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2014/01

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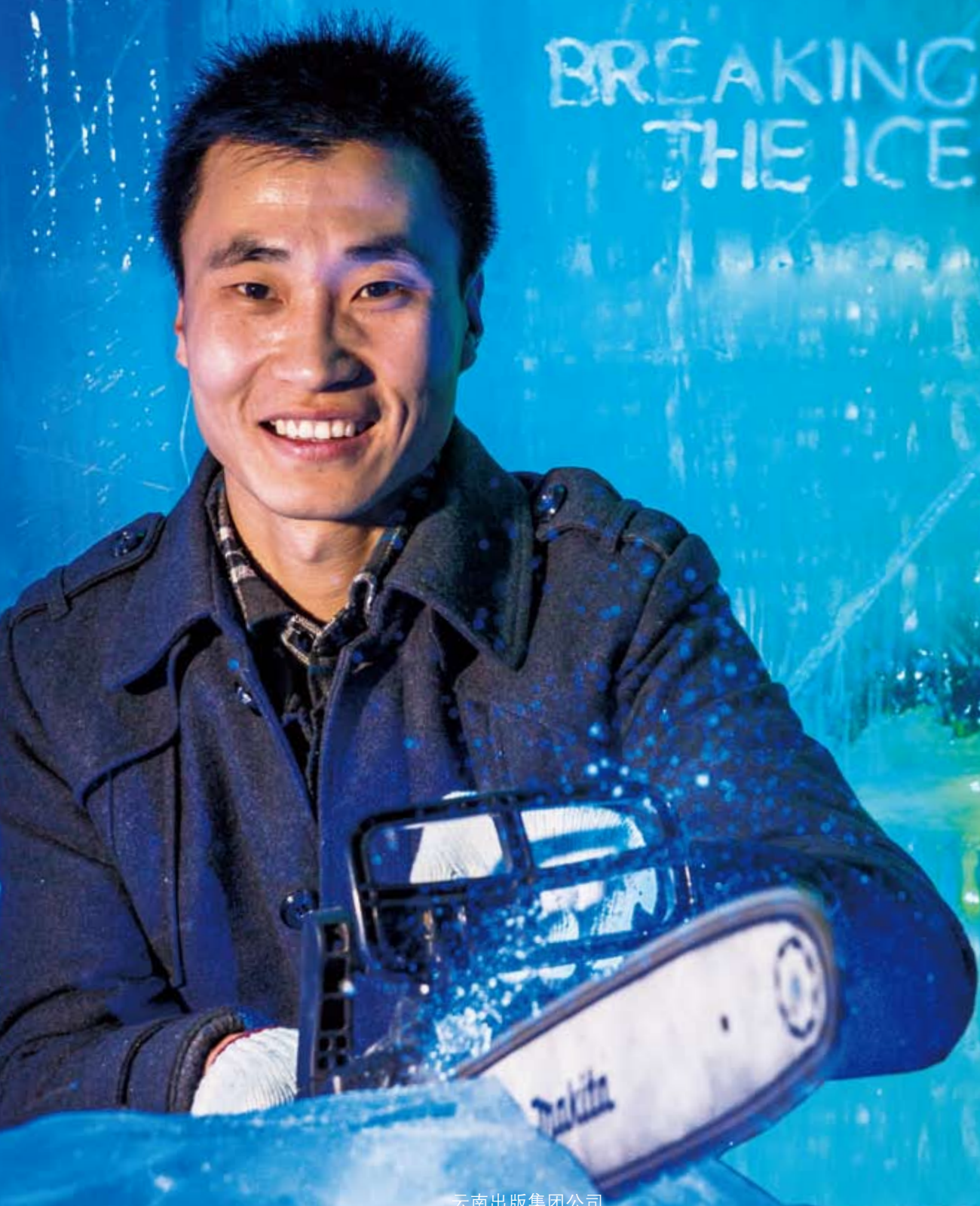


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ICE - WINTER ACTIVITIES

BREAKING
THE ICE



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CITY SCENE

What's Happening: The most important dates this month
Stat: Ancient ice roads
Going Underground: Fuchengmen, Line 2
Scene & Heard: Go on, take a look at yourselves, you beautiful people

06

COVER FEATURE

For this month's cover feature, we went for cool. Explore different ways to have fun with ice and not just the kind that comes in your drink.

12

FOOD & DRINK

What's New: Xalapa, Mulu, One Cup, Brick and Wood, Caribeno, Macaron and Eclairs, Vivid, LIV, 8-Bit
Dining Feature: Being Vegan in Beijing
Just Desserts: Black Swan Luxury
Last Orders: Josh Durham, Paper Pounder Press
Back For More: Vasco's, Hilton Beijing Wangfujing
Alleyway Gourmet: Xinjiang Fanzhuang
Wikipedia: S is for ... *si, suzha, suantai, shaokao*
Taste Test: Oreos
Drinks Feature: Learning under the influence
Cocktail Profiler: Alice of Union Bar & Grille
Made in China: Pairing wines with donkey burgers
Dining Q&A: Samuel Zucca, Regent Beijing
... plus what we've loved eating this month

20

GO

Inspect a Gadget: Winter widgets
What's New Venues: Knewzaba, Q Apartment, Marimekko
Feature: How to use the Bomoda style app
Get Out: Hokkaido
Get the Look: Learn from this month's most style savvy
Feature: Dinner and a movie with a cultural twist

52

MEET

Feature interview: Unknown Mortal Orchestra
Playlist: Richard Barnes
Screentime: Noah Weinzwieg
Bookshelf: Colin Dixon

65

ECOLOGY

Feature: Cruelty in Beijing's animal performances

70

EVENTS

What you shouldn't miss this month

73

PEKING MAN

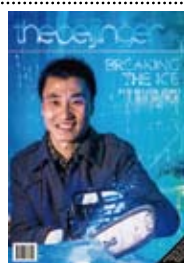
George reviews a new dating manual

80

NEXT MONTH: DANCE BEIJING

FEBRUARY EVENTS DEADLINE: JANUARY 13

This month's cover image features Zhang Xueguo and his handiwork. It was shot by Mitchell Pe Masilun.



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WHAT'S HAPPENING

17 Armed with more infuriatingly catchy ear worms than is fair, US sample master Akon returns to Beijing as part of another world tour this month.

18-19 See the cream of the CBA crop as the All-Star Weekend kicks off in the capital. A carnival of the usual dunk contests and skill challenges precedes the much-anticipated North vs. South match-up.



11 Super troupers and dancing queens can dust off those platforms, dig out their flares and get in the boogie mood as the Poly Theatre presents a production of dazzling dance and sing-alongs courtesy of Sweden's finest.

4 He gets a lot of stick does old James Blunt, but you can't deny that he's up there with the best in terms of sappy balladry that makes the ladies weak at the knees. Try to stay upright when he rolls into Wudaokou this month.

2 Aussie troubadour Jeff Lang is back with his electrifying live show in January. If you missed him at last year's JUE Festival, don't miss out on the chance to experience him in the flesh again.

17 Coloradan thrash quartet Havok rain down on Yugong Yishan this month allied with a phalanx of local metal bandits as they look to bash Beijing.

25 The annual celebration of poetry, whiskey and an onion/oats/innards combo, Burns' Night hijinx return to serve the city's Caledonian contingent.

16 Unknown Mortal Orchestra sound more dangerous than they are – despite a penchant for heavy machinery. The psychedelic rock Portland trio will be getting familiar at MAO this month and introducing their slumbering sound to a wider Asian audience as their star continues to rise in the West.

19 Sarah Brightman, the world's best-selling multilingual soprano, enjoys huge adulation in China, perhaps that's why she keeps coming back so regularly. Given that she's planning a trip into space in the near future, this might be your last chance to see her for a while.

23-25 Get some culture into you with Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at NCPA this month performed by England's Northern Ballet. The Olivier Award nominated dance production has toured extensively.

For more events, see p73.

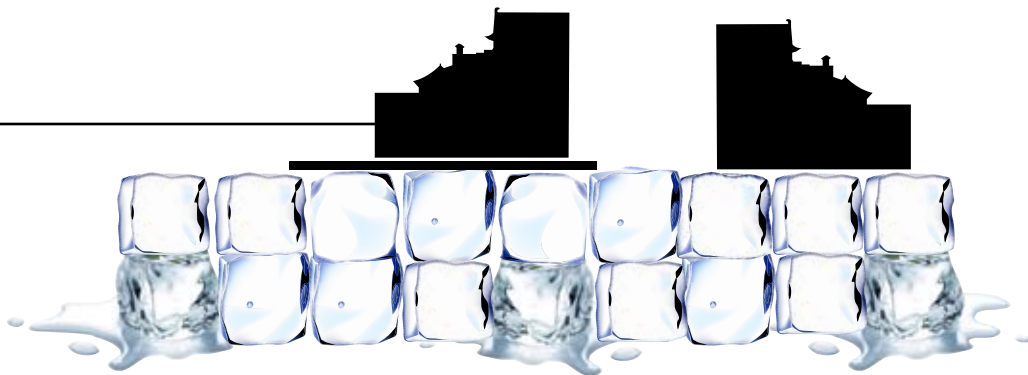
Visit www.thebeijinger.com for even more events and details.

Start as you mean to go on

CITY SCENE

FUCHENGMEN // NEWSBITES // SCENE & HEARD // JOKES

Ancient Ice Roads



- Historians believe a **70**km-long road of ice was used to haul stone for the construction of the Forbidden City.
- **16**th-century wagons couldn't move stones heavier than **96** tons.
- January temperatures of **-3.7**°C created ice strong enough to bear the weight of heavier stones.
- In 1557, a **123**-ton stone was transported over **28** days to the Forbidden City from a quarry by ice sledge, according to a 500-year-old record.
- At least **46** men pulled the stones and kept the ice roads slick with water from wells every half-mile.

Source: *Nationalgeographic.com*

LETTER FROM AN EDITOR

Let's face it: if you don't like Beijing's winter, you're probably not really a Beijinger at heart. The city's entire orientation is directed away from the north, the direction that most often brings frigid winds, and in the past, marauding barbarians. The cold has shaped Beijing's architecture and of course its people. Like the freezing night that gives way to the warmth of a fire inside, Beijingers don't always make a charming first impression, but deep down, they are generally warm-hearted.

As I write this in late December, snow is predicted to fall on the capital for the first time this season. While Beijing doesn't always get heavy snow each year, one thing that will follow the cold winds from Mongolia and Siberia is ice.

This issue is all about ice: how to have fun on it, where to find it, and how to make it into things, like our magazine cover. Ice keeps our drinks frosty, gives us a different look at favorite city spots like the Summer Palace (in winter!) and Beihai Park, and gives us a good reason to get outside when otherwise we might just stay in and watch a movie.

Elsewhere in this issue, start the new year off by visiting

some of the new venues we present, like 8-Bit, the shrine to computer games gone by. There's a guide to pairing movie theaters and restaurants to suit your cinematic tastes, and Jim Boyce on why pairing wine with Chinese food just isn't so important.

In Meet, say hello to film guy Noah Weinzwieg, Gaelic sportsman Colin Dixon, and get to know the Unknown Mortal Orchestra, ahead of their Beijing gig. For a real taste of winter, our Get Out travel column features Hokkaido, Asia's ultimate winter wonderland.

Our Peking Man, George Ding, wraps up the issue and kicks the new year off with an excerpt from a new work of fiction, "Like White on Rice."

Happy New Year! We look forward to bringing you even more about the great people and city of Beijing throughout 2014.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Schwankert".

Steven Schwankert
Managing Editor

GENERATION GAP



TELL US A JOKE



DAVID VAUGHAN DJ Vincent Suede

Q: What do you get from sitting on ice too long?

A: Polaroids

See Vincent Suede tickling the wax at Dada on Jan 24.

Winter Afternoon Promotion

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Expats behaving badly was once again the talk of the town last month. This time, the offending party was a **European man who hit a middle-aged Chinese woman at a crosswalk** while riding an unregistered scooter. Initially it was presumed the pedestrian was a scammer looking to make a fast buck feigning an injury. But it soon emerged that it was the *laowai* at fault. A police investigation revealed that in addition to injuring the pedestrian on an unregistered bike against traffic, the man was also working here illegally and was detained, fined and subsequently deported along with his father, who was also working here illegally.

The chaos wasn't just confined to the roadways, however, as one creep demonstrated in the subway when he took perving to a new low by **hiding under seats to touch the calves of female passengers**. Fellow passengers managed to film the "leg man" in the act. He was later apprehended

by police after a tip-off to 110.

Speaking of subways, **Beijing's unusually low RMB 2 flat fare** may soon go the way of RMB 10 cab rides. City officials are mulling over revising subway fee collection to a distance-based system similar to the ones used in Shanghai and Hong Kong, which would mark the first time the subway fare has changed since 2007, when it was reduced back down to RMB 2 from RMB 3. No details had been released at the time we went to press but our money is on a change to be affected at some point in early 2014.

Transportation wasn't the only sector subject to official crackdowns recently – the Beijing Municipal Commerce Authority announced a **new set of rules aimed at preventing restaurants from "bullying" their customers**. Under the new regulations, dining establishments can no longer prohibit customers from bringing in outside beverages; charge extra for "sterilized" tableware; or charge customers in full for banquets that are cancelled within 15 days of their occurrence. At the

time of press restaurants were expected to comply within a month but there were no further details released about how these rules are to be enforced.

The Culture Yard held the **first Beijing screening of *This is Sanlitun*** last month on the heels of the film's debut at the Toronto Film Festival this past autumn. Directed by Icelander Róbert Ingi Douglas, the comedy stars Carlos Ottery and Beijing scene queen Ai Wan (who has hosted our Reader Restaurant Awards on numerous occasions) and is based on Douglas's experiences living in Beijing and hanging around in expat haunts like The Den.

Folk rock five-piece **The Lumineers are set to perform in Beijing** on February 11 as part of this year's JUE Festival warm-up. They of "Ho Hey" fame released their hugely popular eponymous album back in 2012 and were nominated for Grammy and Billboard Chart awards over the last 12 months. Not bad at all for a poor man's Mumford & Sons.

Split Works have released the initial line-up for JUE Festival 2014. One name that stood out was And So I Watch You From Afar, and not just because it's long and creepy. The Northern Irish post-rock foursome were standout when they toured China last year and treated a shell-shocked MAO Livehouse to a memorable rock assault. Dates are unconfirmed as yet, but check *the Beijinger* website for updates.



THE LUMINEERS: FINGER PICKIN' GOOD

FUCHENGMEN, LINE 2

Selling Point

Set squarely around an old-school, Line 2 subway station, the area around Fuchengmen mixes some of the best of old Beijing (museums, temples) with some of the best of the contemporary capital (Financial Street, brunch). See the past and the future all in one easy walk.

See

Northeast of the Fuchengmen station is the former Beijing residence of China's most famous writer of the first half of the 20th century, Lu Xun (nee Zhou Shuren) (19 Gongmen Ertiao). Lu wasn't a Beijinger – he was born in Shaoxing in Zhejiang province – and was more closely associated with Shanghai. However, he did spend a number of years in Beijing beginning from 1911, and wrote his best known story, *The True Story of Ah Q*, while resident here. The museum is a slightly sterile presentation of Lu's life, but worth visiting for anyone with an interest in his work or China's recent literary history.

Deeper in the reaches of history is Baita Si (White Tower Temple, 171 Fuchengmennei Dajie), the oldest presence of Tibetan Buddhism in Beijing, dating back 800 years to the Mongol-controlled Yuan dynasty. The iconic structure was designed by a Nepalese architect, and legend has it that Kublai Khan had arrows shot in the four cardinal directions to determine its bounds. Today, it houses a collection of Tibetan Buddhist sculptures and other artwork.

Nearby, a place of imperial sacrifices that was built on the site of a former Buddhist temple, Lidai Diwang Temple (131 Fuchengmennei Dajie) was an imperial temple during the Ming and Qing dynasties. Here you can find memorial tablets left by 188 emperors and rulers from different nationalities as well as 80 memorial tablets dedicated by ministers and generals.

Yuetan Park (6 Yuetan Beijie), the Temple of the Moon, was built in 1530, for burning celestial offerings, the western complement to the other three celestial temples: Earth, Heaven, and Sun.

For people who watch *Wall Street* and *Boiler Room* on endless repeat, the area is also home to the northern half of Financial Street. While there isn't so much to see aside from corporate office buildings, it does make for some delightful dining options in the area, both traditional and more contemporary.

Eat

Make a Sunday out of it with a bit of sightseeing and then a Sunday brunch at Senses at the Westin Beijing Financial Street (G/F, 9B Jinrong Jie). Take an after-brunch stroll to help the seafood and champagne go down.

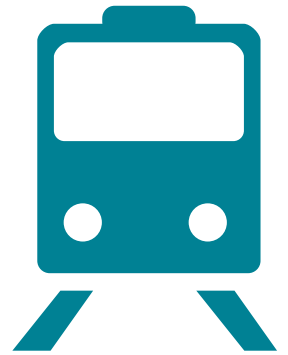
Similarly satisfying but perhaps somewhat lighter is Zen at the InterContinental Hotel Beijing Financial Street (11 Jinrong Jie). Signature Cantonese dishes paired with an impressive selection of fine wines and natural Chinese teas. Dishes are created using the freshest ingredients available, a nice choice either during the week or on a weekend.

