

Cantonese cuisine

广东饮食

Foreword

Cantonese cuisine¹, or Yue cuisine, originates from Guangdong province and is one of the Eight Culinary Traditions of China. It can be further divided into three distinctive classes, namely Guangzhou cuisine, Chaozhou² cuisine and Hakka cuisine. The cooking styles of Cantonese cuisine have evolved over a period of more than 2,000 years in China. The recipes of Cantonese dishes appeared in the literature of the Han (206 BC-220 AD), Wei, South and North dynasties (220-587). It became famous both at home and abroad at the beginning of the 20th century. Due to the great numbers of early emigrants from Guangdong, Cantonese cuisine is perhaps the most widely available type of Chinese cuisine outside China.

The Cantonese are known to have an adventurous palate, as they are able to eat many different kinds of meats and vegetables and other exotic ingredients. Besides pork, beef and chicken, Cantonese cuisine incorporates almost all edible meats, including offal, chicken feet, duck's tongue, snakes, and snails. However, lamb and goat are rarely eaten, unlike in the cuisines of northern or western China. In 1986, Prince Philip of the UK commented on Chinese eating habits at the 1986 World Wildlife Fund Conference: "If it has four legs and is not a chair, if it has two wings and flies but is not an airplane, and if it swims and is not a submarine, the Cantonese will eat it." Exaggerating though it may be, the quotation illustrates the diversity and creativity of Cantonese cuisine.

As the province of Guangdong has a generally hot climate, Cantonese food does not use many spices, bringing out the natural flavor of the vegetables and meats. Guangdong dishes are characterized by their tender and slightly sweet taste. Sauces are a crucial seasoning in Cantonese cuisine. Classic Cantonese sauces are light and

¹ Cantonese cuisine here refers to the culinary style of the province of Guangdong. Colloquially, Cantonese cuisine is regarded by many people in the Pearl River Delta as the cuisine in the Cantonese-speaking Region, excluding that of other areas in the Province. But academically speaking, the Cantonese cuisine of Yuet Cuisine includes three major branches: Guangzhou Cuisine, Chaozhou cuisine and Hakka cuisine.

² Chaozhou cuisine is also known as Teochew cuisine, Chiuchow cuisine, or Chaoshan cuisine. Some considers Chaozhou cuisine a part of Fujian Cuisine as the city of Chaozhou is adjacent to Fujian Province geographically and they share similar cooking styles.

mellow. The most widely used sauces in Guangdong cuisine include: Hoisin sauce³, oyster sauce, plum sauce, as well as sweet and sour sauce. Other ingredients popular in Guangdong Cuisine include spring onions, sugar, salt, soya bean products, rice wine, corn starch, vinegar, and sesame oil. Garlic is used heavily in some dishes, especially those in which internal organs, such as entrails, may emit unpleasant odors. Ginger, chili peppers, five-spice powder, powdered white pepper, star anise and a few other spices are used, but often sparingly.

Guangzhou cuisine 广州菜，广府菜

Guangzhou cuisine is more representative of Canton cuisine than ChaoShan and Hakka cuisine. It dominates dining tables of millions of families across the Pearl River Delta.

General features of Guangzhou cuisine 广府菜的特色

1. A Rich source of raw ingredients 原料丰富

When it comes to ingredients, Cantonese chefs are fortunate to live in an area with abundant rainfall and a sub-tropical climate. The province of Guangdong is a major agricultural area, while Guangzhou city, also known in the west as Canton City, is a major Chinese seaport located on the Pearl River. Lush rice paddies abound throughout the Pearl River Delta. There are also several pig and poultry farms throughout the area.

However, the Cantonese are also very inventive, and happy to incorporate non-native ingredients in their cooking. Coconut milk, rice noodles and curry powder, staples of Thai and Indian cuisine, show up in several Cantonese dishes.

