

Eating the Exotic:
The Growing Acceptability of Chinese Cuisine
in San Francisco, 1848-1915

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For most Americans today, the phrase "Chinese food" conjures up an immediate image. This image is likely not a humble bowl of rice and vegetables, or any of the dishes served at an extravagant banquet in China, but some takeout favorite: chow mein, egg rolls, or fried wonton; dishes are as American as they are Chinese. This widespread fondness for and familiarity with Chinese cuisine, "authentic" or not, would have been unthinkable a hundred fifty years ago, when Chinese restaurants were not yet an American institution. The transition from mysterious newcomer to cultural icon was slow, and Americans would not really begin to embrace eating out at Chinese restaurants until after World War I. But in the period before that, from about 1848 to 1915, interactions between white Americans and Chinese restaurants laid the foundations for what was yet to come.

Before Chinese food was available to most Americans, San Franciscans could sample it at restaurants run by Cantonese immigrants. The history of Chinese food in America thus begins with the earliest days of San Francisco, during the Gold Rush, in the restaurants of Chinatown. Within San Francisco, the history of eating Chinese seems to divide neatly into three periods. In the highly international setting of the Gold Rush era, starting in about 1848 or 1849, Chinese food was well liked, not so much because it was Chinese, but mostly because it tasted good and was still incredibly cheap. Although around the late 1850s and very early 1860s the city's social composition changed and its changed population looked for different qualities in restaurants, Chinese restaurants benefited from the growing tourist industry and the stereotypes it played up. The restaurants whites visited then were expected not to be necessarily enjoyable, but definitely exotic. This exoticism might have continued well into the twentieth century if not for the 1906 earthquake and fire, which destroyed Chinatown and gave its residents a chance to rebuild along their own terms. The construction of a new, "modern" Chinatown removed old stereotypes and helped the Chinese community become more integrated with the San Francisco population as a whole. Likewise, the increasing popularization of chop suey—an American-invented "Chinese" dish that appealed to whites—began at this time to bring Chinese food and restaurants out of the "exotic" niche and

into the mainstream. The growing acceptability of Chinese cuisine in this period culminated with the featuring of "Chinese" chop suey at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition held in San Francisco in 1915.

Some Historical Background and Other Scholarship in the Field

The movement of Chinese cuisine toward acceptability was never a straightforward process, in large part because of the contrasting ways in which Americans viewed the Chinese. Even as hatred and fear toward the Chinese reached its height in California, thousands of tourists flocked to San Francisco's Chinatown out of curiosity about the ways of this exotic people. This dichotomy was very much present in white attitudes toward Chinese food. Many who disliked the Chinese also felt distaste for their food choices and cooking methods. The San Francisco Board of Supervisors reported in 1885 that Chinatown toilets or sewers were placed in close proximity to kitchens, so that "the foul odors . . . they exhale mingle with the Mongolian messes [simmering] upon the adjoining cooking device, nauseating the visitor but . . . adding zest to the appetite of the Celestials."¹ And despite protestations to the contrary by both Chinese and sympathetic whites, many persisted in the belief that Chinese ate and enjoyed rats, mice, dogs, or worse, as noted by a visitor to California: "Every thing possibly edible . . . is acceptable to the Oriental palate; the coarsest of offal and small fish, lizards, rats, fat puppies . . . all such abominable contributions."² Some accusers even targeted habits we would today consider normal. "It is charged against us," Chinese representatives wrote, "that we eat rice, fish and vegetables . . . is that a sin on our part of *sufficient gravity* to be brought before the President and Congress of the United States?"³ To the writers of the charges and their contemporaries, the differences between Chinese and Western eating habits presented compelling evidence of the deep incompatibility between the two peoples. Labor leader Samuel Gompers used this concept to pit white laborers against their Asian competitors in a pamphlet dramatically entitled "Meat vs. Rice: American Manhood against Asiatic Coolieism. Which Shall Survive?"⁴ Gompers quoted remarks made decades earlier before the United States Senate by Senator James G. Blaine, in which Blaine asserts that "you cannot work a man who must have beef and bread, alongside of a man who can live on rice," because that would "bring down the beef-and-bread man to the rice standard."⁵

Anyone familiar with American history recognizes immediately this attitude toward the Chinese. Although Chinese immigrants initially received warm welcomes from both government officials and the population at large, this kindness and tolerance quickly degenerated.⁶ From 1852 onward, a series of anti-Chinese laws attempted to thwart Chinese immigrants' success and minimize their legal rights.⁷ During the 1870s, anti-Chinese feeling escalated as an increasingly unreliable economy led discontented laborers to take out their frustrations on the Chinese.⁸ Finally, in 1882, the passing of the infamous Chinese Exclusion Act—the first immigration law to explicitly restrict a group based on race—prohibited the immigration of all classes of Chinese except a select few, including merchants and students.

As of yet, no one has made a focused study of white Americans' responses to Chinese food during this period, though there have been some studies on Chinese food or on general ethnic food. Those who have mentioned the topic have largely

assumed that because of the unfavorable way in which Chinese and Chinatown were viewed at this time, white Americans would not have eaten Chinese food at all (or that those who did were some sort of aberration).⁹ This is a logical conclusion, but an incorrect and oversimplified one. It is true that Chinese remained the main patrons of Chinese restaurants. But in spite of the growing anti-Chinese movement, many non-Chinese remained willing to try Chinese food. The history of eating Chinese food in America cannot be viewed as a simple parallel to the history of pro- or anti-Chinese feeling in the US. To just ignore or gloss over the experiences of these individuals is to pretend that the complex twists and turns that characterize relations between two groups do not exist, when they did, and indeed still do.

Chinese Immigration in the Early Days of Gum Shan (Gold Mountain)¹⁰

Before the discovery of gold brought the entire world pouring into the state, the bay port in northern California was a small, but growing, town named Yerba Buena. Residents numbered only 812 persons in 1848, but two hotels and two wharves were already under construction.¹¹ Within a year, this little town would be drastically transformed. As news of gold spread quickly across the globe, a diverse mix of peoples rushed into California in hopes of striking it rich. Travellers "were of 'all nations' and of all classes," George Bynner observed in his journal, ". . . in fact you might say the whole world was here represented."¹² Among these people of "all nations" were the Chinese.

In early encounters, Americans reacted to the Chinese the way they might have to any other foreigners. While they found the Chinese puzzling, disgusting or suspicious, the two groups had not yet interacted enough to create any kind of serious love or animosity. In fact, to many whites, one Chinese seemed indistinguishable from another, clustered (or cloistered) in Chinatown as they were, all equally mysterious. One visitor from North Carolina wrote in 1855:

The Americans salute [the Chinese] all indiscriminately by the easy and euphonious appellation of "John," to which they reply as readily as if they were addressed by their true names; and they . . . [apply] the same term to us, equally indiscriminately. A great number of them think "John" is the only name white people have; and if they have occasion to speak to an American or European woman, they call her "John," too! But their own vernacular cognomens . . . sound certainly very odd to occidental ears. The following may be taken as fair specimens: Kak Chow, Chum Fi, Yah Wah, Si Ta, Hom Fong, Dack Mung, Gee Foo.¹³

In truth, most Chinese immigrants did share a common background. While those who came earliest to America were upper-class merchants, by the time of the Gold Rush, most new arrivals were laborers or peasants, often referred to (erroneously) by whites as "coolies."¹⁴ Although many young girls were brought from China to work as prostitutes in Chinatown, few wives left China until later in the twentieth century, and for decades the Chinese American population remained largely male. Ivan Light, in his study of the tourist industry in Chinatown, comments that "as late as 1900, married Chinese women never dared to venture on foot in the streets of San Francisco's Chinatown."¹⁵ Though Light gives no

reason for this, it may have been that the scarcity of "respectable" Chinese women and profusion of prostitutes in the district meant that any Chinese woman walking in the streets risked being mistaken for a prostitute.¹⁶ Also, until the mid-twentieth century, nearly all the Chinese in America had come from one province in southeast China, so that they were all of somewhat similar ethnic, social and linguistic backgrounds.¹⁷