The Russian-themed Little Birch Restaurant (1/F, Jingbin Hotel, 24 Fuchengmenwai Dajie) offers good central Asian cuisine without the Yabao Lu glitz. This place has a clean, diner feel and is ideal for a quiet dinner with your comrades, or dining alone with your own Anna Karenina (or Dr. Zhivago). Be forewarned, the food is mostly Asian, with a few Russian items (such as pickles) and beers thrown in.

Shop

Along with sightseeing and eating, there is ample shopping available in Fuchengmen. There's Tianyi Market (259 Fuchengmenwai Dajie). Considered the biggest flea market in Beijing, the place is a bit confusing for first timers. The buildings are painted in brash colors, Christmas decorations are sold year-round. Tianyi Market is huge; there's a party supplies area, art supplies area, shoe area, watch area, scarf area, and so on. It's one of the must-go places for shopping during the holiday season.

When you're finished with Tianyi, cross Fuchengmenwai Dajie and backtrack towards Fuchengmen subway. Do some last-minute shopping in at Wangtong Market (2 Fuchengmenwai Dajie), which is less overwhelming, much smaller in size, and better-organized than Tianyi Market. The first four floors sell similar products that you have to bargain for. If you are tired of haggling, the fifth floor sells sports brands at deep discounts. One highlight is the Nike factory store, which has sales of up to 70 percent off.

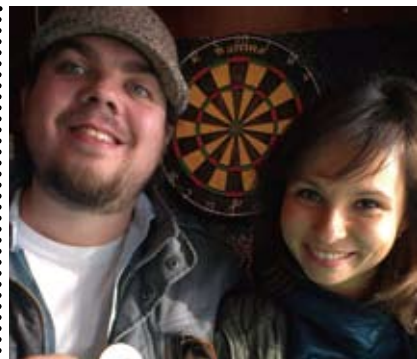


SCENE & HEARD



Swing Dance and Hot Club of Beijing
Modernista, Dec 11. Photo by Laurent Hou

Jing Jam Musicians and Dancers Summit
Café CD Blues, Nov 23. Photo by Laurent Hou



Maovember
Nov 30. Photo courtesy of Jim Boyce



The Loop
d lounge, Dec 6. Photo by Kristina Parchomchuk

Cu Ju Charity Event
Cu Ju, Nov 23. Photos by Ella Chen



Home Plate Bar-B-Que Opening Party
Home Plate Bar-B-Que, Sanlitun, Nov 21. Photos by Frank Yu



Wizard of Oz
BSB Shunyi, Dec 6.
Photos courtesy of Beijing Playhouse



TH4tet
Modernista, Nov 22.
Photo by Laurent Hou



Thibault Cauvin
UCCA, Dec 8. Photo by
Laurent Hou

**"Foreigners and Chinese" Social
Networking Event**
Suzie Wong's, Dec 3. Photo courtesy of FCGroup



SantaCon
Dec 14. Photo by Mike Dwyer



Steve Aoki
Elements, Dec 4. Photos by Jack Soltysik



Centro's Tenth Anniversary
Centro, Nov 22. Photos courtesy of
Centro



Power Fitness for the Philippines
The Haworth Club, Nov 26. Photos by
Frank Yu



Pet Conspiracy
Yugong Yishan,
Dec 13. Pho-
tos by Kristina
Parchomchuk

WINTER WONDER

MAKING THE MOST OF FROZEN BEIJING



Beijing gets cold during winter. There, we've said it. No need to go on about it - most places do. No need to grumble about it either. It's part of the capital's charm. The city is at its prettiest with a powdery dry dusting against a glorious blue sky, and after all, ice helped shape the city's most iconic sight, the Forbidden City.

Now, it's a huge source of winter recreation. Nowhere is Beijing's enjoyment of the ice more apparent than at Houhai. The epicentre of frozen activity in the city, it's where the old boys gather for their morning polar swim; where others spend a crisp afternoon trying to

catch their dinner; where youngsters brush up on their skating, or increasingly, their curling skills; and where mums and dads take their little ones for an icy slide.

For this month's cover feature, we looked at how others enjoy Beijing's icy season. From a vibrant expat community of ice hockey enthusiasts, to young and old alike who enjoy a skate, and the brilliant artist who helped us realize this month's front cover, we found that Beijing is a city where people value the ice, and look forward to its annual visit. So strap on your skates, get over yourself, and enjoy this period.



GAME ON

A COMPANY OF COLD ENTHUSIASTS

by Peter Koveos

inevitably, the Beijing winter throws up two options. You can either work on your drinking arm - an option preferred by the majority of the city's expat community throughout the sub-zero period, or you can pull on your long johns, dig out your woolen socks and tackle the cold head on. For those not cowed by her coldest months, Beijing offers plenty of opportunity to stay active through the hibernation season. The Beijing International Ice Hockey League circuit is not only for toothless



**“WE ALL SHARE THE PASSION
OF PLAYING IN
AND BEING PART OF THE LEAGUE”**

Canadians who've taken one too many pucks to the head, but stereotypes are somewhat justified; Canucks make up about 40 per cent of the league (and there are plenty of missing teeth). Comprised of around 110 players, a dozen nationalities are represented, mostly from the northern European regions, along with an Irishman and a Greek.

Between September and April, each Sunday you can join people kicking ice and taking names. This ritual has been going on since the mid-1990s when the circuit was first conceived.

The biggest promoter of the league is Curtis Dracz, who comes from the hockey-crazed nation of Canada. Shortly after arriving in the Chinese capital he found himself heavily immersed in the organization.



PHOTOS: KEN

"As soon as I arrived in Beijing, I wanted to get involved, so I started coordinating the summer ball hockey," says Dracz, who now runs the league. "As months and years passed, I progressed through the league – running tournaments, managing a traveling team, then captaining a team and finally becoming commissioner."

As with most Canadians, he was playing before he knew how to read and is now trying to promote the sport in Beijing.

"We all share the passion of playing ice hockey and take an immense amount of pride in being part of not only a hockey league, but a way of life. The goal of the league has never been forgotten: to create an experience for our players, on and off the ice," says Dracz.

The experience for some lasts longer than others. About 40 new faces lace up their skates each season to replace players who leave the capital.

For those who don't have the time to commit to a game of shinny every weekend during the winter

months, the league runs other events throughout the year.

"Hockey Night in Beijing' and the 'Houhai Pond Hockey Tournament' were each created to celebrate this community. These events showcase hockey in its purest form and allow people to experience the true lifestyle around the game," says Dracz.

At last year's "Hockey Night in Beijing" a team of Canadians played against a group of Finns, with the boys of the Maple Leaf emerging victorious. But the game itself was just a small part of the festivities, which included a party and performances by students from the Canadian International School. Most impor-



tantly, they were able to raise money for an orphanage in Tianjin.

Curtis has also helped launch a curriculum that teaches beginners the finer points of the game.

"The 'Learn to Play' program started out as a way to provide lessons to the children of our league members," says Dracz. "Now we have developed a brand, Centre Ice Hockey, partnered with a local club and have brought in high-level coaches."

But arguably the most important part of hockey, or even learning to play the game, is what you do after you leave the ice. And what Curtis considers to be the most important part of hockey culture finds an able home in Beijing: Dracz is one of the masterminds behind the opening of the Hockey Bar next to The Irish Volunteer in the Lido area. And he's a firm believer that after a hard day at the rink, there is no better way to unwind than with a drink.

For more information on the BIIHL contact cdracz@gmail.com.

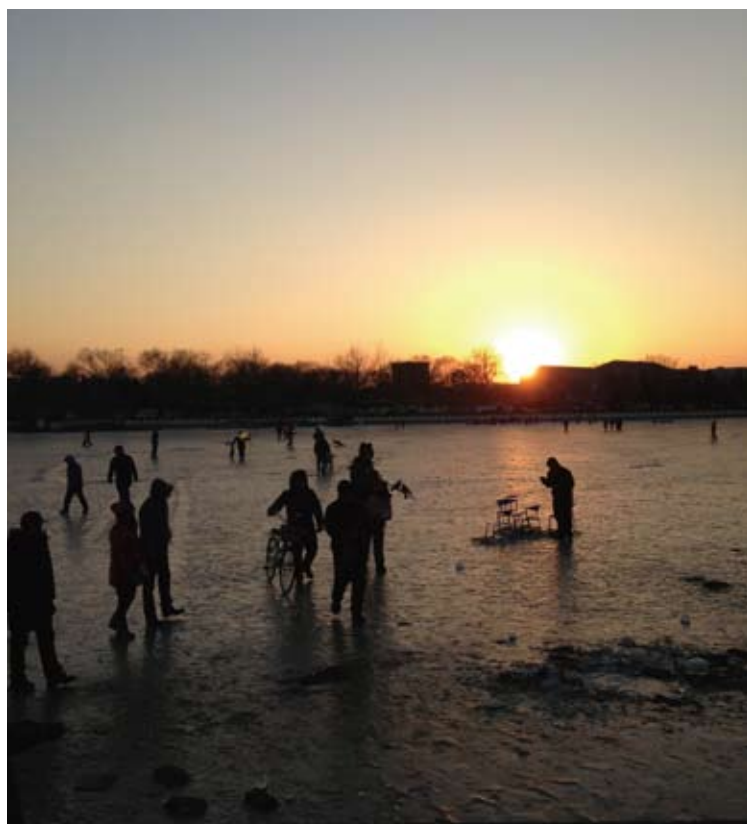
SLIPPING ON ICE

TAKING TO THE FREEZE, INSIDE AND OUT

by Sarah Ting-Ting Hou

As the winter approaches maximum chill, ice skating returns as a favorite winter pastime and Beijing has plenty of indoor and outdoor rinks to glide on.

Weather permitting, for a fun physical outing with friends, try one of the city's many lakes. Be sure to follow directions regarding which areas are frozen solid, usually indicated by poles or flags. Shichahai skating rink is one of Beijing's more popular outdoor skating areas, located on Houhai



Lake. Prices of admission range from RMB 5 on weekdays to RMB 10 on weekends and another RMB 10-15 for skate rental depending on duration of use.

Another favorite outdoor rink is at Beihai Park, which offers the same style of old-school skating but is much less crowded than Houhai Lake. Be careful, though: these outdoor lakes are rigid and bumpy and the rental skates are not the best for those who are more advanced skaters looking to show off their skills. The views of the traditional white pagoda and the park's fantastic scenery make this outdoor rink ideal for skating with a big group. For those who aren't keen on skates, ice bikes are a good substitute rental. These three-pronged cycles allow for two or three people and make for improvised



PHOTOS: KEN, NICK RICHARDS

sleighs and a good game of ice bike bumper cars.

Skating seems to be gaining in popularity because there are new rinks opening up all the time. For those looking to improve technique or more serious skaters, lessons are now available at Dulwich College's indoor skating rink at their Legend Garden campus. Coach Camilla Ojansvu held a winter camp at the end of December providing figure skating lessons, hockey lessons, synchronized team skating, and kids group classes. For now, Dulwich's rink is only open to those signed up for classes but information can be found on Dulwich College's community site. Private lessons for serious figure skaters are RMB 300 per hour. Camilla also revealed that they are looking to add public sessions after the Christmas holidays so the rink can be open to the community.

Ojansvu, who also teaches at the All-Star Ice Rink in Solana, suggested that venue as a good spot for skating. The indoor rink is one of the most roomy and professional in the



city. And although Camilla is currently the only English-language instructor there, the Chinese instructors have excellent reputations for being highly professional, with many coaches from the Chinese national skating team. The skate rentals had the best upkeep compared to other rinks. All-Star Ice Rink is open weekdays (except Fridays) from 10am-6pm for RMB 30; 6-10pm, for RMB 40; Fridays, weekends and holidays for RMB 50 (90 minutes). For more information contact camilla.ojansivu@dulwich-beijing.cn.

In Haidian is the Century Star Club at the Capital Indoor Stadium. It offers ice skating lessons in a slightly smaller than regulation-size rink. Private lessons are priced at RMB 300 (90 minutes), with group lessons starting at RMB 75 (90 minutes). Hours vary, so call for opening times, 6834 6346, or visit www.centurystar.com.cn.

CHIPPING AWAY

HOW WE MADE THIS ISSUE'S COVER

For this month's cover shoot, we considered a number of ideas. Ice isn't plentiful in Beijing in December, when we shot it, so the skating couple on the Summer Palace's Kunming Lake was out. Masked hockey goalie? Frozen Houhai at dusk?

Then we hit upon the idea of an ice cover. A cover made from ice. Now that's cool.

So we opened up our golden rolodex to the page with "ice sculptors" on it and called Zhang Xueguo. He asked us to meet him at his workshop, which we of course expected would be an airplane hangar-sized frozen world, complete with an encased woolly mammoth in the corner. His workspace turned out to be a very cold shed in Fengtai District, somewhere between the Marco Polo Bridge and the middle of nowhere.

Zhang, whom we nicknamed Chainsaw, a friendly, soft-spoken ice sculptor with a fondness for power tools, was ready when we arrived, and took us carefully through the steps of making an ice sculpture.



STEP ONE

STEP 1

He obtained a 20-ton block of ice from a reservoir. Then he saved it in an ice house for a year so that he could have ice when there was none about. Zhang then cut the large block into smaller, one-ton blocks, for easier transport, storage, and cutting into sculptures.

The ice was placed on a rolling table illuminated from below with colored light. This not only allowed him to work more comfortably on the sculpture, but to add color and effect to the final product. It would also make it easier for transport once the sculpture was finished.

PHOTOS: MITCHELL PE MASTLON

STEP 2

Because he's a cool chainsaw master, Zhang then sliced off two panels, each about seven centimeters thick and about 1.2 meters long. The ice blocks weren't wide enough to create a magazine cover-like panel, so he "glued" the two together by wetting the top of the bottom panel, fitting the second panel on it, and then allowed them to refreeze. Even close-up, seeing where the two panels were fitted was not easy, so seamless was the move. The edges of the panels can be smoothed using a basic household tool: an iron.

STEP TWO



STEP 3

Zhang used a small metal scraper to remove any ice shavings from inside the letters. To "seal" the sculpture, smooth the edges, and give the whole thing more of a shine, he heated a metal plate using the iron, then passed it over the entire front of the sculpture, melting the top layer of ice, which would then quickly refreeze. This makes the sculpture glossy and removes any bumps on its surface. The surface becomes smooth to the touch, and light shined through the ice diffuses more clearly.

STEP THREE



STEP 4

Zhang affixed a printout of *the Beijinger* logo and cover text to the top portion of the ice, to allow him to etch the letters into the ice using a Dremel drill. This primary etching process took about 20 minutes.

STEP FOUR



The biggest surprise? What we expected would be a three-hour job took about 20 minutes. Zhang, who studied ice sculpting as part of a degree in sculpture and fine art, said that more complex pieces, such as the swans that are popular at Sunday brunches, take less than an hour for him to complete.

Sip, nibble, gulp, chew, guzzle, savor, feast

FOOD & DRINK

KAISEKI CUISINE // ENCHILADAS // ECLAIRS // VEGANISM // TIPSY TUTORING



Take your eggs scrambled and with black truffle from Jan 2-29 at Jaan, Raffles Beijing.

NIBBLES AND SIPS

NEW OPENINGS

The Drive-Thru Bottle and Bike Bar has opened up in China View building at Gongti doing lines in the deadly duo of beer and bicycles.

Sanlitun's Coutyard 4, home to The Bookworm, is stacking their roster, with this past month seeing the openings of new nightclub **The Basement** and second expanded locations for **Home Plate Bar-B-Que** and **The Rug**.

REOPENINGS

After a short-lived try at closure, **Gung Ho! Pizza** discovered it wasn't for them and reopened their new shop in Wangjing.

Japanese whiskey favorite **Ichikura** has reopened in the CBD after an extended period of renovation. The facelift includes a new bar among other things.

Gulou favorite **The Box** has reopened after some cosmetic enhancements of its own. Their buffalo wings and burgers have survived the makeover.

HAPPENINGS

With the introduction of a new Coconut Porter, **Slow Boat Brewery** has taken their drip tally to 17.

CLOSINGS

Hutong bicycle bar **Serk** is moving on. They'll be packing up their peloton and heading out to the Linked Hybrid space at Beijing Moma. High rents appear to be the catalyst for the move with rumors swirling about other venues in the locale.

Absolut, the space formerly known as Tun at the back of Sanlitun south bar area, has been flattened and is set to reopen as a KTV.

Daniel Boulud's Beijing outpost, **Maison Boulud**, closed after five years of world-class service. Word is that, within the coming months, we can expect another venue in town from the culinary legend.

It seems they just came, but in true Beijing tradition, Italian restaurant **Bantu** closed their space in China View building, only months after opening this summer.



Mexican restaurant 墨西哥餐厅

XALAPA



STORIED SPICE

NEW CHILI FLAVORS ON THE WESTSIDE

WHAT'S NEW RESTAURANTS

XALAPA MEXICAN RESTAURANT

Daily 10am-11pm. 1/F, Huguo Xintiandi, 85 Huguosi Dajie, Xicheng District (6212 1218)
西城区护国寺大街85号护国新天地1层

 200m northeast of Ping'anli station (Lines 4 and 6)

When a Mexican restaurant opens on the west side of town, you wonder who will go there. This curiosity is increased by its even more peculiar location on Huguosi, the destination snack street for regional Chinese cuisines, brimming with soup dumplings and donkey burgers. Who would travel for *sopes* and *pollo de mole*?

