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DANCE IN BEIJING

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Back For More: Brasserie Flo
Alleyway Gourmet: Xi'an Wangjia
Wikipedia: T is for ... *tiebanshao, tiao, tangculiji*
Taste Test: Strawberry Spread
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This month's cover features The Hutong Yellow Weasels at one of their regular Modernista hoedowns and was shot by Sui.



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WHAT'S HAPPENING

FEB 3

SUPER BOWL XLVIII

Celebrate the agony and ecstasy of America's Super Bowl Sunday. It will be early in the morning, but that doesn't mean you won't find all the fixings to make your football fantasy come alive.



FEB 11

THE LUMINEERS

Folk me, this will be a great show. Check out these American folk rockers as they bring a little of that country twang to ol' Peking. This is their first time in China, so let's show them we know how to cut a rug.

FEB 22

SVEN VATH

The German EDM legend returns to Beijing to let the dogs out. He comes here every year, but this just means he is that good and knows exactly what we want to get our freak on.



FEB 28

CARSICK CARS ALBUM RELEASE PARTY

Check out Beijing's hottest musical export as they embark on the next phase of their musical cycle. They have a new album hot off the press, produced by some very big names. Expect nothing short of sonic perfection.

CITY SCENE

TIANTAN DONGMEN // BEST OF THE BLOG // SCENE & HEARD // JOKES



Tourist arrivals in 2013 were down **10.3** percent year on year, which is bad news for Beijing businesses and tourism officials.

Perhaps even worse, Beijing's **72**-hour visa waiver program also fell short of expectations, receiving

only **14,000** arrivals as compared to the anticipated **20,000**.

Tourist arrivals in China as a whole were only down **2.5** percent, which suggests travelers are preferring cities outside of the capital.

LETTER FROM AN EDITOR

"Dance," implored Baz Luhrmann. "Even if you have nowhere to do it but in your own living room." Clearly Baz isn't six-and-a-half feet tall with a quite inhuman lack of rhythm and living in a cramped shoebox of an apartment with what I'm convinced is early onset scopophobia. In any case, the sentiment is a nice one. To most, dancing is a source of joy. An outlet for emotions stockpiled throughout the week. A chance to unshackle and enjoy a night out with abandon.

In order to countenance dancing at any time, I need to ascribe to the words of Mark Twain who advised the awkward like myself to "dance like nobody is watching." Or perhaps Dave Barry who pointed out, "nobody cares if you can't dance well. Just get up and dance." It's sound advice. But it's okay, I seriously doubt that I'm alone in my attitude towards dancing in public. What is initially fear and outright refusal eventually gives way to trepidation following a few drinks and soon becomes tacit acceptance and, ultimately, enjoyment.

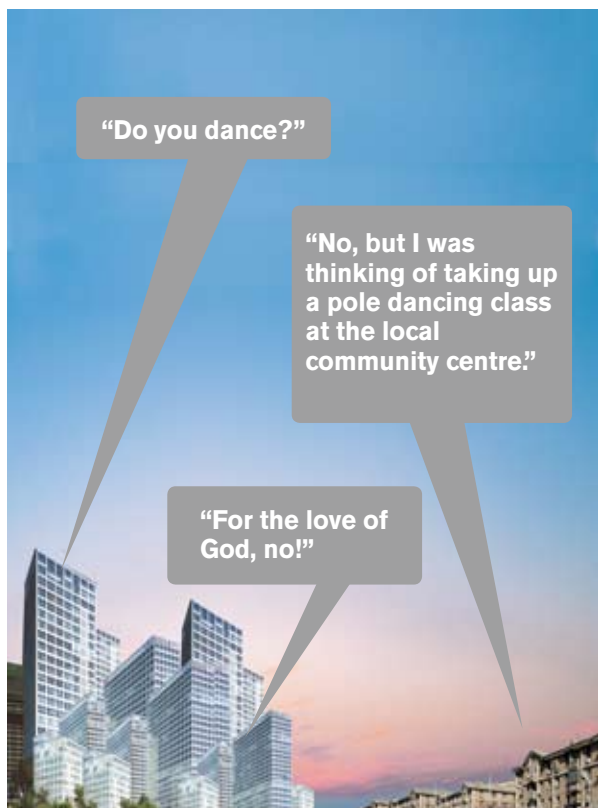
This month, we spoke to some people who posi-

tively encourage you to watch them perform: from the Shuangjing line dancers shuffling through the park jazz-handed and zombified, to the dancers of D&D Entertainment, who have lit up many a *the Beijinger* party with their dazzling routines, to the China national pole dancing squad, who want to be seen in a different light, and the dragon dancers of the Long Feng Yuan dance troupe, who are desperate for more people to watch them. Then there are those who see dance as a therapy and a genuine source of comfort and connection with those around them.

All those who indulge in dance in our city should be feted. Usually it's for fun, but often they're pursuing a passion, and as Albert Einstein best pointed out, dancers are athletes of God.

Paul Ryding
Managing Editor

GENERATION GAP



TELL US A JOKE



JONNY HUTONG PRESENTER ON CHINA RADIO INTERNATIONAL'S "THE PULSE"

Q: Why don't dogs make good dancers?
A: Because they have two left feet.
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on EZFM (91.5FM).

PHOTO: COURTESY OF JONNY HUTONG

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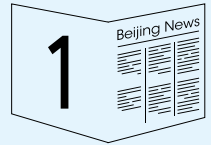
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BEST OF THE BLOG

Every month, we tally the hits from the Beijinger website and bring you the top five most viewed blogs.



2014 CHINA PUBLIC HOLIDAY SCHEDULE RELEASED: GET READY TO WORK WEEKENDS

"We love working weekends!" Not really, but following a public consultation regarding the onerous nature of working weekends during holiday periods, the government has released the 2014 holiday schedule. Expect weekend make-up days for Chinese New Year, May 1 holiday, and October holiday. Read "Talking Travel" every Tuesday to find out how to make the most of your holidays.



FORMER BEIJING EXPAT SCHOOLTEACHER SENTENCED TO 12 YEARS IN JAIL

Neil Robinson, a former international schoolteacher in Beijing, was sentenced to 12 years in prison in his native England for sexually assaulting a 13-year-old and possessing child pornography. Robinson was convicted of crimes that occurred between 1999 and 2002 in the UK, but there is no evidence that he committed any crimes during his time in Beijing.

CUSTOMS: 200 FOREIGNERS DEPORTED FROM BEIJING IN 2013

Beijing police and entry and exit officials announced that they deported 200 foreigners in 2013, mostly due to illegal employment violations. Deportation as a possible consequence of illegal employment came to light when a British citizen struck a woman on his motorbike last month. Foreign passport holders are required to carry proof of identification on them at all times while in China.



DID CHINA JUST LEGALIZE SAME-SEX MARRIAGE?

A video from China Central Television went viral, showing what appeared to be two men kissing at what looked like a wedding ceremony, with a caption stating "China to become the 16th nation to legalize gay marriage." However, there has been no other official news report to back it up, and the video has since been declared a fake.