2. An emphasis on the freshness of dishes 取料新鲜

An emphasis on preserving the natural flavor of the food is the hallmark of Guangzhou cuisine. A Guangzhou chef would consider it a culinary sin of the highest order to produce a dish that was overcooked or too heavily seasoned.

³ Hoisin sauce is a Chinese dipping sauce. The word Hoisin is a Romanization of the Chinese word for seafood as pronounced in Cantonese. Traditionally, Hoisin sauce is made using toasted mashed soy beans. Despite the literal meaning, Hoisin sauce does not contain seafood, nor is it typically used with it.

3. A diverse set of cooking methods 多样烹调

The basic cooking techniques include roasting, stir-frying, sautéing, deep-frying, braising, stewing, and steaming.

At home, steaming and stir-frying are the primary cooking techniques. Given the emphasis on freshness in Guangzhou cuisine, it's not surprising that steaming is popular, as this is the least intrusive cooking technique, and the healthiest. As for stir-frying, the Cantonese are recognized experts.

Roasting and deep frying are less used at home but are common in Guangdong cuisine; the former is generally used for preparing main courses and the latter for snacks and Dim Sum.

Braising and stewing is slightly different, in that braising requires the food to be cooked quickly in oil first, after which it is slowly stewed. These two methods are the more time-consuming for home cooks, but they are what one might apply when preparing big meals.

Traditional regional delicacy 广府传统名菜

1. Roast Sucking Pig 烤乳猪

Roast Sucking Pig, usually prepared for special occasions and gatherings, is one of the most famous dishes in Guangzhou cuisine. It is also a popular dish at wedding dinners or a party for to celebrate a baby's first month of life. In ancient times, Roast Sucking Pig was a main course of Manchu Han Imperial Feast (Chinese: 满汉全席), which are banquets prepared exclusively for the royal family.



A typical way to prepare this dish could be briefly summarized as follows:

Choose a pig that weights about 5 kilograms; Rinse it in cold water and cut it into two halves from the underside of the pig; Remove the middle ribs and brain of the pig; Apply spices and ingredients to the inside of the pig and preserve it for about 30 minutes; Hang it up to dry off any water; Apply other ingredients to the inside of the pig for another 20 minutes; Pour boiling water over the pig until the skin is

tightened and the meat hardened; Use a specially designed fork to set it in the oven; Roast it until the skin of the pig turns red, then it's ready to serve.

The complication and care with which to prepare this dish prevents many families from making it on their own. But many local restaurants, especially the high-end ones offer it on their menus. There is nowhere better to taste this traditional delicacy than the city of Guangzhou.

2. White-Cut Chicken 白切鸡

White-Cut Chicken, or White-Sliced Chicken, is a popular dish for modern families on the Pearl River Delta. It is easy to prepare and it preserves the favor of chicken to the fullest.

The chicken is salt-marinated and is cooked in its entirety in hot water or chicken broth with ginger. When the water starts to boil, the heat is turned off, allowing the chicken to cook in the residual heat for around 30 minutes. The chicken's skin will remain light colored, nearly white and the meat will be quite tender, moist, and flavorful. The chicken is usually cooled before being cut into pieces. Most local restaurants have White-Cut Chicken on their menus. It is served in pieces, with the skin and bone, sometimes with a salted mixture of finely minced ginger, scallions, and either liquid pork fat or vegetable oil.

Though there are over 200 different ways to cook a chicken in Cantonese style, White-Cut Chicken is the definite favorite for many Cantonese.



3. Cantonese-style roast goose 脆皮烧鹅

Roast Goose is a traditional Cantonese dish. It became very popular at the early stage of the Reform and Opening-up in the 1970s. Many who visit Guangzhou for the first time would seek a taste of this famous dish.

It is made by roasting a goose with seasoning in a charcoal furnace at high



temperature. Roasted goose of high quality has crisp skin with juicy and tender meat. Slices of roasted goose are generally served with plum sauce.