A lazy Sunday afternoon that stretches into the evening is the time for mysteries to be solved. An order of two *tamales* (RMB 40) can only be fulfilled with one, owner Esteban Zottele apologizes. He explains that Mexican Embassy hosted a private party there the evening prior, nearly cleaning out the kitchen, "but we will give you this last one to taste." And you find that you have reason to be thankful that the diplomats left this *tamale* on its lonesome along with remainders of thick house-made tortilla chips.

Xalapa eschews the contestable, and detestable, word "authentic." Instead, what the kitchen does is in keeping with that beautiful, staid crystallization of culture called "tradition." The *sopa Azteca* (RMB 28), a tomato broth with shredded chicken, cilantro flecks, and slicks of cream, has a nuance to its chili and flavor – both painful and pleasant – that only centuries passing since the fall of ancient empires could patiently permit. The town of Xalapa in Veracruz does lay claim to the origins of the *jalapeno* and this vein of unchained chili runs throughout the meal.

Tradition brings with it solemnity in the sturdiness that the enchilada's corn tortilla maintains beneath a thick mantle of sauce. But this is not a wholly somber business. Two bright eggs yolks stream down the plate in the exceptional, heaving *enchiladas Sonora* (RMB 55) and the *enchilada bandera* (RMB 55) playfully imitate the Mexican flag's red, white and green.

An already interesting experience of dessert – the *pastel de Uruapan* (RMB 30) – become more intriguing as the evening scene unfolds. A visiting professor from Mexico stops in with his local students to give them a taste of his country. The riddle unravels with the realization: Xalapa is a place to witness tradition transplanted. *Cat Nelson*

Also try: Cantina Agave, Q Mex

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WHAT'S NEW RESTAURANTS




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Daily 10am-1am. 7 Xinsi Hutong, Dongsi Shiertiao, Dongcheng District (6400 3627)
东城区东四十二条辛寺胡同7号

 400m northeast of Zhangzizhonglu station (Line 5)

Xinsi Hutong snakes across the block northwest of Zhangzizhonglu, concealing within one of its many courtyards the new private dining space, Mulu. It's set the stakes high for itself with the self-proclamation of "the ultimate culinary experience in Beijing" – an aspiration, achieved or not, to appreciate and an intent to admire.

The intimate courtyard has been refurbished and ornamented in dark wood, with care towards maintaining the individuality of the space. The rooftop terrace will be brilliant in the summertime and the second-floor *tatami* dining room, cool and airy.

Private dining carries with it connotations of the higher echelons, but while this is not your everyday neighborhood joint, custom menus that traipse between Western and Pan-Asian cuisine can be reasonable, ranging from RMB 188 to RMB 1,288. Reservations are requested at least a day in advance, although the more impulsive who trips up for same-day dining can choose from one or two five-course menus (RMB 588, includes free-flow wine) that

change biweekly.

One visit near the holidays prompted a festive roasted turkey with balsamic-glazed fresh figs and a bounty of Brussels sprouts in a proportion striking for a city often devoid of these potent pocket cabbages. The table had been primed with a handful of contrasting experiences – a complicated heat from the small bite of Malaysian chicken to start and the crab curry soup with mango puree, a fresh breath of salad greens and a Parmesan crisp speckled with basil flakes. The deep savory of a few roasted tomatoes amid the leaves introduced an increasingly rich trend of the meal. What next to follow, but quivering *foie gras*, pan-seared and sweet atop caramelized apples? A king prawn and its companion *spaghetti all'amatriciana* lose the momentum of the meal, but Manager Arthur Stehli de l'Estoile swoops in to pick it back up, graceful, easy, and bearing mountains of turkey and another bottle of wine. *Cat Nelson*

Also try: Chi, Dali Courtyard

WHAT'S NEW RESTAURANTS

THE MAIN MUG

CUP ONE

Daily 9am-11pm. Unit 02-03, F/2, Bldg D, Kirin Place,
11 Fu'anxi Lu, Chaoyang District (5363 0599)
朝阳区阜安西路11号麒麟社(新天地)D楼2层0203室

🚶 800m southeast of Wangjing station (Line 15)

Cup One is evidence of Beijing's changing style. There isn't a floral print or over-sized couch to be seen. I look around me and this is the crowd I'm becoming familiar with in Beijing – groups of middle-class Chinese with a cosmopolitan flair and the occasional edgy hat.

Service is pleasant and relaxed, and the capaciousness rules out cacophony. On the second floor, up the bird cage-like staircase, the café has another dimension, an amphitheatre-like dome, which seems purpose-built for café-based work.

I ordered a latte (RMB 35) – my litmus test of a new café – and this one didn't fare too badly: good temperature and a taste that beats anything coming out of the city's big coffee chains.

The menu is short and Western, and covers a few basic groups, such as milkshakes, alcoholic beverages, brunch items, pasta and rice, and main courses that include items like a prosciutto blue cheese penne with salad (RMB 65). A little slow in coming, it's a rich, creamy event, with thinly-sliced prosciutto sprinkled over the top, a drizzle of pesto, and a mild blue cheese flavor. Somehow large chunks of pear made their way into the recipe, which I could have done without, but overall, as with the space itself, I'm happy. *Shannon Aitken*

Also try: The Rug, Moka Bros



PHOTO: SUI

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VEG OUT

A PRIMER FOR DEVOURING BEIJING AS A PLANT-BASED EATER

by Cat Nelson

Assumption one: you are neither obsessive nor compulsive. Being vegetarian or vegan in China requires a certain flexibility – there will be mistakes and miscommunication. These are not concepts familiar to the average Chinese restaurant. Flecks of meat may – will – find their way onto your table in the most surreptitious, if uncalculated, ways. Despite this, eating locally doesn't have to be an insurmountable challenge for plant-only eaters. Remember: persistence pays off.

Questions to ask

Does this have meat in it? Ham? Pork? Beef? Chicken? Seafood?.

Zhège yǒu ròu ma? Huǒtuǐ ne? Zhūròu ne? Niúròu ne? Jīròu ne? Hǎixiān ne? 这个有肉吗? 火腿呢? 猪肉呢? 牛肉呢? 鸡肉呢? 海鲜呢?

Does it have any meat flecks?

Yǒu ròu mó ma? 有肉膜吗?

There's absolutely no meat at all?

Yīdiǎn ròu dōu méiyǒu? 一点肉都没有?

Does this have eggs, milk or cheese?

Zhège yǒu jīdàn ma? Niúnǎi ne? Nǎilào ne?

这个有鸡蛋吗? 牛奶呢? 奶酪呢?

Phrases to know

I don't eat meat. I'm vegetarian.

Wǒ bù chī ròu, wǒ chī sù 我不吃肉, 我吃素。

(This does not imply an ongoing condition, although wǒ bù néng chī ròu 我不能吃肉 is equally as inadequate.)

I'm vegan. Wǒ chī zhāi. 我吃斋

I don't eat poultry, eggs, fish, seafood, meat stock.

Wǒ bù chī jīròu, jīdàn, yú, hǎixiān, ròu tāng.

我不吃鸡肉, 鸡蛋, 鱼, 海鲜, 肉汤。

No MSG, no chicken-flavored MSG.

Bù fàng wèijīng, jījīng. 不放味精, 鸡精。

(Even if you don't mind having some MSG on your dish, do make sure to mention you don't want any at all, as *weijing* and *jijing* often come together and can be mistakenly added to your order.)

Don't put any meat in at all.

Yīdiǎn ròu dōu bù fàng. 一点肉都不放。

(Verify, verify, verify – and don't be afraid to send dishes back.)



Hūnxīng 荤腥 vs. ròu 肉: Generally interchangeable words, hunxing encompasses fish as well as meat and should cover your bases more fully – though rou is a hard word for a server not to understand and may be the clearest for beginning non-native speakers.

Bespoke Chinese

The sandwich or salad bar equivalent of China, these fully customizable cuisines allow you to tailor the ingredients and offer vegetarian options in no short supply.

Huǒguō (火锅) – varieties include the spicy Chongqing-style and mutton-heavy lao Beijing-style, but of particular note for non-meat eaters is Yunnan hot pot, a province lush with mushrooms, greens and herbs.



Greens straight-up

Larger Chinese menus often include a page or two with a selection of green vegetables that can be cooked simply as single ingredients. The cooking methods vary and include qīngchǎo (清炒), a plain stir-fry; suànróng (蒜茸), stir-fry with garlic; báizhuó (白灼), blanched in boiling water; gānbǎn (干煸), “dry stir-fry” with oil only.

Málà xiāngguō (麻辣香锅) – a “dry” hot pot which means there’s even less worry about the meat-free nature of broth.

Málà tàng (麻辣烫) – the cooking liquid is far harder to control, especially with its typical roadside location that encourages the reuse of broth, but vegan skewers with tofu and vegetables can be chosen.

On the street

Beyond the obvious steamed corn and roasted sweet potatoes, dumplings (bāozi 包子) come in a variety of vegetarian options including a few vegan ones such as tofu with glass noodles (dòufu fěnsī 豆腐粉丝) and mushroom with bok choy (xiānggū yóucài 香菇油菜).

Liángpí (凉皮) are rice noodles dressed in sesame sauce, vinegar and pepper sauce then topped with grated cucumber, gluten chunks and bean sprouts. Carbs are also a good choice ranging from scallion rolls (cōng huā bǐng 葱花饼), sesame cakes (zhī má shāo bǐng 芝麻烧饼) or the basic flat bread (lào bǐng 烙饼).

素

斋

Acknowledgments to Fred Dintenfass, Michael Dobrowolski, and Iain Shaw for their good input.



FAST AND LOOSE

IMPROVISING ON KAISEKI ARCHITECTURE

BEEF TARTAR

PHOTO: KEN

WHAT'S NEW RESTAURANTS

BRICK AND WOOD

Daily 6pm-late. 14 Qianliang Hutong, Dongcheng District (186 1270 8750)

东城区钱粮胡同14号

 400m north of Dongsì station (Lines 5 and 6)

One evening at the bar, between the eighth and ninth course, Brick and Wood owner Kevin Yang slid out three surprise dishes alongside seven slices of marbled steak: *ponzu* sauce with *daikon*, *macha* tea salt, and black truffle salt. "This is how we roll here," he quipped in explanation of the truffled extravagance.

How exactly do they roll? With ardor and ebullience. Brick and Wood serves out of the highly structured tradition of *kaiseki*, a culinary scaffold emphasizing a meticulousness to seasonality and context of each meal of which only the Japanese are capable. But despite its seeming rigidity, this is the jazz of cuisines. The menu is unwritten; you entrust yourself to the kitchen with varying degrees of faith – RMB 380, RMB 500, RMB 1,000 – and then, the sky is the limit.

The architecture of a *kaiseki* supper hangs on two undebatable points – the soup (*suimono*) and rice (*shokujì*) courses – with detailed outlining of the others, but improvisation is encouraged. The chef is a magnetic presence with laughter and red wine hanging in the air between courses, and, in collusion with the animated Yang, he orchestrates an operatic journey.

Translucent panes of octopus lead into a delicate duck broth, a curl of lemon peel and a lashing of green onion attuning the palate to the lightness of fish and richness of simmered meat. A brilliant needlefish carpaccio bathed in a surprising chili sauce introduces and counter-weights melt-away chicken stewed with yam, taro and amulets of lotus root. Things plunge to more delicious, meditative depths – day-long, slow-cooked pork spooning a potato half-dome; fried soft-shell crab on a latticework of miso mayonnaise – with occasional breezier moments of pristine sashimi or an implausibly airy snapper, marinated, braised, then fried.

Each movement of the meal may dip and rise but an impish note runs throughout the evening. Not even the requisite rice course is left untouched. "It's *shabu-sotto*," Yang proclaims as he transforms the *shabu-shabu* remains into an ultra-rich, modernist risotto with egg and sprinklings of black truffle salt before topping it with caviar.

Also try: Kaden Minokichi, Okra



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WHAT'S NEW RESTAURANTS



CABANA NIGHTS

CARIBEÑO 加勒比人西餐厅

Daily 11.30am-9.30pm. 1/F, South Tower, China Overseas Plaza, 8 Guanghua

Dongli, Chaoyang District (5977 2789)

朝阳区光华东里8号院中海广场写字楼1层

 350m northwest of Guomao station (Lines 1 and 10)

Beijing's only, though not first, Cuban restaurant lies in the heart of the CBD, so out of place in this cold center of commerce and jammed between two hotels in what feels like the back alleys. In the face of this then, you can feel a defiant push of resistance from the space. The bright yellows and greens of its murals expand outwardly and the straw-thatched roof above the bar borders on melancholy, but is ultimately convincing that one should drop one's opposition to clichés and imagine island breezes.

The menu rambles from appetizers like *empanadas* (stuffed pastries, essentially – RMB 38 chicken, RMB 28 vegetable) and *papas rellenas* (RMB 35), the Cuban variation on a Peruvian dish of mashed potatoes stuffed with meat and spices, breaded and then fried. Next comes a poetic main, *ropa viejo* (RMB 78), or “old clothes,” so named for the shredded beef's resemblance to tattered fabric. An order of *arepas* (RMB 68) means four variations of the stuffed maize flour flatbreads. The

reina pepiada arepa with shredded chicken and avocado, lemony and fresh, must come from where ocean breezes whip the coast, although the unfortunate mortadella ham, cabbage, ketchup and mayonnaise in the *tumbarrancho arepa* recalls school lunches of a tender, awkward age you'd rather not remember.

Far fonder young memories can be found in the Creole Cuban soup (RMB 38). Cold days of feigning ill to stay curled up on the couch come steeped in a tomato broth – pork, chicken and thick bacon chunks fraternizing with soft carrots, pumpkin and corn.

Caribeño looks forward, too. An interesting section of the menu with more contemporary Cuban cuisine champions a modern dish called “lobster coffee” (RMB 698). Why would you not return to experience a “delicious casualty of coffee and lobster,” especially when it includes a bottle of Chilean white wine? *Cat Nelson*

Also try: Che Diego!

WHAT'S NEW RESTAURANTS

SWEETS SQUARED

MACARON & ECLAIRS

Daily 10.30am-9pm. 6A Gongti Donglu, Chaoyang District (6500 6086)

朝阳区工体东路甲6号

 1km west of Tuanjiehu station (Line 10)

Good days are made from trips to places like Macaron & Eclairs, a new two-trick culinary creation of an Australian and Hong Kong partnership.

First to hit the eyes upon entry are the macarons (RMB 12). Blueberry blackcurrant, Bailey's coffee and other flavors tried to dazzle us, but in the end we chose the earl grey and the rum and raisin. The outside shells weren't especially crisp and the insides more soft than chewy, but the flavors were delicate and the rum and raisin particularly good if your tooth is a sweet one.

These, however, all seemed to pale in comparison to the array of delicate, beautifully decorated éclairs (RMB 25-28) lined up out beneath. Making a decision was almost impossible. Although the two ladies behind the counter fizzed up with excitement when they both said the blueberry cream cheese éclair was their favorite, we went our own way and chose the rose cranberry and the pistachio strawberry instead.

Both were divine, but the rose cranberry took the prize. Soft choux pastry wrapped around a light, rose-flavored pastry cream, a lollipop pink icing ran across the top, and a sprinkling of tiny rose petals and cranberries finished it off. Every bite was sublime. Only guilt stopped us from ordering a second round, but as we walked out the door we were already plotting which ones to come back for.

Also try: Comptoirs de France, L'Atelier



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GUIMI

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Daily 8am-10pm. F1 Huapu Dasha, 19 Chaoyangmenwai Dajie, Chaoyang District (6580 1105)
朝阳区朝阳门外大街19号华普大厦1层

350m east of Chaoyangmen station (Line 2)

With its sleek black exterior and large windows of multi-story cakes, Black Swan Luxury cake shop sits above the fray of pulled noodle and dumpling neighbors. Luxury truly is the word here – the cake constructions on display provide a good 20 minutes of gawking and gasping. Rolexes and Prada bags might be the peacock plumes of the wealthy, but so too, it seems, are Black Swan cakes. The star cake, festooned with white swans across its five tiers, costs one *yuan* short of RMB 2 million.

Although we were curious as to what kind of pleasure a two-million-*yuan* dessert might offer, we settled for two more everyday options – the *Ningxia* (柠夏, RMB 99), a lemon and mango treat, and the pretty-in-pink *Guimi* (闺蜜, RMB 99), which roughly translates as “lady’s chamber secret.”

Both are intricate combinations of textures and flavors. The *Guimi* sits on a biscuit base and inside the

pink-covered chocolate shell are layers of raspberry sauce, cream, ice cream, fruit and sponge cake. Less imperial looking, and more like a summer treat, the *Ningxia* is a combination of lemon and mango, organized around layers of mint, cream, hazelnut praline, white chocolate and shortbread.

The downside to Black Swan’s ice-cream-based desserts is that they seem to be kept in some form of Antarctic blast chiller and are frozen solid. The staff won’t even serve them to you for about 15 minutes to give them time to thaw, and even then, we waited another 15 to avoid an icy ball flying across the room when we cut into it.