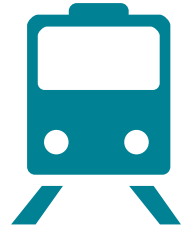
FARE HIKES MAY LIE AHEAD FOR SUBWAY RIDERS

Our days of RMB 2 for a one-way fare anywhere on the Beijing Subway network appear to be numbered. Riders may soon face a distance-based fare system used by other cities such as Hong Kong and Shanghai. The measure may help relieve rail congestion and generate more revenue for the subway system.



Check out these stories and more at www.thebeijinger.com/blog.

TIANTAN DONGMEN, LINE 5



Voyeurism – not of the sexual nature, but of the whimsical – is the draw to this stop on the south-stretch of Line 5. Dug into the eastern peripheries of the Temple of Heaven, the escalator that ascends out of exit A1 leads you into a park that is magical, not only for the platform where emperors made celestial offerings and prayed for good harvests, but for the laymen and their hobbyist performances.

Watch

As a tourist destination, Tiantan is historically significant. To locals, this is a place for interaction and performance – the city's work yard for her residents' inner-jokers.

Deep in the park, old ladies dance, the red fans in their hands gliding to the crackling sounds of a boom box. The dancers harbor no musical prejudice and are oblivious to the speakers that can't process bass. They are here for the challenge of synchronized steps, glowing smiles and camaraderie. Further along, a trio of old men manipulate horsehair bows, and their *erhu* fiddles moan a traditional tune. If the day is right, more may join, and the Beijing *piaoyou* tradition will begin.

This is a rare chance to witness the amateur vein of Peking Opera, where ancient tragedies of greed, love and corruption are sung aloud by friends and strangers in shrill voices. The vibrating sandalwood and python skins that characterize the instruments add soulful texture to many a mournful tale.

Ride

A u-turn out of the same exit brings you onto Tiantan Donglu, and to your right are bikes to rent. Grab a ride and pedal north to Fahuasi Jie. Turn right and continue for 200 meters until you arrive at the Beijing Transportation Museum. On display are the early 20th-century trams that once ploughed through throngs of rickshaws, peddlers and farmer's carts. Keep exploring the neighborhood until your stomach gurgles for food.

Picnic

Pick up some snacks at a supermarket and throw them in your backpack. For those with a penchant for local flavors, there is a Hahajing at 4 Tiyuguan Xilu, southwest of the station. The shop's specialty is *mala* duck neck, peanuts, tofu and stewed beef swimming in a spicy marinade. Pedal your snacks directly south from the station and you will arrive at Huchenghe Park. Enjoy the canal view and maybe the statue pose of a fisherman or two as you spit out the bones of the mouth-numbing treats.



SCENE & HEARD



Yen Countdown

798 Space, Dec 31. Photo by Kristina Parchomchuk

Nasty Ray: Moment of Truth

Yugong Yishan, Dec 28. Photo by Nancy Tong



New Year's Eve Party

The Bar at Migas, Dec 31. Photo by Jessica Rapp



Comedy Club China Second Anniversary Show

Zeta Bar, Dec 14. Photo by Jack Soltysik

Comedy Club China Charity Show

4corners, Jan 4. Photos by Jack Soltysik



Red Revival

Wahoo, Dec 28.
Photos by Jack Soltysik



Roger Vivier SS14 Preview

Eclat Hotel Beijing, Jan 10. Photos by Liquid Element



Moonglow Burlesque
Maison Camus, Dec 20. Photo
by Jack Soltysik

Fizz & Baozi
Ink, Dec 14. Photos by Laurent Hou



Foreign Students Night
Beijing Normal University, Dec 15. Photos
by Laurent Hou



Neon Zoo
Lantern, Jan 10. Photos by Kristina
Parchomchuk



Great Gatsby Party
Parlor, Jan 11. Photos by Laurent Hou



The Loop
d lounge, Jan
10. Photos by
Caroline Killmer



CULTURE CLASH

WHEN TRADITIONAL DANCE MEETS CONTEMPORARY



Dance is booming in Beijing. From the Western influences of square, swing and salsa, to pole dancing and the sexy moves on show in the city's nightclubs. Modern dance styles have met the traditional moves like lion, dragon and line dancing. For February's cover feature we wanted to celebrate this fact. We can also probably boast of being the first folks to bring together a 30-strong troupe of line dancers with the bombshells of D&D Entertainment. They got along just fine and danced a very chilly evening away. And the people who stopped to watch for a while enjoyed the show, too.

POLE REVERSAL

DANCING FOR WOMEN ... AND MEN

by Kyle Mullin



PHOTOS: COURTESY OF YUAN BIAO, NICHOLAS TANG

Music is usually the muse of dancers, but those roles were reversed as Bai Yan pounced on the pole. The stereo's slinky, sensuous baseline seemed to mimic her every move. She hoisted herself up with an assertive yank, then she wrapped both her slender thighs around the gleaming metal. She stretched outward until her body was firmly perpendicular with the support beam. Finally, she slid slowly to the floor in an upside down pose as the last notes faded.

She only began practicing half a month ago. Since becoming a student at Lolan Pole Dancing School, Bai Yan says her attitude has evolved even more than her physical prowess.

"The traditional idea was you'd see this in a bar. But after you actually try it, you'll find it's for women. It shows your confidence and beauty, inside and out."

Nicholas Tang watches as Bai and her classmates finish their break and return to the studio's numerous poles. The students, who spend hours practicing – without

stripping, of course – long for Tang's admiration, not because he's a leery spectator, but because he's their teacher. He says people shouldn't be judgmental of the dance form, regardless of who performs it.

"Many people think it's slutty. But it's great for your body, it uses all your muscles," he says. "The whole point of dancing anyway is to show how you've worked to make yourself look great."

China certainly isn't known for tolerating such gender role reversals. But Tang marvels at the Middle Kingdom's recent social evolution.

"China has grown much faster than Malaysia in this way," he says. "They still have a very traditional mindset back home."

He says 30 percent of Lolan's student body is male – a much higher total than one might expect. With a laugh Tang adds that his approach isn't terribly effeminate: "When I pole dance, it's a fight against gravity."

The Chinese National Pole Dancing Team members are practicing their own dances like Chinese Solider and Terracotta Warrior as they prepare to compete at the World Pole Sport & Fitness Championships in London from January 31 to February 2. Manager Yuan Biao says the team's male members just might be its secret weapon.

"The whole team has been training eight hours a day," he says, adding that their gender gap is even smaller than Lolan's, with five of their 16 dancers being male. "Our boys are doing so well, I think they can win."

Meanwhile Fang Yi, one of the

national team's female dancers, scales poles to the most masculine tune in history – the James Bond theme song. She even has a few battle scars from her gravity-defying tussles.

"It hurts sometimes," she says, explaining that the pole can leave purplish friction burns on a dancer's inner thighs. She adds: "After awhile you get stronger veins, and the bruises won't be so bad."

Luo Lan, the 43-year-old founder of Lolan School, says pole dancing strengthens women in numerous ways. While many people equate it with haggard strippers, Luo says she has only seen the opposite.

"Pole dancing can make you look younger, it allows you to tighten your muscles enough to keep wrinkles away," she says.

