Old school eateries to check out

2018-02-17

By XU JUNQIAN in Shanghai |   
 China Daily |  
 Updated: 2018-02-17 04:45

It may seem preposterous, but hardcore foodies in Shanghai are willing to stand in queues for hours and endure being yelled at by grumpy food servers just to have a meal in a ghetto-like place where undergarments hang overhead and hygiene standards seem lacking.  
Ask them why they do so, and most of these foodies would have the same answer: authentic Shanghainese cuisine.  
Such dining spaces are mostly run by middle-aged Shanghai women, some of whom turned to cooking after being laid off from State-owned factories in the 1990s. In most cases, these dining spaces are actually the living rooms of these home chefs, which are almost always located in crumbling residential estates.  
Decades after they first opened or business, these private dining rooms are now more popular than ever. While most of their customers in the past were diners from the older generation, these eateries have in recent years been drawing large crowds of younger diners. Some are there to relive their childhood memories through the taste of authentic Shanghai food. Others are there simply because it has become trendy to be seen in a ghetto-like diner.  
Some people say that the greatest compliment a Shanghainese chef can get is when a Shanghai native says: “Your cooking is almost as good as my grandma’s.” This is what diners often say to the laobanniang, or boss lady, of Linglong.  
The signature dishes here include the drunken prawns, which come in a special sauce that takes weeks to prepare. The live prawns arrive twitching in the bowl of sauce that is laced with hard liquor. White spirit and yellow wine are also added for flavor and to eradicate any parasites.  
The lady boss of Linglong claims that her prawns are freshly caught every day and that their sweet flesh is what draws diners back for more.  
Address: No.57 South Shaanxi Road, Shanghai  
Such is the popularity of this place that queues for lunch and dinner start at 10:30 am and 4:30 pm respectively. It is best not to visit Lanting hungry, because the long wait would probably leave you feeling faint.  
The dish that is served the fastest here is a plate of chicken in soy sauce. The dish is actually called “chicken bones in sauce” in Chinese because there is hardly any meat on it. As simple as this dish seems, you have to wait 30 minutes for it.  
The main attraction at Lanting is their toffee apple, which according to foodies is the best in Shanghai. Some diners like to leave their toffee apples for a few minutes so that the caramelized layer hardens to create an addictive crunch.  
Address: 1st floor, No. 180 Xizang Middle Road, Shanghai  
A relatively spacious eatery that has more than 20 seats and a handful of large tables, Haijinzi is well-known for its scallion-braised pork chop, a staple dish in college campus canteens and on family tables. In the past when food was scarce, a portion of scallion pork chops was as luxurious as a wardrobe full of Hermes bags.  
The popularity of this dish then waned as society progressed to an age of excess where people were more willing to spend hundreds of dollars in glitzy steak houses in the city. At Haijinzi, this humble dish is branded as “a glorious fight against the steak”.  
The meat is always tender and the savory scallions are incredibly addictive. Don’t be surprised if you find yourself ordering another bowl of rice to go with the scallions.  
Address: No.240 Jinxian Road, Shanghai

http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201802/17/WS5a8742d2a3106e7dcc13ce36.html