Finally, a last tip: While you’re in there, ask for a taste of the rose gelato (RMB 35) – it’s bloomin’ delicious, and the free samples aren’t much smaller than the single scoops you pay for. *Shannon Aitken*

JOSH DURHAM

OWNER AND OPERATOR, PAPER POUNDER PRESS



Each month, we ask noteworthy Beijingers – leaving or not – to imagine their final meal before departing from the city for good.

Josh Durham's time in Beijing was mostly spent pounding paper with a century-old, cast-iron, sexy monster of a machine. Despite loving their time in the city, his and his wife's living here was only meant to be temporary, and now with children reaching school age, the family is moving on.

The venue

We will have to start this shindig at the original Great Leap location. Many a blissful evening have I squandered watching the night descend on the hutongs from this courtyard corner of heaven. This is the only venue that makes sense. It has been my "Cheers," my "Moe's," and essentially my "water cooler" where I went to make friends, to vent frustrations, and to enjoy tasty beer. Even though it can be fun in the winter getting all crammed into that tiny structure, my imaginary "last supper" takes place in the late spring. I want to observe the blue sky through the frame of that high-walled polygon, and find peace with the chaos of the city in its hutongs, where it all comes together.

The starters

While sipping ales, we will abate our growing appetites with *chuanr* and *nang* from the Xinjiang

restaurant on the corner at Mao'er Hutong. Since this is my happening, it's going to be a rolling tour of personal favorites and old haunts, but before we jump on our bikes to go elsewhere, we'll have to munch on an assortment of Mr. Shi's dumplings.

Before leaving the hutongs, we'll make a quick stop by Mai Bar for a whiskijito.

Main course

From Gulou, we'll pedal our merry selves just east of the Third Ring Road. We will slide into Vin Vi for boxes of sake and to savor their tasty "My Sausages!" It's a shame that I only just recently found this place, because I loved everything we had. This time we'll spend hours sampling everything they have to offer, and then going back for seconds of the best dishes.

Any other entertainment?

At this point, my friends and I are feeling a little competitive, so we'll hit up the go-cart track near the IKEA.

We will finish the night off down in Sanlitun where we'll post our bellies to the bar at Revolution and tell stories of days gone by. We'll ride those Irish Mules as far as they will take us.

Follow Paper Pounder Press on Weibo (@p2press) to get the latest on ordering Josh's letterpress creations.

BUBBLES AND BEANS

BRUNCHING ON WANGFUJING



VASCO'S

Sun 11.30am-3pm (brunch). 5/F, Hilton Beijing Wangfujing,
8 Wangfujing Dongjie, Dongcheng District (5812 8888)
东城区王府井东街8号希尔顿北京王府井酒店5层

 450m southwest of Dengshikou station (Line 5)

Beijing encourages a certain expansive excess, and it is one that – while it may land you in your early thirties, continually tipsy, abroad and a bit at sea – is infinitely freeing, cultivating an arguably important permeability to possibilities. The hotel brunch is an exemplary model of such delightful excess.

The indolence of a Sunday morning pairs well with a glass of champagne, and if you haven't thought before of tumbling from bed to the buffet table, you might do well to consider it. The Fizztastic Sunday brunch (RMB 498+15%) at Vasco's is a manageable place to start.

The fifth floor dining room swathed in crème and gold catches early afternoon Sunday sunbeams. Buffet offerings cover all the bases with a sampling of both Chinese and Western fare. Peking duck and a selection of classics such as lightly steamed fish and a stir-fried tofu

represent the East, while a greater portion of the goods are of a Western bent – greens and cold cuts, smoked salmon and a smattering of cheeses, roasted ham and poached eggs. Bacon is in abundance, cooked to several different degrees. Pineapple rounds adorn the ham lending sweetness. And the baked beans? Our table devoured platters of these. If only the yolks of the poached eggs were as runny as we had been hoping for.

Naturally, where there is champagne, there is lobster. The crustacean arrives, split down the middle with artful smears of pale yellow tracing the curve of the red creature. Decadence continues at the dessert spread with its selection of small tarts, cakes, and ice cream. It's easy to get lost in a sugar rush, and when you notice the dying light and empty bottles, you are surprised at how quickly time can pass when life seems this leisurely. *Cat Nelson*

A SELECTION FROM THE BUFFET






OFFICIALLY WULUMUQI

XINJIANG FANZHUANG 新疆饭庄

Daily 11am-9.30pm. 1 Chegongzhuang Dajie Beili, Xicheng District (6836 2795)

西城区车公庄大街北里1号

 600m west of Chegongzhuang station (Lines 2 and 6)

I first visited the Xinjiang Fanzhuang as part of a quest to try all the restaurants attached to provincial and autonomous region representative offices in Beijing, and despite the distance, it's a spot worth the trip when street-side *chuanr* just aren't enough and you're craving a little more adventure.

Located a ten-minute walk from the Chegongzhuang subway station, expect to wait for a table, especially with a large party – they don't take reservations. The premises are a bit hidden but looks quite nice from the outside in its dark little alley. More than any other provincial restaurant, authenticity is the operators' primary concern, running not just a restaurant, but also shops selling all sorts of imported goods from Urumqi along with a huge display of fruits, nuts, and pastries. Walking through the doors is very much reminiscent of my trips to Wulumuqi.

The menu is complete with illustrations and bilingual descriptions, making it very expat-friendly. It includes the usual lamb dishes, and quite a few more beef dishes than most similar restaurants. There are also some rather un-Xinjiang dishes, like abalone.

We decided to order the standards for comparison: *chuanr* (lamb skewers, RMB 15), *dapanji* (big plate chicken, RMB 50), and *yangpai* (lamb steaks, RMB 100) to name a few. The *chuanr* were of the big variety, juicy and perfectly cooked but didn't measure up to those

available elsewhere – this is the representative office, after all. The *dapanji* was solid and beyond criticism, probably one of the better ones this side of the Taklimakan Desert, albeit using different spices than others I've tasted before. On the noodle side, *chao mianpianr* (RMB 18) and *la tiaozhi* (RMB 18) drew accolades from some of the more discriminating noodle eaters with us. Having a vegetarian in our midst, we took the opportunity to try out some vegetable dishes for a change, including cabbage, eggplant and mushrooms, all of which rated favorably by carnivore and herbivore alike.

But when all was said and done, the star of the night was inevitably the yogurt. The natural unsweetened yogurt (RMB 7), covered in nuts, fruits and screaming freshness, drew unanimous "wows."

Standard dishes arrive quickly, most in fewer than five minutes. A pleasant surprise was how friendly the staff was compared to a few years back. They smiled, made suggestions and were on the ball for just about every request we had. That's a remarkable improvement.

Until a recent visit there, I would have traveled even farther, to the Kashgar Representative Office, for a Xinjiang food fix. But now I know I can save some travel time and hassle, and still get a great ethnic meal just a little closer to home. *Badr Benjelloun*



S IS FOR ...

... *si* 丝

This word, or character, can be traced back to early oracle bone inscriptions and means silk or thread. In the kitchen, this translates to thinly chopped strips of anything from vegetables to meat. *Si* appears in all kinds of dishes, from salads to soups and stir-fries. The most ubiquitous dish is likely *tudou si*, or julienned potatoes. This dish has many incarnations, including *culiu*, or dressed in a sweet and sour vinegar dressing and *jiaoyan tudousi*, a mountain of deep fried potato shreds covered in pepper and salt.

... *suzha* 酥炸

Crispy, soft deep-fried goodness – that's all this word implies. This frying technique results in some of the tastiest, and not the least artery-clogging treats on the Chinese table. *Suzha ya* (crispy soft-fried duck) or *suzha ji* (crispy soft-fried chicken) are delicacies served around the country. The process involves chopping up the bird, marinating to taste in sugar and spices, steaming to tenderize the meat and deep-frying to crisp up the skin. The result is a tongue-tantalizing adventure – crisp on the outside and soft on the inside.

... *suantai* 蒜薹

Recently trendy in farmers' markets in the West, this is old news to China. Also known in the south as *suaxin*, the garlic scape has been used in Chinese cooking since garlic's first arrival in western China in the first century. Chopped and stir-fried with streaky pork or eggs, its texture is surprisingly crunchy with a slightly bitter flavor, and the long tasty greens are chock full of nutrients, including vitamins A, C and E, protein and carbohydrates.

... *shaokao* 烧烤

This is a worldwide cooking phenomenon that dates back probably to our primal days when we lived in caves and made fire with stones. That's right: fire. The most exciting way to cook is over an open flame and *shaokao* means just that. We're talking everyone's street-side barbecue favorites like greasy *chuanr*, or more refined delicacies like fish barbecued in bamboo leaves, and for the more adventurous: roasted silk worms. For grilling aficionados there is one important spin-off of this word that shouldn't be left uneaten: *shaokaojiang*, or barbecue sauce.



Lick, Twist and Dunk

APPRAISING VARIATIONS ON A COOKIE CLASSIC

by Cat Nelson

Oreos abroad are much like Coca-Cola – far better for dismissing America's infatuation with corn syrup sweetness and continuing the glorious tradition of refined white sugar. Plus, who isn't intrigued by the idea of a peach and grape Oreo? If Yao Ming approves, why shouldn't we?



Original Oreo (RMB 5.50)

"It's what I imagine fiberglass would be like to chew on."

"The blandness of the gummy cream does invite the biscuit to stand up for itself a bit more ... and it declines the chance."

"It might just be the Englishman in me, but if there were a plate of gingernuts and a plate of these, they wouldn't get a second glance."

"The cream itself is very asinine."

Peach and Grape Oreo (RMB 6.50)

"It's benign at first, and then on the back of your throat, there's a strange, tangy aftertaste. What is this witchcraft?!"

"You know those things that have edible flavors that you really shouldn't eat? But because they have a flavor you always think, it might be alright to try them once, like mainly lip balm. This is like lip balm, or pens that smell."

"That was a weird experience."

Chocolate Oreo (RMB 5.80)

"The cookie is really just a vehicle for the filling, a delivery mechanism."

"Stands on as flimsy a scientific basis as a Communion wafer."

"If it was a navy blue suit and it had a white shirt on, the chocolate would be a blue tie, but not the same shade as the suit. A tasteful differentiation, but still, it's a navy blue suit – not that exciting. Probably made out of polyester as well."

PHOTO: SUU

"Gold-plated" Oreo, vanilla cookie with strawberry cream (RMB 6.50)

"A very sickly odor. It's Nesquik before you've put the milk in, like eating it off the spoon."

"If I were six or seven years old at my friend's birthday party, and I liked that friend, it'd probably be alright. I'd think, 'why doesn't my mom buy these?' Of course the answer would be: because she has some taste."

"I hate to say it, but it's like you've vomited after 50 pints."



Orange and Mango Oreo (RMB 6.50)

"It smells like a Body Shop lotion."

"As a reboot of the Oreo, it's more Dean Cain than the guy who plays Superman in *Superman Returns*. You might say Dean Cain was the best Superman ever."

"I'm starting to feel like I might have been buried alive where an orange juice lorry has crashed and dispersed its wares into the soil. My arms and legs have been immobilized so my only option is to eat my way out."



Vanilla Ice Cream Oreo (RMB 6.50)

"Oh god, this one has messed itself. It's like the aftermath of ... I won't go there."

"It's like a stale Christmas cookie."

"The biscuit part is pretty horrible on this one."

"This one tastes of the smell you get in a gardening center, the sort of slight fertilizer scent."



"Gold-plated" Oreo, vanilla cookie with chocolate cream (RMB 6.50)

"Oh dear. Oh good heavens no."

"Doesn't the biscuit have a taste of Holiland?"

"Undone from the start by its misplaced faith in cheap butter."

"It's not butter. It's the gutter oil-flavored Oreo."

"I Can't Believe It's Not Gutter."

VERDICT

After a painful hour, the conclusion was clear: stick with the classics. Double chocolate was declared "Most Edible" with second place going to the original.

We couldn't bring ourselves to touch China's holy grail of green tea ice cream flavor, but if you want to stay healthy with the country's exclusive fruit duos? Brace yourself for a unsettling experience.

CONFIDENCE IN A GLASS

LEARNING UNDER THE INFLUENCE

by Paul Ryding

Private tutors? We just end up asking them to teach us all the rude words they can. I could swear with devastating effect before I could even ask the direction of the men's room after RMB 1,000 worth of private tutoring. Chinese classes transported me back to school; hiding at the back of the class mouthing along, and copying my classmate's homework on the bus on the way to class. Language partners never work out either. It's almost impossible to stay on topic talking to a girl in a bar. And how long can a "language partner" remain just a "language" partner anyway? All attempts at learning a second language seem somehow doomed to failure from the start. There must be an easier way. How about a blend of each of these methods, mixed with beer?

American entrepreneur Joe Finkenbender and his business partner Digamber Rayamajhi are the men responsible for a new method of language learning. Half-speed dating/half networking event, Drunk Language classes start similarly to your typical bar room exchange – the old "What is your name," "Where are you from," "What do you do here?" trinity, but that's okay as it encourages the repetition that is so important to learning a language.



"We didn't spend a dollar on advertising. The classes just got popular through word of mouth. People came out and had a good time and they told other people about it."

"The biggest problem with the women was the alcohol. At first they were dubious, and we had to explain that the drinking part of it was just to aid the educational side. For some of them it was a little out of their comfort zone."

"Learning languages is based on confidence and repetition. And people are rarely more confident than when they're a little drunk," says Joe, who has a background in language instruction.

Class sizes are generally limited to four or five people, with the option to go up to eight or nine for a lower price. They can be customized to the group's needs, and typically cost between RMB 100 and RMB 150 (including beer). "We're very flexible. We let the group choose where they want to go," says Joe. "I was never comfortable with being private-tutored in Starbucks and making an ass out of myself within earshot of other people. But we offer it up to the group to choose where we hold the class. We can take advantage of lots of locations. It's like, 'Okay, you're in that area? That's not a problem let's find somewhere in that area to have the class.'"

Initially the drinking element took a while to catch

on, and Joe says they had to relax the rules that originally stated that participants had to have a glass of liquid courage with them at all times during a class.

"We used to start things off with tequila," Joe says. "But we had one over-enthusiastic guy who vomited all over the place and had to be carried out. We decided to leave the tequila out after that!"

The key to the drunken element of the sessions is that the students are more inclined to laugh at themselves for getting things wrong in a laid-back environment as opposed to being worried about looking silly in a classroom. "In a classroom environment, no one wants to raise their hand. Particularly if it's a guy and he's sitting next to a pretty girl – he doesn't want to feel like an idiot. They feel more comfortable with a couple of drinks in them, and by the end of the night, we have to chase them from the class! They just want to keep going."

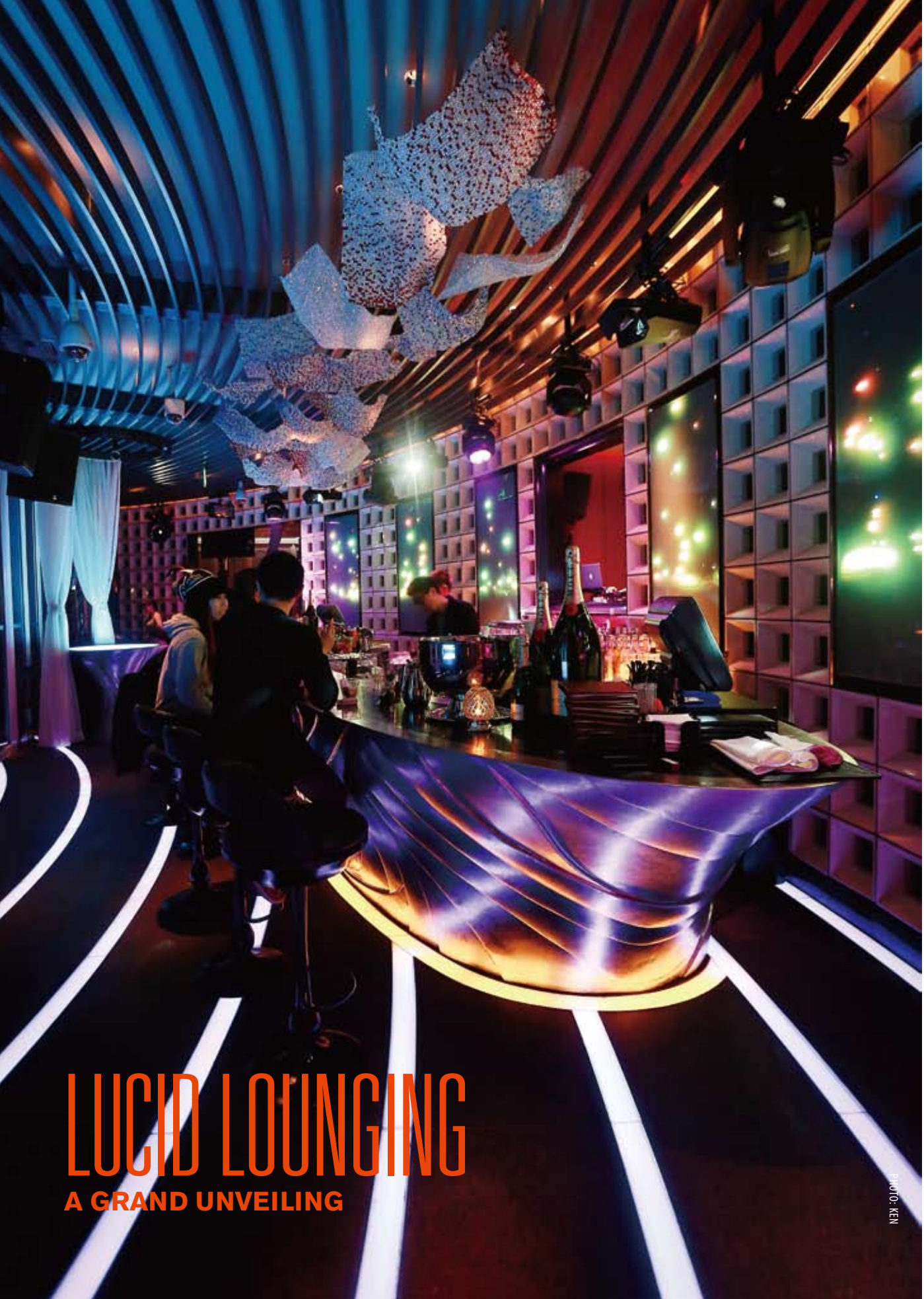
"Classes are mostly taken by males. The college kids don't tend to drink much. We found it was better to get people involved who were aged upwards of 23 as they're more used to drinking alcohol."



