

LITTLE ASIAs

AROUND THE WORLD

There are bustling Little Asias to be found in cities around the world. Centuries of Chinese emigration has resulted in well-established Chinatowns, bound by large, decorative archways, or *paifang*. But waves of arrivals from other parts of Asia have also borne Koreatowns, Little Saigons and more. Within these communities, dishes are adapted to suit local tastes, while ingredients and techniques are borrowed from the local cuisine and, over time, these enclaves evolve their own unique foods and flavours – resulting in New York’s chop suey, Mumbai’s gobi Manchurian and LA’s Korean tacos.



Handmade noodles at King of Noodles in San Francisco. Left: Lamb and coriander dumplings, recipe page 118.

NEW YORK'S CHINATOWNS

Colourful, chaotic and aromatic, Chinatown in lower Manhattan is the only Chinatown that most New York City visitors and even residents know of, but in fact, there are two other, larger Chinatowns (and many more small, but growing Asian communities sprinkled throughout the metropolitan area), each just a 45-minute subway ride from Midtown, each with its own distinct flavour and each worth a visit.

The oldest and original, however, is still going strong. Manhattan Chinatown was largely created in the 19th century by Cantonese immigrants, who trickled in from the West after the end of the California Gold Rush and its railroad construction. Many of them were from the Pearl River Delta in Guangdong province, and they, along with later arrivals from Hong Kong, opened laundries, shops and, of course, restaurants. Their eateries became synonymous with chop suey, an American-Chinese concoction of stir-fried meat and assorted vegetables, the origins of which remain a mystery. Cantonese mum-and-dad businesses still anchor this neighbourhood, even if chop suey has become increasingly rare, and many of the restaurants haven't changed in decades.

On a weekday afternoon, the stretch of Mulberry and Mott Streets between Canal

and Worth can feel especially transporting, with grizzled old cooks in their stained aprons taking a smoke break on the corner and kids in buzz cuts and colourful backpacks wandering home from school. A taste of the old Chinatown can be found at New Beef King, a family-run shop that has been making and selling Cantonese-style beef and pork jerky out of a tiny storefront since 1982 (the beef curry chunks are my and the owner's favourite); Mei Li Wah, a beloved bakery that turns out fresh barbecued pork buns all day long; the no-frills Big Wong King, where you can dine on or take away one of the masterfully roasted ducks or spare ribs hanging in all their bronzed glory above the counter; and at Nom Wah Tea Parlor, a modest and cheery dim sum joint open since 1920, which serves its buns and dumplings to order instead of by pushcart in a charmingly retro, diner-like space. For the dim sum-by-cart experience, there's Royal Seafood, which is also one of the best spots in the area for dinner.

The latest and ongoing immigration wave has brought Fujianese from China's south-east coast, and they have set up shop on the east side of the neighbourhood. A few of their eateries, such as the working-class canteens Super Taste and Sheng Wang, serve Lanzhou-style hand-pulled, knife-cut noodles from the inland province of Gansu, in addition to the delicate wontons and pork-stuffed fish balls of Fujian. If you're looking for another obscure regional cuisine, as food-obsessed New Yorkers always are, visit Spicy Village, a Hainanese eatery that also happens to specialise in 'spicy big tray chicken', a Xinjiang dish of chicken and potatoes swimming in an oily, dramatically red-hued sauce.

If Chinatown in Manhattan offers a glimpse of the past, the one in Flushing, Queens, is a vision of the future. The bustling intersection of Main Street and Roosevelt Avenue could have been plucked from some Asian megalopolis: the wide streets and sidewalks are packed with



Left: Canal Street in Manhattan's Chinatown. Clockwise from top left: Korean eatery Seongbukdong; Korean fried chicken from The Prince; a store in Koreatown; Korean bites and soju at Dan Sung Sa; I Love Boba's iced coffee; *banchan* (side dishes) at Park's Barbecue; *budae jjigae* (Army base stew) at Chunju Han Il Kwan; an ice-cream truck; *pat bing soo* (shaved ice dessert) at Ice Kiss.



elderly ladies clasping their groceries, dogged leaflet distributors, and spiky-haired teenagers in matching outfits furiously tapping away on their phones. This community started from more moneyed, middle-class immigrants, many from Taiwan. Unlike Manhattan Chinatown, where you're as likely to hear German and French from tourists as you are Cantonese, in Flushing, you'll hear a dozen Chinese dialects. This is where Chinese come from all over the tri-state area – and further still – to shop, play, and, most importantly, eat.

Here you can find Mongolian hot pot, Shanghaiese soup dumplings, Dongbei lamb, Sichuan chilli-oil wontons and Taiwanese oyster pancakes – and in Flushing's underground food courts, you might find all of these, and more, under one roof. Golden Shopping Mall offers a dingy, cramped, badly lit warren of stalls where the food is uniformly excellent. Visit Tianjin Xianbing on the ground floor for beef rolled up in a spring onion pancake. Head to the basement for the cumin lamb 'burger' and spicy 'cold-skin' noodles at the original location of Xi'an Famous Foods (there's also a branch in Manhattan Chinatown), as well as juicy lamb and zucchini dumplings at Tianjin Dumpling House.

New World Mall occupies the opposite end of the food-court spectrum. The stalls sit in the brightly lit basement of a massive, shiny glass-and-steel shopping complex, which also houses a cavernous Asian supermarket and a handful of retail shops. More than 30 vendors ring the spacious common seating area, where a mostly young, Chinese clientele

jockeys for tables. You can spend an afternoon grazing on dishes from each stall, but of particular interest are Taiwan Market Foods (stall 18) for *gua bao* (pork belly buns) and shaved ice with red bean and tapioca; the immensely popular Live Seafood (stall 5), where, indeed, lobsters, crabs and various other marine life await their fate in tanks next to the counter; and Tian Fu (stall 24), where you choose your own ingredients to be cooked together with a fiery Sichuan peppercorn-infused sauce.

The largest, fastest growing and least prepossessing of the New York Chinatowns is the one in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, where many of the Fujianese newcomers live alongside transplants from Manhattan Chinatown seeking much cheaper rents. But the eating is no less impressive. Some 30 blocks of Eighth Avenue from the Gowanus Expressway to Green-Wood Cemetery are lined with modest storefronts and scrappy sidewalk vendors, with some spillover onto adjacent avenues. Some of New York's better Vietnamese restaurants are located here as well. One of the best restaurants in the neighbourhood is Yun Nan Flavour Garden, a grander incarnation of a former hole-in-the-wall, specialising in the deliciously complex dumplings and noodle soups of Yunnan, China's far south-west province. Sunset Park is also where you'll find New York's best dim sum, at Pacificana and East Harbor Seafood Palace, two grand, modern banquet halls that roll out cart after cart of inventive, unusual and expertly prepared dumplings, noodle rolls, buns, tofu, roast meats, seafood, egg tarts and rice cakes.