Eating habits and snacks 广府饮食习惯和小吃

1. Having Cantonese Morning Tea / Going for Yum Cha 吃早茶

Having Cantonese Morning Tea is very popular in Guangzhou. As people would eat some snacks while drinking tea, having Cantonese Morning Tea is often called eating Cantonese Morning Tea. Furthermore, as the primary purpose of having Cantonese Morning Tea is to chat with one's family and friends while having breakfast, having Cantonese Morning Tea is also called "enjoying Cantonese Morning Tea (Chinese: 吃早茶)".

Guangdong Morning Tea can be traced back to the reign of Xianfeng and Tongzhi in the Qing dynasty. Back then in Guangzhou, there was a type of simple teashop named One Cent Shop (Chinese: 一厘店) with a wooden advertising plate of "TEA", offering tea and snacks to passersby. It cost only one cent to sit down and have some tea and refreshments, or Dim Sum, with one's companions.

Later on, teahouses began to emerge and developed gradually into bigger tea restaurants. Since then, Cantonese Morning Tea has become a common practice of Cantonese people. Nowadays tea only plays a supporting role while the tea refreshments have become more important.

1.1 Foods offered in Cantonese Morning Tea restaurants 早茶的品种

There are two types of refreshments: dry refreshments and wet refreshments, offered by typical Cantonese restaurants.

Dry refreshments may include steamed stuffed-buns, cakes, and fruit buns and so on.



Wet refreshment typically includes Guilin Gao, congee, bean-curd jelly and so on.



1.2 Etiquette at Cantonese Morning Tea table 早茶的礼节

In a typical Cantonese restaurant that offers Cantonese Morning Tea, the variety of Dim Sum ranges from several dozen to several hundred. When you enter, the waitress will give you a card, note down the number of people you are bringing and escort you to your table.

Tea is often the first thing to order. There is Oolong tea, Pu-erh tea, and Chrysanthemum tea amongst others. The etiquette of tea-pouring are as follows: the person who takes the teapot should not pour tea for himself first, but rather last; regardless of whether there is enough tea in one's cup, the person pouring tea should add some more to it to show respect; the person who is served should tap his fingers (left hand or right hand) on the table several times as a token of gratitude.

The etiquette of tapping the table originates from an interesting antidote. It is said that during the reign of Qianlong (1736 -1795) in Qing dynasty, the Emperor went on an incognito tour to the southern part of China. At one time the Emperor disguised himself as a servant, while his servant played the master. When the Emperor poured tea for the servant, the latter was so extremely flattered and did not know how to express his gratitude while not revealing the identity of the Emperor. With a stroke of brilliance, the clever servant imitated the courtesy of Koutow (Chinese: 叩头) by tapping his forefinger and middle finger on the table several times. This courtesy has remained at tea tables since then.

In a Cantonese Morning Tea restaurant, the guests are not required to serve themselves as in a buffet. The waiters will pull trolleys loaded with food around tables and the guests just take what they want. The waiters will note down the food taken on the card, which will be used to calculate the bill.

Often people would stay until at least ten o'clock eating Cantonese Morning Tea.

Some restaurants offer a discount for those who pay before eleven o'clock. Some may wonder why Guangzhou people who are accustomed to a fast-tempo life would linger for such a long time at the breakfast table. The truth is that many local citizens consider eating Cantonese Morning Tea a way of socializing and bonding with one's families and friends rather than simply having breakfast. It is a great way of enjoying oneself and exchanging ideas with others.

2. Cantonese soup 广府汤, 老火靓汤



Cantonese soup, or slowly-cooked soup (Lou Fo Tong in Cantonese) is one of the most important elements of Cantonese cuisine. It is widely believed by the Cantonese to be nutritious, healthy, and easy to digest. Often soup is served before the main dishes. The Cantonese soup is usually a clear broth prepared by simmering meat and other ingredients for several hours. Sometimes, Chinese herbal medicines are added to the pot. The combinations are varied and numerous.