Unlike the bulk of San Francisco's early white emigrants, the Chinese mostly did not come for gold—at least, not the kind to be found in the mines. Conditions in China were tough, and poverty common. From about 1846 onward, the southeastern provinces from which most immigrants came had been beset by battles, uprisings, banditry, and natural disasters.¹⁸ "From one generation to another," commented Tom Yuen, "everybody tries to send a man overseas. That's the only way you can make things better." Though many immigrants could not speak English and had no skills besides those they had learned in the fields of their native villages as farmers, anything they could do in America would still bring more money than they could have earned at home.¹⁹ They could stay in Chinatown, live frugally and work for other Chinese, and thus scrape up enough money to send back home to keep their families alive. Many scholars of early Chinese Americans have therefore characterized these men as "sojourners," not emigrants, because most of them hoped to return to China as soon as they had made their fortunes. This road was a gradual one, for it could take a decade or two to make enough money to return to their villages and live comfortably for the rest of their lives. For most men this dream never materialized. "Too poor to stay in China and not rich enough to leave America," their wages were never the windfall they had hoped; and so they continued for the rest of their lives to provide for their families from an ocean's distance away.²⁰

One Cuisine Among Many

For poor Chinese immigrants newly arrived in the city, a Chinese restaurant was not necessarily the best place to begin earning money. Most Chinese gravitated toward work in the factories, which required no capital investment and paid better than domestic work.²¹ And despite American conceptions of Chinese men as effeminate, in China cooking was no less "women's work" than it was in America, and Chinese men therefore had little culinary experience. But restaurants offered the advantage of allowing the immigrant to stay among his own people and spend some time adjusting to this new life, without having to learn much English or endure the impersonal atmosphere of a factory. Also, restaurants were a thriving business in the city by the bay. San Francisco was at this time what has been called a "bachelor society", its population made up of single men looking to make their fortune in the mines or in the city. These men not only did not know how to deal with housekeeping or cooking, they were focused only on making money and did not have the time or the interest. Industries sprang up to meet their needs: hotels gave them shelter, laundries took care of their soiled clothing, and restaurants provided their nourishment.²² Lodgings were often overcrowded, smelly, and sometimes not even adequate to completely keep out the rain, but the food was almost universally good.²³ The numerous restaurants not only served tasty food, but served it relatively cheaply, and with great variety and selection. There were

"eating-houses to suit the tastes and pockets of people of all varieties of means, and of every nation."²⁴

In this milieu of excellent restaurants, those kept by the Chinese quickly developed a reputation for being the best of the bunch. Sometimes called "chow-chows" (the food was also sometimes referred to as "chow-chow"), they were frequented by Chinese and whites alike, and were much beloved for two basic reasons: they served good, filling food, and they were cheap. Kirk Munroe wrote that Americans' "liking for [Chinese restaurants] was based upon the fact that, by the payment of a dollar each, their patrons were allowed to eat as much as they chose, and that the dishes were . . . well cooked [and] . . . generally palatable."²⁵ At the start of the Gold Rush, what agricultural development there was in the area was simply not adequate to deal with the massive influx of mouths to feed. Food supplies had to be shipped in from the East Coast, making them not only extremely expensive but also unappetizingly "old" by the time they arrived in San Francisco. Fresh vegetables were rare enough to demand a dollar a pound.²⁶ Eggs sold for fifty cents apiece, uncooked, and were already three months old upon arrival. Whiskey that cost a nickel in St. Louis was fifty cents in San Francisco.²⁷ Early restaurant prices reflected the prohibitive supply costs. But Chinese restaurants managed to escape these, because they had different sources for their food supplies. One visitor learned from a San Francisco police sergeant that the Chinese "buy and use almost nothing made or grown here . . . Their groceries come from China . . . Besides, they bring meats and fresh vegetables by steamer from China, and so cheap are they at home, that . . . they reach here cheaper than they can be grown and sold here."²⁸ Besides edibles, they also imported the traditional utensils and cooking implements to which they were accustomed.²⁹ Others reduced costs by growing their own vegetables, catching their own seafood, and raising their own livestock.³⁰ Consequently, the Chinese may have pioneered the cheap prices about which later writers raved. The best-loved early Chinese restaurants charged patrons only one dollar apiece, on an all-you-can-eat basis. In contrast to this, "at the Plaza Delmonico's of that day, a dinner cost from five to fifty dollars, and two and a half dollars was the price of a cheap breakfast."³¹ Board prices for Chinese restaurants also compared favorably: the charge there was sixteen dollars per week, while other restaurants charged anywhere from twenty to thirty dollars for a week's board.³² By the mid-1850s the food supply situation had moderated so that other restaurants could also offer inexpensive food, but by then, cheap Chinese food had already become famous.

Even with early Chinese restaurants' prices being what they were, in a city of so many eating houses, it is unlikely that even the cheapest establishments could have stayed in business without equally appealing gastronomic offerings. In the case of many of these restaurants, the draw was not that the food was Chinese, but simply that it tasted good. Even so, Chinese-style cooking was a new, often anxious experience for most customers. In most cases, the language barrier between the white patron and the Chinese waiter or chef meant that regardless of what he ordered, he simply got whatever the cook felt like making.³³ Some feared that asking the true ingredients of a dish might reveal an unpleasant surprise. "Hash was indeed a venture in the dark," James O'Meara remembers. "To ask questions might have been to repeat the well-known experience of Caleb Cushing [U.S. Commissioner to China]—'Quack, quack?' 'Bow wow'."³⁴ It is possible that this particular anecdote was a joke, but either way, most men heeded the warning and

refrained from asking questions. But Chinese cooks soon drew commendation for other styles of cooking besides their native Cantonese, offering their non-Chinese patrons dishes with which they were more comfortable. When Bayard Taylor visited San Francisco in the summer of 1849, he could already say that "the grave Celestials" served "many genuine English dishes" besides just "their chow-chow and curry."³⁵ By 1851, according to Englishman William Kelly's widely read account, Chinese chefs had already absorbed so much about western cooking that their menus featured "dishes peculiar to each nation," in addition to "their own peculiar soups, curries, and ragouts, which cannot be even imitated elsewhere."³⁶ Taylor felt that these restaurants' most outstanding offering was not the Chinese "chow-chow and curry," but their tea and coffee. This sentiment is echoed by Munroe, who wrote that "the tea and coffee were the best to be had in the city, and would alone have served to make these restaurants popular with their English-speaking patrons."³⁷ Munroe's comment is telling, for it shows that while many customers appreciated the opportunity to taste Chinese food, most would have continued to eat at these restaurants even if the cooks stopped making their traditional cuisine.

A Changing City

These first Chinatown restaurants would differ greatly from those to come later, for San Francisco in its early days had not yet become a sophisticated, modern metropolis. The Gold Rush brought to the city not only hordes of people, but also the danger and chaos of a population focused only on riches and how to get them: quickly, easily, and illegally, if necessary. Bynner writes:

[San Francisco] had become a byword for all that was shameless and brutal and ruffianly. In open day men were murdered on the streets and at night property was at the mercy of the most reckless bullies on the face of the earth . . . the only check they seemed to recognize was the revolver and bowie knife.³⁸

After a few years of this messy situation, the city finally took action. In 1856, a Committee of Vigilance was formed to mold the chaos into some semblance of order. The committee was efficient and uncompromising. "They discharged their duties," George Bynner recorded, "with unrelenting severity."³⁹ Men were hanged for the slightest provocation. Before the decade was over, San Francisco had earned a reputation sufficiently civilized to equal large cities in other parts of the nation, and thus began to attract more middle-class travelers and families.

