

Detailed introduction: the historical development of Chinese food



1

A Brief Introduction to Chinese Food

4 00:03

Chinese people believe:
"To the people, food is heaven."
民以食为天

- Food is the gift from nature.
- Food is the link of people's relationship.
- Food is the reflection of life.

5 00:03

Believe it or not, a good cook can be appointed as prime minister in China. Legend has it that Emperor Tang, the founder of the Shang dynasty (ca. 1600–1046 BCE), appointed Yi Yin as his prime minister, who is a cook widely renowned for his great professional ability. Indeed, the art of proper seasoning and the mastery of cooking techniques are metaphors for a good government.

"Managing a big country is like cooking small fish."
— Lao Tzu, Author of Tao Te Ching (Dao De Jing).

6 00:03

History of Chinese Food

SOURCE

Rice was one of the earliest crops domesticated in China. The Chinese were the first to use rice as well as to grow it. In the north, where rice doesn't grow, people farmed millet, and gathered sorghum. The Chinese were the first to boil and steam rice into a kind of porridge.

SOURCE

Meat was saved for special occasions, and served in small pieces. It was not until 5500 BC that the Chinese began to eat pork in their daily lives.

7 00:03

SOURCE

The legends say that Fuxi taught people to fish, hunt, grow crops and cook. Wheat was introduced to China from the west and yams were already grown in China.

SOURCE

Worms were used for silkworm rearing. Chinese dishes are often small. The Chinese were the first to use chopsticks. The earliest evidence of a pair of chopsticks dates back to about 1200 BC.

8 00:03

SOURCE

The Chinese were the first to use soybeans (Glycine max) as a source of protein. Chinese crushed soybeans and ate them for fat. Since meat was so expensive, they used tofu and bean curd as a source of protein. Chinese have acquired the technique to produce alcohol spirit from rice.

SOURCE

Confucius had a strong interest in the art of cooking, and established many standards and proper table manners – many standards which are still used today.

9 00:03

Tang Dynasty

Early-ripening rice was introduced into China from Champa. In the Northern Song Dynasty they started selling sweetened ice cubes, and iced plum juice.

SOURCE

During the Tang Dynasty (618 – 906 CE) Chinese people explored all possible sources of food for diet diversity and good health, although cows and bulls were off-limits for religious reasons. The drinking of tea became popular for all social classes. The Chinese have been drinking tea for thousands of years, but during this time millet wine was more popular than tea.

SOURCE

Song Dynasty

10 00:03

Yuan Dynasty

Chili pepper was introduced to China.

Ming Dynasty

From the Yuan Dynasty (1279 – 1368 CE), a new breakthrough brought about the appearance of ice cream. More foreign food products and methods were introduced.

Qing Dynasty

Onion was introduced to China.

11 00:03

Modern China from 1949

In 1973, Yuan Longping and his team developed hybrid rice that typically yielded 20 percent more rice than conventional varieties, transforming Chinese agriculture after years of famine and scarcity.

In 1947, first KFC opened in Beijing. In 1980, McDonald opened its first restaurant in Beijing.

12 00:03

Detailed introduction:

8 major regional cuisines

2

8 Major Regional Cuisines in China

8 Major Cuisines

"Chinese food" means different things to different people, with so many regional variations in Chinese cuisine. Generally, there are 8 major regional cuisines, based on their geographic location, which are: Anhui, Fujian, Guangdong, Hunan, Jiangsu, Shandong, Sichuan, and Zhejiang. Naturally, they are strongly influenced by the local terrain, the people, and the staple crops that grow in each region. (Some people, however, only make a distinction between four styles - Cantonese, Hunanese, Shandong, and Sichuan cuisines.)

8 major cuisines in China

Based on their geographic location, there are eight major cuisines in China: Anhui, Fujian, Guangdong, Hunan, Jiangsu, Shandong, Sichuan, and Zhejiang.

Guangdong Cuisine (Yue Cai 粤菜)

This is what most foreigners tend to mean by "Chinese food", because this is the style of cuisine most commonly served overseas in Chinese restaurants. Guangdong Province and Hong Kong are well known for seafood dishes and rice dishes. They offer a wide variety of foods, and the dishes they serve have lightly seasoned flavors, not too strong, and often tend to be a little sweet.