"The first 45 minutes, honestly, were a bit dull at first. That's why we introduced the drinking games. We found that it takes about that long for the drink to start working. So to begin with we go through all the new vocabulary, all the grammar and a little game. Around 30-45 minutes in is when it starts to click, and then the next hour is just talk."



For more information about upcoming events contact Joe at drunkchinese@gmail.com



LUCID LOUNGING

A GRAND UNVEILING

WHAT'S NEW BARS & CLUBS

VIVID

Tue-Sun 6pm-2am. 5/F, Conrad, 29 Dongsanhuan Beilu, Chaoyang District (6584 6000)
朝阳区东三环北路29号北京康莱德酒店5层

 500m north of Hujialou station (Lines 6 and 10)

The Conrad Hotel's plush new lounge club debuted last month with a lavish opening party. The big reveal introduced a hulking, polished space that pairs a decadent snarl of bowed nooks and plump leather sofas with LED walls and flooring that veers from shag pile in the three private rooms to a neon-lit running track around the main room's perimeter. Tokyo-based design studio Spin was tasked with realizing Vivid's concept, and although at times the outcome delivers more of a nod to Gongti's mega club scene than is comfortable, the result is a vibrant and dynamic setting.

The rooftop bar's entertainment is no less eye-catching. Lingerie-clad dancers gyrate daringly atop raised plinths cloaked in lacy veils, while a male dancer tickles a shock of green laser beam wearing a queasy mask of his own. It's all too much to take your eyes off.

Brief respite can at least be found in your glass. The drink selection reads as you might expect of a confident lounge bar in its class and the standards demand to be savored. Hand-picked beer and wine lists (RMB 50-80 and RMB 260-880, respectively), with an innovative selection of house cocktails alongside flawless takes on the classics (RMB 80-110), all served up with flair or attentiveness depending on whether you take your drink at the bar, or while reclining on low-lit bed loungers.

A Tokyo-style challenge on the senses it might be, and while there are enough recognizable elements to make it less a unique night out, it's just a better one than you might have elsewhere. *Paul Ryding*

Also try: Xiu, Xian



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LIVIN' LARGE

LIV

Daily 9pm-late. 6 Gongti Xi Lu, Chaoyang District (6408 9898)

朝阳区工体西路6号

 1.2km east of Dongsishitiao station (Line 2)

LIV has settled nicely into its role as the new kid on the Gongti block. The area is ruled by the big hitters of Beijing's mainstream Chinese clubs, but this new kid is no sissy. More than any of its peers, LIV has reached a level of gaudy pomp and circumstance that aligns flush with a Gongti-goer's expectations of what a nightclub that side of the Worker's Stadium should be.

If the cherry-red grand piano playing at the foot of a marble spiral staircase doesn't give the game away, then the hallways covered wall-to-wall in gold-framed mirrors should make it obvious that this club is tailor-made for conspicuous money flexing. A place to see and be seen. Standing bottle service, towers of sculpted fruit, and Russian acrobatic shows each provide ample encouragement for clientele to flash the cash.

My party and I were surprised then by free admission and a reasonably-priced drinks menu (although it will be interesting to see if either stay that way). A Zombie (RMB 65) erred on the sweet side, but the Cucumber Gemelt (RMB 65) made for better company.

The DJ mixed familiar pop tunes with electro house from her towering pedestal above the bar, but could not get elbows off tables. With no dance floor, that's a difficult task.

LIV has set a new benchmark for palatial decadence in Gongti, and it attracts an elite crowd. The new kid clearly has its eyes on the throne. *Reed Russell*

Also try: Latte, Elements Club

A BIT OF NOSTALGIA

8-BIT

Daily 1pm-2am. 49 Jiadaokou Nandajie, Dongcheng District (159 1025 6538)
东城区交道口南大街49号

 700m northeast of Nanluogu Xiang station (Line 6)

I was instantly transported back into a misspent early childhood the moment the chiptune signature of Super Mario Bros. registered. Co-owner Dale obligingly cranked the volume at my station, and the next thing I knew, a few hours had passed. That's going to be the danger at the city's first retro video gaming bar.

There are three consoles installed currently – the NES, SNES, and the Sega Genesis, with an N64 and an uber-retro Atari on the way – and if you don't know what they are, you probably have no business being in 8-Bit. Although, there *are* other reasons to stop by. A pint of Kirin will run you just RMB 25, with Vedett (RMB 45) and La Chouffe (RMB 40, 33cl) on draft alongside a selection of bottled Belgians and regulars (RMB 15-45) as well as a small cocktail and shooters menu, RMB 40 and RMB 20 respectively. Daily drinks deals challenge gamers to crack

games in exchange for beer.

Dale says the idea behind the bar was first and foremost a love for game consoles of yore, but also because he enjoys bars that provide patrons something to do. They'll stage regular competitions at 8-Bit for those who, like him, crave more than a pool table or a satellite feed with their pint.

It must have been 20 years since I last visited the Mushroom Kingdom – *Sensible Soccer* on the Amiga hastened my old NES's departure to the car boot sale, but it was a charmingly quaint revisit to a better-natured period. The only downside: I haven't been able to get the Tetris theme tune out of my head since I stopped by.

Paul Ryding

Also try: Beer Mania, The Local



PHOTO: MITCHELL PE MASILUN

COCKTAIL PROFILER



Alice is the resident mix expert at Taikoo Li saloon Union Bar & Grille. With a cast of larger-than-life regulars to profile, Alice had fun crafting a selection of potent cocktails for some of the bar's

familiar faces. Bases for the creations ranged from white wine and whiskey, to martini and vodka, but they all had two things in common: they were all wicked strong, and they were each very much enjoyed by our subjects.



CHARLIE

Interesting fact: In April this year, Charlie boarded a subway train for the first time in his life. He still hates the subway.

The resulting drink:
Going Underground

Ingredients:

30ml Johnnie Walker Blue Label
15ml Johnnie Walker Red Label
15ml Johnnie Walker Black Label

15ml Johnnie Walker Green Label
30ml fresh lime juice
30ml fresh lemon juice

Served: In a sugar-rimmed martini glass.

"Very subtle. I fancy this would leave me drunk from the bottom up, though!"

Every month we ask one of the city's expert mixologists to profile a selection of Beijingers based on a single snapshot and a brief factoid.

If you'd like to be in next month's Cocktail Profiler, email us a photo and an interesting fact about yourself to do@thebeijinger.com.



JAMES

Interesting fact: James once camped overnight in a dinosaur museum. He survived the experience.

The resulting drink:

Balls of Steel

Ingredients:

90ml Town Branch
bourbon
45ml triple sec
15ml Martini Bianco
15ml fresh orange juice

Served: Shaken into a martini glass with a cherry garnish.

"Quite soft with a nice whiskey aftertaste. Not too strong."



DAVID

Interesting fact: Well-travelled David is a keen surfer and has ridden the waves all over the world.

The resulting drink:

Li Shan-Gria

Ingredients:

120ml white wine
15ml Peach Tree
Teaspoon Ballantine's
Teaspoon triple sec
Splash of orange juice

Topped up with soda water

Served: Over ice in a wine glass with a slice of lemon and lime.

"I'd normally go for beer, or a vodka Red Bull, but this is good."



LI SHAN

Interesting fact: Li Shan went to Bali to learn to surf, and eventually became pretty good at it.

The resulting drink:

Surftastic

Ingredients:

45ml vodka
15ml peach schnapps
15ml crème de cassis
60ml orange juice
30ml pineapple juice

30ml cranberry juice

Served: With a pineapple ring in a sugar-rimmed brandy glass

"Very nice. Sweet. I can't describe it, I just know I like it."



PEKING PAIRING

SELECTING WINE FOR A DONKEY BURGER

by Jim Boyce

An air of irrelevance surrounds the practice of pairing food and wine. We see a steady flow of books, columns and videos, providing everything from “expert advice” to “perfect pairings,” with the cuisines of China attracting growing attention over the past few years. What matches spicy hot pot? How do the onion slivers or plum sauce served with Peking duck affect a wine? Red or white with that late-night donkey burger?

Beyond the wine trade and a small niche of consumers, few people care. Most wine here is bought for reasons of status, price or health, and not taste, thus how well it goes with dim sum is irrelevant. Drinking is typically done “*gan bei*” aka “bottoms up” style, leaving little chance to appreciate whether a wine – poured down your gullet at 150 milliliters per shot – “lifts” the Yunnan truffle flavors in a given recipe. Dinners where the wine flows freely usually feature a dozen or more dishes that are served simultaneously and run the gamut from sweet to sour to

salty to bitter. Those foods not only tend to pair well with each other but also present a myriad of flavors that make fitting one wine to them all but impossible.

Finally, there is the simple fact that people’s tastes differ. Some have a sweet tooth, others a savory one. Some like spicy Sichuan dishes, others can’t even handle the fumes. Red bean desserts can be delight or disaster, depending on your taste. The same goes for wine, with preferences that extend from so cloying as to be a candidate for a coffee sweetener to so dry and mineral that it is like licking a piece of slate. Rather than perfect pairings for all, it seems more accurate to say that exceptions are the rule.

Does that make Chinese food and wine pairing fruitless? No. The point is not to deny it is enjoyable but to note that the vast majority of drinkers do not care and those that do should trust their own tastes. Wine teacher Tim Hanni stresses this personal aspect well by saying the wine should match the diner, not the dinner.



PHOTOS: FLICKR USERS RICK CHUNG, SCOTT VEG, JEN GALLARDO, PETE D



With Chinese New Year coming, many of us will soon face those tables loaded with a dozen or more dishes. For those interested in pairing them with wine, here are a few ideas:

See what the experts say. It might seem like I dismissed them earlier but only in terms of deference. Expert opinions can be a good starting point for determining your own preferences. With Peking duck, for example, most recommend Pinot Noir over Cabernet Sauvignon. See if you agree.

Order several different wines. If a big night is on the cards, you will drink plenty of bottles, so split them between a red and a white – or even more options if possible. That means more wines to try against all those dishes.

Experiment. I recently went for spicy hotpot with a small group. We had a wine typically recommended

for spicy food, a semi-sweet German white wine, but also a half-dozen Napa reds. Our initial skepticism disappeared as the sense of sweetness from those fruit bombs, especially the Merlots, helped handle the heat.

Have an opinion. People will argue endlessly about the best burger, duck, or dumpling in Beijing. When it comes to wine, they tend to go along with the “wine guy” in the group. There is no need to be shy; it’s only fermented grape juice, after all.

Finally, if you have a special bottle, consider drinking it near the beginning of the meal, even if it is a heavy red wine. Common practice puts white and lighter reds first, but why leave the star attraction until your taste buds have been vaporized by peppercorns or your brain is so numbed by booze you can barely see straight? Wine rules are made to be broken, and the only perfect pairing is between the bottle and you getting the most out of it.



THE PERFECT PASTA

SAMUEL ZUCCA, REGENT BEIJING

by Cat Nelson



Northern Italy native Chef Samuel Zucca recently landed in Beijing to head up Daccapo at the Regent Beijing. He spoke to us about street food versus burgers, the difficulties of a simple pasta and the ideal pizza.

If you could only eat one dish for the rest of your life what would it be?

I would choose pizza because it's a full meal, and it's the best combination of ingredients you can have. If you eat it with the right toppings, I don't consider Italian pizza to be junk food.

What's your favorite pasta dish? Why?

A good spaghetti with tomato and basil. It seems like a simple dish, but I'm really picky as it's not easy to find a good one – one made with the perfect balance of sweetness and acidity of fresh tomatoes, plus a pinch of garlic, red dried chili, and perfumed with Italian basil.

If you could build your own pizza with any toppings in the world, what would you include?

I would top a pizza *margherita* with fresh porcini mushrooms, finely cut and sautéed with extra virgin olive oil. I'd top the pizza with them just before serving, so that the fragrance of the porcini wouldn't change. Finally I'd

finish it with wild arugula and *Grana Padano* cheese.

Which of your mother's dishes do you miss the most from home?

Every time I go back home to Italy, my mom calls me two weeks before to ask me what I want and plan the menu during my stay. I always ask her to prepare *boreto alla graesane* – a seafood soup prepared with a fish particular to my town – at least twice. In our town, my mom is quite famous for cooking this. Actually, all my family members are chefs.

Is there anything you don't eat?

I don't eat much meat, and I avoid fast food. I prefer street food to burgers.

What's the craziest thing you've ever done in a kitchen besides cook?

Well, you should ask my girlfriend.

What is your biggest reoccurring food craving?

I'm a chocolate addict. I always feel better emotionally after eating chocolate.

Head over to Daccapo at the Regent Beijing to try the new menu created by Chef Zucca.

P.S. WE ATE YOU

Every month, we like to shine a spotlight on the most delicious dishes we've stumbled upon recently. Slurp it up!



qingtang (清汤)

Wang Pangzi, RMB 2

Whether subways or soup, it's hard to argue with something that's two *kuai*. It's not much more than its name, but that's exactly what we want: a translucent mahogany, salty and flavorsome broth speckled with cilantro leaves. Good for solo sipping or as an accompaniment to the trademark donkey burger.

potato soup

Beiluo Bread Bar, RMB 30

This bowl of russet-colored, smooth starch, garnished with a delicate swirl of cream somehow lives up to the gusto of a chunky, rich potato soup without meddlesome lumps. It's also offered for what's arguably the best value on the whole menu – if it were injected with caffeine, we'd get three of these instead of Americanos.

geda tang (疙瘩汤)

Wangasi Muslim Fengwei, RMB 15

We once mistakenly knew it as "peasant soup," but in fact the name means "pimple." Heavy with tomato, egg and ribbons of baby bok choy, the ochre broth conceals the prize (and pimples) of this dish: rotund nuggets of dough. If you thought soup was insubstantial, think again.

mushroom soup

Mosto, RMB 95 (part of the two-course lunch set)

If you pureed the forest, this would be the result. The damp floor beneath the redwoods and pine trees is surprisingly complex in its liquid representation. The liquified shiitake supports an island of the tender mushroom, cubed and varnished with a swirl of paprika oil. It's offered on the mid-day menu as the first of two courses, if you so choose – a velvety touch to soften your winter workday.

red tofu soup

Okra, RMB 40

You might think it's miso, but Chef Max Levy is more clever and far more particular than that. If China's miso isn't good enough, then a savory red tofu it must be – dotted, naturally, with small treasures: a smoked clam, dried garlic shoots and stars of the restaurant's namesake.