Changes in San Francisco's social composition also affected Chinatown and its restaurants. The early miners, who were not afraid or ashamed to venture into Chinatown for good cheap eats, began to be replaced by more "respectable" folk, who did not consider Chinese restaurants such viable options for eating out. There may have been multiple reasons for this. They may have been suspicious of Chinatown's rumors and stereotypes, and therefore chose not to take any risks to their health or reputation by eating at its establishments, when there were so many other "nice" restaurants all over the city. The prevalence of Chinese cooks or other domestic help in white households also meant that a curious family could, if they wished, ask their trusted servant to prepare them a dish, and thus avoid having to venture into the mysterious Chinatown.⁴⁰

Still, this is not to say whites no longer went to Chinese restaurants. Laborers did, for the same reasons the miners before them had gone. The food was still cheap, the portions still generous. And many surely grew fond of the cuisine. For the middle- and upper-classes, while making Chinese food an integral part of their diet may have been unthinkable, there were other motivations for going to Chinese restaurants. Chinese food was an attraction, a curiosity. One tourist raved, "Such sweetmeats!—with their delicious charm of forbidden fruit, for were they not made of one knew not what? coloured, as like as not, with barbarian blood?"⁴¹ Not everyone took such relish in eating unknown dishes, but many did enjoy the titillation of sampling a foreign cuisine. This feeling of exoticism was one reason for the development of tourism in the Chinese quarter. As Chinatown became increasingly segregated from the rest of the city, its separateness became a lure. It may be premature to call this a real tourist industry.⁴² But as Chinatown moved unwittingly toward its 1906 destruction, more and more people flocked to see the district in all its real or imagined glory.

The Evil, the Exotic

By and large, the Americans we know visited Chinatown were not locals, for much the same reason that locals today avoid tourist traps. The tourists were out-of-towners, mostly middle-to-upper-class white Americans, men and women alike.⁴³ Many of them enlisted the services of a licensed guide to escort them on their trips to Chinatown. Some of these guides had been or were at the time policemen or detectives who were familiar with the area (which no doubt comforted the anxious), and several even boasted fluency in Cantonese.⁴⁴ The tourists came to Chinatown with certain expectations in mind, based on popular accounts about the area. The most popular of these characterizations of Chinatown fall into two seemingly quite different categories: Chinatown as epitome of filth and degradation, and Chinatown as a picturesque "little China".

Chinatown for many years maintained a reputation as a vice district, a mysterious and potentially deadly maze of opium dens, gambling houses, and places of prostitution, navigable only by the low and cunning residents of that quarter. While this "vice district" reputation offended some and frightened others, still others came in droves to experience it for themselves. Guidebooks made the most of Chinatown's shady reputation, urging the reader to come "investigate this wriggling mass of humanity, and see them in their underground opium and gambling dens."⁴⁵ One group of men, who engaged a policeman to accompany and protect them on their tour, felt so strongly about seeing these vice establishments, that when the gambling houses all refused to admit a group that included a policeman, they dismissed him and went off on their own.⁴⁶ Another tourist, a woman from Pennsylvania, felt timid about venturing into "the inner courts of this strange, wicked spot," for "the horrors of the place have been so often . . . described that you scarce know what to expect, and are ready for murder, arson, gambling, opium smoking, and robbery . . . with beating heart you await it."⁴⁷ Yet even her fear of the place was not enough to deter her from going, and at night. "Slumming parties" started in Chinatown and concluded in the notorious Barbary Coast district.⁴⁸ In reality, the "horrors" were anything but, though they must have looked real enough to maintain Chinatown's vice-ridden reputation. Tourists were frequently shown faked scenes in opium or gambling dens, and Chinatown residents were sometimes

hired to stage fights or just lurk menacingly near the tour group. A common "fight" involved two opium-crazed Chinese threatening each other with knives over possession of a slave girl.⁴⁹

In spite of the ubiquitousness of this view of the area, Chinatown boosters advanced a quite different image that would appeal to more people, particularly women who found the "vice district" conditions appalling or frightening. This was the idea of Chinatown as a *safe*, quaint, picturesque place, a smaller version of China, where one might go as a journey or an escape, or just to "study" the conditions of life among an exotic people. One advertisement recommended that "visitors to San Francisco . . . visit Chinatown and spend an instructive evening studying Oriental life," as though this were an educational field trip—though the text did not neglect to mention that the tour also "includes views of opium smoking."⁵⁰ Other guides also played up the "little China" aspect of the quarter. A state-sponsored guidebook promised readers that "to the visitor Chinatown is no doubt the most interesting part of the city" because "the stores, the restaurants and theaters are all conducted by Chinese and in Chinese fashion, which must be seen to be appreciated."⁵¹ Another guidebook dubbed Chinatown "the Mecca of the tourist with its twenty thousand . . . inhabitants living as they do in their home land."⁵² Visitors' accounts show that their experiences concurred with this stereotype. "Had it not been that the buildings were decidedly American," one woman wrote, "we could easily have imagined ourselves in another land."⁵³ To maximize the exotic aspect of their visit, guides and tourists alike agreed that "night is the time to see Chinatown in all its glory, which means with all its lanterns lighted. The streets are very narrow, not much more than alleyways, and . . . these fanciful illuminations . . . give to them a fantastic gala appearance."⁵⁴

Perhaps because many of the night tours lasted as long as five or six hours, they nearly all included one or more stops at Chinatown restaurants, though restaurants were rarely seen as a destination in themselves.⁵⁵ Even when tour groups visited restaurants, it was not to get nourishment in the form of a meal, but just to partake of some refreshment in the form of tea and snacks. And though the bulk of the restaurants' clientele was Chinese, it was rare indeed for white tourists to eat at Chinese restaurants simultaneously with Chinese residents—they would probably not have wanted so intimate an experience of "little China!"⁵⁶ The restaurants that enjoyed the greatest white patronage were quite different from their predecessors. While the restaurants in the Gold Rush period paid more attention to providing cheap, filling food than to attractive décor (some of the restaurants were no more than tents over crude furniture), the restaurants of this era were much more elaborate in their construction.⁵⁷ The most famous and most often described restaurants of this period were designed ingeniously to accommodate clients of all income levels, without forcing them into contact with one another. These restaurants were housed in three- or four-story buildings. On the street or basement level was usually some kind of small shop selling sundries like cigars or newspapers, or the cheapest kind of "eating-place" with "sawdust on the floor and no linen on the table" serving "Chinese bachelor workers" or white or black laborers.⁵⁸ Up one or two flights of stairs, the décor, the cuisine, and the pricing changed, and the clientele became men "of moderate means—small shopkeepers and the like."⁵⁹ On the top floor was the highest-end dining room, the one reserved by the local Chinese élite for banquets and formal gatherings, and the one that served American tourists when they came. This elegant room was a

far cry from the sawdust of the ground floor, decorated as it was with intricate carvings, traditional Chinese motifs in eye-catching golds and reds, and calligraphic scrolls hanging on the walls. Spaces were defined and divided by polished ebony and mahogany partitions and filled with teakwood furniture inlaid with marble, with sparkling chandeliers and Chinese lanterns dangling from the ceiling.⁶⁰ Customers could listen to musicians playing traditional Chinese instruments.⁶¹ Some restaurants that ran the entire depth of the building had ornate balconies at both ends.⁶² In addition to the dramatic differences of interior decoration, the fact that each floor of the building had a separate kitchen helped all customers feel that they were not eating in the same restaurant as people who were not in their class (or, perhaps, of the same race). (See Figures 1 and 2 at the end.)