MANHATTAN

- New Beef King** 89 Bayard St, 10013, +1 212 233 6612, newbeefking.com
- Mei Li Wah** 64 Bayard St, 10013, +1 212 966 7866, meiliwah.com
- Big Wong King** 67 Mott St, 10013, +1 212 964 0540, bigwongking.com
- Nom Wah Tea Parlor** 13 Doyers St, 10013, +1 212 962 6047, nomwah.com
- Royal Seafood** 103 Mott St, 10013, +1 212 219 2338
- Super Taste** 26 Eldridge St, 10002, +1 646 283 0999
- Sheng Wang** 27 Eldridge St, 10002 +1 212 925 0805
- Spicy Village** 68 Forsyth St, 10002, +1 212 625 8299, spicyvillagenyc.com

QUEENS

- Golden Shopping Mall** 41-36 Main St, 11355
- Xi'an Famous Foods** Various locations, xianfoods.com
- New World Mall** 136-20 Roosevelt Ave, 11354, newworldmallny.com

BROOKLYN

- Yun Nan Flavour Garden** 5121 8th Ave, 11220, +1 718 633 3090
- Pacificana** 813 55th St, 11220, +1 718-871-2880, sunset-park.com/mall/pacificana
- East Harbor Seafood Palace** 714 65th St, 11220, +1 718-765-0098



LA'S Koreatown

Clockwise from left: spicy beef soup from Park's Barbecue; LA's Koreatown; tea and cookies from Hwa Sun Ji; a shop vendor in Koreatown.



From *bibimbap* to barbecue and day spas to late-night bars, the joys of LA's edgy Koreatown precinct have long been a well-kept secret. But all that's changing. Thanks to its happening nightlife, thriving food scene and local heroes, K-town is now considered one of LA's hippest neighbourhoods.

"When I first arrived in Koreatown in 1988, I thought, 'This looks like a dangerous place,'" says Jenée Kim, laughing. Jenée is the owner of the iconic Park's Barbecue restaurant, a regular haunt for name LA chefs, Hollywood stars and visiting K-pop idols. "K-town was really small back then," she explains. "And really quiet. There were only a handful of Korean restaurants and markets – it was nothing like it is today."

In the past couple of decades, Jenée has seen her community bounce back from the devastation of the 1992 LA riots and witnessed Koreatown's gradual transformation from a neighbourhood where non-locals (perhaps unfairly) feared to tread, into one of LA's 'hottest' areas, and what is now widely – and proudly – recognised as the cultural heartland of Korean America.

Korean families first started arriving into the neighbourhood during the 1950s when it was still the epicentre of the 'Golden Age' of Hollywood's film industry. Many faded remnants of this era can still be seen today, and some of the best examples have served as regular filming locations for TV shows such as *Mad Men* and *Criminal Minds*.

In the 1950s, a second wave of immigrants settled here after the Korean War, and in the 60s, after US immigration laws were relaxed, many more Koreans made it their landing spot. Despite being predominately well-educated and middle class, most of these new migrants found work running liquor stores, dry cleaners and grocery shops – and later, restaurants.

Today, Koreatown is one of LA's most culturally diverse areas, with about two-thirds of its inhabitants foreign-born. Koreans represent around 30 per cent of the population, while Latinos, mostly from Mexico and El Salvador, make up more than 50 per cent.

In the early days, it was the barbecue joints like Park's that acted as an accessible 'gateway drug' for curious non-Koreans although now, the average Angeleno will readily admit to a full-blown smoky addiction. "There weren't many [white] Americans in the restaurant when we first opened in 2003 – it was mostly Koreans and other Asians," recalls Jenée. "But now that's changed. At weekends, it's 80 per cent non-Koreans."

In fact, "going for Korean barbecue" is as much a part of the LA dining vernacular as "grabbing a taco". And thanks to Roy Choi and his Kogi food trucks, it's the unique combination of these two oh-so-LA elements (Korean food and tacos) that has stamped Koreatown on the map and brought waves of new fans to the area.

"There are also many new condominiums being built here, so more people are moving into the area, even non-Koreans," adds Jenée, alluding to the new generation of young home-

buyers who have been priced out of other parts of LA. "It's become very safe," she says. And it's easy to see the shift: new bars are popping up, as are specialty coffee shops, boutique hotels and even an oyster bar, so we're told. "People like it here for the nightlife – there's a lot going on," says Jenée.

Like so much of the city, the Koreatown precinct, which is bordered by Hollywood and Downtown, is extremely spread out. There is no singular, central retail or dining strip, and all the best restaurants are typically located in otherwise unremarkable mini strip malls, so if you're visiting, it pays to hire a car. Alternatively, guests at The Line Hotel on Wilshire Boulevard can make complimentary use of the hotel's bicycles or take the nearby subway to get around.

As a Korean-American, Jenée Kim feels justifiably proud of the place that Korean cuisine has earned in modern American culture. So much so, she tells us, that kimchi has even stolen the culinary heart of the nation's First Lady. "Michelle Obama made kimchi at the White House, she loves it!"

Voicing a sentiment she says is widely shared by her community, Jenée says, "We are glad that it's not just Koreans coming to our restaurants. It's great to see other people enjoy the food." And it seems long-gone is any sense of mystery about the more pungently challenging aspects of Korean food that may have tested Western palates in the past. "It's amazing. Westerners are more adventurous now. Five years ago, they didn't even want to smell kimchi – now they ask for it!"

Park's Barbecue It doesn't seem much from outside, but one look at the Michelin awards and photos of visiting K-pop heart-throbs and Hollywood starlets lining the walls here more than suggest that this smart stalwart is an LA icon. Widely considered Koreatown's premier smokeless barbecue restaurant – the beef is of high quality and their array of *banchan* (side dishes) is right up there. **955 S. Vermont Ave, 90006, +1 213 380 1717, parksbbq.com**

Seongbukdong Unremarkable strip-mall location? Tick. Tiny kitchen filled with a small army of Korean ladies? Tick. Authentic, regional Korean fare? Tick. This humble restaurant specialises in traditional cooking from Korea's south-east Gyeongsang region. Hero dishes include the restorative braised mackerel and kimchi stew, and the tender braised beef short ribs. **3303 W. 6th St, 90020, +1 213 738 8977**

Pot Fun Raucous and proudly Korean-American, Roy Choi's hip new mod-Korean canteen at The Line Hotel takes all that is familiar about K-food and reimagines it – with a big side serve of hip hop. There's a strict no-bookings policy, so choose your time wisely or prepare to join the queue. **The Line Hotel, 3515 Wilshire Blvd, 90010, +1 213 368 3030, eatatpot.com**

Dan Sung Sa From the outside, this izakaya-style bar looks impossibly seedy. A late-night favourite with off-duty chefs, this windowless, wood-lined bunker

is part mess hall and part secret cubby house, but the food – mostly booze-friendly snacks – is exceptional. Try the spicy barbecue pork ribs or charred beef intestine skewers. **3317 W 6th St, 90020, +1 213 487 9100**