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Things to do, places to be, stuff to try

GO



Sweet or salted? p62

VINTAGE CYCLING // FASHION APP // HOKKAIDO // CINEMAS



The Broadway spectacle Chicago hustles onto the Beijing Exhibition Theater stage on Jan 28, 29, 31, and Feb 1.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE ORGANIZERS

OAKLEY AIRWAVE 1.5

More than a high-quality goggle, the Airwave 1.5 delivers a full range of information such as temperature, map, speed, and incoming calls and messages right in front of your eyes through heads-up display technology. Just don't forget to watch the slope!

www.oakley.com
RMB 4,550

**TP-LINK TL-PB10400 PORTABLE BATTERY CHARGER**

This ultra-portable gadget sports 10400mAh Capacity and dual USB ports, letting you charge two devices at the same time. A fully-loaded battery can charge your iPhone up to six times. Doubles as an LED flashlight, making it very convenient for a trip to the snow.

www.tp-link.com.cn
RMB 115

**FORNIX BACK-COUNTRY MIPS HELMET**

This chic and lightweight helmet features a comfortable fit and an adjustable ventilation system to prevent goggles from fogging, giving you enough protection and vision on the slopes. Available in four colors.

www.pocsports.com
RMB 2,000

**CASIO LDF20-3AV**

The color of this timepiece makes it eye candy in the snow. Its world time, stopwatch, alarm, and hourly chime functions and waterproof design come in handy throughout a ski trip.

www.casio.com
RMB 210



Winter Widgets

by Joey Guo

FUJIFILM FINEPIX XP100

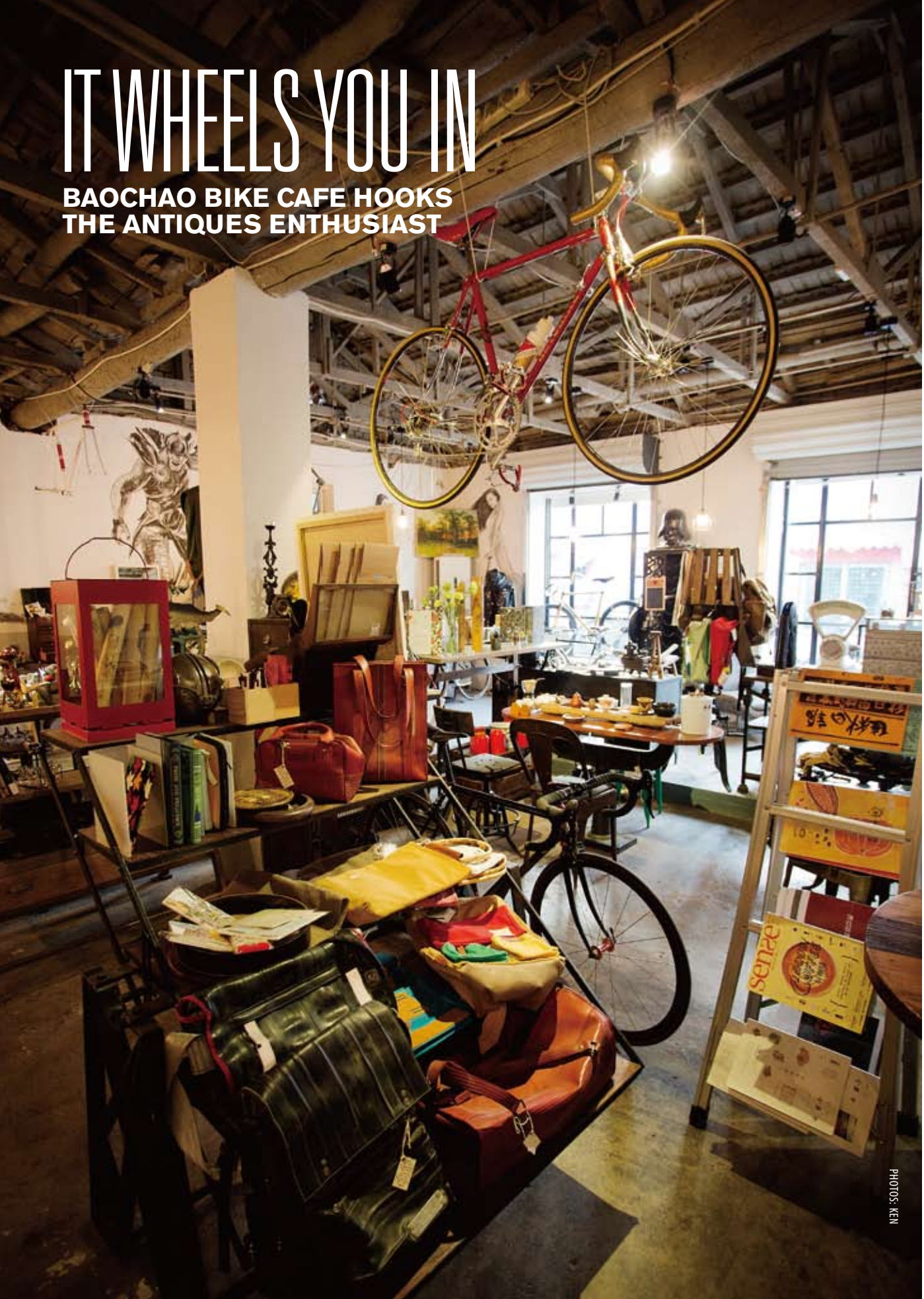
This 14MP camera is ready for the elements. Designed for temperatures as low as -10°C, waterproof up to ten meters underwater, and shockproof for a two-meter fall, it with stands whatever you throw at it, while recording all of your ski memories.

www.fujifilm.com.cn
RMB 1,999



IT WHEELS YOU IN


BAOCHAO BIKE CAFE HOOKS
THE ANTIQUES ENTHUSIAST



KNEWZABA

Tue-Sun 1-9pm. 52 Baochao Hutong, Gulou Dongdajie, Dongcheng District (159 0100 0650)

东城区鼓楼东大街宝钞胡同52号

 900m southwest of Andingmen subway station (Line 2)

Rims as gleaming as Wiz Khalifa's gold tooth, polished, caramel leather, and lightweight aluminum dipped in mint and turquoise hang suspended in mid-air, catching the rays of the afternoon sun. Those who dream of cruising Beijing's streets the way Eddy Merckx might have tackled the hills of France might be inclined to stop for a closer look. But it's a trick.

Ma He and Lao Yu have collected the petite, vintage vehicles of the racing cyclist for three years with no intention of selling them. They display them at the front of their shop, instead offering a collection of trinkets, urban gear, tools, and cycling books in a raw space reminiscent of dad's workshop. A rustic wooden workbench hosts kitschy forest animal knick-knacks, old light bulbs, and antique car horns. A mantle clock and a miniature, brass telescope overlook corduroy outerwear from Manastash, a Seattle brand. Metal cabinets feature aged scales, a cash register fit for a saloon, and a model tank.

"A bike is like a mirror. It can reflect social phenomena," owner Lao Yu responded when asked what sparked his interest in hoarding his taunting bicycles. What he speaks of is reflected in the ever-so-slightly-mismatched themes that make up his shop. They suggest Beijing's youth can be likened to that hip uncle with an antique tool shed in his basement, who sports a leather cross body bag and

stylish, suede lace up boots and collects Star Wars paraphernalia. He drinks aged whiskey from Waterford crystal, but could also sip oolong prepared atop a petrified wood tea table. That same uncle also fancies complimentary truffles and DIY capsule espresso served in lab beakers, rides a motorcycle, supports the environment, and collects coffee table pop-up books. He likes Gladiator and scantily-clad women in heels straddling bikes, much like Knewzaba's mural-maker, Shangdong illustrator Zhou Qi.

Okay, so their market likes a bit of everything. Or they don't know what they want. Anyone who spends time browsing Beijing's boutique start ups is familiar with this. If Knewzaba had a smell, it would be a cheating boyfriend's musty cologne. It's a space that, for the Western consumer, is both unsettling and soothing. Yet for Chinese, Knewzaba's introduction of a vast array of niche labels must be exciting.

Perhaps more disappointing, those looking for beans from Soloist Coffee Co., won't find them here anymore. No doubt, though, the spot whose name Ma says means something along the lines of "To eat knowledge" has plenty else to offer for consumption. *Jessica Rapp*

Also try: Natooke, Serk





Q APARTMENT

Daily 11am-8pm. 2606, Bldg 6B, Pingod, 32 Baiziwan Lu, Chaoyang District (186 1033 0793)

朝阳区百子湾路32号苹果社区6B楼2606

 750m northeast of Shuangjing station (Line 10)

Shuangjing's Pingod is now home to a Narnia of vintage designer clothing. Handpicked during more than seven years of Shao Qing's travels to France, Italy, and the US, a sparkling closet of flowing gowns, stunning prints, and kickin' shoes have transformed an unsuspecting living room.

Just three years ago, Qing was styling shoots for some of China's leading local designers including White Collar and Ricostru. It's this that refined her talent for taste and selectivity, so that she has fostered a collection of truly stand-out pieces dating back as early as the 1930s. Take the heavy, hand-sequined, plum maxi dress by Palm Beach, probably donned on a US nightclub stage sometime in the 1950s. There's the Gianni Versace signature heart skirt, recognizable from a 1994 couture collection advertisement, the era during which Versace famously recruited supermodels like Cindy Crawford for his campaigns.

It's minute details like tweaks in the designer's logos and the quality of the garment's lining that help Qing determine the authenticity of clothing when she peruses high-end shops and auctions, and she'll stand by the validity of her pieces. One can even find recreations of her originals, like

Jimmy Choo's acrylic "candy" clutch, an almost-copy of her red, Italian handbag from the 1950s which she sells alongside other chic accessories for RMB 2,000.

In a scene where shoppers are increasingly itching for apparel made with the same care as luxury designer wear, but featuring exclusive touches, Qing's shop, along with the few others like it in Beijing, is settling in nicely. Stars like Fan Bingbing and Zhang Ziyi have been sporting vintage on the red carpet, so it's only a matter of time before Qing's more unusual, elaborate dresses debut at high-profile events. Her collection goes for between RMB 700 and RMB 15,000.

Qing has been making rounds at Beijing's pop-up events, markets and exhibitions. Follow her on WeChat (shqaoing1234) to see where she'll be next. You may even get a taste of her second passion: making killer Italian food. Not that all those trips to scout clothes in Italy had any influence on her skills; it's with unabashed firmness the normally humble Qing reveals, "I taught myself."

Jessica Rapp

Also try: Chi Garden, Delia

FINNISH FLORALS

MARIMEKKO

Daily 10am-10pm. S8-10C, Taikoo Li Sanlitun South, 11 Sanlitun Lu, Chaoyang District (6416 4626)
朝阳区三里屯路11号太古里三里屯南区S8-10C

 800m west of Tuanjiehu station (Line 10)

It's difficult to miss Marimekko in Sanlitun's Taikoo Li shopping mall. Despite being tucked in a shaded corner near the escalators, its facade pops with rainbow-colored patterns dancing on the surfaces of clothing and pottery, a modern display of mid-century Scandinavian print at its finest.

The classic brand provides a top-notch selection of women's wear for the upcoming holiday season. Expect finds like Jacqueline Kennedy-era smock dresses spontaneously spotted and scattered with whimsical illustrations, slim-cut cropped trousers in Lumimarja bright orange berry print, a classic boat neck black and white striped blouse with buttons up the back, and a hidden cubby of polka dot socks. The sunny display is enough to melt away even the coldest Beijing winter blues.

Those who don't see an outfit in the shop that perfectly

suits them may want to browse the 15 bolts of fabric, sold for RMB 650-750 per meter. The famous Unikko poppy print, designed by Finnish artist Maija Isola in 1964, is a top seller and available in both their original red and multicolored versions.

Clothing aside, Marimekko hosts a selection of ceramic plates, bowls and mugs that match the most popular prints, but for those staying in the northern capital this holiday season and attending one or more of those "secret Santa" holiday parties, we recommend kitchen textiles: matching sets of dishtowels, aprons and oven mitts in, you guessed it, playful shades and prints. When gifting these, you'll be hard-pressed to find a host with the most who won't be grinning. *Nancy Tong*

Also try: IKEA, Chang and Biörck



PHOTO: COURTESY OF MARIMEKKO

PHONE FASHION

THE NEW APP THAT UNVEILS CHINA'S DREAM WARDROBES

by Jessica Rapp

Style fiends in New York City have given Beijing Subway's phone-obsessed another reason to keep their digits distracted: a new photo-sharing app driven by influential trendsetters and retailers spanning the globe.

Intended as a "style muse," Bomoda uses a pinboard-style interface that many are already familiar with (think

Pinterest and China's Meilishuo) to highlight looks from both local and international designers. The concept is easy: You browse fashion photography and repost the images you like. Bomoda's vice president of marketing, Avery Booker, points out some unique features of the app below, now available for iPhone and Android.

Genres

Filter photos by choosing genres like Brands, which include lookbooks, magazine photo spreads and ads, or Jetset, which features shots relating to glamorous itineraries in big cities.

Who will I find on Bomoda?

"Users include designers, brands, and stylists using Bomoda as a platform to reach new customers and clients, as well as popular Chinese bloggers and street style photographers," Booker says.

Likes



Hit the heart symbol to "like" an image and help promote and keep track of your favorites.

Personal Collections

Within any genre, you can find and follow personal collections from users. You can create your repost images to that collection by clicking the "+" sign.



V for verified



Bomoda's editorial staff verifies users based on their quality of activity on the site. When you see the V, you know you won't be finding photos of scruffy dogs or low-res images of what someone had for dinner.

What's in a shot?

Booker says you'll find more luxury than local labels. "However, fashion isn't black-and-white, so a significant percentage of images on Bomoda don't skew towards strictly luxury or strictly indie," he says. "The diversity of images users have added to their collections and shared to social media has been astonishing."

Tags



Want people to buy your stuff? Use the tag feature. It hosts a link to drive potential customers to an authentic e-commerce website.

GO HOKKAIDO

JAPAN'S SNOWY PARADISE

by Steven Schwankert



Hokkaido gets 15 meters of snow per year, transforming Japan's northernmost island into a playground for anyone that loves snow and winter.

A 90-minute flight north of Tokyo, Sapporo is Hokkaido's laid-back capital, a clean, low-rise city of five million best known, like Qingdao, for its eponymous beer, and a baseball team called the Nippon-Ham Fighters.

Visiting anywhere in Japan would be a waste without making every meal count. The perfect lunch, Hokkaido ramen comes served in a miso base, not the usual *shoyu* found elsewhere, and usually features a slice of butter and a spoonful of corn. Be sure to slurp – silent noodle eating is a signal of dissatisfaction. Ramen Alley in the middle of Sapporo's entertainment district, is the place to try the best in the city.

Consider eating those ramen early in the day because there's even better fare at night. The Sapporo Beer Museum, the original factory location of Sapporo Beer, serves Genghis Khan, a lamb barbecue feast that will remind Beijingers of Korean barbecue. It offers a 100-minute, all-you-can-eat-all-and-drink feast for about JPY 6,800 (about RMB 400) per person, which should leave participants sauced and stuffed for days.

Appropriately for a wintry island, snow crab is king in Hokkaido, plentiful and relatively inexpensive. Various restaurants around the city serve it. It's simple: when the

dish that looks like a tower of snow crab served from a bucket is brought to a nearby table, point to it and act like you want that. It's the best JPY 800 (RMB 47) you'll ever spend.

Hokkaido gets even better outside of Sapporo. The *onsen* (hot spring) town of Noboribetsu, about two and a half hours by bus from the capital, offers visitors a variety of in-room soaking options in hot spring inns, and *ryokan*, traditional Japanese hotels. Top among these is Takinoya Ryokan, which may make your heart flutter more than a snowy outdoor soak in 70-degree water. It's worth it. Nearby is Hell Valley, a sulfur-stinking cousin of Yellowstone featuring geysers and vents.

The locus of winter sports activity is Niseko. About three hours by bus from Sapporo's New Chitose Airport, Niseko United, as it's officially known, features four full ski areas in the shadow of the extinct volcano Mt. Yotei. Remember that earlier comment about 15 meters of powder? This is the best place to explore it.

Choose accommodation carefully, as the area is very spread out, shuttle busses are limited (except to actual ski lifts), and walking from one part of Niseko to another is not possible due to high snow drifts.

Flying to Hokkaido can be done via Air China to Sapporo, but will cost about RMB 4,000. Try Delta Airlines to Tokyo (RMB 2,800), then connect to Sapporo from Tokyo on Air Asia (about RMB 800).

GET THE LOOK

SOLD ON STYLE

by Jessica Rapp

Who better to call style savvy than those running Beijing's premier boutiques? This month, we asked shop owners to show off their personal looks.

Michel Sutyadi
Co-Founder and Creative Director
NLGX Design

His style: Urban casual

Style evolution: Sutyadi says his style changed quite a bit since coming to Beijing in 2003. "It doesn't come as a surprise that my style became much more casual after starting a t-shirt business."

What he's wearing: T-shirt, Epic Fight by NLGX; Hoodie, The Capital Hoodie by NLGX; Jacket, Uniqlo; Jeans, H&M; Boots, Marks & Spencer; Backpack, Recycled Paper Wool Backpack by Kommute; Scarf, H&M; Glasses, Sagawa Fujii

Mao Xiaozhi and Zhao Daye
Owners
Little White & Big White

Their style: Mao Mao prefers androgynous looks that are easy to move in, while Zhao sports a signature rider style. To back it up: he has five motorcycles, two bikes, three skateboards and a 1989 Cadillac.

What they're wearing: Mao Mao: Jacket, E Hyphen; Shirt, Ni Chi Cat; Skirt, LWBW; Shoes, Venilla Suite at I.T.; Purse, Paper Mint at I.T.; Necklace, Top Shop. Zhao Daye: Jacket, Beauty and Youth; T-Shirt, Famous; Pants, Macbeth; Shoes, Dr. Martens; Belt, Vans





Broadway Cinematheque



DINNER AND A MOVIE

THE PERFECT DATE

by Nick Richards, Oscar Holland, Clemence Jiang, Morgan Shang, and Nimo Wanjau

Looking to impress that special someone with an interesting take on a clichéd night out? Start with this: The largest film museum in the world is located just north of 798 Art District, there's a 4D cinema in the Olympic Village, and the oldest cinema in China is in Qianmen. We reviewed four unique movie theaters and recommend dining options so you can plan a time-tested date spiced with a dash of culture.

CHINA SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY MUSEUM

中国科技馆

Movie Selection ★★

Hollywood blockbusters in English and domestic movies are available. The 4D cinema plays specially-made films which, while not theatrical masterpieces, are designed to enhance the viewer's sensory experience. The fourth dimension refers to a combination of seat movements and other effects.

Screening Rooms 🪑🪑🪑🪑

At almost 30m wide and 22m high, the display in the huge-screen theater is only a few meters away from being the biggest cinema screen in the world. Those at the front may get a sore neck, so it may be the right spot to move in for a first kiss. Nonetheless, it is a remarkable cinematic experience, made even more engrossing by a six-track surround sound system.

