

# **Introduction**

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It is interesting to note that talking about food and writing about food, cooking, and cuisine have become a trendy activity involving all sectors of many societies during the past two decades. Since the beginning of the twenty-first century we see a global surge of interest in food and cuisine as expressed in popular media reports; such as newspaper columns, TV programs, and magazines specializing in food, cooking, and recipes. When one visits large book stores in major cities, one would not be surprised to find readers and consumers crowding a special “food” section full of books and popular journals dealing with food, cooking, cuisine, and restaurant guide. This is not to mention modern stores that carry almost any merchandise imaginable associated with the kitchen and cooking. Also, cooking classes may be offered by celebrity chefs for privileged ladies belonging to the social elite who can afford to pay, and who rarely need to cook their own or their families’ daily meals.

Within such global phenomena of popular social and cultural development, we also see the emergence in recent years of scholarly research and publication on food and cuisine that not only satisfies the academic community, but also attracts what I would call the intellectually curious practitioners of food, including foodies, amateur and gourmet chefs. The present book is fitting to be part of such a new and privileged category of academic work. Essays in this book were originally presented by acclaimed scholars

at international conferences organized by the Foundation of Chinese Dietary Culture of Taipei with joint sponsorship of many universities. Being one of the major world traditions of antiquity, the discussion and publication of the development of Chinese food culture and culinary art naturally attract significant attention around the globe. During the course of over twenty years, the Foundation's bi-annual conferences have been held alternately in major cities in Taiwan and elsewhere in Asia, such as China, Hong Kong, Penang, Seoul, and Tokyo.

The fifteen chapters included in the present book were selected from a pool of dozens of conference papers on Chinese food and cuisine, presented at different times and different conference sites; they have appeared in the conference proceedings of the Foundation but not formally published. I myself participated in these conferences many times and I am honored, if a little humbled, to be asked to serve as the editor of this volume of collected papers. The job of making the initial selection of only some of the papers for inclusion in a book has not been an easy one; because all the papers were presented by renowned scholars and specialists from the food industry. However, those that have been selected to be included in this book happened to fit into natural and connected themes; hence, the three major parts of the book provide coordinated theoretical orientations and empirical evidence. These papers also form an integrated presentation in telling informative stories of how the Chinese cuisine spread overseas, settled in various parts of the world, and where the Chinese cuisine adapts, changes, has been adopted into the local foodways and transformed into a foreign national cuisine as well. Furthermore, I can assure the reader, they are all highly entertaining. This book is intended both for specialists looking for particular information or interpretation and for a general audience interested in the history of Chinese food and cuisine, the process of diffusion overseas and the

contemporary reality of Chinese cuisines outside of China.

Part I, titled “Eastward March”, consists of six chapters that focus on Chinese cuisine in Japan. Chapters 1 to 3 can be read as an interconnected whole that deals with the history of Chinese culinary culture and its spread to Japan. Chapter 1 and 2 are written by the same author, Naomichi Ishige, and provide both a general introduction to Chinese cuisine in Japan during the twentieth century and a description of the invention and acceptance in Japan of a Chinese soup noodle dish now globally represented as the most important Japanese national dish of “ramen” (a term now adopted in English), which correctly pronounced in Japanese would become the original word in Chinese of “*lamien*”. Ishige reminds us that the most important aspect of the wholesale adoption of Chinese culture in Japan since the beginning of the first millennium can be found in the culture of food. Ishige points out why and how the Japanese adopted common Chinese dishes only after the second World War; these include Gyoza (the Chinese *Jaozi*, or both *Guotiei* [fried] and *Shuijiao* [boiled]), ramen, *mapo* tofu (or *Mapuo doufu* in Mandarin), *cha-siu* pork (a Cantonese word for barbecued pork, now an adopted term in English). In Chapter 2 Ishige offers his macro-historical analysis of the origin and diffusion into Japan of ancient Chinese cuisine, eating style and etiquette, and cooking methods and utensils. The theory of the spread of a “great tradition” into a “little tradition” helps to analyze changes and the localization of Chinese food culture in Japan. Together with chapter 3, these food experts summarize the modern food history in Japan of the invention of Chinese noodle dishes, including the globally popular instant noodle, by an overseas Taiwanese, Ando Momofuku.

Chapter 3, as its title reveals, discusses “How the Japanese Accepted and Changed Chinese Culinary Culture: A Look at the

History of Chinese Cuisine's Acceptance in Japan." Ayao Okumura traces draws on ancient Chinese and Japanese texts to prove the borrowing and transfer into Japan of ancient Chinese technology for the production and manufacture of food items include essential Japanese sauces or condiments, such as *miso* (bean paste) and *shoyu* (soybean sauce). In this chapter, Okumura also cites old recipes and restaurant menus to demonstrate popular acceptance in Tokyo and Osaka since the Meiji era of Chinese and Taiwanese dishes and cooking methods.