Kobawoo Open since 1983 (with decor to match), Kobawoo is a classic. Lunchtimes are typically packed and everyone goes for the *bossam*, braised pork belly served with various accoutrements including spicy turnip kimchi and pickled radish, designed to be wrapped into crunchy, cabbage leaf bundles. Their *haemul panjun* (seafood pancake) is a winner, too. **698 S Vermont Ave #109, 90005, +1 213 389 7300**

Hwa Sun Ji Tea & Coffee After days devoted to the brash but addictive charms of K-town's culinary treasures, a visit to this authentic Korean teahouse comes like a welcome hug from a sweet old aunty. There's a lovely sweet-spicy aroma to the air from the constant brewing of herbal tisanes. You'll find teas for any ailment, as well as a small range of Korean cookies and snacks. **3960 Wilshire Blvd, Suite 100, 90010, +1 213 382 5302**

Ice Kiss Apart from doing a roaring trade in waffles and sweet potato milkshakes, this vividly decked-out dessert bar is the neighbourhood go-to for Korea's favourite icy treat, *pat bing soo*, a colourful riot of shaved ice with red bean paste, fruit syrup, fruit and cream. **3407 W 6th St, Suite 101B, 90020, +1 213 382 4776**

1

TIANFU

Obviously, I have to start with Sichuanese food, my first love! The head chef at Tianfu, Fu Wenhong, is from the Sichuan capital Chengdu, and is adept at conjuring up the thrillingly spicy flavours of his hometown. There are too many good dishes to list, but start with a pig's ear salad laced with chilli oil, or sizzling squid with dried chillies. **37-39 Bulwer St, W12 8AR, +44 20 8740 4546**



2

TOP TASTE

This obscure cafe in East London serves dishes from the Dongbei (north-eastern) part of China that draw in young Chinese from all over the city. Specialties include a garlicky salad of slithery noodles with vegetables and sesame sauce ('five-colour clear noodle') and irresistible fried pancakes stuffed with egg and Chinese chives ('pan-fried garlic chive pancake pockets'). **129 Roman Rd, E2 OQN, +44 20 8980 2037**

3

HUNAN

Hunan is one of a kind. The eccentric owner and head chef, Mr Peng, from Taiwan, offers a tasting menu, with a bias towards the spicy flavours of Sichuan and Hunan. Specialties include a pork and mushroom soup served in bamboo tubes, and deep-fried green beans. The ambience is quite European, but the Chinese cooking is some of the best in London. **51 Pimlico Rd, SW1W 8NE, +44 20 7730 5712, hunanlondon.com**

Fuchsia Dunlop's Top 5

Chinese Restaurants in London

London's Chinese fare is spread across the vast city, but here, celebrated cookbook author Fuchsia Dunlop narrows it down to her top five must-eats.

4

TOP TASTE ROYAL CHINA CLUB

The Royal China chain of restaurants all serve great dim sum, but the Royal China Club offers an extra dimension. The steamed dumplings are as delicate and delectable as you'd hope, and the sesame prawn rolls with mango are superb. They also specialise in lobster, as you can see from the beady-eyed specimens hovering in the tanks. **40-42 Baker St, W1U 7AJ, +44 20 7486 3898**

5

MAOTAI KITCHEN

This is the only restaurant in London specialising in the fiery fare of little-known Guizhou, and is named after the province's famous liquor. The head chef grew up in the countryside near the Guizhou-Hunan border, and sometimes seasons his dishes with litsea oil, which has a taste like lemongrass. The food has a refreshing sour-hot character. **12 Macclesfield St, W1D 5BP, +44 20 7437 8785, maotaikitchen.com**

Fuchsia Dunlop's most recent book is Every Grain of Rice: Simple Chinese Home Cooking (\$55, Bloomsbury).



Pork spare ribs with spicy salt, recipe page 118



Salted fish and peanut congee, recipe page 118



Neil Perry's Hong Kong Hit List

I am lucky enough to travel once a year to Hong Kong and I love exploring and eating my way through some of the best food the city has to offer. Here are my favourites.

Lei Garden offers a classic Cantonese restaurant experience. There are four branches, but everyone says the one in Wan Chai is the best. I only sampled the yum cha menu, but it certainly hit the spot. The chicken feet, fresh bamboo braised in soy, and rice noodle rolls with spring onions were standout dishes. **1/F, CNT Tower, 338 Hennessy Rd, Wan Chai, +852 2892 0333, leigarden.hk**

Manor Seafood Restaurant specialises in seafood, as the name suggests, but for my money, the other stuff on the menu is often better. They are justifiably famous for their roast suckling pig, which is pre-ordered as either a half or a whole. It's served with steamed bread, hoisin and spring onions, and a little caster sugar to add extra crunch and sweetness: heaven on a plate. In fact, it was so good that I had to dine there twice. Other dishes worth a second visit include the tea-smoked chicken and the clay pot fried rice – the best I've ever had. **F/G, 440 Jaffe Rd, Causeway Bay, +852 2836 9999**

Chong Fat Chiu Chow Restaurant was recommended to me by Chinese cuisine specialist Fuchsia Dunlop (see opposite page). There's no English menu, but that's not a problem – simply point at any of the live seafood that takes your fancy and choose the vegetables that you'd like from those hanging on the front counter. This is a truly local restaurant and one that I will keep returning to. **60 South Wall Rd, Kowloon City, +852 2383 311**

The Four Seasons Hong Kong is firmly entrenched as one of my favourite hotels in the world. It has two three-star Michelin restaurants. Lung King Heen serves delicate and delicious yum cha for lunch, while French restaurant Caprice is sensational from start to finish with its open kitchen and views over Hong Kong – be sure to order the roasted Bresse chicken. **8 Finance St, Central, +852 3196 8888, fourseasons.com/hongkong**



Slurping noodle soups at King of Noodles. From far left: tea-smoked eel rolls; Mission Chinese makes American-Chinese food hip; the signature crab at R&G Lounge; the Mission Chinese kitchen.

San Francisco's Chinatown

Established in the 1850s by an industrious generation of Chinese railway workers and Gold Rush hopefuls, San Francisco's is the oldest Chinatown in America and one of the largest outside of Asia. Like all the best Chinatowns around the world, you'll find no end of bustling crowds, bright neon and all-round sensory overload. And unsurprisingly, there's no shortage of great eating, either.

Built around historic Portsmouth Square, San Francisco's Chinatown district was the main port of entry for Chinese immigrants from the 1840s to 1900s. Predominantly male, they came largely to seek work on the Transcontinental Railroad or hoping to strike it lucky in the great California Gold Rush.

In 1906, the by then well-established neighbourhood was completely destroyed by a huge earthquake, which flattened most of the surrounding city along with it. Later, during the 1960s, changes in immigration laws brought another big wave of immigrants (mostly from Hong Kong) and cemented the area's appeal as a world-renowned tourist and dining destination.

Second-generation Chinatown restaurateur, Frank Wong was born in San Francisco and has lived in Chinatown most of his life. His parents immigrated from Guangzhou in 1975 and their business, R&G Lounge, on Kearny Street has been a Chinatown fixture for almost 50 years.