The main attraction is the actual soup itself, rather than the solids found inside it, which are usually thrown away unless they are expensive ingredients like abalones or shark fins. A whole chicken may simmer in a broth for six hours or longer. The solids are usually unpalatable but the essences are all in the soup. Traditional Cantonese families have this type of soup at least once a week. Though in this day and age, many families with working parents cannot afford this tradition due to the long preparation time required. For the same reason, few restaurants serve this type of soup either. Even if they do, it can only be served as soup du jour (Soup of the Day, or Li Tang in Mandarin, Chinese: 例汤).

2.1 The origin of Cantonese soup 老火汤的起源

The Pearl River Delta is characterized by a wet climate and humid air. Historical records show that Yue people have a steadfast belief that soup could lower the inner

heat of one's body. Therefore, soup is an indispensable part of their diet and is often served at the beginning of a meal.

Traditional Cantonese women, unlike those in the Southern Yangtze River region who spend most of their time in front of mirrors penciling eyebrows, would sit in front of a simmering pot of broth for a long time, awaiting the return of their husbands. The broth they are preparing represents a brimming pot of love for their families. Cantonese women also believe that the quickest way to a man's heart is through his stomach. This is why being an accomplished soup-maker is widely considered a great virtue of a good wife.

2.2 The effects of Cantonese soup 老火汤的功效

Cantonese soup is believed to have a great effect in improving beauty, strengthening physical health, preventing and curing diseases, and nourishing vital organs of the human body. The idea is that a specially-designed recipe of Cantonese soup could remedy the body of ill-health by providing the elements it lacks before that deficiency is brooded into disease.

For example, free-range chicken and snail soup with scallops and mushrooms is said to help the stomach and intestines, as well as preventing cancer and aging. Pork ribs soup with green and red carrot moisturizes a dry mouth and throat. Pork lungs boiled with fruit and tender cabbage is said to strengthen the lungs and help beat back nagging coughs.

3. Siu Mei 烧味



Siu Mei is the generic name in Cantonese cuisine given to meats roasted on spits over an open fire or a huge wood burning rotisserie oven. It creates a unique, deep barbecue flavor and the roast is usually coated with a flavorful sauce (a different sauce is used for each meat) before roasting.

Usually meat of this type is purchased already cooked, as Siu Mei takes a great deal of resources to prepare and few households have the necessary equipment. Shops generally have large ovens and rotisserie-like utilities for cooking the meat. Families order or prepare their own plain white rice to accompany the Siu Mei. A Siu Mei meal usually consists of one box comprising half meat and half rice, and maybe some vegetables. Certain dishes, such as orange cuttlefish, or White-Cut Chicken, are not roasted at all, but are often prepared and sold alongside BBQ roasted meats in Siu Mei establishments; hence they are generally classified as Siu Mei dishes.

4. Cantonese-style congee 广府粥

Congee (Zhou in mandarin) is a type of rice porridge or gruel popular in Canton. Congee is a good choice for breakfast or Cantonese Morning Tea. When eaten as plain rice congee, it is most often served with side dishes. When additional ingredients, such as meat, fish, and flavorings are added whilst preparing the congee, it is most often served as a meal on its own. To make Cantonese-style congee, white rice is boiled in its weight of water for a long time until the rice breaks down and becomes a fairly thick, white porridge. It is often considered particularly suitable for the sick as a mild, easily digestible food.

Names for different types of congee are as varied as the style of its preparation. Despite its many variations, it is always a thick porridge or soup of rice which has usually disintegrated after prolonged cooking in water.



Plain rice congee is often eaten with pickled vegetables (Chinese: 榨菜), salted duck-eggs, lettuce, bamboo shoots, deep-fried bread sticks (Chinese: 油条), pickled Tofu, wheat gluten, or with other condiments, meat or preserved eggs.



Congee is often named after the main ingredients added, such as: Congee with Preserved-Egg and Pork, Congee with Sliced Fish, or Congee with Pig's Liver and Pork.

There are other types of Congee that are named after their provenance or legend.

