

CITY SCENE

PEKING PIC



China's Honor Guard stand tall during the Lantern Festival. Photo by Matus Serdula

Got a Peking Pic? Send it to win@thebeijinger.com for a chance to win an RMB 300 voucher for Flamme.

GENERATION GAP



This month's cover was created by the artist of art directors, Susu Luo.

EDITOR'S LETTER

The weirdest thing I ate in the last month was a whole apple, horizontally sliced. Any man is free to slice an apple as he sees fit, but I was one of 700 people being served the dish at the same time. Needless to say, the apple was browner than a freshly holidayed George Hamilton. No one really questioned it.

We don't because here in Beijing we're too busy getting sucked into the latest fad. Every restaurant in town seems to want to outdo each other at the same dish. This month, it's black cod – and who's a sucker now? After trying Nobu's work-of-art (Japan's finest export since Super Mario), I have no choice now but to go and see how those at Nadaman, Compass Grill and SG Song compare (see p38-40). And before black cod, the flavor of the month was suckling pig, cupcakes, tapas, gourmet burgers, gourmet hot dogs, "English-style" afternoon tea and "sliders." I know we magazines are partly to blame in this rash of faddishness but it doesn't stop me hating them. Especially sliders. Just make a full-size burger. (What's that, little kid? You can't fit your mouth around a Whopper? You shouldn't be eating burgers anyway. Eat some peas.)

Even Burger King tried to sell sliders (in 1987) and binned them after just a few months. But Burger Bundles, as the King called them, were not the worst of the fast-food disasters. That would

be the Hula Burger. McDonald's founder Ray Kroc wanted to keep profits up during Lent (apparently abstinence meant something as recently as 1962). He came up with a sandwich that involved the bun of a burger, the cheese of a burger and in place of the beef, a pineapple ring ... like some sick joke by the fruitarian fringe. Kroc's unholy union was not taken up by his practicing customers. (He already had what they wanted: the bizarrely successful Filet-O-Fish.) Thankfully there are no fast-food Frankensteins experimenting on the local palate these days ... apart from, well, all of them.

The other thing about food is that we're eating it all, and we don't seem to care. Fish stocks are dwindling, meat takes up too much arable land to raise and biofuels are competing with food crops. If you want to eat with a clear conscience, turn to "invasiovorism" – the practice of eating the invasive species that are ruining the local food chain. In Florida that's lionfish, in Britain it's grey squirrels and in China – well, it's certainly not Yunnan golden monkeys (see p12). The best I could come up with? Expats who write books on their China experience.*

Jonathan White
Managing Editor

*See p63.

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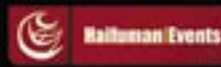
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READER LETTERS

Got an opinion? We'd sure like to hear it. E-mail us at editor@thebeijinger.com. Published letters will get you a free large pizza, salad or pasta, and bottle of New Zealand wine from the lovely fellas at Gung Ho! Pizza.

Dear Editor,

Page 22's station translation of this March does make me burst to tears, 泪流满面啊! tears trickling full-faced! haha! :) East pole~West pole, geil!

— Jackie

We say: Gosh. Have a tissue.

Dear the Beijinger,

On page 16 of this month's *the Beijinger* it says that you can win prizes from Gung Ho! I love Gung Ho! Pizza, so I've been looking to find the question.

I haven't been able to find it. Have I been looking with my nose (Dutch expression), or is it simply not there?

— Kim van Rijssen

We say: Looking with your nose should please your stomach — you've managed to inadvertently win the prize.

Dear the Beijinger,

As a native of Beijing who moved abroad at a young age, I've now become an expat in Beijing. I've always been wary of being regarded to as a "laowai" in what I consider my home, but *the Beijinger* has demonstrated



to me that the expat community is just as knowledgeable about and active within the Beijing community at large. Through my daily dose of *the Beijinger's* expat-centric witty and informative articles — be it food, culture, or the recent infographics, I have begun to see Beijing through the lens of my diasporic upbringing and now expatriate early-adulthood. (49???)

— 望舒VIII

We say: Glad you liked it. We certainly aim to delight our readers.

If you disagree with anything that your fellow readers voted for in the Reader Restaurant Awards, then feel free to send us your rant. E-mail editor@thebeijinger.com with your feedback.

GOING UNDERGROUND



HUJIALOU, LINE 10

SELLING POINT

It's close to everything — a mere stroll away from Guomao, the Kerry Centre, the CCTV Headquarters and Tuanjiehu Park.

