

# [***Chinese Food In America Is A Joke It s So Limited!***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:69VB-W8W1-JBCM-F0GH-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Byline:** Russell Flannery, Forbes Staff

**Highlight:** China Institute Co-Chair Yue-Sai is working to bring more authentic cuisine to American palates

**Body**

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Fortune cookies, a Chinese restaurant staple in the U.S., aren't widely served in China. (Photo by: Education Images/Universal Images Group via Getty Images)

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Depending on who s counting, the U.S. has an estimated 45,000-plus restaurants that specialize in Chinese cuisine. Menu staples include egg foo young, chop suey and fortune cookies that appeal to Americans but aren t as widely popular in China.

Chinese food in America is a joke it s so limited! smiled long-time Chinese American business and culture icon Yue-Sai Kan in a recent interview. The only thing that is similar is Peking duck. In China, there is food that is unique to where you go. For example, when you're in Guilin (Province), they use osmanthus flowers to cook endless things. I've never had anything like that in America, Kan enthused. Another Kan favorite: rice steamed in bamboo.

We can do much better, she said of Chinese eateries in America.

From her current perch as co-chair of the China Institute in New York, Kan and other leaders are busy with plans to open a new Culinary Center at the organization s Manhattan headquarters in 2024. Founded in 1926 by American educators John Dewey, Paul Monroe and Chinese diplomats Hu Shi and Kuo Ping-Wen, the soon-to-be 100 years old China Institute is a nonprofit that aims to deepen understanding of China through programs in business, art, culture, cuisine and education.

A fashion and media celebrity in China, Kan has a record of advancing business and people-to-people ties between the country and the world for nearly five decades. She hosted Looking East in the 1970s and 1980s, a weekly TV show that introduced Asian culture to an American audience; she later launched the One World TV series in China that educated one billion Chinese about the outside world. In 1992, Kan created the cosmetics brand Yue-Sai, which was acquired by L Oréal in 2004. Now based in Hawaii, she has authored 10 books and is a board member of Imax China.

U.S.-China ties have gone through ups and downs over the years, and are not good today, she said. Yet for Kan, born in China and emigrated to the U.S. in the 1970s, Chinese culture is an enduring source of curiosity. I'm Chinese and I'm also American. I'm very proud to be American, but I'm also stunned by Chinese culture. The more I study it, the more I realize what an extraordinary culture we happen to be born in, Kan said. We can't do much about ***politics*** and the current world situation, but we can do is let the world enjoy our culture.

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Yue-Sai Kan, right, and Princess Reema bint Bandar Al Saud, Saudi Arabia's ambassador to the U.S., left, together at a China Institute gala in New York in October.

China Institute

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A highlight of that culture, she said, is cuisine. Sometimes when you are in China, you are totally stunned by the kind of food that they are served. The food is so different from south to north and east to west. It's a magnificent cuisine. In America, hardly anyone really knows about it. And so I think there's a lot to promote, Kan said.

The China Institute plans to work with a few culinary institutes around the world some in mainland China, some in Singapore, and some from Hong Kong, and showcase their strengths for up to 160 guests per sitting at the expanded Institute headquarters. You can imagine that every month we will have a fantastic chef coming in. That's the thinking and the goal at this moment. And I think if we are smart, we will be able to do that.

As co-chair since 2018, Kan has been working to fund the institute for the long haul and, of late, create the new culinary hub. To that end, the organization which earlier this year hired former McKinsey executive George Geh as CEO raised more than $1.3 million at a dinner for 350 guests in New York in October. For her own efforts at the China Institute, the board gave Kan at a Blue Cloud Award along with seven others including businessman and philanthropist James Chao, the founder and honorary chairman of Foremost Group, an American shipping company based in New York. China-born Chao immigrated to the U.S., and raised children active in U.S. ***politics*** and business. Among them, Elaine Chao, the wife of U.S. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, was the first Asia-American to hold a Cabinet position. Henry Kissinger, who passed away this month, addressed the event.

Kan got a first-hand look at tough U.S.-China relations and China s slower economic growth during two trips to the mainland earlier this year. I was nervous when I went this year because of media reports about the economy and strains. I went to about 12 cities, she said. The economy s growth is definitely slowing down. But the strange thing is that the restaurants are unbeatable. I'm very excited about the experience I had in China this last year in in terms of food.

Helping to lead a non-profit such as the China Institute is just like running a company in that it needs money to succeed; donor support is vital and the group needs to see progress, she noted. Sometimes you donate to a fund, and you don't see anything from it, Kan said, who s working to make sure that doesn t happen in connection with the new culinary effort.

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