Frank says that although San Francisco's Chinese population has spread out to other enclaves such as Richmond and Sunset, Chinatown's population remains almost exclusively Chinese. "It's great because even though the amount of people has decreased locally, it's still the largest living population of Chinese in a Chinatown. The size of San Francisco's Chinatown is small compared to other major cities [in Asia], yet we still have a huge Chinese population here," he explains.

"I also love the fact that for [Chinese] immigrants, you don't have to leave the neighbourhood. You can get everything here. You can easily survive here without having to speak English," Frank says.

Indeed, the area is a jam-packed 24 blocks of crowded restaurants, residences, food markets, temples and shops, and since its

heavily occupied heyday in the 1960s, still remains one of the most densely populated neighbourhoods in the United States.

Most of the action takes place along Grant Avenue, the oldest street in San Francisco, and it's here you'll find the area's official entrance – the Chinatown Gate – on Grant Avenue at Bush Street. For a proper taste of the locals' Chinatown though, a Saturday afternoon amble through the many produce and live markets along Stockton Street (between Columbus and Broadway) is the ticket. Space is cramped and noise levels are suitably cacophonous, with deals getting cut left, right and centre. According to Frank, "This street is what Chinatown is about. The locals come here for all of their grocery needs and for the dim sum, which is excellent."

Other favourites include the legendary Golden Gate Bakery for egg tarts and Washington Bakery for "on-the-go food". For dim-sum, Frank recommends Great Eastern Restaurant and City View, and adds that no visit is complete without a trip to the Fortune Cookie Factory and a tasting at one of the tea shops along Grant Street.

San Francisco's Hit List

R&G Lounge One glance around the tables at this well-kept, wood-lined restaurant popular with everyone from Asian businessmen to the Obama family, and you'll discover that its specialty is the exceptional salt and pepper crab. **631 Kearny St, +1 415 982 7877, 94108, rnglounge.com**

Z&Y Restaurant If you're keen to pray at the altar of all things spicy, this authentic Sichuan restaurant in the heart of Jackson Street makes a fitting temple. Sichuan places are rather light on the ground in SF (most are Cantonese) and this one proves a worthy detour. The signature dish here is the 'chicken with explosive chilli pepper' and, like it says, you can indeed expect a high-temperature explosion. **655 Jackson St, +1 415 981 8988, zandyrestaurant.com**

Great Eastern Restaurant Widely considered among Chinatown's best dim sum joints, this gaudy kingdom of jade and brass is a hotspot for Chinese families, especially on weekends. The wait staff are from the get-in, get-out school of hospitality, but the a la carte menu offers plenty of seafood and an excellent Peking duck. **649 Jackson St, +1 415 986 2500, greateasternsf.com**

Yank Sing Located just over the Chinatown border in the nearby Financial District, this highly awarded dim sum restaurant offers a decidedly more sophisticated and serene dining experience from the Chinatown standard. Gracious staff deftly pilot the laden trolleys and the excellent *xiao long bao* (Shanghai soup dumplings filled with minced Kurobuta pork, served with a ginger-laced red vinegar

dipping sauce) are easily reason enough to justify crossing the border. **49 Stevenson St, +1 415 541 4949, yanksing.com**

Mission Chinese Food Though not strictly in Chinatown, chef Danny Bowien's grungy pop-up rates a worthy mention for elevating classic American-Chinese food to hip new heights. Forget that it's housed inside a seedy-looking building; the food here is seriously good. Think vibrant Chinese-inspired cuisine using mostly local and organic produce, served with Tsingtao longnecks and a large measure of rock and roll swagger. Highlights include the tea-smoked eel roll with Chinese celery, braised pork and cognac soy, and the hickory-smoked cumin lamb ribs. **2234 Mission St, +1 415 863 2800, missionchinesefood.com**

King of Noodles For a hidden gem that's well off the tourist track, this modest, family-run Northern Chinese diner in the nearby Sunset district is a welcome treat. It's known for its comforting soups, delicious dumplings and handmade noodles (which you'll likely see being stretched to order). Go for the rich, aromatic marinated lamb noodle soup and the crisp green chive pancake. **1639 Irving St, +1 415 566 8318**

Golden Gate Bakery It's said you can't leave San Francisco without experiencing Chinatown and you can't experience Chinatown without a visit to Golden Gate Bakery. Sure, out-the-door lines are obligatory, but with the pain comes plenty of gain; their famous egg custard tarts are some of the best in the city. **1029 Grant Ave, +1 415 781 2627**



San Diego's



Little Manila



A feast at Manila Sunset, including the *bibingka galapong*, a rice flour cake baked in a banana leaf. Clockwise from far left: Chris Aure of Zarlitos; burgers from Filipino fast food chain Jollibee; local favourite Manila Sunset; Island Pacific Supermarket; dining in at Zarlitos; pastries from Valerio's Bakeshop; Manila Sunset; cooling down with *halo-halo* at Conching's Café.



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hough it may be better known for its zoo, the laid-back harbour city of San Diego is also home to one of America's biggest Filipino communities. On the outskirts of town lays a hidden gem called National City – a culinary sweet spot where you'll find plenty of warm welcomes and some of the best examples of authentic Filipino food outside of Manila.

Located almost two hours south of Los Angeles and with a population of around 180,000 Filipinos, San Diego county is home to the second-largest Filipino-American population in the United States.

From the early 1900s to the late 1940s, large waves of Filipinos came to the area as cheap hired labour to work on farms and in San Diego's many hotels and restaurants, while many others sought work at the nearby US Navy base. Since then, the majority has settled in the National City neighbourhood, with Filipino residents making up almost 17 per cent of the area's population.

Talented young Filipino-American chef Craig Jimenez of San Diego's pan-Asian Gang

Kitchen is National City born-and-bred and he's a passionate ambassador for the area's vibrant local food scene. There's no denying Craig's pride when he speaks about his hometown, and when you speak to fellow local business owners, it's plain to see he's not alone.

Having long been relegated to the 'obscure and misunderstood' category, Filipino food in San Diego, according to Craig, is enjoying newfound appreciation from non-Filipinos, having found fresh new influences from other cuisines – like Mexican and Korean – to crossover easily into the mainstream.

"Both my parents were born in the Philippines – my mum is from Tagudin and Dad is from Bacoor City in Cavite," Craig explains. "My three older brothers and I grew up here in National City, so even though we've got that whole Californian thing, we've always been surrounded by a strong Filipino culture," he says proudly.