Famous dishes include: crab shell meatballs (pork meatballs in crab shell powder), Nanjing salted duck.

Anhui Cuisine (Hu Cai 徽菜)

Anhui Cuisine is well known for including wild foods from the mountains, both plants and animals, with a healthy and hearty food ingredients. With fresh herbs, mushrooms, bamboo shoots, and other regional plants, it is visually appealing.

Famous dishes include: Stinky Fish, Bamboo Shoots with Stinky Fish, and Stinky Fish.

Fujian Cuisine (Min Cai 闽菜)

Fujian Cuisine is characterized by its use of wild foods from the mountains, seafood, and generally sweet and tender flavors. Fujian Province is located in southern China, with geographical features that are a combination of seafood and woodland-based ingredients. It has a delicate and light flavor, and almost always comes with soup.

Famous dishes include: Buddha Jumps Over the Wall (Fu tao qiang), Oyster Pancake (Hao zai jian), and Crisp Pufferfish (Xin bang).

Hunan Cuisine (Xiang Cai 湘菜)

Hunan Cuisine is known for its spicy, moist and creamy dishes, which are generally mild and tender. Although it is a "dry" heat, different from Hunan Cuisine, it is located in southern China. Hunan is dominated by mountains and valleys, which provide a fertile ground for growing rice, especially rice, and so this cuisine is generally low in oil and fat. It is known for its spicy, deep colors and fresh flavors. Spicy and tender are typical in this part of the country.

Famous dishes include: La zi chicken (Lao zi jing), Dong'an chicken.

Jiangsu Cuisine (Su Cai 苏菜)

Jiangsu Cuisine is well known for its great seafood and generally sweet and light flavors, and tender textures, with an emphasis on soup. Besides, its cooking techniques are delicate. Jiangsu Chef emphasis on matching shapes achieved through precise knife work.

Famous dishes include: crab shell meatballs (pork meatballs in crab shell powder), Nanjing salted duck.

Shandong Cuisine (Lu Cai 鲁菜)

Shandong Cuisine is recognized as being fresh and salty, with a lot of seafood dishes. One of the main characteristics of this type of cuisine is the tendency to eat food made from wheat flour, such as noodles, dumplings, buns, instead of rice and the use of onions as a seasoning.

Famous dishes include: Sweet and sour carp (Tangsu liyu), Steamed Tofu Stuffed with Vegetables.

Sichuan Cuisine (Chuan Cai 川菜)

Sichuan Cuisine is typically a very spicy, flavorful style originating from Chengdu and Chongqing. Sichuan Province is south-western China. This area generally has weather with high humidity and lots of rain, which is why so much Sichuan Pepper and Chili Oil is used as it helps reduce internal dampness.

Famous dishes include: Kung Pao chicken (kung pao jidaguan), Mapo Tofu (mapo doufu). Besides, Sichuan hot pot is also very popular.

Zhejiang Cuisine (Zhe Cai 浙菜)

Zhejiang Cuisine is known for great seafood and generally sweet and light flavors. With a mellow flavor, this cuisine prominently features freshwater fish in its dishes, just as the Jiangsu cuisine does, provided by the Yangtze River. Nearly half the dishes in this cuisine include bamboo shoots.

Famous dishes include: Dongpo Pork (Dongpo rou), Stir-fried Shrimps with Longling Tea Leaves (Longling xianxue).

Discuss

Which cuisine impresses you most? Why?

Guangdong Cuisine (Yue Cai 粤菜)	Anhui Cuisine (Hu Cai 徽菜)	Fujian Cuisine (Min Cai 闽菜)	Hunan Cuisine (Xiang Cai 湘菜)	Jiangsu Cuisine (Su Cai 苏菜)	Shandong Cuisine (Lu Cai 鲁菜)	Sichuan Cuisine (Chuan Cai 川菜)	Zhejiang Cuisine (Zhe Cai 浙菜)
--------------------------------	---------------------------	-----------------------------	------------------------------	-----------------------------	------------------------------	--------------------------------	-------------------------------

Detailed introduction:

Some popular Chinese dishes



Some Popular Chinese Dishes

25 00:03

Peking Roast Duck 北京烤鸭 (Peking Kāoyā)

Include: duck, sweet soybean paste, shallots, cucumbers, and pancakes.