For example, Ji Di Congee (Chinese: 及第粥, lit. passing the imperial exam congee), made with lean pork, liver, intestine and kidney, is named after an interesting story about its origin.

It is said that during the Ming dynasty, in the province of Guangdong, there lived a talented young man named Lun Wenxu (Chinese: 伦文叙), who was born into a family of limited means. He made a living by selling vegetables, but his earnings were not enough to enroll in a good school nor for a comfortable lifestyle. The butcher who lived next door had sympathy for him. He ordered a basket of vegetables from Lun every now and then. When the latter delivered the goods to the butcher's house, the butcher would invite him to lunch. The butcher's lunch consisted of congees made with lean pork, liver, intestine and kidney. Years later, Lun Wenxu passed the imperial examination and became Zhuangyuan (Chinese: 状元, lit. exemplar of the state). The newly-appointed official was grateful for the kindness shown by the butcher when he was young. Therefore he visited the butcher and asked for a bowl of the congee he used to enjoy. The congee was not named yet so Lun Wenxu wrote down the name “及第粥” (Ji Di Congee) for it. This became a much-told story since then and the recipe of the congee is thus preserved.



Another kind of congee, Ting Zai Congee (Chinese: 艇仔粥, lit. congee made in a small boat) has a rather beautiful tale. Legend has it that long ago there was a beautiful and kind girl who was the daughter of a fisherman. They lived in a small boat. One day, she released a carp caught by her father. Several years later, her father was seized by sudden illness. The little girl was so sad that she went to the riverside to pray. A beautiful fairy appeared and told her to cook and sell some congee with fish, shrimp, peanuts and other crispy ingredients, then use the money to send for a doctor, and 10 days later her father would recover. The little girl did what she was told and her father regained his health. The congee in this story was thus named Ting Zai Congee as it was made in the small boat of the fisherman and his daughter.

Street food 广府街坊美食

1. Steam rice rolls / Chang Fen 肠粉

There are many other snacks and foods that have distinctive Canton characteristics. Steamed Rice Rolls (Chinese: 肠粉) are often seen in street shops.



They can be eaten for breakfast, lunch and supper. The procedure to prepare this dish is very complicated, therefore it is seldom homemade.

How do they prepare it? Firstly, the rice is ground and mixed with water to form a mildly glutinous liquid. The solution is steamed in a triangular container until it is half-cooked and other ingredients are added according to the requirements of the customers. Common ingredients include beef, pork, eggs, chicken, pig's liver, mushroom and vegetable. It is usually served with soy source.

2. Beef offal with white radish / Luobo Niuza 萝卜牛杂





Beef offal with white radish is not strictly just beef offal and white radish anymore. It has been developed into a signature food in the Pearl River Delta. Wherever there is a pedestrian walkway, you can find one or more stalls selling it. The stalls usually sell a variety of cooked beef offal including intestine, liver, lung, stomach, which can be accompanied with white radish, gluten, beef balls, pork balls and so on. Beef offal is usually cooked whole and then cut into pieces with scissors according to the amount requested by customers. At rush hour, some stalls may also chop it up in advance.

The customers can choose condiments such as chopped green onion, pepper sauce, and vinegar. This food is usually sold take-away, but some large stores may also prepare seating areas for customers.

Chaozhou cuisine 潮州菜

Chaozhou cuisine originated from the Chaoshan region in the east of Guangdong province, which includes the cities of Chaozhou, Shantou and Jieyang. Chaozhou cuisine also bears some similarities to that of Fujian cuisine, with which it shares some dishes.

General introduction on Chaozhou cuisine 潮州菜概况

Chaozhou cuisine is particularly well known for its seafood and vegetarian dishes and is generally regarded as being healthy. Its use of flavoring is much less heavy-handed than most other Chinese cuisines and depends much on the freshness and quality of the ingredients for taste and flavor. As a delicate cuisine, oil is not often used in large quantities and there is a relatively heavy emphasis on poaching,

steaming and braising, as well as the common Chinese method of stir-frying.