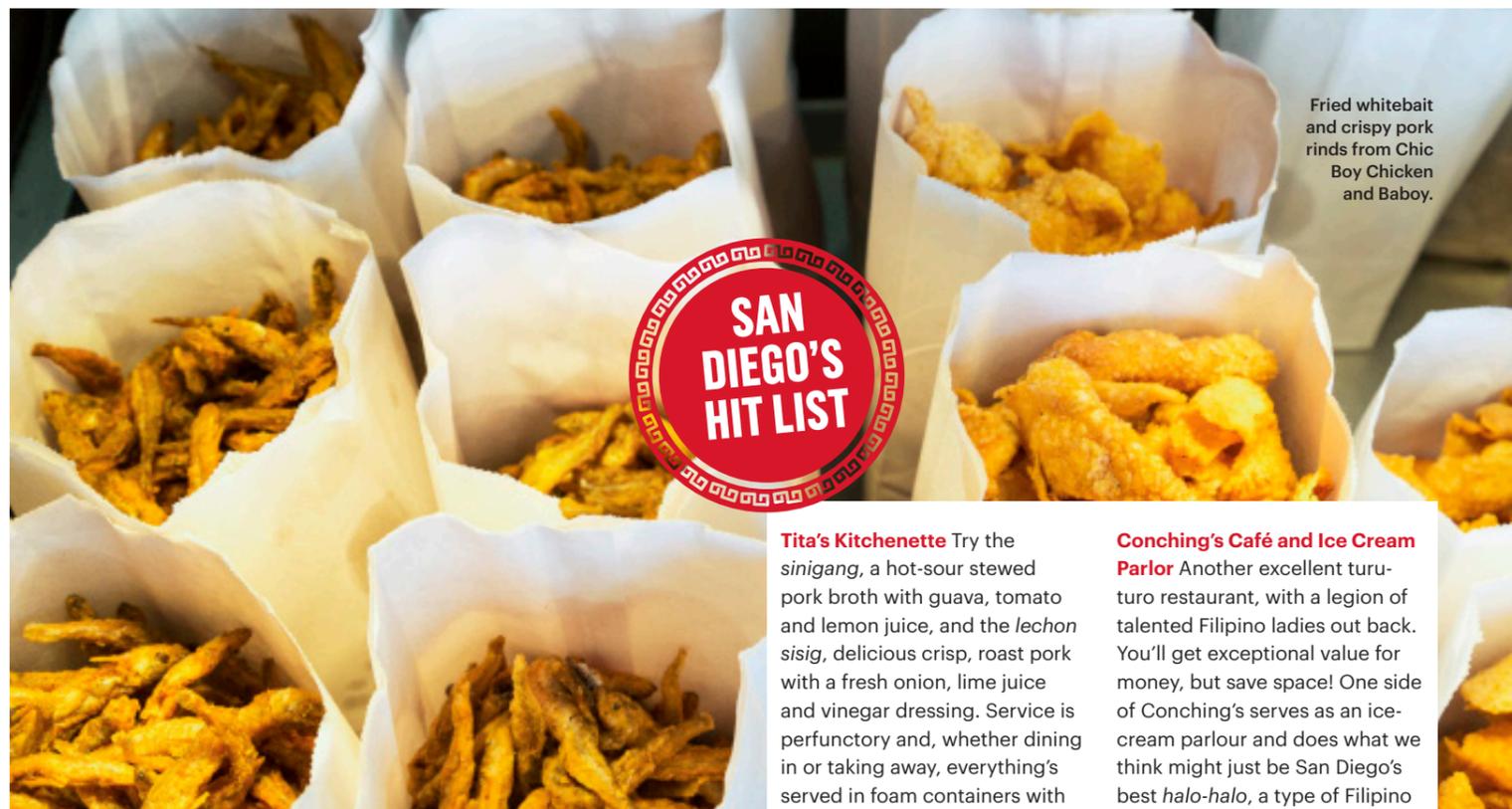
While the average Californian teen's food lexicon is lucky to extend beyond big-chain burgers and fried chicken, Craig's mother's home cooking convinced him otherwise. "One

of my favourite dishes growing up was *bopis*, a sweet, spiced dish of chopped pork innards (typically heart and lung), with sautéed peppers and onions. I know it sounds a little scary, but it's delicious," Craig assures us.

Of course, nothing beats his mum's version, but it's a dish he still can't help ordering whenever he visits a traditional Filipino *turo-turo* (point-point) restaurant, like the always-busy Tita's Kitchenette, located in a busy suburban strip mall off East Plaza Boulevard.

The name 'point-point' refers to the ordering process – everything is served in bain-maries, so that customers can point to a mix of the dishes that they want to order. Craig recommends it as a good place to start for anyone new to the bold, vinegar-tinged flavours of the Philippines. "There's so much to choose from; all the classic dishes – *adobo* (pork or chicken stewed in vinegar and soy), *diniguan* (pork stewed with pig's blood and spices), *sisig* (fried pork with onion, chillies and lime juice) – they're all there."

Lined with moulded-plastic seats and bright green and yellow tiles, Tita's is a modest



Fried whitebait and crispy pork rinds from Chic Boy Chicken and Baboy.

SAN DIEGO'S HIT LIST

Tita's Kitchenette Try the *sinigang*, a hot-sour stewed pork broth with guava, tomato and lemon juice, and the *lechon sisig*, delicious crisp, roast pork with a fresh onion, lime juice and vinegar dressing. Service is perfunctory and, whether dining in or taking away, everything's served in foam containers with plastic cutlery. **2720 E Plaza Blvd, +1 619 472 5801**

Manila Sunset Since opening in the early 1990s, this 'quick-serve' restaurant has become a favourite for Filipino expats yearning for a nostalgic taste of home. You'll see a broad mix of locals here including young families and slick-uniformed US Navy staffers. Don't miss the *bibingkang galapong* (aka *bibingka*) – a fluffy, rice flour cake made with eggs and milk, baked in a banana leaf and topped with sugar, freshly grated coconut and white cheese. **925 E Plaza Blvd, +1 619 474 0421, manilasunset.com**

Zarritos During the week, this second-generation, family-owned restaurant is a traditional *turu-turo*, but on weekends, son Chris Aure takes over the kitchen serving his inspired version of Filipino/So-Cal fusion. Think *adobo burritos* and Filipino-style tacos stuffed with *lechon sisig* or *longanisa* (sweet pork sausage). **505 E. 8th Street, +1 619 474 1144, zarritos.com**

Conching's Café and Ice Cream Parlor Another excellent *turu-turo* restaurant, with a legion of talented Filipino ladies out back. You'll get exceptional value for money, but save space! One side of Conching's serves as an ice-cream parlour and does what we think might just be San Diego's best *halo-halo*, a type of Filipino sundae with fruit, chopped jelly, red beans and *ube* (purple yam) ice-cream. **3400 E 8th St, +1 619 470 6993, conchings.com**

Chic Boy Chicken and Baboy This tiny takeaway is a homage to all things deep-fried and fatty, but the snacks here are undeniably tasty and not to be missed. Think *chicharrones* (deep-fried salty pork rind), fried *dilis* (whitebait) and fried chicken skin, all sold in paper bags by the pound, as well as juicy roast pork belly with crisp crackling. **2220 E Plaza Blvd T-1, +1 619 472 2449**

Valerio's Bakeshop Filipinos love their baked goods and in National City, they really love Valerio's. You'll find traditional favourites such as *pan de sal* (salted bread roll that's popular for breakfast), as well as *pan de ube* (soft sweet bread filled with a purple yam paste) and *leche flan* (Filipino-style *crème caramel*). Their cheese rolls (cream cheese-filled pastries) are always the first to run out. **2220 E Plaza Blvd, +1 619 472 9948**

yet cheerful place, typical of the neighbourhood. Much like everywhere else in the area, there's a small army of middle-aged Filipino 'aunties' running the show, too. "This place is your classic point-point," Craig explains. "I love it. It looks kind of dive-y, but it's straight up".