While the men on the ground floor sat down to full meals, the ladies and gentlemen on the top floor had their introduction to Chinese cuisine by sipping tea and nibbling at snacks and sweets: dried almonds, pickled watermelon rinds, candied quince, Chinese nuts, little cakes, fruit, and preserved ginger.⁶³ A cup of tea could be had for a quarter to a half a dollar, and the snacks came free with the tea.⁶⁴ Tourists almost universally enjoyed the tea, and many also praised the "sweetmeats." But few would return to try more adventurous foods, this little introduction having sufficed for them. "Our desire . . . was more to see the true national *cuisine* than to indulge in a feast," wrote Mrs. Frank Leslie, wife of the editor of *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Magazine*.⁶⁵ Some visitors were suspicious of Chinese cooking methods. Clarence E. Edwards cautioned that "the average Chinaman" has an "impossible" "disregard for dirt and the usual niceties of food preparation."⁶⁶ Even C.F. (Constance Frederica) Cumming, who found Chinese delicacies "capital," warned that a Chinese baker or pastry cook worked by using his "long thin lips" to "[draw] up a mouthful [of water], which he then spurts forth in a cloud of the finest spray. Having thus damped the surface evenly, and quite to his own satisfaction, he proceeds to roll his pastry."⁶⁷ Others complained of unfamiliar flavors or ingredients. "They cook chickens and ducks nicely, though queerly, the bird being first split clean in two," reads a magazine article on San Francisco restaurants, "but almost everything has the same taste of nut oil [sesame oil?] sicklied over all, and few western palates can endure even the most delicate of their dishes."⁶⁸ Another writer suspected that the "dirty cook in the corner" of the kitchen he visited was "cutting up the identical pieces of pork-fat which [form] such a stumbling-block to the European debutant in Chinese chow-chow."⁶⁹ Many who could handle the Chinese snacks served on tours would have found it harder to stomach the truly "exotic" ingredients such as sharks' fins, birds' nests, turtles, eels, snails, or "thousand-year-old" eggs, which would have been served at meals or banquets.⁷⁰ Chinatown photographer Louis Stellman demonstrated an impressive knowledge of ordinary and authentic Chinese home cooking and restaurant fare, and urged his readers to try Chinese restaurants, but his guide (with letters of endorsement by prominent Chinatown leaders) was never published.⁷¹ It is quite clear that although white tourists were willing to sample Chinese foods, the Chinese restaurant experience simply did not have enough appeal to westerners to be able draw in a large body of middle-class non-Chinese patrons, so restaurants had to continue to rely on Chinese patronage for their survival.⁷²

A New Chinatown

In the early morning of 10 April 1906, the city of San Francisco shook in a devastating earthquake felt through the entire West Coast from Oregon to Los Angeles. After the earthquake, fires ravaged the city for four days. Thousands died; property damage was estimated in the hundred millions. In the post-quake fires, Chinatown was completely destroyed, burned to the ground. Residents gathered what belongings they could and fled. When the chaos was over, people began to talk of rebuilding, but old prejudices resurfaced. Anti-Chinese groups had been calling for the destruction of Chinatown for years, and many now insisted that Chinatown not be rebuilt. But Chinese merchants and property owners protested. Instead of accepting the city's plan of reconstructing Chinatown in a new location, they demanded that it be rebuilt in the same location or not at all, arguing that the city could not afford to lose the trade brought in by Chinatown.⁷³ When city officials stalled, Chinese leaders and whites who owned property in Chinatown put more pressure on them. The Chinese brought up their part in the development of San Francisco as an important city, but also held up the threat of moving the community to the nearby city of Oakland, or as far as Portland, Oregon, and Seattle, Washington, claiming that all three cities had already offered to take them in.⁷⁴ Eventually, the district was rebuilt on nearly the same location.

The publicity generated around "New Chinatown" prompted changes in attitude among both Chinese and whites. Since the Chinese community had been so involved in the reconstruction, many Chinese residents who had previously thought only of China as their home began to feel a stronger connection to Chinatown. Among whites, many began to feel that Chinatown was a real part of their city, not just an unwelcome addition. Some still viewed it as foreign, but it was an acceptable form of foreignness, no longer to be feared or suspected.⁷⁵ Many guidebooks praised the clean and up-to-date new Chinese quarter, though others mourned the departed exoticism. Author Clarence Edwards, in a 1914 guide to San Francisco's restaurants, lamented that while "in the rebuilding" the district took on "a more Chinese aspect," "much of the picturesqueness of the old Chinatown has disappeared."⁷⁶ With the cleaning-up of Chinatown and the increased assimilation of the Chinese into the city, moreover, many tourists lost interest. Chinese community leaders began to encourage "legitimate tourism" beginning in 1909, but guidebooks no longer pushed visits to Chinatown as aggressively as they had in the years immediately preceding the earthquake, sensing that the new lack of drama and mystery took something away from people's curiosity about the area.⁷⁷ As late as 1913, one guidebook offered the pathetically telling comment that "perhaps the most interesting place in [the new] Chinatown" was not the new quarter itself, but the old one!— in the form of an "exhibit of [Chinatown] fire relics of the San Francisco disaster," kept by the white wife of a Chinese man.⁷⁸

The feeling that Chinatown was a part of the city helped facilitate greater local interest in shopping or eating there. In addition, several restaurants opened with the specific intention of catering to whites—which meant, more often than not, the strategic placement of signs in English advertising "chop suey" and "Chinese noodles."⁷⁹ The noodles may or may not have been authentic, but chop suey would certainly never have been served in a traditional Chinese restaurant. The origin of the dish is unknown, though stories abound. Some claim that it was invented in the United States, others say that it is just the simplest of Chinese home cooking,

a stir-fry of odds and ends.⁸⁰ Whatever its heritage, it was immensely popular from the start. To the chagrin of advocates of authentic Chinese fare, the advent of chop suey corresponded directly to the increased success of Chinese restaurants.⁸¹ But as chop suey became more and more popular, the divide between what white patrons ate and what Chinese patrons ate widened. By the time of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in 1915, enough white San Franciscans were eating chop suey that Chinese restaurant food had lost much of its flavor of the exotic, and had started to become just one ethnic cuisine among many.

Once Again, One Cuisine Among Many

The Panama-Pacific International Exposition (PPIE) was held in San Francisco from February to December of 1915. Although its ostensible purpose was to celebrate the completion of the tremendous feat of engineering that was the Panama Canal, it really also represented a major triumph of recovery for the city so recently shaken by the 1906 earthquake. The PPIE drew huge numbers of tourists to San Francisco and generated truly staggering amounts of advertising and souvenir material: the official PPIE company released a new "souvenir guide" each month during the exposition's eleven-month run, and equal amounts of similar guides were produced by companies with booths at the exposition: railway companies, local publishers, and others. These guides often featured not only walkthroughs of exposition points of interest but also lists of things to do and places to see in the city of San Francisco—in which Chinatown of course was a part. Chinese food was also available at multiple sites within the exposition grounds.

