

Chinese Creative Lifestyle

The Food Culture Of Shanghai

A Taste Of Shanghai



Shanghai People's Fine Arts Publishing House

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Shanghai cuisine has attracted the world's attention in recent years, as has the city's rapid growth and development. This book contains recipes for twenty typical Shanghai dishes in five categories: vegetarian, seafood, meat, soup, and snacks. In a departure from typical cookbooks, this book also provides for each dish its traditions and classical allusions, its nutritional value, and its ideal cooking method. The book's photographs showcase the artistic beauty of each dish. In addition, the book includes the names and maps of several well-known Shanghai restaurants which serve each dish as its specialty. By reading this book, you will not only learn how to cook each dish, but you will also learn about the food culture of Shanghai. Therefore, this book is both a practical and a classical overview of Shanghai cuisine for all who celebrate Shanghai's food culture.



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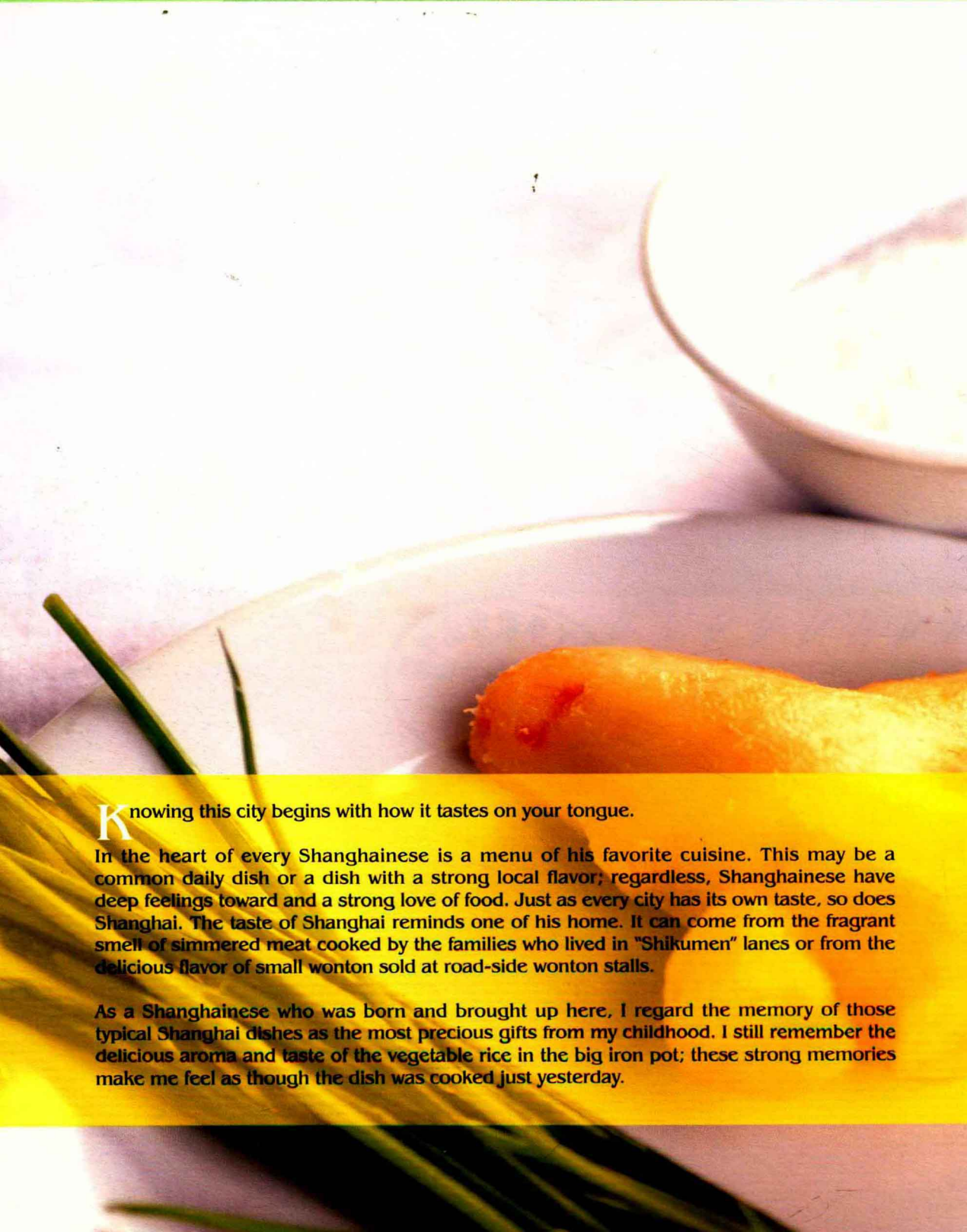
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A close-up photograph of a bowl of white rice and a plate with a fried wonton and green onions. The bowl is in the upper right, and the plate is in the lower half. The wonton is golden brown and has a small red garnish. Green onions are scattered around the plate.