It all started for Luo just over a decade ago, as she looked for a more stimulating alternative to the gym. Her sister, who lived in the US, said pole dancing was a hot trend there. But Luo couldn't find anywhere in Beijing to enroll.

That gap was a perfect opportunity. She didn't just see a chance to turn demeaning sleaze into empowerment – it was also a viable business plan. Now plenty of her female students are following that strategy in the same way they learn the choreography.

"Many come because they already have yoga or dance studios, and they want to learn another way to get more students," Luo says, before adding: "But many of my girls just work in an office, or other regular jobs. What they're looking for is a fun new way to challenge themselves."



ENTER THE DRAGON

CAN DRAGON DANCING STAY RELEVANT?

by Kyle Mullin

In the West, they're seen as monsters – hulking, fiery, swooping down on their prey like scaly vultures. But, of course, China is known for holding their dragons in a higher, more heavenly regard, deeming these slithery creatures to be elegant, nimble and, above all, lucky.

It's little wonder that dragon dancing has become such a time-honored tradition. The flashy process is comprised of a troupe stepping nimbly in tandem, hoisting poles adorned in silky slithery materials that represent the creature's skin, until a dragon seems to be slinking before your eyes. The dance form has

become so ubiquitous over the years that many foreigners think of it at the very mention of China.

But on an occasion like this year's Spring Festival, when tokens of good fortune are in no short demand, many dragon dancers are beginning to feel out of step with their old clientele's new appetites.

"During 2012, the Year of the Dragon, this dance was very popular," says An Zhen Zhuo, manager of the Long Feng Yuan dance troupe. He adds that peak occasion has been followed, only a few short years later, by a massive slump. An's troupe has no special Spring Festival performances planned for this year.



PHOTOS: COURTESY OF DUAN QUANWEI



Lately they've only managed to book gigs at shopping mall openings and weddings.

"Young people are more interested in fashionable, fancy things now," he says.

Duan Quen Wei, captain of Beijing's Wu Long Wu Shi team, which has won 13 gold medals in various national Chinese dragon dancing competitions, blames the tradition's sagging popularity on other factors.

"In a big city there's often not enough space to perform these dances," he says, adding that his troupe in particular needs at least 21 people to keep their dragon in motion. "Also, the materials to make the dragon can be very expensive."

Still, he admits it can be tough for dragon dancers to compete with flashier modern performances.

"People have so many other recreational activities now. It's hard to get everyone together for a dragon dance," Duan adds about the challenge of not only acquiring audiences, but also performers to study those carefully choreographed steps.

To keep dragon dancing fiery, vibrant and relevant, Duan's troupe has made a number of recent trips to universities and public schools in the hope of inspiring a new generation of dancers. But Mary Huang, president of the Golden International Dance Academy in Haidian District, says it will be a challenge for Duan to keep those youngsters interested in an aged artform like dragon dance.

Huang, who teaches a variety of styles including traditional Chinese dances, dragon dance, and newer styles like hip-hop, tap, and belly dancing, adds that contemporary dance skills are far more fanciful and eye-catching.

She says that big changes would be required to bring dragon dance up to that technical caliber. But Huang adds that modernizing those steps could be more costly than any amount of lost business.

"The dragon dance would have to reform its motion, style, and music. Then it could compete with more modern dances," Huang says. "However, a reformed dragon dance would lose its special tradition. Who would want to do that?"

In fact, the very elements that impede dragon dancing's popularity today could be its future salvation. At least that's the opinion of Hu Kai, a professor of physical education at the Chinese University of Geosciences (CUG) in Wuhan, and the coach of that school's award-winning dragon dance team.

"It can be more difficult than other dance types, especially because the dragon head weighs about seven pounds, which is very heavy for some performers," Hu says of the ornate, bulky faces of these graceful beasts, carried by the leaders of dragon dance processions.

That duality of beauty and burden is present in all aspects of this dance, making it universal – especially in an era when most Chinese citizens are torn between rapid modernization, and a few millennia of tradition.

Hu puts it another way: "I think its popularity will go up and down over the years. But I'll always love dragon dance. I especially like how it makes several people feel like one person, how everyone helps each other while doing it."



DANCING FOR THE SOUL

POJIE ARTS HELPS STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES CHANNEL CREATIVITY

by Kipp Whittaker

We've heard of social-focused counseling and physical rehabilitation for those with disabilities, but Rosey Feltham and Georgie Cockburn are approaching therapy from a different angle: through dance. They used their skills in the performing arts to found Pojie Arts, an organization that helps students with disabilities work creatively. Pojie also aims to foster a feeling of community and contribution that can be sorely lacking for those who feel different or underestimated.



Do you have a background in dance?

Rosey's background is in contemporary dance choreography and performance. After graduating from dance school in Auckland, New Zealand, she founded a dance performance company and was part of the company for five years before moving to Beijing. Rosey's role there included choreography, dance and artistic direction.

Georgie worked primarily as an actor for a number of years, specializing in physical theater and then trained in dance and theatre before beginning to work alongside performers with disabilities. Whilst working in London, Georgie collaborated with New Adventures, Random Dance, Sadler's Wells and Tate Modern to produce original performance work by artists with disabilities and to deliver training in creative and inclusive dance practice.

How did you initiate Pojie Arts?

After meeting in Beijing, we worked with Beijing Huiling Centre for People with Intellectual



Disabilities. After this organization dissolved, we decided to form Pojie Arts. Since its founding in 2012, we have run projects in Beijing, Shanghai and Xuzhou. At the end of 2013, in collaboration with Handicap International and the China Dolls Center for Rare Disorders, we organized an event where the audience and performers were encouraged to dance together in celebration of the International Day for Persons with Disabilities. The event was attended by over 300 people from the community, local organizations and media.

Can you describe a typical class?

First, we have a warm up where we can get to know each other and gain some more awareness of our own body and the space. Next is a

creative session where each person is given the opportunity to voice their own creativity and ideas based on stimulus we provide, which is often from other disciplines, such as fine arts and music.

What are some of the challenges you face when working with students who have disabilities?

Part of the challenge and the enjoyment comes from making each class accessible and inclusive to people of all abilities. We often work with people who have never been in a dance class before, from 6 year olds to 60 year olds, wheelchair users, people with partial or no vision, people from the deaf community and people with learning disabilities.

What do you hope to achieve

through your experiences with Pojie Arts?

We see our work primarily to be about creating dance and highlighting the increased need for equal rights regarding access and opportunity. Often, once people with disabilities are out of the school system provision is very limited.

Are there ways we can support Pojie Arts?

We are always looking to connect with people working in the field of disability or the arts, or from anybody interested in volunteering. Get in touch and we can let you know when our next performance is taking place.

For more information on Pojie Arts contact rfeitham@gmail.com.

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

FOOD & DRINK

BRISKET // TZATZIKI // JAM // MOLTEN CAKE // IRON BARTENDERS



Turn on your love and lights – Valentine's Day and Lantern Festival collide at Yu on Feb 14.

NIBBLES AND SIPS

NEW OPENINGS

In the heart of Guomao, B/1 of the Kerry Center has filled out with branches of heavy-hitters like California-style sushi favorite **Hatsune** and sandwich joint **Wagas** to complement the stellar Peking duck at **Horizon**.

