



The Local Food History of San Francisco Chinatown

FREE MAP

While the Western world was still developing, China had already invented gunpowder and paper, started exporting fine silk and beautiful porcelain, and mastered the culinary arts. As thousands of Chinese made their way to California during the Gold Rush of 1849, they brought their cuisine and established the first Chinese restaurant in North America—Canton Restaurant.



Pig Roasting in Nevada City, 30"x 40", watercolor on board original. Collection of Chinese Historical Society of America

Although many of San Francisco's once beloved Chinese restaurants of the past are now just a fond memory, some are still open today serving both the community and visitors alike with the same spirit of traditional Chinese cooking. Through this map of historic restaurants we take you through some of the well known and loved restaurants of our neighborhood that range from traditional Cantonese cuisine to some of the earliest iterations of "Chinese American" food.

Be sure to also check out our museum's gift shop to grab yourself a copy of any of our cookbooks and introduce your own family to the rich heritage of Chinese cuisine.



1 Sam Wo
713 Clay St - accepts cash & credit cards
Sam Wo (三和) arose following the 1906 earthquake and features handmade rice noodles and Chinese rice porridge known as "jook"—a specialty of one its owners, David Ho. During the 1950s, one of its employees named Edsel Ford Fong was dubbed "World's Rudest Waiter" for regularly berating and harrasing customers which peculiarly became integral to the dining experience at Sam Wo. Located on Clay street, David Ho's daughter Julie now runs the restaurant serving the same beloved dishes from past generations.

2 New Woey Loy Goey
699 Jackson St - accepts cash & credit cards
New Woey Loy Goey on Jackson street is one of the oldest restaurants still in operation dating back at least to 1913. They still display the sign at the entrance that reads "chop suey." This is a tell-tale sign that the restaurant once served Chinese-American style dishes with chop suey being its specialty. Now they feature traditional dishes particularly from Toisan (a district in Guangzhou, China from where many of the earliest Chinese

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immigrants came) serving up homestyle classics like steamed pork with salted duck egg and stews cooked in clay pots.

3 New Lun Ting
670 Jackson St - cash only

Porkchop House is how previous generations refer to New Lun Ting, one of the original eateries in Chinatown that features Western dishes with Chinese influence. Once known to some as Chinatown's "bachelor cafe", the restaurant was regularly patronized by the unmarried men from the neighborhood. Today, the community has grown and the restaurant welcomes families as well. Everyone can enjoy the "beef stew" and "roast pork with gravy" that old timers might still remember from when the restaurant first opened in 1970.

4 Hang Ah Tea Room
1 Pagoda Pl. - accepts cash & credit cards

Since 1920, Hang Ah has been serving the community all the quintessential dimsum (點心) classics such as siu-mai (steamed pork dumplings), har-gao (shrimp dumplings), and cha-siu bao (barbecue pork buns) but also welcomed newer items to their menu such as Shanghai-style soup dumplings known as "Xiao Long Bao". Dimsum translates to "a touch of the heart" and is meant to be enjoyed as a group. The table can gather for hours of dining and it is believed that tea can aid in digestion so a pot of tea is a welcome accompaniment to the meal.

5 Eastern Bakery
720 Grant Ave - cash only

Eastern Bakery opened in 1924 and is the oldest bakery in Chinatown, specializing in both Western and Chinese confectionaries in the form of pastries, cakes, and other baked goods. They are most famous for their mooncakes (月餅), which are Chinese pastries filled with either red bean or lotus paste that are traditionally eaten during the Mid-Autumn Festival. At Eastern Bakery they are available all year round along with other mainstay favorites like their Coffee Crunch Cake.

6 Fortune Cookie Factory
56 Ross Alley - cash only

Often associated with Chinese restaurants, fortune cookies are a uniquely American invention by way of the Japanese. Baron Makoto Hagiwara who

created the Japanese Tea Garden in Golden Gate Park was the first to sell the famous cookies that took on that familiar crescent shape. The outbreak of World War II forced Japanese Americans into internment camps and Chinese Americans took the same concept to create what is now known as the "fortune cookie." Opened in 1962, the Fortune Cookie Factory boasts that it's the only place that still makes "handmade" fortune cookies in the United States.

7 Far East Cafe
631 Grant Ave - accepts cash & credit cards

Far East Cafe first opened in 1920 in the midst of the Chinese Exclusion Act. It was where the growing Chinese community in San Francisco hosted wedding banquets and other Chinatown celebrations. A unique feature of Far East Cafe are their private rooms on the first level which are separated by wooden partitions- said to have also been utilized by Chinatown gang members. They roast all their duck, chicken and pork on site but have also been proclaimed to have the best "Egg Foo Young" dish in the city.

8 Golden Gate Bakery
1029 Grant Ave - cash only

Guangzhou (Canton to the West) has a long history as a global port city. International presence from Portugal, Great Britain and the United States has influenced its cuisine such as the "egg tart" known as "dan taat" (蛋撻) in Cantonese. The Chinese first adapted the recipe from the Portuguese "pastel de nata," which entered Macau when it became a Portuguese colony in 1557, while the variation in Hong Kong, however, is much more influenced by the British "custard tart." Today you can enjoy "dan taat" at Golden Gate Bakery, which first opened in 1976 by the Kuan brothers.

9 Capital Restaurant
839 Clay Street - cash only

Capital is a neighborhood favorite and its walls are covered with photos of its many famous patrons. Known for its fried chicken wings the restaurant opened in 1986 and has always been family owned. Today it is run by Samantha Lo, daughter-in law of the original founder. She first worked at Capital as a waitress and her brother is now its current chef.