Knowing this city begins with how it tastes on your tongue.

In the heart of every Shanghainese is a menu of his favorite cuisine. This may be a common daily dish or a dish with a strong local flavor; regardless, Shanghainese have deep feelings toward and a strong love of food. Just as every city has its own taste, so does Shanghai. The taste of Shanghai reminds one of his home. It can come from the fragrant smell of simmered meat cooked by the families who lived in "Shikumen" lanes or from the delicious flavor of small wonton sold at road-side wonton stalls.

As a Shanghainese who was born and brought up here, I regard the memory of those typical Shanghai dishes as the most precious gifts from my childhood. I still remember the delicious aroma and taste of the vegetable rice in the big iron pot; these strong memories make me feel as though the dish was cooked just yesterday.



Preface

It is really a pleasant experience to visit a Shanghai family home because Shanghai cuisine treats guests in a special way. The joyful preparation of the feast is like the careful rehearsal of a concert; the gas fire for cooking is the stage lighting; the seasonings are the piano tuners; the rattle of pots and pans is the prelude; and the host is a conductor who has prepared for a spectacular concert.

The sense of taste is the key to savoring the menus of Shanghai families. Although the city of Shanghai is a glorious and rapidly growing city, the essence of her splendor is in the dishes served by Shanghai families. The fragrant smell of the dishes will bring people back to Shanghai, no matter how far they must travel to do so.

Yes, knowing the city of Shanghai begins with how it tastes on your tongue.



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Vegetarian Dishes

Very Typical Shanghai Cuisine:
Simmered Spongy Gluten

A Popular Herb Dish:
Sautéed Alfalfa Sprouts with Sorghum Liquor

Once a Temple Dish and Now Popular in All Restaurants:
Arhat Vegetarian Dish

"Green and White Jade":
Sautéed Winter Bamboo Shoot and Shanghai Cabbage
(Seasonal)

Very Typical Shanghai Cuisine:
Simmered Spongy Gluten

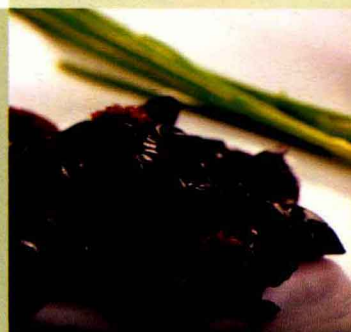


In a strict sense, spongy gluten (called “Kao Fu” in Chinese) is not a bean product. It is a form of wheat gluten, which is made by leavening raw gluten and then baking or steaming it: it has a similar texture to a sponge. It is sold as small blocks and is then diced up and cooked. It remains a mystery why spongy gluten is always sold with bean products. Perhaps it suddenly occurred to a tofu maker who wanted to amaze the world with this brilliant idea that spongy gluten should be included in the family



of bean products, just as great scientific discoveries are often made out of expectation. Before spongy gluten is cooked, it needs to be rinsed several times, and then immersed in water for some time. Contrary to the fact that many restaurants regard simmered spongy gluten as a cold dish, the local cooking method often treats it as a hot dish. It is thought that since there is a wide choice of hot dishes nowadays, simmered spongy gluten may seem too ordinary when served as a hot dish. Nevertheless, food should never be distinguished as ordinary or special. So far as I am concerned, it is more delicious when served hot because that is when gluten tastes the most tender and soft. This softness disappears when it is served cold.

Simmered spongy gluten should not only be served hot, but it also has several key ingredients. In addition to spongy gluten, daylily, black fungus and black mushrooms are three important traditional ingredients to be added to the dish. With these four ingredients, Chinese like to call simmered spongy gluten “Si Xi Kao Fu”, which means the four ingredients will bring four joys. The dish can be served as a cold dish or with noodles, and if it is vacuum-packed, it can be a traveling food. Simmered spongy gluten is a vegetarian dish. Gong De Lin Vegetarian Restaurant and other well-known vegetarian restaurants consider it to be their specialty. The biggest difference between spongy gluten and bean products is that spongy gluten is never cooked with meat. It remains true to its “vegetarian essence” and never “gets mixed with meat or fish”.