Nearby in China World Trade Center, China World Hotel has opened another sugary outpost of their bakery **Sweet Spot**.

Andrew Ahn unveiled his Sanlitun Soho contemporary Korean joint Ssam in its new incarnation as **One Pot by Ssam**, which has a particular focus on Korean street food.

The cocktail brains behind Revolution and Fubar have opened **Hidden House**, a new hideout on Xindong Lu that, true to its name, has a secret entrance via a moving bookcase. We challenge you to find it before we do.

Those who made it to the Gatsby-themed party at Jeff Ji's latest on the Beijing's bar scene, Parlor, might enjoy a peek in the swanky new chandelier-clad digs, **Bubble Bar**, also on Xindong Lu.

REOPENINGS

Mas reopened its renovated space with a fiesta in late January. Swing by Beixinqiao for a gander at their new look and one of their signature daiquiris.

HAPPENINGS

The Sanlitun power players of Mediterranean have joined together along with Chi Fan for Charity in a promotion for charity. Buy a book of coupons for RMB 50 from any of the participating restaurants – **Mosto**, **Migas**, **Agua** and **Sureno** – and get discounts through mid-March. All proceeds from booklet sales go to the organization Morning Tears.

For those willing to take a social media hit and bag their phones for the length of a meal, Yunnan restaurant **In and Out** is offering 50 percent off the total bill on Mondays, valid at both their new location in Tun San Li Mall and their original North Sanlitun spot.

CLOSINGS

Wine bar and restaurant **Scarlett** ended its run in Beijing with a farewell bash on January 24, in line with the closing of award-winning Hotel G.





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HOME PLATE BAR-B-QUE

SOUTHERN FARE IN SANLITUN



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: SMOKED CHICKEN AND SAUSAGE,
CHEESE-STUFFED PEPPERS, CONBREAD AND BACON MUFFINS, CHILLI CHEESE DOG

WHAT'S NEW RESTAURANTS

Daily 11am-10pm (bar until midnight). Courtyard 4 (100m past The Bookworm on the right), Gongti Beilu, Chaoyang District (400 967 670)

本垒美式烤肉: 朝阳区工体北路4号院

🚶 800m west of Tuanjiehu station (Line 10)

Did you think that you would move to Beijing to eat barbecue weekly? Neither did we, but somehow that's what happened. Home Plate and its original location hardly needed to convince Beijing further. We were happy to travel outside of the Third Ring Road on the regular for pulled pork and fried pickles.

But good folks that they are, the team behind Home Plate is indulging us with a new Sanlitun space. If the main critique of the first spot was the limited seating, this second sprawling location more than compensates for that small shortfall. And if one were to be petty, you might have quibbled that the cornbread at Sanyuanqiao tended towards dry or, for those of us with a healthy appetite for sugar, the dessert selection was constrained. In Sanlitun, these problems have been solved.

An order of cornbread is not dry in the slightest and comes with a new, thrilling development: bacon muffins (RMB 15, two of each, soft opening prices subject to change). Other novel items bolster the stacked line-up, too. Cheese-stuffed peppers wrapped in house-cured bacon (RMB 38, five pieces) might not have occurred to you, and you will be sad that the concept wasn't yours – they are brilliant. Soups have arrived in time for the cold season. Sip slowly, if you can exercise restraint, on a rich Brunswick stew (RMB 20) – tomato broth heavy with a constellation of corn kernels and shredded meat – lest you fill yourself before the requisite flurry of sandwiches: pulled pork and brisket (RMB 35), variations on chicken (fried, barbecued and buffalo, all RMB 30) and the newcomer chilli cheese dog (RMB 30). Supplement the homestyle fare with a rare Virgil's rootbeer or a swathe of cocktails inspired by items you might find in a corner candy store, like the pop in the Adult Cherry Coke or the black licorice in the Le Fizz Criole. Eat the exceptional apple and candied walnut salad with honey Dijon vinaigrette (RMB 30) to counteract the imminent bread pudding with bourbon sauce (RMB 30) and slice of chocolate cake (RMB 30) ... because this is how one achieves a balanced – if overabundant – diet, right? *Cat Nelson*

Also try: Tim's Texas BBQ, Fuel

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WHAT'S NEW RESTAURANTS



GREEK SALAD

SANTORINI SOUVLAKI BAR

GREEK IN GUOMAO

Daily 10am-10pm. 3-129A Guanghua Lu Soho, 22 Guanghua Lu, Chaoyang District (5290 7261)

朝阳区光华路22号光华路Soho3单元129A室

 500m north of Yong'anli station (Line 1)

Tucked around the backside of one of the lesser known Sohos – the Guanghua edition – Santorini Souvlaki Bar doesn't offer itself up for much foot traffic. It's also rather compact, seating possibly 12-15 people, and even that would be cozy.

Definitely skewing more towards a casual dining experience, it's the kind of place you simply turn up at, enjoy a bite, and be on your way. The backless stools don't really allow for much hanging about.

Though self-described as Mediterranean, the menu concentrates primarily on handheld Greek cuisine, with, you guessed it, *souvlaki* as the hero. We opted for the pita with grilled vegetable *souvlaki* (RMB 16). It was a soft, fresh pita wrapped around well-grilled vegetables and a *tzatziki* sauce. Satisfying but, in hindsight, not as moreish as the pita with pork *souvlaki* (RMB 19) might have been with its cheeky inclusion of French fries in the filling.

Also on the order was a fresh Greek salad (RMB 15/24), which was sprinkled with soft feta and seasoned perhaps

not so pleasingly with dried herbs, a side of pita bread (RMB 6), and serving of delicious *tzatziki* sauce (RMB 8), which was simultaneously piquant and creamy. We also attacked the grilled skewers, including a vegetable offering (RMB 4), which came deconstructed on a plate, and the pork one (RMB 5/7), which at first appeared to be a little dry, but was actually wonderfully juicy and tender inside.

Santorini Souvlaki Bar isn't rigidly sticking to its roots – the menu sways like a drunken sailor at sea. For the most part, it's Greek, but pasta dishes offer an Italian flavor, Schnapps a German one, and a few Chinese additions give a nod to local preferences. Regardless, the food is tasty, the atmosphere friendly and relaxed, and the prices cheap enough to steal you away from your regular local eateries for an affordable Western lunch or quick bite for dinner. *Shannon Aitken*

Also try: Argo, Athena

WHAT'S NEW RESTAURANTS

PICTURE MY CUP

CAFE FARE IN WANGJING

Mon-Sat 8am-8.30pm. Unit 158, Bldg A5, U-Lo Park,
Guangshunnan Dajie, Chaoyang District (5361 6770)
朝阳区广顺南大街悠乐汇A5座158商铺

 800m southwest of Wangjing station (Line 15)

Amidst the rapid development happening in Wangjing, Picture My Cup has placed its final touches up on the walls and seems poised to secure itself as a go-to place in the neighborhood for high-quality American brunch and lunch fare.

Following the huge success of Kro's Nest, owner Marty Handley is taking a step back from the world of pizza, and adding sandwiches, hot dogs, all-day breakfast and delectable lunch specials to his new venture. Coupled with a satisfying drinks menu – especially for those who enjoy the odd alcoholic beverage – Picture My Cup is a welcome innovation to Wangjing.