Guidebooks and accounts from the PPIE do not mention Chinese food as an individual attraction, but they do extol the wonders of having so many international cuisines all in the same place. The Exposition made food very accessible to visitors. The Palace of Food Products, a division of the Palace of Agriculture, was an important feature at the exposition. In his definitive chronicle of the exposition, Frank Morton Todd explains the Palace's popularity:

Because from the time of the first pudding the proof of that commodity has been the eating of it, and because food can hardly be exhibited in any other way, the Palace of Food Products was a very popular place. Cooking and eating were going on all about, from the time the doors opened until they closed, and odors filled the air that seemed to rob people of reason. Demonstrators were continually handing out samples . . . and people were continually ingesting them . . . It made the Palace of Food Products a very nutritious place and one of the most attractive resorts in the grounds.⁸²

The constant popularity of this five-and-a-quarter-acre Palace meant the exposure of huge numbers of people to international foods, often for the first time. The Sperry Flour company of California built a mill within the building and employed chefs from eight different nations to work nonstop, in full public view, baking goodies of their native lands using Sperry Flour. According to Todd, this exhibit was "without doubt the most striking" in the Palace.⁸³ Those who advertised the exhibit were less interested in the actual cuisines, however, than in the attractive concept of foods from many lands, and their descriptions play on established stereotypes. One guide explained that the exhibit would include chefs from Mexico, Japan,

Russia, Palestine, and India, as well as “an expansive black mammy” to make southern American food, and “a Celestial chef” to produce “the dainty confections of China.”⁸⁴ Interested visitors could watch the entire cooking or baking process from start to finish, and printed recipes were available to anyone who wanted them.⁸⁵ Popular author Laura Ingalls Wilder attended the Sperry exhibit with her daughter Rose Wilder Lane, then described her experience in an article in her hometown newspaper, the *Missouri Ruralist*. In the article, she also gave recipes for Chinese almond cookies and other “international” foods, which she apparently picked up at this exhibit.⁸⁶ (See Recipes Appendix #1.) Many Americans thus had their first introduction to ethnic foods through this exhibit, tasting Chinese food as just one of several new cuisines.

Some visitors to the PPIE received a more traditional first taste of China—traditional American, that is. The Food Products Palace housed an “attractive” Chinese restaurant, which sold tea and, according to PPIE chronicler Frank Morton Todd, “whatever else you wanted from the Chinese cuisine”—which might have meant nothing more than chop suey or noodles.⁸⁷ Plain chop suey cost twenty-five cents, chop suey with pork forty cents, and mushroom chop suey fifty cents. One could also buy Chinese cakes, sweetmeats, or (questionably authentic) plain ham sandwiches for ten cents, as well as Chinese-style squab for only sixty cents, teas at various prices depending on quality, and “Mandarin dinners” for a dollar fifty cents apiece.⁸⁸ Outside of the Food Palace, the country of China, along with many other countries around the world, also had a section at the exposition, an arrangement of various pavilions in traditional Chinese architectural style.⁸⁹ Two teahouses flanked the main entrance to the Chinese compound, where visitors could partake of tea and sweetmeats much as Chinatown tourists had been doing for decades. But unlike the foods of Chinatown in past decades, the main entrees offered at these houses were nothing so authentic as to shock western palates. However “Chinese” the rest of the Chinese exhibit may have been, its tea pavilions served chop suey for twenty-five to seventy-five cents a plate.⁹⁰

One other area at the Exhibition attempted to revive the attractions of old Chinatown. A large area devoted solely to amusement, commonly referred to as “The Zone,” featured a “Chinese Pagoda and Village,” in which a section known as “the Underground Chinatown” displayed opium smokers along the lines of “vice district” fakes decades ago. When the Chinese Commissioner-General objected to the name, it was changed to “Underground Slumming,” but the exhibit never did as well after the change.⁹¹ The Chinese Pagoda also contained a restaurant where both Chinese and American foods were served.⁹² But the Zone section as a whole seems to have been one of the less successful areas of the PPIE. Todd remarks dourly, “to say that great fortunes were made and lost on the Zone would be true if any had been made.”⁹³

Conclusion

During this period, Chinese restaurants would never quite become the highly popular, fully integrated, commercially successful institutions they are now. But our modern Chinese restaurants needed the developments of this time period to become what they are today. Without the need for cheap, filling food for Gold Rush miners, perhaps the earliest Chinatown restaurants would have gone unnoticed by the white population. If post-Gold Rush Chinatown had not had a reputation

for exoticism, the middle and upper classes may never have ventured within its borders to taste its food. And the period after the 1906 earthquake began inching Chinese restaurants toward their present situation. They were not yet beloved, but were slowly becoming acceptable.

Mainstream white attitudes toward Chinese food, like mainstream feelings toward the Chinese people, have always been muddled by exceptions and contradictions; complexity is an inescapable component of reality. Attitudes toward Chinese food were fairly open during the social chaos of the Gold Rush, reflective of two threads of stereotyped attitudes (exoticism and depravity) during and after the height of anti-Chinese sentiment, and increasingly tolerant after the earthquake brought the Chinese quarter more solidly and permanently into the cultural landscape of San Francisco. It seems difficult to say that the acceptance of Chinese restaurants reflected simultaneous feelings toward the Chinese as a population. There is a definite move toward acceptability, but this is no simple, straightforward story. Therefore, it is even more difficult to assess whether interest in Chinese food may have helped in bringing about acceptance of the Chinese. Those of us with a deep and passionate reverence for food tend to think that food touches us on such a basic, universal level, that a fondness for the tastes of a foreign cuisine can also convince us to look more favorably upon the people of that region. But this may be too optimistic a hope.

While our ancient connection to food can make us more expansive and tolerant, this attitude reverses easily, and concerns about food can touch on equally ancient fears and anxieties. We in the twenty-first century live in a different world from the anti-Chinese agitators of the 1870s, but some old ways of thinking die hard. The recent outbreak in China of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and the subsequent panic has caused some degree of reversion in attitudes toward Chinese restaurants. Not long after the outbreak, public paranoia about catching the mysterious disease resulted in decreased business for Chinese restaurants in Canada and the United States. And a lengthy *New York Times* article on the epidemic spotlighted the food markets near Guangzhou, China, for their lack of attention to sanitation and their sale of curious food animals such as “snakes, chickens, cats, turtles, badgers, frogs . . . sometimes rats, too.”⁹⁴ It is difficult to read such words and not think back to the attitudes of the last century: the distaste, the hysteria, the fear. But by now, the situation truly is different from what it was one hundred or one hundred fifty years ago—at least where Chinese restaurants are concerned. Despite SARS, the once “exotic” Chinese restaurant appears to be here to stay.

Recipes Appendix

#1. Chinese Almond Cakes, from Laura Ingalls Wilder's article for the *Missouri Ruralist*.

Wilder, Laura Ingalls. *West from Home: Letters of Laura Ingalls Wilder to Almanzo Wilder, San Francisco 1915*. (New York: Harper & Row, 1974.) 124.

Chinese Almond Cakes

4 cups flour, 1 cup lard, 1½ cup sugar, 1 egg, ½ teaspoon baking powder.

Mix and knead thoroughly. Take off pieces of dough the size of an English walnut, roll in a smooth round ball, then flatten about half. Make a depression on the top and place in it 1 almond. Place on pans, 2 inches apart, and bake a golden brown.

#2. Reed Birds à la Chinoise

This "turn-of-the-century" recipe allegedly comes from the famous Hang Far Low Restaurant. I can only guess that this must have been a very interesting looking dish. Reed birds, according to food authority Alan Davidson, are "a small N. American bird which migrates southwards and fattens on wild rice, after which it becomes a prized table delicacy." They are called bobolinks or bobalinks when alive, and marketed as reed birds or rice birds.

Berger, Frances de Talavera, and John Parke Custis. *Sumptuous Dining in Gaslight San Francisco 1875-1915*. (Garden City [New York]: Doubleday, 1985.) 138.

Davidson, Alan. *The Oxford Companion to Food*. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999.) 84.

Reed birds à la Chinoise

Purchase 2 or 3 cans of Chinese reed birds from a shop in the Grant Avenue [formerly Dupont Street] district. Take the birds out of their containers. In a large, greased pan, heat the birds thoroughly. Toast old-fashioned digestive crackers and on each one place 2 of the reed birds. Serve them on very hot plates. Accompany this dish with a sparkling white wine of golden hue.