Common Sense of Nutrition



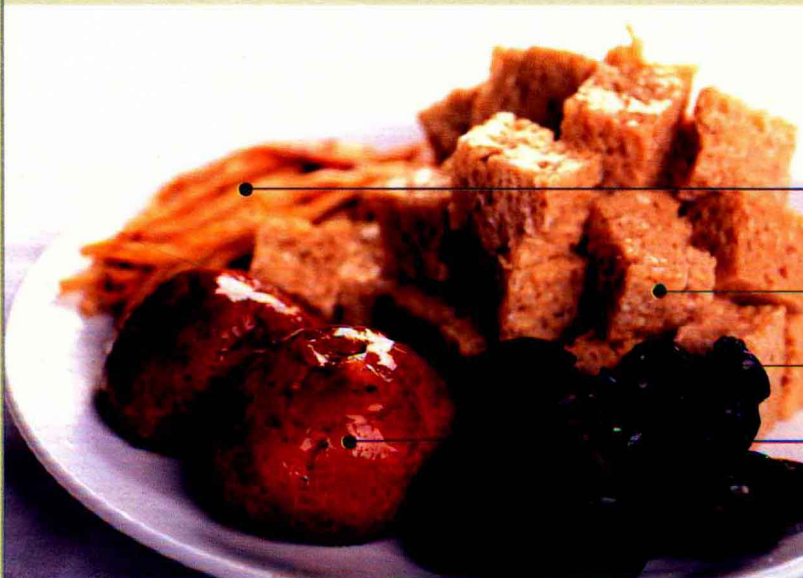
1. *Spongy gluten, with high levels of rich protein, is low fat and low sugar, and it has few calories. This makes it especially suitable for those who are easily fatigued, or who suffer from fevers or dehydration. Spongy gluten tastes sweet and is cool in nature; it has an antipyretic effect, and it can benefit the spleen, boost energy, nourish blood and prevent dehydration.*

2. *Daylily has anti-aging and brain tonic effects because it contains rich lecithin, a substance which is an essential composition of many cells, especially the brain cells. Lecithin can increase and improve brain function, improve concentration, reduce memory loss, remove deposits in arteries, and reverse cerebral arterial occlusion. Therefore, daylily is also known as "healthy brain food".*

3. *Black fungus contains very rich iron, so if it is eaten often, it can help nourish blood, delay the process of aging, make skin and body healthy, and prevent iron-deficiency anemia.*

4. *Black mushrooms contain lentinan which can increase the activity of T helper cells and enhance antibody production. Several research findings prove that black mushrooms can prevent cancers, so they are used in clinical treatment.*

Main ingredients



daylily

spongy gluten

reconstituted black
fungus

black mushroom

Traditional Method

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1. After the block of spongy gluten has been blanched in boiling water containing soda, rinse it several times and then dice it. Soak the dried black fungus, daylily and black mushrooms in warm water to reconstitute them. Remove the root of the black mushrooms.

2. Heat oil on high heat, sauté scallion sections and

ginger slices until fragrant. Add spongy gluten, fry it and add soy sauce, monosodium glutamate, sugar and water.

3. When the liquid boils, reduce the heat to low, and add the reconstituted black fungus, black mushrooms and daylily. Simmer together for ten minutes.



Heat oil on high heat, sauté scallion sections and ginger slices until fragrant. Add spongy gluten.



Fry spongy gluten until golden.



Add the reconstituted black fungus, black mushrooms and daylily, and simmer together for 10 minutes.

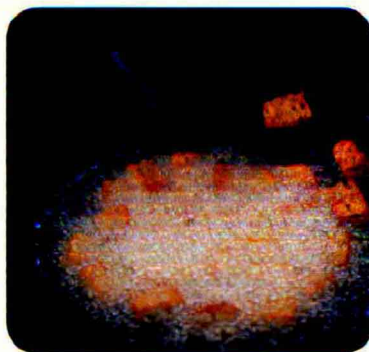


Add the seasonings and continue cooking until the sauce is absorbed.





Add a bit more sugar to enhance the taste of the dish.



Add more oil when frying spongy gluten.

1. Spongy gluten absorbs oil, so add more oil when sautéing it. You can also choose to fry spongy gluten in 180 degree centigrade oil.
2. Simmered spongy gluten tastes more delicious when served hot.
3. Daylily is the second most important ingredient of the dish, so be sure to add it when cooking. Sliced bamboo shoots can also be added to the dish to enhance its taste.

Some restaurants in Shanghai to eat simmered spongy gluten



Gong De Lin Vegetarian Restaurant
Address: No. 445, West Nanjing Road (close to North Chendu Road), Huangpu District
Tel: 021-63270218 or 63272181



Cang Lang Ting Restaurant (Huaihai restaurant chain)
Address: No. 689-691, Middle Huaihai Road (close to Sinan Road), Luwan District
Tel: 021-53823738



Old Kitchen Restaurant
Address: No. 48, Yuyao Road (in Tongle Lane, close to Xikang Road), Jingan District
Tel: 021-52135277



Lv Ya Restaurant
Address: No. 372, Middle Jiangxi Road (close to Ningbo Road), Huangpu District
Tel: 021-63219081