Chapter 4 provides rare and valuable documentation of the diffusion from China and adoption in Japan of one particular category of food or eating style—the snacks—that today is only known as the unique Japanese traditional snack culture of *Togashi* (literally meaning Tang dynasty confectionery). In this chapter Yusuhiro Ota demonstrates his painstaking efforts in tracing the genealogy of food items, their origin in the sixth century China, and their evolution in Japan. He is able to show, for instance, certain exotic Japanese regional folk cuisine is actually the legacy of a particular snack culture introduced from ancient China.

The following two chapters, 5 and 6, should also be read as interconnected research that reveal one of the most intriguing aspects of human olfactory function which governs the acceptance, change and refusal of food flavors that are culture bound or ethnocentric. Tokiko Nakayama's Chapter 5 focuses on the essence of traditional Chinese cooking aiming to achieve a unique and most desirable flavor of "*hsien*" and "*hsien wei* (the flavor of *hsien*)". This is compared to the distinctive Japanese flavor of "*umami*" achieved from cooking dry seaweeds and dry bonito flakes in making a broth base. Seeking such a desirable flavor led to the Japanese invention of a chemical compound of the essence of artificial *hsein* or "*ajinomoto*", (sodium glutamate powder) which are universally use in cooking in China and Japan (and overseas

Chinese restaurants in the United States). Nakayama, herself a chef and instructor of Chinese cooking who had spent her childhood in China, defines such flavors by providing historical materials and personal observations. It is amazing that Chinese chefs from China today cannot cook without the artificial powder or MSG, known in the West as a controversial flavor enhancer.

Chapter 6, by Kazuyo Kono, provides a history in Japan of comparative and scientific experiments in terms of technological and chemical analysis of the Chinese preference for chicken bouillon and Japanese for dried bonito stock (which is the foundation of the daily consumed Japanese *miso* soup). It is an eye opener to me that Kono's report using the scientific method and chemical analysis helps us to understand the chemical foundation for culturally desirable flavors. Her scientific evidence explains why Chinese people prefer chicken bouillon and MSG. It is common sense that, like sugar, such substances have been universally used not only in restaurant cooking but in mass produced, industrially processed food around the world.

Part II of the book, four chapters in all, tells the story of the "South, East, and Westward March" of the Chinese cuisine. I myself am the author of Chapter 7, "Improvising Chinese Cuisine Overseas". The chapter starts with a review of popular theoretical discourses among political economists regarding globalization of the food industry, including the center to periphery theory of political domination and cultural flow. However, my discussion of the spread and settlement in the Western world of Chinese restaurant cuisine demonstrates an exception to the Western theory of globalization. My report is concerned with the beginning of Chinese restaurants from the first generation migrants' point of view. Examples from Australia, Papua New Guinea, and Hawaii, tell how ordinary Chinese immigrants with no restaurant background or experience in cooking, arrived in a foreign land to

open a family operated Chinese restaurant as a means of survival. Yet, their strategy of adapting to foreign tastes made all Chinese restaurant dishes familiar and standardized, and much deviated from the Chinese cuisine in the homeland.

Chapter 8, by Kwang-ok Kim, based on anthropological observation, gives a grand history since the late nineteenth century of the introduction and transformation of Chinese restaurant food into Korea. The essence of his theoretical point is well represented by the chapter title: “Sichuen, Beijing, and Zhonghua in Chinese Restaurants in Korea: Local Specialty and Consumption of Imagination.” The chapter provides valuable observation and cultural assessment of varieties of Chinese ethnic cuisines that arrived in Korea in waves and are related to the changing politics and international relations with China and Taiwan. The most interesting aspects of Kim’s discussion are the contrast of the deep rooted localization of old Shandong cuisine with the new Chinese cuisines, which emphasize imagined ancient Chinese court banquets in new restaurants with vulgar décor and flashy service. Kim also includes the recent phenomenon of Korean tourists visiting China to experience a mostly created and imagined traditional Chinese cuisine of contemporary China.

Chapter 9, as the title explains, presents “Chinese Cuisine and Chinese Restaurants in America: An Anthropological Study.” The author Bernard Wong, himself a first generation immigrant, has spent practically all his life living and teaching in San Francisco. He documents the history of development of Chinese restaurants since the end of the Second World War in the Bay area of California and the entire United States as a whole. His theoretical explanation of the success of increasing numbers of Chinese restaurant businesses echoes that of Chapter 7 in that the entrepreneurial spirit of Chinese immigrants helped them to fit into the new environment, while they make constant inventions in food in order

to attract the host population (the non-Chinese consumers).

Chapter 10 on “Chinese Food – Western Ways: No Small Change for Eaters and Eateries” is a research report based on a survey among the host population in the United States about their views on Chinese food and restaurants. Author Jacqueline M. Newman, constructed an interesting and important questionnaire on the basis of her years of writing on Chinese food in the West, which reflects her repository of knowledge about Chinese food, cooking, and a history of eateries in eastern United States. Her survey helps to understand from the “foreign” consumers’ point of view how the diaspora of Chinese cuisine is being accepted or rejected, and on what grounds.