#3. Char siu

This recipe was allegedly "a standard" at the Hang Far Low Restaurant, but this version must have been updated for modern cooks because it calls for refrigeration and gives directions appropriate to a modern stove.

Char siu, as it is now commonly spelled, is sometimes called "Chinese barbecued pork." It is still a great favorite and is still available at many Chinese shops and restaurants in one form or another—as a large chunk of unsliced meat, cut into small pieces and mixed into fried rice or noodles, or sliced and packed into a take-out box.

Berger 138.

Ross Valley Char Siew

1 pound pork tenderloin, cut into strips
¼ cup sugar
¼ cup honey
½ cup soy sauce
1 teaspoon garlic powder
½ teaspoon powdered hot (English) mustard
½ teaspoon salt
3 tablespoons chili sauce
sesame seeds, to cook's touch, for garnish
oil

Marinate the pork in a combination of the sugar, honey, soy sauce, garlic powder, hot mustard, salt, and chili sauce for at least 3 hours. If possible, prepare the dish ahead to this stage and marinate the pork overnight in the refrigerator. Turn the meat from time to time. When ready to cook, preheat the broiler to 425 degrees Fahrenheit. Drain the pork and broil it for no less than 20 minutes. Turn the strips every 5 minutes. While they are cooking, toast the sesame seeds by heating them until golden in a pan with just enough oil to coat them. When the pork strips are cooked through and browned, arrange them on a hot platter. Sprinkle the barbecued pork with toasted sesame seeds, and serve . . . immediately. Serves 4 as an appetizer.

Figure 1

Hang Far Low Restaurant, 713 Dupont Street, San Francisco, ca. 1885
From *Bridging the Pacific: San Francisco Chinatown and its people* by Thomas W. Chinn



The Hang Far Low Restaurant on 713 Dupont was for years a San Francisco Chinatown landmark, acknowledged almost universally among Chinese restaurant patrons as the finest such restaurant in the city—the "Delmonico's of Chinatown," as one writer called it. Founded prior to 1870, the Hang Far Low was rebuilt after the 1906 earthquake and continued operating until the 1950s, when new owners renamed it.

The exterior of the Hang Far Low clearly shows the "story system" adopted by larger Chinatown restaurants, which allowed laborers and working Chinese to eat inexpensive meals on the ground floor, while wealthier Chinese and white tourists could dine on the upper floors. Note the progression from the unadorned street level to the ornate highest visible floor: the style of windows on the top floor is noticeably different from that on the floors below it, there are more potted plants and hanging lanterns, and there appears to be elaborate carving on the double doors and possibly above the windows.

Figure 2

Grand Dining Room of a Chinese restaurant on Dupont Street, San Francisco, ca. 1880s
Tolman, Harriet. "Views from a Trip to California, 1887-1889", Group 5 Item 46. Bancroft Library, Berkeley, CA.

The ornate interior of this room indicates that it was on one of the upper floors of a large Chinatown restaurant, probably even on the topmost floor. Elaborate Chinese banquets would have been held here, but white tourists might also have taken tea here while no banquet was in session.



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Endnotes

¹ *Report of the Special Committee of the Board of Supervisors of San Francisco on the Condition of the Chinese Quarter and the Chinese in San Francisco, July, 1885* (San Francisco: P.J. Thomas, 1885), 22.

² Pringle Shaw, *Ramblings in California; containing a description of the country, life at the mines, state of society, &c. Interspersed with characteristic anecdotes, and sketches from life, being the five years' experience of a gold digger* (Toronto: J. Bain, "1857?"), 23, in *California as I Saw It: First-Person Narratives of California's Early Years, 1849-1900*, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/cbhtml/cbhome.html>.

³ "A Memorial from Representative Chinamen in America," in Esther E. Baldwin, *Must the Chinese Go? An Examination of the Chinese Question*, 3rd ed. (New York: H. B. Elkins, 1890; repr., San Francisco: R & E Research Associates, 1970), 38. Citations are to the reprint edition.

⁴ Samuel Gompers, "Meat vs. Rice: American Manhood against Asiatic Coolieism. Which Shall Survive?" (published as both an American Federation of Labor document and as Senate Document 137, 1902; repr. with introduction and appendices by the Asiatic Exclusion League, San Francisco, 1908).

⁵ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁶ In August 1850, John White Geary, mayor of San Francisco, and other community leaders gathered to publicly recognize and welcome the Chinese, and encourage further immigration from China. Newspapers praised Chinese comportment as "a pattern of sobriety, order and obedience to law." Chinese San Franciscans were also invited to take part in California statehood ceremonies later that same year. Helen Throop Purdy, "Portsmouth Square," *Quarterly of the California Historical Society* 3.1 (1924): 40-41.

⁷ Some of these are: the 1852 Foreign Miners' Tax, which was aimed directly at controlling the increasing numbers of Chinese in the gold mines (and which in fact generated at least half of all California state revenues from 1850 to 1870); an 1854 decision in the California Supreme Court which forbade Chinese testimony against whites; and an 1859 act withholding state funds from schools with Chinese students. Him Mark Lai and Philip Choy, *Outlines: History of the Chinese in America* (1972), 50 quoted in John Kuo Wei Tchen, *Gentle's Photographs of San Francisco's Old Chinatown* (New York: Dover, 1984), 5.

⁸ Mass meetings and fiery oratory fueled this anger, but it did have roots in fact. In general, Chinese laborers had a reputation of being more trustworthy and hardworking than other groups, and they were willing to work for wages far lower than what would be acceptable to white Americans. In one factory in 1876, "young Chinamen" were paid ninety cents per day, ten cents lower than the lowest rate for any class of white worker: "white child laborers" received a dollar a day. For this reason, Chinese were not only hired under regular conditions but were often shipped in to serve as strikebreakers. Victor G. and Brett de Bary Nee, *Longtime Californ' (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1972)*, 45.

⁹ J.A.G. Roberts's colorful history of Chinese food in the West makes the claim that "in the late nineteenth century the strength of anti-Chinese prejudice . . . made it unlikely that many Westerners would choose to eat Chinese food." J.A.G. Roberts, *China to Chinatown: Chinese Food in the West* (London: Reaktion Books, 2002),

144. Tonia Chao's dissertation on the changing architecture of San Francisco Chinatown restaurants and Chi Kien Lao's monograph on the Chinese restaurant industry in the United States also make the same assumption. Tonia Chao, "San Francisco Chinese Restaurants as Cultural Intersections, 1849-1984" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1985). Chi Kien Lao, "The Chinese Restaurant Industry in the United States: Its History, Development and Future" (master's monograph, Cornell University, 1975). One book that does acknowledge the complex relationship between white Americans and Chinese food is Donna R. Gabaccia's very well researched book on ethnic food in the United States, but her book's focus is much broader than my topic. Donna R. Gabaccia, *We Are What We Eat: Ethnic Food and the Making of Americans* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998). Bryan R. Johnson's short article on the history of Chinese restaurants in the United States and Renqiu Yu's article on chop suey also acknowledge that some whites ate Chinese food in the middle period I have called the "exoticism" period, but do not offer a reason for why they might have done so. Bryan R. Johnson, "Let's Eat Chinese Tonight," *American Heritage* 38.8 (1987). Renqiu Yu, "Chop Suey: From Chinese Food to Chinese American Food," *Chinese America: History and Perspectives* 1987.

¹⁰ Early Chinese immigrants called San Francisco "gold mountain" (*jin shan* in Mandarin, but *gum shan* in Cantonese, the language of the earliest immigrants) because of its associations both with the mineral gold and with success and prosperity in general. Today, Mandarin speakers still refer to the city as *jiu jin shan*, ǃ'q\ "old gold mountain," with the "old" added because of later gold mines found in Australia.