Snacks 🍿

When we visited, the snack stall at the huge-screen theater was closed. Also, bear in mind that there are no snacks available at the 4D cinema. Who wants to hold onto popcorn in the midst of all the movement and risk spilling Coke on a date's lap?

Dinner ✕✕✕

There are plenty of nice restaurants about ten minutes east of the museum on Datun Beilu including the Sichuan flavors found at Meizhou Xiaochi and pizzas from Papa John's.

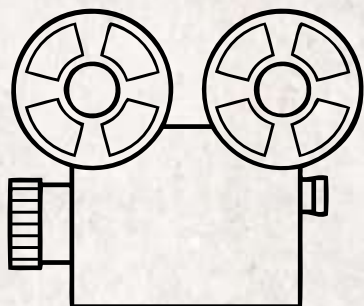
5 Beichen Donglu, Chaoyang District
(5904 1188) www.cstm.org.cn
朝阳区北辰东路5号

2



Daguanlou Cinema

3



“THE AWKWARD QUESTION THEN ARISES: TWO BLANKETS OR ONE?”

BROADWAY CINEMATHEQUE

当代Moma百老汇电影中心

Movie Selection ★★★★★

Moma has carved itself a niche with indie and art house offerings and bills itself as the first art house cinema on the Chinese mainland. Hollywood movies occasionally make it onto the list.

Screening Rooms 🍿🍿🍿

The screening rooms are on par with what you would find in other cinemas but tend to get drafty. Broadway provides blankets to customers for a RMB 100 deposit. The awkward question then arises: two blankets or one?

Snacks 🍿🍿

Standard caramel popcorn and some cookies are available, but nothing special. Drink options are limited to Coke, bottled coffee, and water.

Dinner ✕✕

The artsy Kubrick cafe in the building next door is an experience in itself, but food is limited to cakes and triangle sandwiches. In building SO of the complex, Manlan Jiudian offers a classy, traditional atmosphere and well presented Chinese dishes.

T4, Moma, 1 Xiangheyuan Lu, Dongcheng District (8438 8202/8258) www.bc-cinema.cn 东城区东直门香河园路1号当代Moma北区T4

DAGUANLOU CINEMA

大观楼影院

Movie Selection ★

Beijing's oldest cinema, Daguanlou tends to screen foreign and domestic films that are just phasing out of other cinemas. When we visited, it was still playing *Fast & Furious 6*. Located in the storied Qianmen area, make this a day trip that encompasses the neighborhood's other attractions, or invite a date who can't stop whining about the movies they've missed.

Screening Rooms 🍿

Daguanlou has some of the smallest screening rooms we've ever seen. They feel more like home theaters than cinema-caliber projection rooms. This may prove positive, if you're after a more intimate outing.

Snacks 🍿🍿

There was popcorn on sale for RMB 15, but we wouldn't vouch for any of the other snacks at; they looked like they'd been sitting there for a while.

Dinner ✕✕✕✕

Established in 1903, Donglaishun is a nearby Beijing hotpot chain that predates the cinema by two years. If your history lesson fails to impress, there are always the decadent meals at Capital M.

36 Dashilar Jie, Qianmen, Xicheng District (6303 0878) www.zhdy.com.cn 西城区前门大栅栏街36号



China National Film Museum (CNFM)

CHINA NATIONAL FILM MUSEUM (CNFM)

中国电影博物馆

Movie Selection ★★★★★

Aside from the latest mainstream films, you can also watch older movies (local and imported) that are no longer being shown at other cinemas, at very reasonable prices. Besides the variety of films, the exhibition areas offer a great opportunity to learn about the art of filmmaking and the history of Chinese film.

Screening Rooms 🎬🎬🎬

CNFM boasts cutting-edge film projectors and equipment. The 21m by 27m IMAX screen might not be the biggest in Beijing, but earned its reputation when *Avatar* was first shown here in 2009.

Snacks 🍿🍿

There were several snack shops in the complex and one cafe with fresh-ground coffee and free Wi-Fi. There was sweet popcorn for sale on the first floor.

Dinner 🍴🍴🍴

Located outside the northeast Fifth Ring Road nearby dining options are scant. There is a cafeteria in the basement that may rank in the top ten worst places to take a date on Earth. You've taken your prospect this far, keep the adventure alive. Across the street, Huiyou is famous for its fish head stew with pancakes. Order a bottle of Argentinean wine to sustain the romance.

9 Nanying Lu, Chaoyang District (Cinema and IMAX hotline: 6438 1229, other information: 8435 5959) www.cnfm.org.cn
朝阳区南影路9号

“THERE IS A CAFETERIA
IN THE BASEMENT THAT MAY BE
RANKED IN THE TOP TEN
WORST PLACES TO
TAKE A DATE ON EARTH”



PHOTOS: KEN AND SUI

Introducing the people who matter

"NO ONE MESSES WITH SOMEONE WIELDING A CHAINSAW" SEE P66

"EVERYONE MAKES FUN OF ME FOR LOVING ANYTHING BY SHANIA TWAIN" SEE P67

"AN ALIEN TRANSVESTITE TRAVELS TO EARTH AND CREATES A MALE SEX SLAVE" SEE P68

"I'D LOVE TO MEET SCROOGE BEFORE HE BECAME MEAN" SEE P69

MEET

UNKNOWN MORTAL ORCHESTRA // COLIN DIXON // NOAH WEINZWEIG // RICHARD BARNES

JAMES BLUNT AT HIS MOST CLOYING

*There must be an
angel with a smile on
her face, when she
thought up that I
should be with you*

*And I love you,
I swear that's
true, I cannot
live without you*

*I'm watching you
breathing for the last
time, a song for your
heart*

*Love is blind and
that I knew when,
my heart was
blinded by you*

Have your blind heart melted by James Blunt at MasterCard Center on Jan 4.

MACHO DEBAUCHERY

UMO FRONTMAN PROVES HIS MANLINESS

by Kyle Mullin

Ruban Nielson isn't a wuss, though, he certainly sounded like one earlier this year when he described how his "eyes get puffy," when he hikes, making him much more of a "city person." Now the New Zealand-born front man of Portland indie troop Unknown Mortal Orchestra (UMO) reaffirms his masculinity revealing, how rebuilding instruments makes him a true handyman and his penchant for chainsaws onstage.

You recently said you would need to go to a camp to learn how to be a man. Shouldn't a rock star sound more masculine than that?

I was just making fun of myself. I think I was trying to distance myself from the 'crunchy granola' healthy outdoorsy lifestyle that's associated with Portland.

And yet you once wielded a chainsaw on stage. How did that happen?

Our then-drummer said his dad had a chainsaw. So we stole it for the day. My brother started it in the dressing room at a festival, and then took it onstage while it was revving. Funnily enough, no one messes with someone wielding a chainsaw when it is turned on. We were all wearing matching gold costumes, like something David Bowie might wear. It was a really fun show.

You're also something of a handyman. What have you been tinkering with lately?

The latest thing I made was a pedal. It uses three oscillators that react with each other and with the guitar. I use really old parts that I pull out of old tape recorders, tube radios and things like that. Then I rearrange them until they sound the way I like.

There's some ambiguity about what kind of band UMO is exactly ...

My idea of what is good involves that element of mystique, or some kind of minimalism. The drawback is stupid people don't get it ... actually, that's just another benefit.

Are you working on any new music, and does it have that same mystique?

Art isn't social media or web design. Its goal isn't to provide ultimate user-friendliness. Ambiguities and open-endedness are a necessary part of good art. So my answer is, my aesthetic will stay the same. But it might become more refined. I'm going to make UMO more and more UMO-ish.

See Unknown Mortal Orchestra perform at MAO Livehouse on Jan 16. For more information visit the Beijinger website.



PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE ORGANIZERS

RICHARD BARNES

GUITARIST, THE GROOVE COLLECTIVE

Can you play any other instruments? If so, what?

I've played guitar for over 11 years, but before that I played violin, very, very badly for seven years.

What was the first song you memorized the lyrics to?

That's a long time ago, but I think it was "Basket Case" by Green Day.

Name a song for your time in Beijing?

Probably one: The Groove Collective original called "Get the Funk Out" because it was one of the first songs we wrote, and it's also about Beijing.

What is the song you've listened to most in your life?

"Sweet Child O' Mine" by Guns N' Roses. I was obsessed with trying to learn the solo when I was younger.

What's your favorite Chinese song, and why?

Probably the pop song "Aiqing Maimai." I think it's an awesome song, but none of my Chinese friends agree. I used to sing it with a friend when played at Central Park.

Has a song ever made you cry?

That would be "Pachelbel's Canon," a stunning piece of music.

Which song lifts your spirits?

Anything that has groove, soul and a great melody. If I had to choose one song it would probably be "Every



Little Thing She Does Is Magic" by The Police because every time I listen to it I feel a little bit better.

Which singer would you bring back from the dead?

Surely there is only one logical choice: Freddy Mercury.

What record are you most embarrassed about having on your iPod?

Well, I don't think it embarrassing, but everyone else makes fun of me for loving everything recorded by Shania Twain. Does that count?

Which artist would you most like for a drink with?

Oh, that is tough. It would have to be between Jeff Beck, Dave Gilmour, Mike Landau and Guthrie Govan. They are all my favorite guitarists.

RICHARD'S FIVE SONG PLAYLIST

1. "Time" by Pink Floyd It's a great example of what is great about Pink Floyd.

2. "Every Little Thing She Does Is Magic" by The Police. You can't listen to this song without feeling a bit better.

3. "Kid Charlemagne" by Steely Dan. It has not one, but two of the best guitar solos ever written, both played by the amazing Larry Carlton.

4. "Cliffs of Dover" by Eric Johnson. I tried so hard to learn this song

and could never manage it. An astonishing piece.

5. "Start Me Up" by The Rolling Stones. Just a great song.

Catch Dave and the Groove Collective at Fubar on Jan 15.



NOAH WEINZWEIG

PRODUCER, TENEIGHTY

Have you ever walked out of the movie theater? If so, which scene made you say “I can’t watch any more of this”?

As I live in China I mostly see films on DVD, so the question should be “which DVD did I walk out on?” I think the winner this year is *After Earth*. I watched most of it in 32x fast forward and then even that wasn’t fast enough to get me through the pain of that father-son home video.

In the biopic of your life, which scene should be filmed in slow motion?

The scenes when I kiss the girl too fast.

In the biopic of your life, which scene should be filmed as a silent movie?

All the scenes where I have to listen to my film clients tell me why payment has been delayed again.

What’s the TV series or movie that you haven’t been able to find on DVD?

All Is Lost, Robert Redford. I bought a 43-foot sailboat last year, but have no sailing experience. I’m dying to see how my eventual demise will be played out.

Which character from TV/film would you most like to be?

Easy, Indiana Jones. Rugged good looks, beautifully worn-in leather jacket. Lots of turbulent relationships with tough gorgeous women and a whip! Sign me up!

What TV show or movie did you once love, but now think is rubbish?

CSI. It was a great show once, but now it’s an incestuous soulless formulaic cliché wrapped in a rancid corpse and syndicated around the globe.

What TV show or movie did you have to be coerced into watching, but now readily admit that you love?

Breaking Bad. I came to the show late, around season 4. Too many people were telling me to see it, so I did. After watching all five seasons I now readily announce that if I had only three weeks to live but had to wait four weeks to see the end of *Breaking Bad* I would squeeze an extra week out of life to do that. *Breaking Bad* is stroke of human entertainment genius!

What’s your favorite film musical?

Rocky Horror Picture Show – nothing will ever touch that one. An alien transvestite travels to earth and creates a male sex slave on a low-budget set with Meatloaf singing on a Harley and Susan Sarandon in a bra. Come on, that’s pure genius!

What movie are you sick of people saying to you: “What?! You haven’t seen it?”

I’ve seen every movie made. You can’t touch this!

What is the slowest paced movie you still enjoyed?

There are many, some that come to mind include *Papillon*, *There Will Be Blood*, *Barry Lyndon*, *Lawrence of Arabia* (RIP, Peter O’Toole).

What was the first movie that you saw with a date?

Are you serious? I’m 42, I’ve been dating for 40 of those years. I can’t remember, but I know we didn’t get married!

What movie first made you say: “Wow, how did they do that?”

Gravity!

Learn more about Noah and Teneighty’s current projects at www.teneighty.net.

COLIN DIXON

BEIJING GAELIC ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION MEMBER

If you only ever read one book about China, make it ...

Lords of the Rim by Sterling Seagrave – an interesting insight into who the Chinese actually are.

What book do you pretend to have read, but haven't really?

The Bible. I've listened to passages from it on a Sunday but haven't actually read it.

Bathroom reading?

Evo, the performance car magazine. In a previous life I was a petrolhead. Beijing has cured me of that and I'm perfectly happy on a bicycle now. There's definitely some twisted irony in there somewhere.

Book you hid before we came around?

The Da Vinci Code. Lots of hype, but precious little substance.

What is the book that changed your life?

Every book I read changes my life ... at least a little for a while.

Character in a book who you'd like to meet?

I'd love to meet Scrooge before he became mean. I'd like to know what happened to him. Was he a budding philanthropist who just lost hope? Was he an orphan that never got rescued? We love books because they just open up so many questions, right?

What's the last book you bought?

Antifragile by Nassim Taleb. I bought this book after a recommendation from a good friend who told me it might be the best thing I ever read. This came from a guy who is a tad cynical and not prone to outbursts of emotional praise. I thoroughly enjoyed it and it certainly provokes thought about who we listen to.

Book you wish you hadn't read?

I don't think there are any regrets in reading books.

Book that surprised you the most?

China Witness: Voices From A Silent Generation by Xinran.

The resilience and fatalism of Chinese people who survived the Cultural Revolution absolutely amazes me.

Book you'd like to see adapted as a film?

The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty by Sebastian Barry. It's a tale of an emigrant. It must ring true for political refugees everywhere. I think it would lend itself well to a film, with the lead played by Liam Neeson. As he gets older, his features become more harrowed and melancholic, and that is the overwhelming feeling that this book left me with. I think Andrea Arnold (*Red Road*) would direct it to give it a gritty realism and avoid the romanticism that Hollywood would surely bathe it in.

Favorite line/quote from a book?

Once upon a time ...

Join Colin and the Beijing GAA gang combining fitness and craic as they prepare for a new season. Check out www.beijinggaa.org for more details.



ECOLOGY

"THE ONLY GOOD CAGE IS AN EMPTY CAGE." - LAWRENCE ANTHONY



Elephants perform acrobatics at the Beijing World Park elephant show.



CRUEL ACTS

WHY BEIJING IS LAGGING IN ANIMAL WELFARE

By Kyle Mullin

Hulking apes pedaling squeaky little tricycles. Lumbering elephants hoisting their hind legs, like the feeblest of acrobats. Whimpering canines, leaping through hoops of fire. These stunts and more are touted as spectacles to behold at countless animal performance venues across China. But activist non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have deemed these popular routines to be cruel and tortuous.

The most shocking aspect of this issue may not be the degree of harm inflicted on animals, but instead the locales where these performances occur. They are not exclusive to underdeveloped corners of China. In fact, the Shandong provincial capital of Jinan made one of the country's biggest animal rights breakthroughs this past fall, after locals coordinated a social media campaign to stop a carnival featuring wild animal performances. Meanwhile, animals are forced to showcase tricks on a daily basis at parks in cities like Beijing and Shanghai.

This, of course, begs the question: why is China's capital lagging behind Jinan in the realm of animal welfare?

Mang Ping, founder of the NGO Beijing Zoo Watch,

says our city's animal rights track record has always been lagging. She cites regular performances at the Badaling Zoo and the Beijing World Park elephant show as some of the worst examples (these facilities did not respond to interview requests by press time). Mang adds that she was even more appalled to see dogs leaping through flaming hoops during her visit to the Interesting Animals Performance at the Beijing Wildlife Park on November 2.

But Cao Liang, director of the State Forestry Administration (SFA) – the government branch that oversees China's woodlands and safari parks – says such performances are a time-honored Chinese tradition. "If you really want to focus on animal performances, I advise you to visit several wild zoos, and listen to the audience's opinions," he says. "Hear the 'bravos!' and applause after an excellent show. Ask them if this is an abuse of animals. Does the show not bring people happiness?"

Mang says onlookers had a far different reaction at the Interesting Animals Performance she attended this past fall. The event featured a monkey walking a tightrope over a pond, clutching a stick that was chained to its steel collar.

"In the middle of the performance, the careless monkey almost fell into the pond, which caused the crowd to scream," Mang says, adding that the little ape used that mini-balancing beam to eventually regain its footing. She adds: "I feel ashamed of my government. Why can't they do something practical to stop these terrible performances?"

But David Neale, the welfare director of Animals Asia, says government bureaucracy has often proved to be an ineffective weapon in the fight for Chinese animal rights. Neale says the SFA issued a directive in 2010 designed to end acts of cruelty in safari parks. The notice instructed facilities to stop animal performances, halt the sale of illegal wildlife products, and conduct self-inspection reports.

Such an initiative seems to directly conflict with Cao's comments to *the Beijinger*. "In China, there is not even a single law forbidding animal performance. Without any legal authorization, no government department can interrupt any legitimate business operations," the SFA director said.