Their signature item, a customizable sandwich (RMB 55), gives the choice of one type of bread, one meat, one cheese, one sauce, and one side dish. For the mathematicians among us, I believe that equates to a lot of delicious options available. The multigrain bread tasted like one from a farmers' market – hot and fresh with a captivating aroma that brought the countryside onto the plate. White cheddar cheese melted into roast beef, accented by a jalapeno whole grain mustard.

With so many choices to be made, Picture My Cup is guaranteed to snap up new customers very quickly.
Erin Strong

Also try: Alba Cafe, Cup One



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Je ne sais qua?

A GUIDE TO BEIJING'S SQUASHES
by Marissa Kennedy

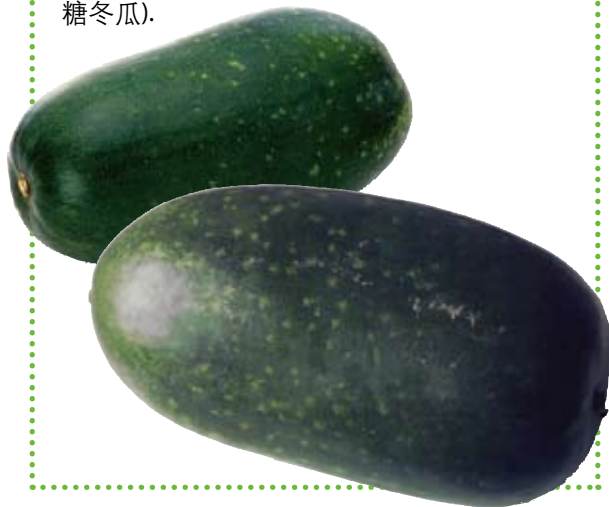
Your friendly neighborhood wet market offers delicious varieties of delectable gourds that are not only flavorful, but also easy on the pocket.

Every wet market you go to, no matter the level of veggie expertise or varieties available, it seems anything vaguely squash or gourd-like in shape is given the name “*nangua*.” Whether it be small or large, green or orange, long or stout, the name is used to describe a good third of the large starchy vegetable category. How can we even begin to differentiate between them? Is there hope for us in our current state of pump-kinfusion?

Nangua is literally translated “southern gourd” because it was introduced first in the southern part of China. The green-skinned variety is more prevalent in southern provinces and therefore is given the standard name. However, up here in the North, the plump orange or elongated brown variety is also called *nangua*. Would a *nangua* by any other name taste as sweet?

WINTER MELON *dōng guā* (冬瓜)

Don't let the English name fool you, this is a root vegetable that switches from sweet to savory depending on when it's harvested. Costing roughly RMB 1.5 per *jīn*, it has a shelf life of up to 12 months. You'll see the iridescent white flesh popping up in noodle broth, tossed into stir-fries (*chǎo cài* 炒菜) at your neighborhood stands and even candied into a sweet treat (*táng dōng guā* 糖冬瓜).



WHITE ZUCCHINI *xī hú lú* (西葫芦)

This veggie is much smaller in comparison to its aforementioned big brothers and is a cross between a gourd and a zucchini. Its skin is more pliable and can be eaten after minimal cooking. It is mostly found as a replacement for cucumber or sliced and cooked with eggs (*xī hú lú chǎo jī dàn* 西葫芦炒鸡蛋) and diced with old favorite (*gōng bào jī dīng* 宫爆鸡丁). (RMB 2 per *jīn*)

PUMPKIN *nán guā* (南瓜)

While the Western mind would consider this more butternut squash-like in shape, this naturally sweet root vegetable is packed with vitamin A, which improves vision, vitamin C, which supports the immune system, and vitamin E, which promotes healthy skin – all for the bargain price of RMB 2.5 per *jin*. It's often found weaseling its way into unexpected places like *malatang* and pan fried dumplings (*nán guā jiǎo zǐ* 南瓜饺子), an Anhui province specialty.



ACORN SQUASH *wō guā* (倭瓜)

Mostly used as a breakfast food either steamed or stirred into congee (*zhōu* 粥), this squash sticks to your ribs until it's time for lunch. However, the best part about this little jewel of the gourd family is that it creates its own bowl. Simply cut the squash in half, scoop out the seeds, sprinkle with water, and microwave until the squash is soft. In the hollow space, you can stuff rice, meat, vegetables or even (gasp) more acorn squash. Usually you can get one of these multi-purpose delights for RMB 4 per gourd (depending on the size).

SHARK FIN MELON *yú chì guā* (鱼翅瓜)

Watermelon on the outside, pumpkin on the inside, this marble-colored gourd (RMB 5 per *jin*) can be intimidating with its fuzzy and sometimes spiky vines. However, when cooked it becomes supple, stringy, and sweet. When steamed and scooped, it resembles a plate of clear noodles. *Yuchigua* usually adorns sweet versions of congee for general consumption, but is widely used as a holistic treatment for diabetes.



SMALL PUMPKIN *xiǎo nán guā* (小南瓜)

This orange bundle of joy is smaller and even sweeter than its larger cousin. Even after cooking, it still packs as much of a vitamin and fiber punch with an added potassium bonus. This little guy is nature's energy bar for a mere RMB 3 per *jin*. You can find it at your local Dongbei restaurant dusted in flour and deep-fried (*dàn huáng jú nán guā* 蛋黄焗南瓜), a sweeter and softer version of the beloved French fry.

THE RUG

REFINED ORGANIC IN
SANLITUN COURTYARD



CORN FRITTER

WHAT'S NEW RESTAURANTS

Daily 10.30am-10.30pm. Courtyard 4 (next to Kro's Nest), 4 Gongti Beilu, Chaoyang District (6507 2342)
朝阳区4工体北路4号院

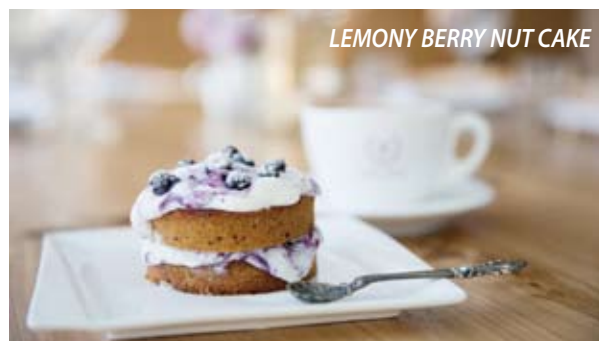
🚗 800m west of Tuanjiehu station (Line 10)

The original Chaoyang Park location of The Rug murmurs of what the dazzling new space in Sanlitun unabashedly trumpets: a chic elegance. White tile and blonde wood dominate, cloth napkins are neatly monogrammed with tiny 'R's, a cluster of carefully chosen antique spoons adorn one wall and sleek ladles another, and the light fixtures are stylish and varied. The first floor holds the bar, an intimate couch area with stacked suitcases for tables and small front room. The second floor spreads out with nooks and crannies filled by tables for two, a bar that runs along a glassed-in kitchen, seating for small groups and two very lovely private rooms.