The final part of this book, Part III, deals with the spread of Chinese cuisine “down south”, in Australia, New Zealand, and Southeast Asia, hence “Marching South”. Five chapters, or research reports, are included in Part III, which represent both the point of view of the Chinese who introduce the cuisine and that of the receiving host populations.

Chapter 11, by Chee-beng Tan, presents a first rate ethnographic documentation of the “Chinese Peranakan Food and Symbolism in Malaysia.” Peranakans refer to the native born and assimilated Chinese, known as the Baba, who are Malay speaking and whose Chinese ancestors, mostly Hokkien (South Min or Fujian), have settled in Melaka of Malaya for hundreds of years. Despite their assimilation into the local Malay culture and intermarriage with the Malays, their food – the Nyonya food – is a creolized version of local foodways. However, Tan tells us how they make symbolic representation and religious expression of Chinese cultural identity in the maintenance of believed Chinese tradition in food. Tan provides detailed ethnological material and insightful analysis of symbolic meanings in ritual foods and drinks served in family rites of passage and offerings to spirits, such as at the extended family

gathering for the ancestral worship rituals.

Chapter 12 deals with “Old Recipes, New Meals, the Localization of Chinese Food in Indonesia.” Myra Sidharta presents her research results of the Indonesian versions of Chinese cuisine by investigating Indonesian home cooking, published recipes, and Chinese restaurant food in the country. As the Chinese have settled in the country for at least 500 years, the influence of Chinese cuisine naturally appears in every aspect of local Indonesian foodways, including, for example, daily cooking and consumption of tofu. This chapter also gives historical information about the introduction since the early twentieth century of new Chinese regional or ethnic cuisines in the restaurant, such as the Shanghai, the Hakka, and the Fujian. The author concludes by saying that many dishes claimed to be original local Indonesian turned out to be introduced by the Chinese in ancient times.

Another interesting study of creolized local Chinese cuisine in Malaysia is Khin-wah Soo’s Chapter 13: “Chinese Street Food: A Legacy of Unique Food Culture in Penang.” Street food, or sidewalk café, is an essential part of a popular eating culture found in many Asian cities. What is unique, Soo observes in his study, is the multi-cultural street food found on the island of Penang where all kinds of tastes, ingredients, and cooking methods are found in concentration on one street, or in one huge food court; in Penang such foods and drinks eateries are often claimed by tourism authorities to be a unique Penang style of Chinese cuisine. This chapter describes historical development of such foodways in public, where local Chinese dishes, as Tan points out earlier in relation to Nyonya food, represent the Peranakan food under apparent years of influence from the Malay, Indian, and Thai food cultures. If one traces the origin of Chinese street food or food bazaars in many Asian countries, one can find a comparable popular public eating culture in modern China, in both rural and



urban settings.

Jeannie Martin, in Chapter 14, explores “Translated Space/ Translated Identity: Landscapes of Chinese Food in a Sydney Street.” Martin observes, in a personal reflexive way, the socio-political changes in Australia and New Zealand that have attracted new Asian immigrants and their cuisine since the 1970s. The new Chinese immigrants transformed not only the physical appearance of a commercial street, but also the representation of collective cultural and ethnic representations on that particular location and the entire society in the host country. This chapter presents Australian Chinese cuisine in practice and change. The analysis shows the way in which the symbolic meaning of eating Chinese has changed, when the author portrays an entire street of “Asian” (or Chinese) restaurants and ethnic stores that during the past four decades transformed the Australian diet and public eating culture.

The final chapter of this book, Chapter 15, on “The History and Politics of Malaysian and Taiwanese ‘National Cuisine’”, makes a comparative study of two states in their separate but sociologically parallel process of invention of a national cuisine. The two authors, Michael H.H. Hsiao and Khay-thiong Lim are native to each of the two countries, yet spent time working and conducting fieldwork in both places that share a similar socio-political background of multi-ethnic populations. They present two interesting social histories of the making of representative “national dishes” under the state authority’s efforts, for the similar reasons of economic development, such as local tourism, and new nationalism.

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including seeking funds for getting this book published. She also prepared a thorough index for our book. Mr. Kenneth Rouse of Australia performed an enormous job of providing English copy editing that renders this book presentable to an English speaking audience. Professor Akamine Jun of Nagoya, Japan, coordinated the English translation by professional translators of several chapters in Part I that were originally written in Japanese.

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As much as we can learn from the rich information presented in these chapters about Chinese cuisine in East Asia, Southeast Asia, and Oceania, this volume, I believe also serves to provide significant new ideas about the cultural identity and culture change among the Chinese who have spread to these regions. Along with the authors, and so many people who have contributed to the making of the present book, we hope it will provide good food for the delicious thoughts to the reader.

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