Neale says that attitude was apparent in the implementation of the SFA's 2010 animal cruelty directive. "We have not seen significant changes to safari park activities since July 2010," he added.

But Neale says he hasn't completely lost faith in the PRC's reform processes. He says Animals Asia has been impressed by the work of the Ministry of Urban and Rural Housing Development (MURHD). This department is responsible for urban zoos, which were once China's most popular animal performance venues. Neale says the MURHD followed through on its welfare directives in 2013, implementing a "National Zoo Development" plan that banned animal performances in its facilities.

"The forestry departments won't engage in this process," Neale says. "Animals Asia has invited them to many workshops on animal welfare. But they declined."

Zhong Xie, vice deputy secretary general for the Chinese Association of Zoological Gardens (a branch of the MURHD that oversees these recent reforms), says such changes will take time for both zoos and safari parks.

"There is a distance between Chinese zoos and zoos in developed countries," she says. "Our association hopes to help them continue to improve, in order to reach the advanced level of international zoos."

"Safari parks want to make money from these performances," says Liu Nonglin, chief engineer of the China Zoo Association (another branch of the MURHD), speaking far more bluntly about the SFA's shortcomings.

Liu feels that smaller towns like Jinan are better

equipped to tackle the animal performance business.

"Beijing and Shanghai have shows like this at their safari parks almost every day, so people won't feel that strongly about it," he says, adding that there was nothing routine about Jinan's circumstances. "That was a traveling circus, not a regular show. It got more attention and was a bigger deal, so more people realized it was bad."

Neale says a similar sort of apathy would have quelled Jinan's opposition a few short years ago. But thanks to social media, he says the Shandong capital's activists successfully rallied support – sending visceral animal abuse pictures that went viral and coordinating rallies with a few touchscreen taps.

Liu and Neale may be quick to tout China's second-tier animal rights advances, but Mang is equally optimistic about Beijing's potential. She cites a successful Weibo campaign that Beijing Zoo Watch carried out in 2011 against an elephant circus held in The Bird's Nest. But she says true change can't come through social networks alone.

"If we have better laws, I think people will follow them," she says, adding that animal protection legislation won't pass without pressure from activists. "If people know about the link between these performances and animal abuse, they will choose to do more and more. So we have a lot of work to do, in order to let them know."



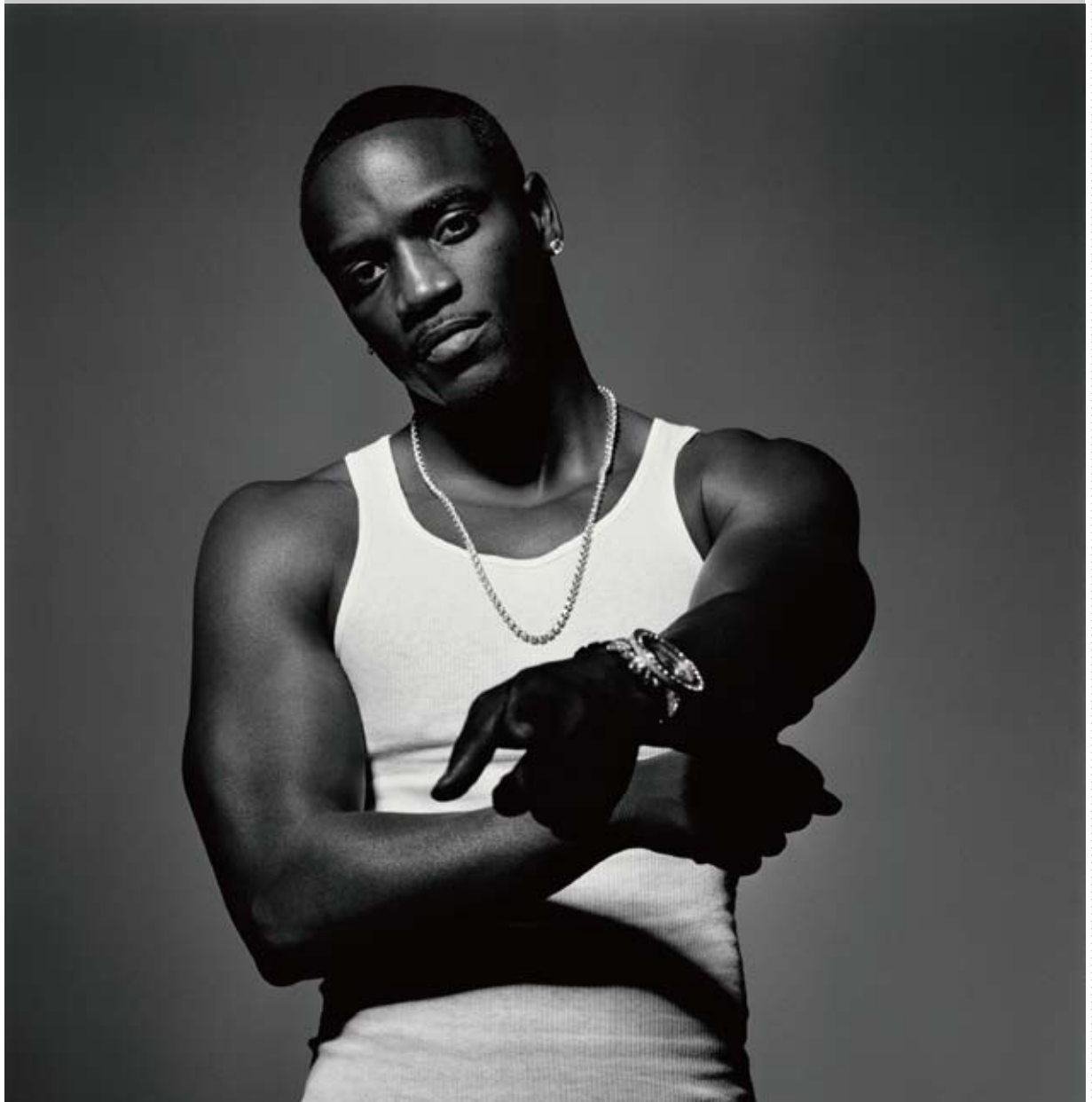
What are you planning to do?

EVENTS

OUR EDITORS PICK THE BEST OF THE MONTH

UPLOAD YOUR EVENTS AT THEBEIJINGER.COM/EVENTS

FIND ALL VENUE INFO AT THEBEIJINGER.COM/DIRECTORY. PLEASE CALL VENUES AHEAD OF TIME TO CONFIRM DETAILS.



AKON

JAN 17 – Hip-hop heavyweight returns to Beijing as part of his So Blue world tour. The multi-million selling “Lonely” singer has no shortage of fans in Beijing and has worked with performers like Michael Jackson, Eminem, and Snoop Dogg throughout a glittering career. RMB 280-1,680. 6.30pm. MasterCard Center (6828 6386)



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1. NAKADIA

JAN 11 – Thai dance floor queen Nakadia hits Beijing as part of a world tour. A rising star in the global DJ community, the Berlin-based electronic spinner has been touring constantly for the past ten years playing some of the world's biggest venues. RMB 50. 10.30pm. Lantern (135 0134 8785)

2. HOTPOT F. SOUTH RAKKAS CREW

JAN 10 – The “dons of digital funk,” South Rakkas Crew guest at this edition of the popular Migas night with support from local darlings Wordy and Soulspeak. RMB 80 (Free before 11pm). 10pm. The Bar at Migas (5208 6061)

3. 2014 CBA ALLSTAR WEEKEND

JAN 18-19 – The CBA's top players come together for a weekend of exhibition matches and contests including skills challenges, a three-pointer competition, and a slam dunk contest, before the annual North vs. South match-up. RMB 100-880. 7pm. MasterCard Center (6828 6386)

4. A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

JAN 23-25 – The Northern Ballet Theatre brings its magic to Shakespeare's most bewitching play in this critically-acclaimed dance version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. RMB 280-1,280. 7.30pm. National Center for the Performing Arts (6655 0000)

5. SHANXI

ALL MONTH – A solo exhibit by photographer Zhang Xiao that explores the spooky post-Chinese New Year traditions of Shanxi province. Pekin Fine Arts (5127 3220)



5

DON'T MISS

DUBVISION

JAN 1 – Dutch EDM superstars DubVision front a Playboy-themed bash at the Gongti veteran. After collaboration with fellow Dutch heavyweight Sander van Doorn, the duo proceeded to headline some of the biggest dance clubs in the world. Price TBD. 10pm. Vics (5293 0333)

HOLIDAY LUNCH

JAN 1 – Nali Patio darling offers a smooth slide into 2014 with their two-course lunch. For RMB 158, add unlimited bubbles. RMB 135 (two courses). Noon-2.30pm. Mosto (5208 6030)

NEW YEAR'S DAY BRUNCH

JAN 1 – Eat, drink, and be merry at the China World Hotel and their seafood buffet in addition to other mains like roast turkey and ham. RMB 358 (includes a glass of red wine). 11.30am-2.30pm. Scene a Café (6505 2266 ext 35)

NEW YEAR'S BRUNCH 2014

JAN 1 – Start off the new year on the right foot with high-quality brunch favorites in Feast's bright, airy space. RMB 168+15% (two courses), RMB 208+15% (three courses). 11.30am-3pm. Feast (Food by EAST) (8414 9820)

LISA ONO

JAN 1 – After a successful stint as a judge on Chinese reality singing talent show "Asian Wave" (Shengdong Yazhou), fan favorite Lisa Ono returns with her signature brand of bossa nova for a new year celebration show. RMB 180-1,280. 7.30pm. Workers' Gymnasium (6501 6300)

THE DETROIT SERIES: LAMARR IRBY BIRTHDAY SPECIAL

JAN 3 – Beijing's premier soulful house music night returns with a special celebration for the founder, as Lamarr Irby celebrates his birthday in style, testing out Migas's new sound system. RMB 30 (free before 11pm). 10pm. The Bar at Migas (5208 6061)

THE SLAP

JAN 10 – "Critical rock specialists" The Slap play their first Beijing show of the new year. RMB 80, RMB 60 (advance). 9.30pm. Yugong Yishan (6404 2711)

WINE TALK: WORLD-CLASS WINES

JAN 10 – Sip on the subject matter as you get a view into what takes wine to the international level. RMB 138 (includes tasting). 7.30pm. Capital M (6702 2727)

THE BEIJING DEAD

JAN 11 – Billing themselves as "Beijing's premier Grateful Dead cover band," these funky psychedelic cowboys kick off their second year paying tribute to Americana classics and spacey jam tunes in China's capital. Free. 9pm. 4corners (6401 7797)

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1. DANCING QUEEN: ABBA'S GREATEST HITS

JAN 11 – Celebrating timeless hits from the pop phenomenon *ABBA* and hot on the heels of the huge success of the Broadway musical *Mamma Mia*, this outrageous glittering production is a non-stop, fun-filled party for everyone. RMB 100-1,000. 7.30pm. Poly Theater (6500 1188)

2. HAVOK

JAN 17 – Following in the tradition of Metallica and Slayer, these thrash metal heads intend to crash hard on the Beijing stage. RMB 160, RMB 120 (advance). 8pm. Yugong Yishan (6404 2711)

3. MARK JOHN

JAN 25 – One of the most respected and highly revered DJs in Australia, Mark John comes to stroke the wax in Beijing after supporting Prince on a recent tour of Down Under. RMB 80, RMB 50 (advance). 9pm. Yugong Yishan (6404 2711)

1. SWAN LAKE

JAN 10-12 – Ukraine's Kiev Ballet Theater, performing under the stewardship of renowned choreographers Serguey Sergueev and Vakhtang Vronskiy, present what has become one of the most respected ballets in the world. RMB 280-1,280. 7.30pm. National Center for the Performing Arts (6655 0000)

2. SARAH BRIGHTMAN

JAN 19 – The world's biggest selling soprano, an international superstar as beloved for her staggering vocal

range (over three full octaves) as for her impassioned film and stage performances. RMB 380-1,680. 7.30pm. Great Hall of the People (6309 6156)

3. FIRE OF ANATOLIA

JAN 1 – Reputed as one of the best dance groups in the world, this is a unique project that derives inspiration from Anatolia's ancient mythological and cultural history. RMB 180-1,680 7.30pm. Great Hall of the People (6309 6156)



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EVENTS



1. SHINee

JAN 18 – Award-winning, reality TV-starring, South Korean R&B boy band SHINee have taken the South Korean charts by storm since their debut in 2008. Now they bring their slick live performance to Beijing. RMB 666-999. 7.30pm. Olympic Sports Center Gymnasium (400 610 3721)

2. SPINDER UNPLUGGED

JAN 3 – This Jimi Hendrix tribute band will shake down the bar, even unplugged. Expect plenty of “Foxy Lady” cocktails and “Are You Experienced?” absinthe shots throughout the night. 10pm. Modernista (136 9142 5744)

3. MOZART'S LE NOZZE DI FIGARO

JAN 16 -19 – Mozart's classic presented by the NCPA's very own critically acclaimed conductor Liu Jia. RMB 180-680. 7.30pm. National Center for the Performing Arts (6655 0000)

4. STAR WARS TRILOGY

JAN 6, 13, 20 – What better way to celebrate this original space opera trilogy than over the first three Mondays of a freezing cold month in a dive club with a big screen and free popcorn? Moaning about the childish prequels and further blasphemous editions to come is highly encouraged. Free. 9pm. Dada (183 1108 0818)

1. SIR ALICE SONGWRITING

JAN 11-12 – Discover your hidden capacity for songwriting through word games and basic rhyming rules instructed by touring French musician Sir Alice. Price and time TBA. Atelier (6416 1614)

2. BURNS' NIGHT

JAN 25 – The Beijing Caledonian society invites you to a night of dance, drinks, buffet and a live performance by the John Stewart Band from Scotland. RMB 800. 6.30pm. China World Hotel (6505 2266)

3. JEFF LANG

JAN 2 – Almost a year on from his performance at last year's JUE Festival, Australia's Jeff Lang returns to "paint pictures with music." The virtuoso guitarist has a rich back catalogue of 14 studio albums from which to draw. RMB 80, RMB 50 (advance). 9pm. Yugong Yishan (6404 2711)



LIKE WHITE ON RICE

by George Ding

The following is an excerpt from Nikki Aaron's upcoming book about dating in China, *Like White on Rice*.

When I first came to China in 2007, I promised myself I would do two things: keep an open mind about this strange new country, and try to have sex with a Chinese man. When people – i.e. my white friends in England – heard about the latter, they were shocked.

"Why Chinese men?"

"Are you trying to set some kind of record?"

No, I'm just open to finding love wherever it exists. And I happen to be writing a book about dating in Beijing. I mean, we've all heard the stories of white guys and Chinese girls – now it's time to tell the other, less creepy half of the story.

My friends back home – who I'm starting to think are, like, kind of racist – always ask me what I see in Chinese men. They reject out of hand the possibility of dating a Chinese guy, saying they're too skinny, effeminate or Asian to be attractive. And then there's the small penis thing.

But not me.

I find Chinese men to be a breath of fresh air from the kind of guys I used to date. The fact that they will carry your handbag without complaint is reason enough to try one for yourself.

But apart from being great bag carriers, Chinese men have also helped me understand China more deeply. If dating a Jew makes you a Talmudic scholar, then dating a Chinese is like being handed the keys to 5,000 years of culture. I've dated two Chinese men, so that makes me, like, a leading expert.

I know exactly how large of a bribe to give my doctor if I want a surgery to go smoothly; I know how to make every pouty face Chinese girls deploy in selfies; and I have mastered three out of the four tones.

But, as always, problems started to seep into my cross-cultural relationships.

Take my latest boyfriend for example. His mother called

him – a lot. So much so that I wondered if there wasn't some kind of Oedipus thing going on. (I looked into it – there wasn't.) After much soul searching, I realized that China's "Little Emperor" syndrome was to blame. My taste in men has been impeccable, but China's family planning policy has rendered them spoiled and hopelessly filial. It's always China's family planning policy, isn't it, ladies?

I also couldn't stand his manners. Coming from a country so fond of anachronistic rules and stuffy hierarchy, his peasant insouciance grated on me. He would noisily hock up phlegm instead of silently drawing it up into his mouth and swallowing it like a normal person. He would also slurp his noodles loudly instead of eating them the

right way, with a soup spoon and noodle fork. It was almost as if he'd grown up with entirely different customs.

Long story short, our relationship fell apart. The cultural differences just proved to be too much. He loved his mother; I loved myself.

I was into peddling Chinese propaganda; he not so much. And then there's the small penis thing.

Some of you might think I'm generalizing but I dated two guys and they were *both* like this.

Most importantly, he didn't appreciate how lucky he was to be with me, a white woman. If you think about it, what are the odds? You're probably more likely to die in an airplane crash. But he didn't seem to realize he'd hit the interracial equivalent of the Lotto.

But even though my love life in China hasn't been all that, my career is taking off. With lots of hard work and a little white privilege, I managed to land an amazing job at Xinhua, which, for those who don't know, is like *Pravda* without the fact-checking. Nowadays, I'm a presenter on a nightly news program that is neck and neck in ratings with the hit reality show, *Paint Drying*.

It just goes to show you: if you put your mind to it, any privileged, attractive white female can make it in this country.

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