The menu is the same between both locations, and the selection encompasses many of the daytime favorites like bagel plates (RMB 55-95) and hash browns (RMB 48-58), plus a few more recent brunch additions such as corn fritters (RMB 138) and omelets (RMB 78-88). A substantial dinner section complicates The Rug's identity as a breakfast and brunch joint, with mussels (RMB 99-108) as an interesting evening proposition.

Some concepts need tweaks. The *shakshuka* (RMB 98), a North African dish of eggs poached in tomatoes and chilli peppers demanded a salt shaker to pull out the vegetables' flavors slightly more. The red wine beef stew (RMB 66) came with a poached egg and savory beef, though the mashed potatoes had a gluey pull. Sweeter dishes excel. Glazed in organic honey and sandwiching a slice of ham, the corn fritters tread the line between the sweet and the savory. Cream creeps from the lemony berry nut cake (RMB 68), a citrusy tang blending brightly with a sharp and silver light of winter. *Cat Nelson*

Also try: Moka Bros, Chi



WHAT'S NEW RESTAURANTS

RAYA SPECIAL BUTTERED PRAWNS



RAYA MALAYSIAN RESTAURANT

NEW SOUTH ASIAN FLAVORS HIT GUOMAO

Daily 10am-10pm. E156, Tower E, World City, 8 Jinhui Lu, Chaoyang District (189 1015 0773)

大马美食: 朝阳区金汇路8号世界城E楼E156

🚶 600m south of Dongdaqiao station (Line 6)

The most difficult thing about a visit to Raya Malaysian Restaurant – other than finding it – is deciding what to order. The menu is a cacophony of color promising exotic flavors in mouthwatering proportions. One thing that is immediately apparent is the focus on seafood, notably prawns. Flipping through the menu, each section reveals a different take on the tasty crustacean, although crab, fish and chicken also make a good showing.

You could start with the seafood *tom yam goong* (RMB 28/68), as we did. This was a refreshing soup, permeated with clear notes of lemongrass and lime, spicy and zesty, with just a hint of cream in the background for balance. The sambal four-angled beans (RMB 42) were a vibrant addition to the table, as they were beautifully cooked to the point where crunchy meets tender and tossed in an XO-style sauce to provide a punchy fish kick.

The Raya special buttered prawns (RMB 109) was definitely one of the most interesting dishes ordered. A

topping of butter floss – much like the pork floss you see on bread in Chinese bakeries – was sprinkled generously over a handful of large grilled prawns. It was stylishly presented and well cooked, but we didn't really enjoy having to work our fingers through the buttery floss to relieve the prawns of their shells.

The curry beef (RMB 48) was perhaps the biggest let down. It had the usual style of sliced beef we've grown accustomed to in Beijing, and a sauce that, while not unpleasant, was simply unremarkable. If not for needing to later write about it, it would have been quickly forgotten.

All in all, while we wouldn't necessarily replicate our selection, there was enough satisfaction in the several dishes and enough promise in the untried dishes left on the menu to warrant a return visit.
Shannon Aitken

Also try: Cafe Sambal, Nyonya Kitchen

WHAT'S NEW RESTAURANTS

SOLOIST COFFEE

SPECIALTY COFFEE IN QIANMEN

Daily 11.30am-8pm. 39 Yangmeizhu Xiejie,
Xicheng District (5711 1717)
西城区杨梅竹斜街39号

 600m southwest of Qianmen station (Line 2)

One of the five venues that were chosen to stay open permanently after Design Hop: Dashilar Alley during Beijing Design Week in the autumn, Soloist Coffee is a treasure trove of old, interesting furnishings.

You can spend the entire afternoon lounging around, listening to jazz, and appreciating an attention to detail that extends from American lockers and lamps from the 1920s, to ornate Chinese cinema chairs from the 1980s and a piano from England also from the '80s. To steep it even further in history, the space itself was a public bath-house in a previous life.

The cafe offers specialty coffee with beans roasted in-house and approved by a licensed Q grader from Coffee Quality Institute who ensures the highest standards. Coffee prices hover around RMB 35 while the menu regularly changes based on stock. The Ethiopia Aramo (RMB 55) had a crisp and fresh taste, while the cappuccino (RMB 40) was incredibly smooth.

For those with a sweet tooth, their homemade cheesecake (RMB 35) should not be ignored. With a prominent taste of cheese, it's thick, but not too rich and made from imported French cream cheese. No flour is added – it's the real deal. *Mike Dwyer*

Also try: Knewzaba, Beiluo Bread Bar




MOSTO

CHOCOLATE CHAOS

Daily noon-2.30pm, 6-10pm. 3/F, Nail Patio, 81 Sanlitun Lu, Chaoyang District (5208 6030)

摸石头餐厅:朝阳区三里屯路81号那里花园3层

 900m northwest of Tuanjiehu station (Line 10)

Until I moved to Beijing, there had been two notable chocolate cakes in my life. It was by way of the first – a dense affair glazed with a rich blend of heavy cream and chocolate – that, at the age of six, I learned the word “ganache.” It made single-digit birthday appearances for most of childhood, numbers in icing declaring the swift march of years.

The next love of my young chocolate life began in my junior year in college at a moment when time in the kitchen – even one in a dormitory – is the best thing to interrupt a spate of loneliness. A classic cake in the truest American sense, the crumb was moist, but light and the frosting a simple buttercream.

Unexpectedly, I fell into my third significant romance in Sanlitun. Mosto rescued the requisite first Beijing year of disappointing desserts with their warm chocolate soufflé (RMB 80). The discovery of its molten center prompted late-night cab rides across town, mildly

awkward requests for dessert only and an unabashed greediness for concentrated hits of chocolate.

There is a totality to this compact round of a sweet thing; it is a tiny complete Earth unto itself. Use your spoon tenderly, and you will slowly break through the outermost cakey crust into a moist mantle of chocolate before a liquid core spills out with accents of white chocolate amid the dark. The universe of the dish extends beyond the soufflé as the kitchen nods to ostensibly less decadent flavors. A trellis of raspberry coulis lies beneath, and a small mound of vanilla ice cream nearby is bolstered by several small pebbles of pistachio. As is law, entropy prevails in this universe. With one fatal stroke of the spoon, what was once orderly and discrete devolves into a sublime mess of molten chocolate smears, pureed raspberry streaks and trails of melted ice cream – a particular chaos to which you happily surrender yourself. *Cat Nelson*



ABI HOWELL

FORMER PUBLICITY MANAGER,
PENGUIN CHINA

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

Abi Howell brings down the curtain on five years in Beijing this month and plans to bow out with an epic night showcasing the best of Beijing. With a mix of favorite local delicacies, followed by fun with close friends, her last night in Beijing sounds like it would be one she wouldn't forget in a hurry.

The venue

I love the décor and the old black and white movies they play on a small screen behind the bar at Revolution. I'll start with a whiskey sour (hold the egg white).

The starters

A medley of sushi from Hatsune: *tekamaki*, and an off-menu *oshinkomaki*, *inari* sushi, little red roll, butterfly roll, caterpillar roll, and Princess Li roll. I moved to Beijing as a penniless student; meals alternated between cheap *chuan* and *jianbing*. When a friend's family invited a bunch of us to dinner at Hatsune, it was such a luxury that it became my go-to restaurant for special occasions after that.

