

Title:

Regional Cuisines Of China

Word Count:

615

Summary:

It's easily one of the world's favorite foods. No matter where you are, someone you know is bound to suggest, "Hey, let's do Chinese." For decades, Chinese food meant one thing - Cantonese cuisine. It was the style of Chinese cooking with which most of the world was familiar - the appetizers and roasted meats and delicate sauces that blend vegetables and spices in a perfect marriage of flavors. But Chinese food is far more than just the Cantonese cuisine. There are four major...

Keywords:

cuisine,China cuisine

Article Body:

It's easily one of the world's favorite foods. No matter where you are, someone you know is bound to suggest, "Hey, let's do Chinese." For decades, Chinese food meant one thing - Cantonese cuisine. It was the style of Chinese cooking with which most of the world was familiar - the appetizers and roasted meats and delicate sauces that blend vegetables and spices in a perfect marriage of flavors. But Chinese food is far more than just the Cantonese cuisine. There are four major styles of cooking across China, and several more subdivisions to divide them even further.

Cantonese is the most well-known and popular of the Chinese regional cuisine styles. Cantonese chefs specialize in delicate sauces and roasted meats, in steamed and stir-fried dishes with vegetables that are as carefully chosen for appearance and appeal to the eye as to the palate. Steamed rice is a staple of Cantonese cuisine, and is the base of most meals. Every vegetable is sliced to best show off its color and shape, even in a stir-fry or sauce. One of the more enduring and widely enjoyed traditions of Cantonese cooking is 'dim sum' - 'little hearts'. In many cities, both in China and in other countries around the world, you'll find little dim sum shops tucked beneath stairways and in storefront shops. They serve tea and the delicious savory and sweet little dim sum pastries to businessmen and afternoon shoppers.

Szechwan cuisine has grown in popularity over the last few decades. Most famous

for searingly spicy foods like Kung Pao Chicken and Double Cooked Spicy Pork, Szechwan cuisine is a distinct style of cooking that is native to the landlocked mountainous center of China. The pungent flavors of ginger, fermented soybean, onions and garlic characterize much Szechwan cuisine, but there are also more subtle dishes that rely on the interweaving of texture and flavor. The typical cooking methods include frying, frying without oil, pickling and braising.

Hunan cuisine is the most well known of the several regional Chinese cuisine styles from Zheijiang region of China. It is characterized by thick, rich sauces and complex pungent flavors. Typical ingredients include scallions, chili and pepper. A popular favorite dish in the Hunan style is Pepper Chicken, with small chunks of succulent chicken quick-fried with black pepper and onions.

Shangdong cuisine is characterized by its emphasis on fresh ingredients in combinations that emphasize the flavor, aroma, color and texture of each ingredient. The Shangdong regional cuisine is known for delicate flavor combinations that are surprisingly pungent. Garlic and scallions are frequent ingredients, as are seafood, fresh vegetables and shoots. The soups are either thin and clear with a light flavor, or thick and pungent, rich with cream and spices. One of the most famous dishes from the Shangdong area, Bird's Nest Soup, is typically served at major affairs of state.

While these are four of the main styles of Chinese regional cuisine, there are a number of others worthy of note. Fujian and Jiangsu Cuisine both focus on seafood and shellfish, accompanied by fresh vegetables. Fujian cuisine blends sweet, sour, savory and salt flavors in magical combinations. Jiangsu cuisine is light, fresh and sweet, and is characterized by its elegant presentation. More than any other style of Chinese regional cuisine, it emphasizes appearance as an important part of the appeal of a meal.

China is a complex country, with many smaller nationalities and regions within its borders. Most have typical styles of cooking that are starkly different than those of other regions around them. It is, however, a nation whose love affair with food has produced some of the most complex, rich, delicate and delicious dishes ever created.