There are various ways to roast duck in China, and Peking Roast Duck is one of the most famous. It is very popular among tourists and diplomats.

26 00:03

Sichuan Boiled Fish (水煮鱼 Shuǐ zhǔ yú)

Include: Fish slices, Sichuan peppers, dried red chili peppers, and soybean sprouts (or other vegetables)



This is a very classic dish in Sichuan cuisine. Fresh fish slices are boiled in water seasoned with chili peppers and Sichuan peppers, and finished with smoking-hot oil.

27 00:03

Mapo Tofu/Tofu with Chili and Sichuan Pepper (麻婆豆腐 Mǎ pó dòufu)

Include: Tofu, ground meat, chili, scallions



This is one of the most popular dishes in many restaurant menus. It is found throughout China. The dish is spicy, hot, and tender, and is served with a bowl of steamed rice. "Mapo" is the legend of a woman who invented this dish.

28 00:03

Fried Pork Chop (锅包肉 Gōu bāo ròu)

Include: pork chops, soy sauce, vinegar, ginger and scallions



This dish is one of the most popular dishes in Northern East Chinese cuisine. The meat is fried and served with sugar and vinegar as the sauce. It has a sweet and sour taste.

29 00:03

Steamed Tofu and Eggs (番茄豆腐鸡蛋炒蛋 fān qié chǎo dàn)

Include: Tofu, eggs, scallions



Why is such an ordinary dish so popular with the Chinese?

- Easy to cook. This is the first dish most people learn to cook.
- The mixture of sour, sweet and salty flavors is a perfect match with rice.

30 00:03

Hot pot (火锅 Huǒ guō)



Hotpot is very popular in Chengdu and is known for its spicy and hot flavor. Although this kind of hotpot is taken as the Chongqing specialty by the locals, it has become famous and popular all over the country for a long time.

Most of the pots used in hotpot are divided into two sections. One half is filled with the spicy oil, and the other is filled with a delicious broth for those who are not a big fan of spicy foods. And the pot is surrounded by plates of raw meats and vegetables.



31 00:03

Hot pot (火锅 Huǒ guō)

Some popular meats and vegetables for hot pot:

Chinese cabbage (大白菜 Dà bái cài)	Bamboo shoot (竹笋 Zhú sǔn)
Coriander (香菜 xiāng cǎi)	Kelp sprout (海带芽 hǎi dài yá)
Lettuce (生菜 shēng cài)	Mushroom (蘑菇 mó gu)
Frozen bean curd (冻豆腐 dòng dòu fu)	
Fried Yuba (炸腐竹 zhá fǔ zhī)	
Potato (土豆 tú dòu)	
beef (牛肉 niú ròu)	
Lamb (羊肉 yáng ròu)	
Tripe (毛肚 máo dǔ)	



32 00:03

Barbecue (烧烤/烤串 Shāo kǎo/Kǎo chuàn)



Chinese style BBQ are usually made by skewering ingredients with bamboo sticks and searing them on a charcoal grill.

In China, BBQ are mainly made of lamb, beef, chicken, pork, fish and shrimp. Common vegetarian dishes include potato slices, eggplant, peppers, enoki mushrooms, corn, soybean skin, etc.



33 00:03

Cultural knowledge related to food

Chinese people believe:
"To the people, food is heaven."

mín yǐ shí wéi tiān

民以食为天

- Food is the gift from nature.
- Food is the link of people's

"Managing a big
country is like
cooking small fish."

-- Lao Tzu, Author of
Tao Te Ching (Dao
De Jing).

Believe it or not, a good cook can be appointed as prime minister in China. Legend has it that Emperor Tang, the founder of the Shang dynasty (ca. 1600–1046 BCE), appointed Yi Yin as his prime minister, who is a cook widely renowned for his great

Hot pot and Barbecue play important roles in Chinese social culture because they allow people to eat, drink, and talk at the same time. The spicy flavors can make people feel happy.

In China, people
always say:

没有什么是一顿
火锅/烧烤解决不
了的，如果有，
就两顿。

Literally means:

"There is nothing that
one hot pot/BBQ can't
solve, and if there is,
two."

Fun Activity:

Open a Chinese restaurant

(inspirations and templates are provided!)