Main course

Beijing *kaoya* from Duck de Chine. I love the ceremony

there as well – I hope they'll bring the gong. *Shuizhuyu*, *ganbiandoujiao* and *disanxian* from Yulao Kaoyu on Guijie, which, until now, I had only ever known as "the restaurant with all the lanterns outside." Also, a selection of dumplings from Din Tai Fung. To complete the meal, I'd have rice from Hatsune – I love the sesame seeds they sprinkle on top of their steamed rice.

Dessert

The granny apple cake from Café Konstanz because even though the apples are cooked they are still firm, crunchy and delicious. The Village Café at The Opposite House has the most fantastic lemon tart. I would also require *Tanghulu* from any street vendor and definitely cupcakes from Lollipop Bakery. My favorite is the Earl Grey which comes with a lemon frosting, but vanilla, red velvet and spiced carrot are mouthwateringly good as well.

The music and entertainment

A good friend DJ of mine would play a set after dinner. He incorporates Chinese opera into his sound, which is amazing. Also, my boyfriend could do a stand-up comedy set in front of our friends. My friends could put together a variety show.

Pick up a copy of Li Na's memoir My Life, published by Penguin China, at The Bookworm or Page One.



BRASSERIE FLO

A SECOND LOOK AT BEIJING'S FIRST-RATE FRENCH FARE

Daily 11am-3pm, 5.30pm-11pm. 18 Xiaoyun Lu, Chaoyang District (6595 5135)

朝阳区霄云路18号

🚶 900m northeast of Sanyuanqiao station (Line 10)

A gaping hole had been left in Beijing's French dining scene with the unexpected December departure of Daniel Boulud's installment in the former American Embassy, according to international media. But we now wonder if 14-year-running Brasserie Flo is enough to fill it.

The French staple routinely amasses accolades from dining critics for its authenticity and dependability. It delivers a Parisian-style interior, impeccable service, and masterful cuisine, all with an air of effortlessness that's still rare in Beijing's unfledged dining scene. Just a few paces into Flo's sparkling lobby alone is enough to please, mostly thanks to a glass case displaying dainty desserts and wines to tease you before dinner (and why not give in? The Flo Restaurant Group slogan maintains that life is a party, anyway.)

To keep pace, Chef Stephane Laurens has whipped up new dishes to better satisfy winter weather cravings.

Start things off with the *foie gras mi-cuit facon flo* (RMB 128), a sizable portion of liver atop a streak of fig brioche. The accompanying dollop of red wine-poached pear is like a canned, spiced apple ring in a tuxedo, bearing warming notes of cinnamon and clove. Alternatively on offer is the chilled, crunchy Alaskan King Crab salad (RMB 166), a starter subtly flavored with beetroot, avocado and pistachio. Laurens arouses the senses with fits of unexpected saltiness in what is otherwise a citrusy *salade de roquette gourmande* (RMB 108).

Flo is still serving its signature French onion soup (RMB 58). Though, we found it to be too sweet and preferred the more complex blend of marinated wild fungi and black truffle in the cream of mushroom (RMB 68). The real stew for the soul is the cassoulet, a trifecta of tender meats that nearly spoiled us. Round it all off with Flo's degustation platter (RMB 96) – that is, if the foyer's macaron counter didn't get to you first. *Jessica Rapp*



15



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Daily 10am-10pm. 76 Yonghegong Dajie, Dongcheng District (6402 7070)

东城区雍和宫大街76号

 100m north of Beixinqiao station (Line 5)

Despite an indistinguishable atmosphere from any other mom and pop hutong restaurant on the strip – with its drab still life paintings and unflattering fluorescent lighting – this restaurant is unique, delicious, and its location, just a stone's throw north of Beixinqiao station, is a prime one.

Xi'an Wangjia has your staple Shaanxi cuisine like cold noodles (RMB 6) and *roujiamo* (RMB 6), but they also offer a selection of Korean and Japanese dishes, with a little Americana in the mix. Some of their customers remarked how many of the dishes served at Xi'an Wangjia won't be found at other Shaanxi restaurants. Though the staff denied that it was anything other than Chinese food, I felt my chain was being yanked a little.

I ordered the potato salad (RMB 8), a small egg omelet (RMB 6), and the *koufu* fried chicken (RMB 20). The potato salad was almost identical to the *gamja* salad

you might find at a Korean restaurant. It was served cold, mashed with cucumber, carrots, and mayonnaise on a bed of lettuce. The eggs were reminiscent of a Japanese *tamagoyaki*, thin layers of sweetened egg folded into a cube shape and sectioned into mini bricks. The *koufu* fried chicken was exactly like one you might encounter at an American shopping mall, stuck to a toothpick and falsely labeled bourbon chicken. A guilty pleasure of mine because I have a little bit of a sweet tooth, it was unfortunately served with a chopped head of lettuce covered in mayo, which I left soaking in its quickly thinning juices on the plate.

Everyday at Xi'an Wangjia the same three spunky ladies prepare their delicious food with cat-like dexterity and speed. You can be in and out in about 15 minutes, and quick is good with Kenny G on loop at the neighboring winter wear store. *Kipp Whittaker*

PHOTO: KEN

T IS FOR...

... **tiebanshao** 铁板烧

The hot plate tradition that came to China from Japan in the 1980s may be best described to the uninitiated as the Eastern answer to *fajitas*. *Tiebanshao*, literally “metal plate roast,” comes to the dining table as a hot piece of iron upon which sizzles juicy pieces of meat and strips of vegetables. Sometimes fried noodles are also served this way. Culinary historians believe that this cooking method originated in Spain around the 15th and 16th centuries. The technique was spread around the world by Spanish sailors who found this the best way to cook fish, giving birth to the Mexican *fajita* and Japanese *teppanyaki* traditions. Chinese hotel restaurants picked up the tradition after the country’s opening-up and reform, and the cooking method has since become ubiquitous here. Popular renditions include *tieban niuliu* (hot iron beef) and *tieban youyu* (hot iron squid).

... **tiao** 条

The Chinese quantifier for anything that is long and thin naturally has its place in the kitchen. *Miantiao*, or noodles, literally translating to “flour strips,” is a prime example. A twist on that usage would be the long Xinjiang pulled-noodles bathing in tomato sauce that are such a favorite. Those are called *latiaozi*. However, anything that can be cut into strips or long pieces also becomes *tiao*. So potato strips would be *tudoutiao* then? Good guess. Deep fry them and they become *shutiao*, or French fries. Here’s another good tip: when ordering a dozen sausages don’t ask for 12 *gexiangchang*, instead ask for 12 *tiao xiangchang* and you’ll be complemented on your good Chinese.

... **tangculiji** 糖醋里脊

Tangculiji, or sweet and sour pork, bears the crown in the kingdom of sweet and savory delicacies. While the dish appears in many of China’s regional cuisines, its most popular rendering is in *Lucai*, or Shanghai cuisine. Good Shanghai sweet and sour pork will be golden in color, crispy and the pork tenderloin fragrant. The meat is cut into strips, battered in egg, starch and flour before being deep fried in a pot of medium-hot oil. In Sichuan, the sauce recipe calls for tomato sauce or ketchup which acts as a thickening agent and tends to be tarter on the taste buds.