1. Dipping sauces 蘸醬



A condiment commonly associated with cuisine of certain Chaozhou groups is Shacha sauce (Chinese: 沙茶醬). It is made from soybean oil, garlic, shallots, chillies, brill fish, and dried shrimp. The paste has a savory and slightly spicy taste.

As an ingredient, it has multiple uses: as a base for soups; as a rub for barbecued meats; as a seasoning for stir fry dishes; as a component for dipping sauces (e.g. in hot pot meals).

Another sauce with almost equal popularity is called fish sauce (Chinese: 魚露).



It is an amber-colored liquid extracted from the fermentation of fish with sea salt. It is often made from anchovies, salt and water, and is usually used in moderation because of its intense flavor.

2. Chaozhou broth 潮州上湯

Chaozhou chefs often use a special stock called Superior Broth (Chinese: 上湯). This stock remains on the stove and is continuously replenished. Portrayed in popular media, some Hong Kong chefs allegedly use Superior Broth that has been preserved for decades.

3. Vegetable carving 蔬菜雕刻

Chaozhou chefs take pride in their skills of vegetable carving, and carved vegetables are used as garnishes on cold dishes and on the banquet table.

Regional delicacy 潮州名菜

1. Oyster omelet / Hao Lao 蠔烙



An omelet dish cooked with fresh raw oysters and tapioca starch. Sometimes other ingredients are added catering to the needs of different families, which might include sliced pig's liver, peas, eggs and so on. Oyster omelet is generally either served or cooked with fish sauce.

2. Fish balls and fish dumplings 鱼丸和鱼饺



Fish balls and fish dumplings are typically made from yellow fish, which is pulverized into a thick paste and mixed with egg white. The fish paste made into balls and dumplings can be cooked in many ways but are often served in Chaozhou-style noodle and soups.

A good fish ball should have an elastic (bouncy) and fluffy texture and a strong taste of fish. They are made using only fish and are usually eaten as a compliment with noodles and with Shacha sauce. Readily available in traditional markets and supermarkets, fish balls are also a popular ingredient for hot pot.

3. Teochew hot pot / Teochew steamboat / Teochew Huo Guo 潮汕火锅



A dish where fresh, thinly sliced ingredients are placed into a simmering flavorsome broth to cook and then dipped into various mixed sauces, usually with

Shacha and soy sauce as the main components. Ingredients often include leafy vegetables, yam, Tofu, pomfret and other seafood, beef balls, fish balls, pork balls, mushrooms and Chinese noodles, amongst others. Chaozhou hot pot, like other Chinese hot pots, is served in a large communal metal pot at the center of the dining table.

4. Beef balls and pork balls 牛肉丸和猪肉丸



As mentioned before, beef balls and pork balls are popular dishes in Chaozhou. Beef balls, in particular, are a signature dish for the city of Shantou. Authentic Shantou beef balls are made of beef that has been finely pulverized. They are easily distinguishable from fish balls due to the beef balls' darker color. They are frequently eaten with Shacha sauce.

5. Marinated meat / Lu Wei 卤味



Chaozhou cuisine is noted for its wide variety of braised dishes, which includes goose, duck, pork, bean curd, eggs and offal.

6. Chaozhou-style congee 潮州粥

Chaozhou-style congee is a rice soup that has a more watery texture compared to Cantonese congee. There are two types of congee; one is plain white congee, which is commonly served with various salty accompaniments such as salted vegetables, preserved radish, boiled salted-duck-eggs, fried salted-fish and fried peanuts.

The other type of Chaozhou-style congee is more richly flavored with other ingredients; typically sea foods such as oyster, crab, shrimp and so on. But minced meat is usually added to bring out the flavor of sea food.



Different from Guangzhou-style congee, Chaozhou-style congee is not particularly watery; normally the rice is still visible. It is a protein-rich food which is easy to digest and tempts even the most picky palate. Sometimes peanuts and other appetizers are prepared to accompany the congee.