EAT

The southwest exit deposits you at the mouth of Guandongdian Beijie, a peaceful narrow street. Kitchen Igosso and Geba Geba, located in an inconspicuous brick house on that street, serve gourmet Italian and Japanese delicacies, respectively. If your wallet allows, head over to Suzuki, a high-end Japanese restaurant hidden in an office building on the north side of Chaoyang Beilu.

GAWK

If you happen to emerge from the

southeast exit, you'll see an old-fashioned building perennially packed with tourist buses. That would be Chaoyang Theater, a *laozihao* of Chinese acrobatics. Go watch the bendy young children spin plates, jump through hoops and do startling things with bicycles.

CONTEMPLATE

To the southwest of the subway station is Jing Guang Center. It's now only the sixth-tallest building in town, but for 17 glorious years (1990-2006) it held the title as Beijing's loftiest structure — and the views from the panoramic windows are still fantastic. (If you're the competitive type, you can peer down at Jing Guang from China World Summit Wing Hotel, just a stone's throw away.)

BEIJING FOLK



DIANPING DIAMOND

by Emily Young

Dianping.com is China's biggest forum for user-generated restaurant reviews. Sun Yuan is one of their "diamond-level users." That means she's written nearly a thousand restaurant reviews — in just over six years. Sun is also a doctoral candidate at the Chinese Academy of Sciences, studying integrated

computer technology. We caught up with the busy Beijinger recently to ask her about food and robots.

What's your research topic?

Robotic eyes and machine learning (i.e. artificial intelligence).

Which Beijing restaurant would be most suitable for robots?

Subway! Although we would need to change the menu to include various kinds of battery bread, engine oil sauce plus some screws or nail cookies.

How does a Ph.D. student find time to eat?

One wonderful meal makes a lasting energetic study.

If you were going to write your dissertation on Dianping, what would the title be?

"Searching vs. Browsing vs. Sharing: 'Dianping' From a Meal to the Whole Life."

What do you like best about Beijing?

The Beijing personality. As the saying goes: "Beijing gals are naïve, chatty and kindhearted." (北京大姐，人傻，话多，心眼好)

Which Chinese restaurant in Beijing would you recommend to impress visitors?

Only one? Maybe Man Fu Lou (满福楼), which serves lamb hot pot in an authentic and elegant way. The lively atmosphere and the service

will delight your guests.

If Dianping disappeared, what would you do with your spare time?

Build another Dianping? I guess I'd need time to get used to being without this space and to become comfortable with another.

Is there anything that you would not eat?

As long as I can confirm that it's food, even if it's unhealthy, I will try it at least once.

Will artificial intelligence ever evolve to the point that human restaurant reviewers would be rendered obsolete?

What happens in a restaurant is not just eating ... it's the beginning of feelings and thoughts on our lives, love and society. Reviewers become popular on Dianping not simply because they provide useful information, but also for their humor and their amazing imagination. Artificial intelligence could bring precision to judging restaurants, but it could never create fun.

TALK ABOUT TOWN

EAT ME

IF YOU WERE FOOD, WHAT WOULD YOU BE AND WHY?

The healthy eating lobby are fond of whispering "You are what you eat" accusingly into our ears. If they applied that mantra to themselves, they'd be a boring, skinny old stick of celery. But if you could determine your own foodstuff alter-ego, what would you be? We sent **Michael Connors** to the streets to ask you.



"Chips and curry sauce – a mix of Indian and British culture."
Selina, 25, UK



"Apple. Hard outside, sweet inside."
Catherine, 35, New Zealand



"Good meal from meat. Lots of meat, some cheese maybe."
Ilhom, 33, Uzbekistan



"An apricot – I'm a redhead and I'm summery."
Hadar, 32, Israel



"Steak, entrecot with lots of fat."
Yoni, 30, Israel



"Shark. I'm a swimmer."
Falko, 22, Germany



"Banana. Everyone loves bananas."
Vanessa, 26, Peru

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The only stumbling block for creators of *objets de poulet* is what part of the bird to immortalize. Chicken heads are for chickenheads,

wings are too flabby and Fabergé has got eggs on lock. The right choice is the drumstick. It ain't white meat and as sure as eggs is eggs, it's the best part of a chicken. (As long as it's not from a Chinese KFC.) Make it in jade. Make sure the jade is yellow. Make suckers green.



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