¹¹ Thomas W. Chinn, ed., *A History of the Chinese in California; a syllabus* (San Francisco: Chinese Historical Society of America, 1969), 61.

¹² Personal diary by George T. Bynner, *Across the continent: Winter of 1871-72*, 31. Bancroft Library, Berkeley, CA.

¹³ Hinton Rowan Helper, *The Land of Gold. Reality Versus Fiction* (Baltimore: H. Taylor, 1855), 91. In *California as I Saw It*, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/cbhtml/cbhome.html>.

¹⁴ Actual coolies, according to most definitions of the term, were the most degraded of laborers, working their lives away for others under slavlike conditions. William Heintz's introduction to Gladys C. Hansen, *The Chinese in California: A Brief Bibliographic History* (Portland, OR: Richard Abel & Co., 1970), 5.

¹⁵ Ivan Light, "From Vice District to Tourist Attraction," *Pacific Historical Review* XLIII (1974): 379.

¹⁶ White women, however, could (and did) walk through Chinatown without harassment. Many personal accounts document white women's visits to Chinatown during this time period, and the complete safety of such visits. For example, Theodora Burton describes frequent walks through Chinatown on her way to other parts of town, during which she was never in the least harassed. Max Abram, Theodora Burton, Dorothy Clarke, Dorothy Forde, Edward Frowenfeld and Hazel Hubbard, interview by Robert Vanderlip, 17 January and 16 May 1966, tape recording, Bancroft Library, Berkeley, CA.

¹⁷ This province includes the port of Canton, so both the people and their dialect are often referred to as Cantonese.

¹⁸ Especially where the southeastern regions are concerned, good fortune seems simply to have abandoned China during the mid-nineteenth century. From 1846

to 1850, a series of floods and droughts swept through China, devastating food supplies and encouraging banditry and popular discontent. In 1850, the Taiping rebels took over most of southeast China. From 1854 to about 1864, a group known as the Red Turbans instigated uprisings in Guangdong Province. From 1856 to about 1868, two ethnic groups (the Cantonese and the Hakkas) fought each other for territorial primacy. These desperate conditions, combined with heavy foreign advertising and seductive rumors, prompted many suffering Chinese to immigrate in search of a better life. Chinn, *History of the Chinese in CA*, 11-12.

¹⁹ Nee, *Longtime Californ*, 17.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Lao, "Chinese Restaurant Industry in the United States," 9.

²² As is now well known, laundries were often kept by Chinese, and thus provided another avenue through which early Californians were exposed to Chinese people and culture. Many scholars have written on this subject; for more information, the Chinese American Museum in Los Angeles (<http://www.camla.org/resource/biblio.htm>) recommends Paul Ong, "An Ethnic Trade: The Chinese Laundries in Early California," *Journal of Ethnic Studies* 8: 4 (1981).

²³ William Shaw describes a lodging house reeking of cigarette smoke and too many unwashed guests, the ceiling leaking rain, everyone sleeping on the floor side by side for want of enough bunks. "But though the sleeping accommodation—if such a term may be used—was wretched . . . there was no lack of places of refreshment." William Shaw, *Golden Dreams and Waking Realities; Being the Adventures of a Gold-Seeker in California and the Pacific Islands* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1851), 38-39, in *California as I Saw It: First-Person Narratives of California's Early Years, 1849-1900*, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/cbhtml/cbhome.html>.

²⁴ Ibid., 39.

²⁵ Kirk Munroe, *The Golden Days of '49* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1889), 71.

²⁶ J.F.F. Haine, "A Belgian in the Gold Rush," ed. Donald C. Biggs, *California Historical Society Quarterly* 37.4 (1958): 320.

²⁷ Hilde Lee, *Taste of the States: A Food History of America* (Charlottesville, VA: Howell Press, 1992), 257-58.

²⁸ J.H. Bates, *Notes of a Tour in Mexico and California* (New York: Burr, 1887), 123-24.

²⁹ Robert F.G. Spier, "Food Habits of Nineteenth-Century California Chinese," *California Historical Society Quarterly* XXXVII.1 (March 1958): 80.

³⁰ Johnson, "Let's Eat Chinese Tonight," 107.

³¹ James O'Meara, "Pioneer Sketches.—IV. To California by Sea," *Overland Monthly and Out West Magazine* (April 1884): 380.

³² James O'Meara, "The Chinese in Early Days," *Overland Monthly and Out West Magazine* (May 1884): 477, in *American Periodicals Series Online*, <http://aps.umi.com>.

³³ Chinn, *History of the Chinese in CA*, 62.

³⁴ Ibid., 478.

³⁵ Bayard Taylor, *Eldorado* (New York: Putnam, 1850), 117, in *California as I Saw It: First-Person Narratives of California's Early Years, 1849-1900*, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/cbhtml/cbhome.html>.

³⁶ William Kelly, *An excursion to California over the prairie, Rocky mountains, and great Sierra Nevada* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1851), 244, in *California as I Saw It: First-Person Narratives of California's Early Years, 1849-1900*, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/cbhtml/cbhome.html>.

³⁷ Munroe, *Golden Days of '49*, 71.

³⁸ Bynner (personal diary), 34.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ However, so far I have no records of any white employer(s) having made such a request. Bynner says "In almost every family and restaurant may be found a Chinese servant . . ." Bynner (personal diary), 36.

⁴¹ Walter M. Fisher, *The Californians* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1876), 51, in *California as I Saw It: First-Person Narratives of California's Early Years, 1849-1900*, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/cbhtml/cbhome.html>.

⁴² It would not be until 1909, after the great earthquake and rebuilding of Chinatown, that the Chinese began to take a more active role in fostering tourism. Light, "From Vice District to Tourist Attraction," 38.

⁴³ I have found some accounts of children visiting Chinatown, but these come from locals. I do not know if tourists brought their children.

⁴⁴ Captain William Glennon and his assistant William Lynch advertised "a long experience and thorough knowledge of Chinatown speaking the language of the quarter fluently and further they have an intimate acquaintance with all the leading Chinese of the city." *Seeing San Francisco aboard the Sight-seeing Car*. Unpaginated.

⁴⁵ *Vest Pocket Memoranda and Directory of San Francisco containing Important Information* (San Francisco: E.C. Hughes, 1895).

⁴⁶ Albert S. Evans, *À la California. Sketch of life in the Golden state*, (San Francisco: A. L. Bancroft and Co., 1873), 283-84, 287, in *California as I Saw It: First-Person Narratives of California's Early Years, 1849-1900*, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/cbhtml/cbhome.html>.

⁴⁷ Mary H. Wills, *A Winter in California* (Norristown, PA, 1889), 106-07, in *California as I Saw It: First-Person Narratives of California's Early Years, 1849-1900*, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/cbhtml/cbhome.html>.

⁴⁸ Clarence E. Edwards, *Bohemian San Francisco* (San Francisco: Paul Elder & Co., 1914), 33, 54.

⁴⁹ Light, "From Vice District to Tourist Attraction," 390.

⁵⁰ *Seeing San Francisco aboard the Sight-seeing Car*. Unpaginated.

⁵¹ *The City of San Francisco, prepared for the State Board of Trade* (San Francisco: Mysell-Rollins, 1900), 37.

⁵² As always, these numbers may not be in the least correct. *Seeing San Francisco aboard the Sight-Seeing Car*. Unpaginated.

⁵³ Mrs. J[acob] B[arzilla] Rideout, *Camping Out in California* (San Francisco: R. R. Patterson, 1889), 123, in *California as I Saw It: First-Person Narratives of California's Early Years, 1849-1900*, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/cbhtml/cbhome.html>.