Eating habits and other customs 潮州饮食习惯及其他

1. Gongfu Tea / Gongfu Cha 工夫茶

Chaozhou is famous for its Gongfu Tea, a method of cooking tea, mostly Oolong tea (Chinese: 乌龙茶). Chaozhou is recognized by some as the “Capital” of Gongfu Tea. The indispensability of tea making in Chaozhou is evident in all corners of the city. The practice of preparing tea carefully for enjoyment is truly integrated it into Chaoshan people’s daily life.

Tea-drinking is an important part of everyday life as well as for entertaining guests. People are proud to own beautiful tea sets. This is one of the reasons for the thriving development of porcelain trade in this region.



Gongfu Tea is really about a shared tea drinking experience, where small pots of tea are brewed and the drinkers sip rounds of fresh tea in tiny cups. One is to enjoy the community and the conversation at least as much as the beverage itself.

2. Late night meal / Ye Xiao 夜宵

Chaozhou cuisine is also known for a late night meal known as Ye Xiao (Chinese: 夜宵). Chaozhou people enjoy eating out close to midnight in restaurants or at streetside food stalls. Some restaurants stay open till dawn.

Unlike the typical menu selections of many other Chinese cuisines, Chaozhou restaurant menus often have a dessert section.

3. Guo 粿

Guo are bite-sized snacks or dessert foods usually made from rice or glutinous rice. Guo are more often steamed than baked, and are thus very different in texture, flavor and appearance from Western cakes or puff pastries. Many Guo are sweet, but some are savory.

Many Guo are made especially for important festivities such as the Qingming Festival or Chinese New Year.

For example, Ti Guo (Chinese: 甜粿), known in mandarin as Nian Gao (Chinese: 年糕), are served as articles of tribute to the ancestors in the Chaoshan region on New Year's Eve and during the Lantern Festival. Ti Guo is often made with a combination of glutinous rice, free range rice and refined white sugar or brown sugar.



Turnip Guo (Chinese: 菜头粿) usually pan-fried or stir-fried with egg and can be eaten straight. It is made with a mixture of ground glutinous rice and smashed turnip.



Many Guo require the use of a Guo mold similar to that used in moon cakes, which is either carved out of wood or made of plastics. Guo molds of turtles are ubiquitous, though molds of peaches are usually quite common. Since many Chinese no longer make Guo at home, these molds have become less common in many kitchens.



Hakka cuisine 客家菜

Hakka cuisine is the cooking style of the Hakka people, who originated in the southeastern Chinese provinces of Guangdong and Fujian, but may also be found in

other parts of China and in countries with significant overseas Chinese communities.

Hakka cuisine in general 客家菜概况

In a nutshell, the salty Hakka cuisine can be attributed to environmental influences. Early Hakka migrants worked hard and sweated a lot to open up new land for farming. To make up for the huge loss of sodium in the body, they added more salt to food. Besides, food with high salt content can be preserved for longer. These qualities correspond to thrifty and hardworking nature of the Hakka people. Hakka chefs are good at preparing meat, and chicken is their favorite choice.

Famous Hakka dishes 客家名菜

Some of the more notable dishes in Hakka cuisine are listed as follows:



1. Dongjiang salt-baked chicken 东江盐焗鸡

This dish was originally baked in a heap of hot salt, but many modern restaurants simply cook it in brine, or cover it with a salty mixture before steaming it or baking it in an oven.

2. Duck stuffed with sticky rice 糯米鸭



The bones are removed from a whole duck with the shape of the bird maintained, and the cavities filled with seasoned sticky rice.

3. Tofu with minced meat / Niang Tofu

酿豆腐



Tofu with Minced Meat is one of the most popular dishes with deep Hakka origins, it consists of Tofu cubes heaped with minced meat (usually pork), salted fish and herbs, and is then fried until it produces a golden brown color, or until it can be braised. Variations include usage of eggplant, shiitake mushroom, and bitter melon stuffed with the same meat paste.