Growing up, Craig remembers National City's Filipino food scene as fairly traditional, though now he says, "there are more and more restaurants and bakeries sharing regional dishes beyond the typical street food that the community has become accustomed to."

And there's yet more change in the air too, says Craig. "What's exciting now is the new generation of young Filipino-Americans who have grown up here and who have started to mash-up traditional Filipino food with a Mexican influence." And it makes perfect sense – San Diego is barely 35km from the Mexican border. "In SoCal [Southern California], Mexican food is considered 'local'. Pretty much everyone eats tacos – no matter what their background."

Craig says that Filipinos are hugely family-focused and love to entertain, and Filipino eateries all do a swift trade in generously portioned takeaway 'party trays'. Filipinos will also eat at any time of the day. "Breakfast, lunch – it's all the same," he laughs. "For the most part, Filipinos will eat the same kind of food at any time of the day."

Up to now, businesses in National City have dealt almost exclusively with a Filipino clientele, which means that the integrity of regional cuisine that you'll find here remains blissfully unadulterated. And though change is afoot in the form of deliciously creative Filipino-Mexican fusion, you can rest assured that's far from a bad thing.

Indian-Chinese fried cauliflower (gobi Manchurian), recipe page 112

Mumbai's Chinese meets Indian

At a counter facing a dusty street lined with parked scooters, a boy tosses fligid, greasy noodles in a wok using a long metal paddle. To his right is a grimy desk covered with brightly coloured bowls and buckets. There is soy sauce, chopped green chillies, ginger and garlic pastes, finely chopped coriander, onions, battered fried chicken, a cornstarch slurry, angry-looking chilli-garlic sauce, cauliflower florets, a heap of cooked noodles, eggs, food colouring and a bowl of powdered masalas. After the noodles are done, he slops them into a flimsy plastic pouch. He pours another glug of oil into the wok and cracks an egg into it. The fried egg goes over the noodles and the bag is knotted up and swiftly transported by a delivery boy to an office in Mumbai's burgeoning mega-suburb of Andheri.

The young man may not know this, but he's preparing a meal that started taking shape at least 250 years ago when the Hakka moved to Kolkata to work at the bustling port and in its tanneries, and settled in a region called Tangra. Around 1850, some of this Chinese population moved to Mumbai to work in the docks and factories. The west coast city had a thriving Chinese population of nearly 5000 families until the 1962 Indo-China war, when most of them fled or were made to leave. All that remains of Mumbai's Chinatown today is a temple and a cemetery, but the community's impact on the city's food has been massive and sweeping.

Today Chindian, or Indian-Chinese food, is found in every category of eating

establishment in every neighbourhood in Mumbai. Five-star hotels serve chicken chilli dry, restaurants make good money from crispy thread paneer, street-side *dosa* vendors stuff noodles with chilli and soy sauce into their South Indian rice crepes, while small local restaurant chains offer Punjabi and South Indian dishes alongside chicken Manchurian.

This last dish has no connection to Manchu cuisine – it is said to be invented by Kolkata-born Nelson Wang, who tossed soy sauce instead of masala into a chicken dish with Indian flavours such as ginger, garlic, chillies and coriander while he was a line cook at a local members-only club. A few years later, in 1983, he opened »

China Garden, Mumbai's first fine-dining Indian-Chinese restaurant, attracting celebrities and socialites. Around the same time, food trucks with names like Hungry Eyes painted over with red dragons parked on major commercial streets, and Mumbai's Chinese restaurant scene exploded. Ever since, spicy, oily, fried and saucy Chinese food with Indian flavours (or is it the other way around?) has stayed among Mumbai's favourite cuisines, feeding wealthy industrialists and broke students alike.

"All this time, Chindian food used to be only popular here in India," says Hemant Oberoi, grand executive chef at The Taj Mahal Palace Mumbai, who serves Chindian dishes at the hotel's Chinese restaurant Golden Dragon. Now, thanks to the Indian diaspora, Sydney has Indian Chopsticks, Melbourne has Mumbai Hakka, and New York City has a food truck called Chinese Mirch. There is even a Chindian restaurant in Hong Kong called Branto Pure Veg Indian Food in Tsim Sha Tsui that offers vegetable Manchurian on its menu.

Mumbai's Hit List

China Garden Nelson Wang refuses to share his recipe for chicken Manchurian, but you can try the inventor's version of Mumbai's most loved Chindian dish at his restaurant. **123 Om Chambers, AK Marg, Kemp's Corner, +91 22 2363 0841; Gabbana House, 15th Road, Khar (West), +91 22 2600 2626, chinagardenindia.com**

Jim-Me's Kitchen Students and young single men in the neighbourhood are fond of JK's, as they call it, for its satisfying, spicy dishes. The beef chilli and their spare ribs are the stuff of legend. **12 St Peter's Road, off Hill Road, Bandra (West), +91 22 2643 6301**

5 Spice With 10 locations in the city, a menu that lists hundreds of dishes, and a good delivery network, 5 Spice satisfies every variety of Chindian craving. Try the spicy crab soup, the chicken in burnt chilli sauce and the paneer kung pao. **296/A Perin Nariman Street, Fort, +91 22 3015 1591**

INDIAN-CHINESE FRIED CAULIFLOWER GOBI MANCHURIAN

Serves 2 • Prep 15 mins • Cooking 20 mins

300g cauliflower, trimmed, cut into florets
50g (½ cup) cornflour
1 tbs plain flour
½ tsp white pepper
Vegetable oil, to deep-fry, plus 2 tbs extra
1 onion, thinly sliced
1 garlic clove, thinly sliced
3cm-piece ginger, finely chopped
1 long green chilli, thinly sliced
2 celery stalks, thinly sliced
1 tbs dark soy sauce
1 tbs light soy sauce
1 tbs Maggi Seasoning*
1 tsp caster sugar
Chopped coriander leaves and steamed rice (optional), to serve

1 Bring a saucepan of salted water to the boil over high heat and blanch cauliflower for 2 minutes or until tender. Drain cauliflower, then pat dry with paper towel.

2 Combine flours and pepper in a bowl with 1 tsp salt. Fill a deep-fryer or large saucepan one-third full with oil and heat over medium heat to 180C (or until a cube of bread turns golden in 10 seconds). Working in 2 batches, toss cauliflower in the seasoned flour, then gently drop into oil and fry for 5 minutes or until crisp and golden. Remove with a slotted spoon and drain on paper towel.

