

Learn – Cook – Enjoy




“To cook or not to cook”, is a question often asked by foreigners living in China. The abundance of food on offer and display, from the nearby wet market to street kitchens and restaurants catering to almost every taste, makes the answer more often than not a quick “let’s eat out!”. Since food and eating makes up such an important aspect of Chinese culture and lifestyle, tasting yourself through the eight main regional cuisines should be part of everyone’s stay in China. Restaurants from just about every region can make the dining scene in most larger Chinese cities quite overwhelming. But what about enjoying some good home-cooked local fare in the cosy atmosphere of ones own walls?

Many non-Asian expats still shy away from the wide range of unfamiliar ingredients, cooking methods and undecipherable groceries found in the local market or grocery store. Indeed, Chinese cooking requires some knowledge about ingredients and spices, but with a good portion of curiosity, a handful of talent (or two) and a pinch of help everybody can learn how to cook at least some local standards.

For those not lucky enough to have an ayi with cooking skills and the willingness to pass on her secrets, a good way to get started is through a cooking course. An increasing number of providers cater to foreigners and offer their classes, or at least their manuals, in English. And even if the language remains a barrier, simply observing and copying can go a long way.

A convenient experience in Shanghai is a cooking lesson with the “Flying Chef”, as he holds his course at your home. Bringing along all the cooking

utensils and ingredients as well as cleaning up the kitchen afterwards, the chef does all the hard work. During the three hours class a menu of the client’s choice with about five dishes, will be prepared – and enjoyed thereafter. Since the chef will do most of the cooking, the course attendants are rather observers than active kitchen-helpers, but the presentation and recipe handouts in English are still very useful and enjoyable. Having worked for a few years in Germany, “Flying Chef” Li can even speak some German, where he learned how to adapt his cooking style to his mostly western clientele.

As the following selection shows, the range of learning opportunities is wide and growing. Cooking in groups can also be a fun activity with friends and family or a good ice breaker with new acquaintances among fellow students. Living and eating in China provides ample supply of experiences and anecdotes. Saying “Let’s cook!” can give rise to many new ones. CH 

The Flying Chef Shanghai

www.flyingchef.cn

Rent-a-Chef Li flies into your kitchen and teaches you to cook

Chinese Cooking Workshop

www.chinesecookingworkshop.com | Email: cookingworkshop@gmail.com

Dim sum courses and other themed cooking classes in central Shanghai

Community Center Shanghai - Puxi – Healthy Chinese Cooking

www.communitycenter.cn/classes_tours_contact.asp?id=2193

Learn to cook some healthy Chinese dishes within four sessions

Hias Gourmet Beijing

www.hiasgourmet.com | Email: info@hiasgourmet.com

Cooking demonstrations and hands-on training in the capital

Hutong Cuisine

www.hutongcuisine.com | Email: chef@hutongcuisine.com

Learn to prepare traditional Chinese cuisine in an old Beijing hutong