Traditionally, Tofu with minced meat is served in a clear yellow bean stew along with bitter melon and shiitake mushrooms. Modern variations that are more commonly seen sold in food stalls are made by stuffing Tofu with solely fish paste. Variations to replace Tofu are more noticeable in this version, ranging from fried fish maw slices and okra to chili peppers.



4. Steamed pork slices 扣肉

There are two versions of Steamed Pork Slices. The most common consists of sliced pork with preserved mustard greens: thick slices of pork belly, with a layer of preserved mustard greens between each slice, are cooked and served in a dark sauce made up of soy sauce and sugar.



The other version is cooked with yam or taro. Usually pork belly is used for its layers of fat and meat. The yam and pork are shallow fried until browned before being steamed with five-spice powder and yellow-rice wine.

Eating habits and other customs 客家饮食习惯及其他

1. Ground Tea / Lei Cha 擂茶



Ground Tea is an assortment of tea leaves (usually green tea), peanuts, mint leaves, sesame seeds, mung beans and other herbs pounded or ground into a fine powder and then mixed as a drink, or as a dietary brew to be taken with rice and other vegetarian side dishes such as greens, Tofu, and pickled radish.

2. Ban 粄

Ban means food made from rice, rather like the Guo in Chaoshan Cuisine. The basic procedures in making various type of Ban is by first grinding rice or sweet potato into powder, mixing it with water, adding other ingredients and cooking it in various ways. Below are several of the most common Bans in Hakka.

Artemisia Ban (Chinese: 艾叶粄) is said to prevent high blood pressure, kidney disease, diabetes and various other diseases. Its magic functions come from Artemisia, a traditional Chinese herb that has long been used in Chinese medicine.



Radish Ban (Chinese: 萝卜粄) in Hakka cuisine is similar to the Radish Guo in Chaoshan cuisine except that there is more than meets the eyes. Different from Radish Guo, the Radish Ban is made with a mixture of ground glutinous rice and stir-fried mashed radish with minced meat, shrimp, and mushrooms. The mixture could be steamed entirely as a large thick cake or could be kneaded and shaped into smaller round balls.



There are other kinds of Ban such as Taro Ban (Chinese: 芋子粄), Zhuma Ban (Chinese: 苕麻粄), Weijiao Ban (Chinese: 味窖粄) and many more. It is said that Hakka people have over 200 ways of making Ban. To achieve a greater effect, premium rice is used and ground thoroughly to produce a fine mixture.

3. Hakka-style noodles / Yan Mian 腌面

Use lard to quick-fry minced meat, minced garlic and chopped green onion to produce a sauce, add it to the bowl of cooked noodles, mix them finely together,



then a Hakka-style noodle dish is ready to be served. To produce the right taste, you'll need the right sauce and this is what Hakka people are good at. Usually each family and each shop have their signature way of preparing the sauce.



4. Steamed pork dumplings / Shao Mai 烧卖

Steamed Pork Dumplings or Shao Mai is a type of Dim Sum made with wheat flour and stuffing which usually includes pork. Unlike steamed stuffed-buns or Bao Zi, the stuffing of Shao Mai is generally visible and

tempting.

5. Home-made glutinous-rice wine / Niang Jiu 客家娘酒

Wine in different places reflects the characteristics of the local people. The wine of Hakka is called Niang Jiu (Chinese: 娘酒, lit. mothers' wine) or home-made



glutinous-rice wine. It is usually prepared by housewives. Hakka women are known to be hardworking, virtuous and having eyes only for their husbands and children. Their love and care for the family could be felt with a sip of the wine they made: sweet, mellow and pure.

Niang Jiu is made with glutinous rice fermented for 2 to 3 months and heated with dry straws to boiling point. The nutritious value of it is reflected in that Hakka women who have just given birth usually drink it to keep fit and healthy.

Nowadays, as more and more people come to know about the medical benefits of it, Niang Jiu is being made industrially and marketed nationally.