⁵⁴ Harriet Harper, *Letters from California* (Portland, ME: B. Thurston and Co., 1888), 29, in *California as I Saw It: First-Person Narratives of California's Early Years, 1849-1900*, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/cbhtml/cbhome.html>.

⁵⁵ "Chinese food was mentioned as a curiosity but not yet recommended for consumption by tourists." B.E. (Benjamin E.) Lloyd, *Lights and Shades in San Francisco* (San Francisco: A.L. Bancroft, 1876), in Gabaccia, *We Are What We Eat*, 103.

⁵⁶ It is not clear exactly why this was, but very few tourist accounts mention that there were Chinese patrons eating at the restaurants while the tourists were there. One visitor does mention that his tour group saw a Chinese banquet in session, but notes that they could only watch from the balcony and were not taken in to eat in the same room. Edward S. Parkinson, *Wonderland; or, Twelve weeks in and out of the United States* (Trenton: MacCrellish and Quigley, 1894), 147, in *California as I Saw It: First-Person Narratives of California's Early Years, 1849-1900*, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/cbhome.html>. I suspect that tourist guides and the Chinese community were mutually careful about not going to restaurants at times when they knew the other would be there.

⁵⁷ For the tent "restaurant," see Haime, *Belgian in the Gold Rush*, 320. I describe here only the restaurants known to be patronized by white tourists, because I have as yet little evidence about the restaurants that served only Chinese or only laborers of any race.

⁵⁸ "eating-place" in "The Chinese in San Francisco," *Harper's Weekly* (20 Mar. 1880): 182; "sawdust and linen" in Chao, "Chinese Restaurants as Cultural Intersections," 58; "Chinese bachelors" in Gabaccia, *We Are What We Eat*, 103; "white or black laborers" in Johnson, "Let's Eat Chinese Tonight," 101.

⁵⁹ Gertrude Atherton, *My San Francisco* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1946), 53.

⁶⁰ Description taken from "A Chinese Reception," *Harper's Weekly* (9 Jun. 1877): 446; "Restaurant Life in San Francisco," *Overland Monthly and Out West Magazine* (Nov. 1868): 472, in *American Periodicals Series Online*, <http://aps.umi.com>; Atherton, *My San Francisco*, 53-54; Frank Norris, *Blix* (New York: Doubleday, 1899), 65-67; and photographs in the Bancroft Library.

⁶¹ "A Chinese Reception," 446.

⁶² Norris, *Blix*, 66.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 69-70; Edwards, *Bohemian San Francisco*, 54; J.H. Bates, *Notes of a Tour in Mexico and California*, 120.

⁶⁴ Norris, *Blix*, 86; Parkinson, *Wonderland*, 58; Mrs. Frank Leslie [Miriam Squier], *California: a pleasure trip from Gotham to the Golden Gate, April, May, June* [1877] (Nieuwkoop [Netherlands]: B. De Graaf, 1972), 108, in *California as I Saw It: First-Person Narratives of California's Early Years, 1849-1900*, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/cbhtml/cbhome.html>.

⁶⁵ Leslie, *California*, 107.

⁶⁶ Edwards, *Bohemian San Francisco*, 56.

⁶⁷ C. F. [Constance Frederica] Gordon Cumming, *Granite Crags* (Edinburgh: W. Blackwood and Sons, 1884), 191, in *California as I Saw It: First-Person Narratives of California's Early Years, 1849-1900*, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/cbhtml/cbhome.html>.

⁶⁸ "Restaurant Life in San Francisco," 472.

⁶⁹ Andrew Wilson, "Andrew Wilson's 'Jottings' on Civil War California," transcriber, John Haskell Kemble, *California Historical Society Quarterly* 32.4 (1953): 304.

⁷⁰ Edwards, *Bohemian San Francisco*, 56 and "Restaurant Life in San Francisco," 472. "Thousand-year-old eggs" are whole eggs, in the shell, preserved in a mud-and-lime mixture. Kenneth H.C. Lo, *Chinese Cooking on Next to Nothing* (New York: Pantheon, 1976), 18.

⁷¹ Louis J. Stellman, *Chinatown: A Pictorial Souvenir and Guide* (Written in 1917, previously unpublished), in Gary E. Strong, ed., *Chinatown Photographer Louis J. Stellman* (Sacramento: California State Library Foundation, 1989), 42.

⁷² "Chinese patronage" from Theresa A. Sparks, *China Gold* (Fresno: Academy Library Guild, 1954), 54. The following mention of chopsticks in "The Chinese in San Francisco," 182, is provocative: "The principal drawbacks to the enjoyment of a Chinese dinner are the inability of the Americans to use chopsticks, and the fact that many of the dishes taste of oil or rancid butter." At the present I do not know how many, if any, Chinese restaurants provided Western utensils.

⁷³ "Chinese Merchants Desire to Remain on the Old Site," *San Francisco Call* (11 May 1906): 1.

⁷⁴ "To Resist Moving of Chinatown," *San Francisco Call* (17 May 1906): 1.

⁷⁵ The debunking of an old myth, that the most repulsive of Chinatown's vices were carried out in a vast rabbitlike underground network of dens and tunnels, greatly contributed to the new tolerance for Chinatown. When the earthquake and fires destroyed the buildings of the quarter, exposing their foundations to public view, it became apparent that this nefarious "underground" had never in fact existed. Stellman, *Chinatown*, in Strong, ed., *Chinatown Photographer*, 31.

⁷⁶ Edwards, *Bohemian San Francisco*, 54-55 and *San Francisco, California* (San Francisco: Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition Committee, 1909), 55.

⁷⁷ Light, "From Vice District to Tourist Attraction," 38.

⁷⁸ *Collin's Guide of San Francisco* (San Francisco: Francis E. Collin, 1913), 85.

⁷⁹ Edwards, *Bohemian San Francisco*, 55.

⁸⁰ Supposedly the name itself means "different pieces"—"a little of this and that." The Mandarin pronunciation is *za sui* ㄗㄞˋ ㄙㄨㄟˋ. Yu, "Chop Suey," 89.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 94.

⁸² Frank Morton Todd, *The Story of the Exposition* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1921), vol. 4, 293.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 294-95.

⁸⁴ *Panama-Pacific International Exposition 1915 Souvenir Guide* (San Francisco: The Souvenir Guide Publishers, 1915), 7.

⁸⁵ *The Blue Book. A Comprehensive Official Souvenir View Book of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition at San Francisco 1915* (San Francisco: Robert A. Reid, 1915), 63.

⁸⁶ Article from the *Missouri Ruralist* (20 Nov. 1915) appears in condensed form in Laura Ingalls Wilder, *West from Home: Letters of Laura Ingalls Wilder to Almanzo Wilder, San Francisco 1915*, ed. Roger Lea MacBride (New York: Harper & Row, 1974).

⁸⁷ Todd, *Story of the Exposition*, Vol. 4, 293-94, 304.

⁸⁸ Frank Morton Todd, *The Story of the Exposition* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1921), vol. 2, 379.

⁸⁹ This was actually a historically significant exhibit, as it was the "first official revelation of modern China to the modern world," following the 1911 revolution which overthrew the last Qing emperor. (The Qing was the last of China's

dynasties.) Frank Morton Todd, *The Story of the Exposition* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1921), vol. 3, 287.

⁹⁰ Todd, *Story of the Exposition*, vol. 2, 380.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 358.

⁹² *The Blue Book*, 321.

⁹³ Todd, *Story of the Exposition*, vol. 2, 372.

⁹⁴ Elizabeth Rosenthal, "The SARS Epidemic: The Path; From China's Provinces, a Crafty Germ Breaks Out." *New York Times* (27 April 2003).