3 Heat extra 2 tbs oil in a wok over medium-high heat. Add onion and cook for 1 minute, then add garlic, ginger, chilli and celery, and cook for a further minute or until fragrant. Add fried cauliflower, soy sauces, Maggi Seasoning and sugar, and cook for 2 minutes or until cauliflower is coated in sauce and celery is slightly softened. Scatter with coriander and serve with rice, if desired.

* Maggi Seasoning is available from Asian food shops.

Orange County's Little Saigon

The two major waves of Vietnamese immigration to the US took place in 1975, at the end of the Vietnam War, and in 1978, when refugees fled the Communist government's re-education camps. Immigrants continued to arrive in steady numbers through the 1980s and 1990s. Some 1.5 million (as of 2010) Vietnamese call the US home, and more than 300,000 of them live in Orange County, part of the Los Angeles metropolitan area. Little Saigon began there with the Bolsa Mini Mall, a single plaza with a few offices and shops, and has since grown to an area covering just under eight square kilometres, with thousands of Vietnamese-run businesses. When it comes to eating here, locals choose a spot based on the particular dish they crave – many of these places have one specialty, sometimes more, that they've perfected.

OC'S HIT LIST

Binh Dan The specialty here is goat dishes, and they offer a seven-course feast of goat. **10040 McFadden St, Westminster, 92683, +1 714 839 7050**

Brodard Try the grilled pork spring rolls. **9892 Westminster Ave, #R, Garden Grove, 92844, +1 714 530 1744, brodard.net**

Pho Thanh Lich A local favourite for a bowl of pho with oxtail or filet mignon. **14500 Brookhurst St, Westminster, 92683, +1 714 775 6686**

Quan Hy Go for the sticky rice and refreshing Vietnamese salads. **9727 Bolsa Ave, Westminster, 92683, +1 714 775 7179 »**

Paris's Le Quartier Chinois

The Asian community in Paris is spread out among three Chinatown neighbourhoods, but the largest of these – indeed the largest Asian community in Europe – is located in the thirteenth arrondissement, in the city's south-east.

It was founded in the 1970s by refugees from Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, but a large Chinese population from China has since joined their ranks, and together they run the majority of restaurants and businesses in the area.

It may not be the most picturesque of Chinatowns, but its wide sidewalks and village-like atmosphere makes it a pleasant spot for a stroll and a bite, whether you're in the mood for a huge dining hall, a tiny noodle joint, or a bookstore that doubles as a sandwich counter.

Sometimes dubbed the Golden Triangle, wedged between two adjoining avenues, Avenue de Choisy and Avenue d'Ivry, it is most easily accessed by metro (exit at Olympiades, on line 14, or Tolbiac, on line 7).



Quang, 26, website manager

What brings you to the Quartier Chinois?

I have a work appointment not far from here, so I thought I'd swing by Thieng Heng and treat myself to a bánh mì for lunch. I love the one with the caramelised pork.

Do you cook Asian dishes yourself?

I do! My family is from Vietnam, so I can make a few classics, and come to the Quartier Chinois to shop for ingredients. I make my own bánh mì from time to time, but I work long hours, so it's usually easier to grab one here.



Baptiste, 19, student

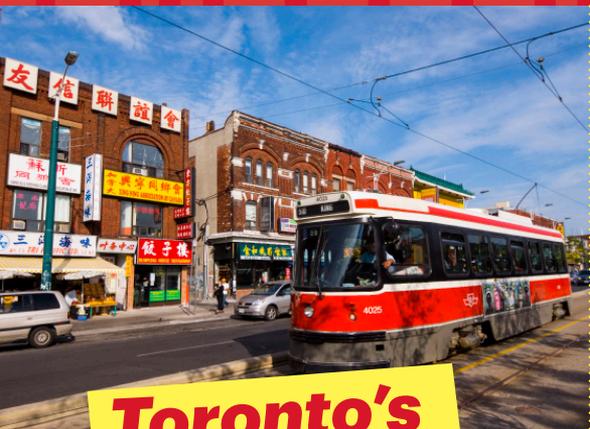
What brings you to the Quartier Chinois? I am very interested in Asian cultures, so I love to come here and soak in the ambiance. I am also planning to travel to Asia next year, so I guess this is my way of preparing for the trip.

Have you done any shopping here today? I have just bought some bottled green tea. I love to hang out in the various supermarkets and try to figure out what everything is. It can be puzzling if you don't have a more experienced friend to show you around the different aisles, but I like the adventure!

Mélina, 25, police officer (right)

What brings you to the Quartier Chinois? I live here, and my mother [Marie-Aimee, pictured left] came up to visit me from Montpellier, in the south of France. We went out to get something for lunch, then we'll go home and eat while we catch up.

What do you like to eat around here? Ang is a great Chinese rotisserie, as you can see from the lacquered birds in the window. Some say it's the best in Paris, and on weekends, there's a line down the sidewalk. Their roasted pork is particularly good, but I'm fond of their steamed crêpes, too. »



Toronto's Chinatown

Depending on who you speak to, Toronto has up to five Chinatowns. It's not surprising, given that the city has one of the largest ethnically Chinese populations in the world, with a history of Chinese immigration dating back to the 1870s. The hub around the intersection of Spadina Avenue and Dundas Street West in Downtown Toronto is one of the most accessible and iconic.

Fong On Foods

This narrow shop specialises in tofu and soy milk, which is freshly made at the back and snapped up by loyal local fans. **46 Kensington Ave, +1 416 598 7828**

Asian Legend

The Peking duck is a crowd-pleaser and the dumplings are a hit at lunchtime. **418 Dundas St West, +1 416 977 3909, asianlegend.ca**

Chinese Traditional Bun

Opened by a homesick engineer from Shaanxi, this eatery has introduced Torontonians to the delights of *dan dan mian* (Sichuan spicy pork noodles). **Basement, 536 Dundas St West, +1 416 299 9011**

Lai Wah Heen

A world away from cheap Chinese takeaways, this is a Cantonese fine-dining experience that could rival some Hong Kong counterparts. **2/F, Metropolitan Hotel, 108 Chestnut St, +1 416 977 9899, laiwahheen.com**

Taste of China Seafood Restaurant

Open until 5am on Fridays and Saturdays, this largely Cantonese joint is one of the favourite hangouts of Toronto's chefs. **338 Spadina Ave, +1 416 348 8828, tasteofchinarrestaurant.ca**



Braised beef brisket
with shiitake
mushrooms

BRAISED BEEF BRISKET WITH SHIITAKE MUSHROOMS

Serves 6 • Prep 20 mins, plus ½ hr soaking
• Cooking 3 hrs 20 mins

12 dried shiitake mushrooms*
1kg beef brisket, cut into 3cm pieces
2 tbs vegetable oil
4 garlic cloves, very finely chopped
2 tbs finely chopped ginger
60ml (¼ cup) Chinese rice wine (shaoxing)*
3 tsp caster sugar
2 star anise
4 dried chillies
4 dried tangerine peel pieces*
2 tbs light soy sauce
3 tsp dark soy sauce
6 spring onions, trimmed, cut into 5cm pieces,
plus extra thinly sliced, to serve
2½ tsp cornflour
Steamed rice and chopped long red
chillies (optional), to serve

1 Soak mushrooms in boiling water for 30 minutes or until soft. Drain, reserving 125ml (½ cup) soaking liquid.

2 Preheat oven to 120C. Bring a large saucepan of water to the boil and working in batches, add beef and blanch for 2 minutes or until pale. Drain.

