bun with sesame fillings of Beijing Hotel; steamed dumplings and deep-fried triangles of Duyichu Restaurant; fried flour lumps of Mukezhai Restaurant; fried liver of Huixianju Restaurant; and sweet baked cake of the Dashunzhai Pastry Bakery.

Relative to restaurant and bakery offerings, snacks were more readily available in snack outlets and at night-market concessions. Despite a small scale of operation and limitation of varieties, after years



Baodu Feng Restaurant



Wonton Hou Restaurant

of reliable operation some of the smaller restaurants and food stands developed famous brands. These brands were distinguished from one another by the surnames of their managers. Old Beijing, for example, had four famous brands **Douzhi** (Mung Bean Milk), namely



Wonton

Douzhi Zhang, Douzhi Xu, Douzhi He, and Shu's Douzhi; and brand names of **Baodu** (Quick-boiled Tripe) were Baodu Shi, Baodu Wang, Baodu Zhang, Baodu Yang, Baodu Feng, and Baodu Man. Other well-known snacks include Xiaochang Chen (serving **Luzhu Huoshao**, a type of pork soup with bread bits), Wonton Hou, and Niangao (Glutinous Rice Cake) Wang, and more.

The typical snacks of Beijing attract diners with their distinctive characteristics. They often feature strong sweet and salty flavors, and whether crispy or smooth, they offer a purity of taste. While some of the snacks are tasty only when served very hot, like fried cakes and the soup of chopped entrails of sheep or ox, some are served as a cool dish, like cold glutinous rice cake and cold bean jelly. And importantly, these and other snacks are not expensive. These traits make the dishes especially popular with Beijing citizens and foreign visitors, and even those bites which used to be only available to the royal families are now part of the lives of ordinary populace. It would be erroneous to believe these prepared foods were served by and to the underclass only to satisfy hunger. As a matter of fact, many of the traditional Beijing snacks enjoyed popularity among the wealthy as well as the humble locals. For instance, it was common to see distinguished personages and famous opera performers patronizing the roadside food stands, alongside with ordinary citizens.



The Wangfujing Snack Street