3 Heat oil in a large claypot or casserole pan over medium heat. Add garlic and ginger, and cook, stirring, for 2 minutes or until fragrant. Add beef, rice wine, sugar, spices, tangerine peel, soy sauces, 1 tsp each salt and pepper, mushrooms and reserved soaking liquid, and bring to a simmer. Cover with a lid, then cover the pot tightly with several layers of foil to seal well. Transfer to oven and cook for 3 hours or until beef is very tender.

4 Add spring onion, stir to combine, then transfer pot to the stove over medium-low heat. Combine cornflour and 2 tbs water in a small bowl to form a smooth paste. Stirring constantly, add to braised beef and cook for 1 minute or until liquid comes to a simmer and thickens slightly. Serve braised beef immediately with rice, extra spring onion and chopped red chilli, if desired.

* *Dried shiitake mushrooms, Chinese rice wine and dried tangerine peel are available from Asian food shops.* »

LAMB AND CORIANDER DUMPLINGS

Makes 60 • Prep 1½ hrs • Cooking ½ hr

750g lamb shoulder, minced (ask your butcher to do this for you)
 4 garlic cloves, crushed
 6 spring onions, very finely chopped
 2 bunches coriander, leaves, stems and roots washed, very finely chopped
 1½ tbs Chinese rice wine (shaoxing)*
 1 tbs light soy sauce
 2½ tsp dark soy sauce
 125ml (½ cup) cold chicken stock or water
 4 x 300g packets gow gee wrappers*

Vinegar dipping sauce

6cm-piece ginger, cut into julienne
 250ml (1 cup) Chinese red or black vinegar*

1 Combine lamb mince, garlic, spring onion, coriander, rice wine and soy sauces in a large bowl. Using your hand and stirring in the same direction, slowly mix in the stock until combined. Mix in 1½ tsp salt and 1 tsp black pepper until well combined.

2 Working with 6 wrappers at a time, place wrappers flat on a board. Lightly brush each with water, then place another wrapper on top for double thickness, pressing firmly to seal and pressing around the edges to thin them slightly. Place 2 slightly heaped teaspoonfuls of the lamb mixture in the centre of each double wrapper, then fold over to enclose filling and form a half-moon shape. Press the edges firmly together and pleat each edge to seal. Repeat with remaining wrappers and lamb mixture to make about 60 dumplings.

3 To make vinegar dipping sauce, divide ginger among individual dipping bowls, then pour over vinegar.

4 Bring a large saucepan of water to the boil over high heat. Add about one-third of the dumplings, stirring gently to prevent them sticking to the base of the pan while the water returns to the boil. Cook dumplings for 8 minutes or until the filling is cooked through. Drain and keep warm. Repeat with remaining dumplings.

5 Serve dumplings immediately with dipping sauce.

* Chinese rice wine is available from Asian food shops; substitute dry sherry.

* Gow gee wrappers are from the refrigerated section of supermarkets and Asian food shops.

* Chinese red vinegar is slightly sweeter than Chinese black vinegar (chinkiang). Both are available from Asian food shops.

SALTED FISH AND PEANUT CONGEE

Serves 6 • Prep ½ hr, plus overnight soaking • Cooking 2½ hrs

105g (¾ cup) unskinned peanuts
 150g dried salted fish*
 165g (¾ cup) medium-grain rice
 2.5L chicken stock or water
 2½ tbs very thinly shredded ginger
 400g piece pork neck
 750ml (3 cups) vegetable oil
 6 wonton wrappers, cut into 5mm strips
 Coriander sprigs, thinly sliced spring onions and chilli oil*, to serve

1 Soak peanuts in cold water overnight.

2 The next day, drain peanuts, then soak dried fish in cold water for 30 minutes. Drain.

3 Combine fish, peanuts, rice, stock, ginger and pork in a large saucepan and bring to a simmer over medium-low heat. Reduce heat to low and cook for 1 hour, then remove fish and set aside to cool. Cook congee for a further 30 minutes or until pork is very tender. Remove pork and set aside to cool. Cook congee, stirring occasionally, for a further 1 hour or until rice is soft and falling apart and the mixture has thickened.

4 Meanwhile, remove fat and gristle from pork and thinly slice. Remove skin and bones from fish and flake flesh into small pieces.

5 Heat oil in a saucepan over medium heat until hot. Working in batches, deep-fry wonton strips for 20 seconds or until golden and crisp. Remove with a slotted spoon and drain on paper towel.

6 When congee is ready, stir in pork and fish. Add a little extra stock or water to thin congee if necessary. Divide among large bowls, scatter over fried wonton skins, coriander, spring onion and serve drizzled with chilli oil.

* Dried salted fish and chilli oil are available from Asian food shops.

PORK SPARE RIBS WITH SPICY SALT

Serves 4 • Prep 15 mins, plus 3 hrs marinating • Cooking ½ hr

1.2kg pork spare ribs, cut into individual ribs
 3 tsp Sichuan peppercorns*
 2 tsp dried chilli flakes
 2 tsp salt flakes
 300g (2 cups) cornflour
 Vegetable oil, to deep-fry

Marinade

2½ tbs Chinese rice wine (shaoxing)*
 1½ tbs dark soy sauce
 2 tbs light soy sauce
 1 tbs caster sugar
 5 garlic cloves, crushed

1 To make marinade, combine all ingredients in a large bowl and stir to dissolve sugar. Add pork ribs and, using your hands, mix well, making sure ribs are coated all over in marinade. Cover bowl tightly with plastic wrap, then refrigerate for 3 hours or overnight, turning the ribs occasionally.

2 Meanwhile, heat a small, heavy-based frying pan over medium-low heat, add Sichuan peppercorns and toast, tossing occasionally, for 3 minutes or until peppercorns are fragrant, taking care not to burn them. Using a mortar and pestle, grind peppercorns to a coarse powder. Place in a bowl with chilli flakes and salt, stir to combine and set aside.

3 Drain ribs, discarding marinade. Fill a large saucepan one-third full with oil and heat over medium heat to 170C (or until a cube of bread turns golden in 15 seconds). Working in batches, dust ribs in cornflour to coat, shaking off any excess. Carefully add half the ribs to oil and cook, turning halfway, for 8 minutes or until meat is tender and ribs are crisp and golden. Remove with a slotted spoon and drain on paper towel. Repeat with remaining ribs.

4 Serve spare ribs immediately sprinkled with spicy salt.

* Sichuan peppercorns are available from select delis and Asian food shops.

* Chinese rice wine (shaoxing) is from Asian food shops. Substitute dry sherry. 72