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Jam Session

SAMPLING STRAWBERRY SPREADS

by Paul Ryding



Jam, preserves, jelly, whatever you want to call it, there are few things more satisfying than a thick spread of the strawberry variety smothered into the corners of a slice of bread or shoved into a butty (a single slice of white bread buttered and usually folded around a sausage or some chips for the non-Brits among you) and gobbled down for supper. We went sans butter so as not to sully the strawberry goodness of what we imagined would actually be a most enjoyable testing session. And it was, for the most part.



McCormick strawberry jam (RMB 6.80)

"That smells a lot like a Nesquik strawberry milkshake."

"It has the consistency of the jellied innards of a pork pie."

"That has never met a strawberry. Tastes more like a Jolly Rancher."

"There are many instances where this would be appropriate. Spread thickly across a lightly-browned piece of toast, with a knob of butter is sadly not one of them."



Hero strawberry preserve (RMB 29.50)

"Solid – more a jelly than a jam, and it retains the shape of the jar. This could be a fruit sensation."

"Needs a good mix up, that, to make it a bit more jammy."

"The seed to gelatin ratio is disconcertingly high. Certainly what you'd call 'seedy.'"

"Not unpleasant, but overwhelmingly sweet at the end. A saccharine finish, if you will."



Schwartau strawberry extra jam (RMB 28.50)

"It's is like someone has baked this jam – it has a sort of crust on the top."

"Ooh, it's very, very spongy. Retains its shape even under the demands of the steel."

"Literally crunches as you slice through it."

"This one needs a lick of butter to tame it."

PHOTOS: SUI



**Kewpie strawberry jam
(RMB 6.90)**

"The very color of this would suggest it's not high on strawberry content."

"I prefer this one's consistency. It's way more saucy, almost like it's melted."

"I've actually located a full strawberry almost perfectly intact in there."

"That's been perfectly preserved. Like the mosquito in *Jurassic Park*."

"Kewpie is obviously not very good, but you're happy it's there. It's like Yanjing beer, you'd rather not drink it given the choice, but you happily will if it's all they have."



**Qaiek strawberry jam
(RMB 8)**

"This is bizarre. It has the consistency of ketchup, and yet it tastes dusty."

"This one looks like the jam they used in old gory movies. It's very red and very thin."

"There's something distinctly chemical about that. Did somebody leave this one in La Pizza for an hour or two?"

"It tastes nothing like fruit, but smells and tastes like The Body Shop shampoo."



**Bonne Maman strawberry preserves
(RMB 42.50)**

"Highly viscous and not too solid – it crumbles into a nice syrup-like texture."

"Utterly delicious."

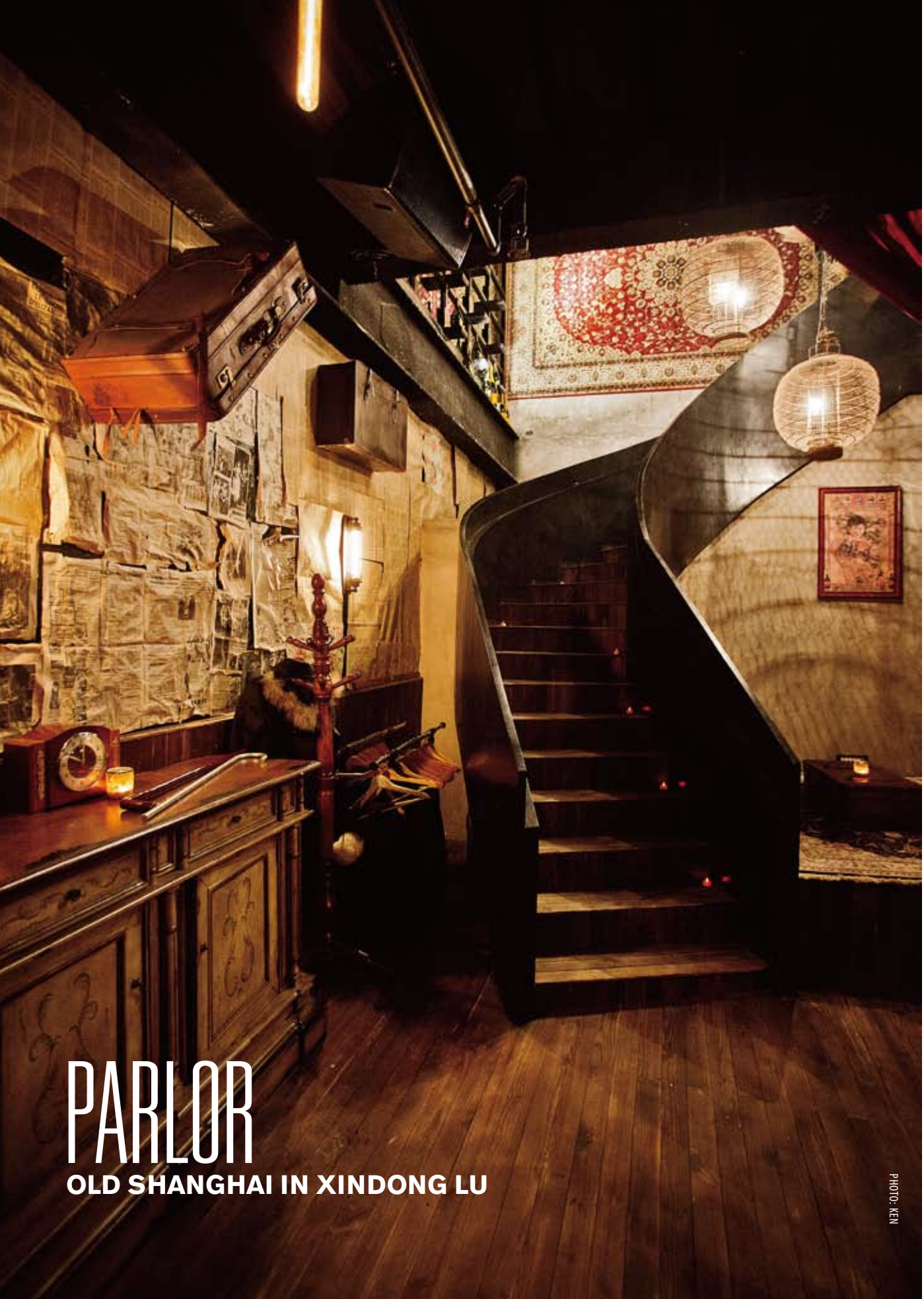
"Some of those pretenders played at having strawberries; this has strawberries."

"I would give this to an old lady who makes her own jam and tell her: 'There you go, pet. That's what you should be aspiring to.'"

"This jam is so superior that you could mix in a dollop of it to the others and it would make them world beaters, too. A bit like those guys who make fake whiskey but add a dash of the good stuff so it tastes fine."

VERDICT

As with most things in life, you get what you pay for, and the most expensive option won the day. If you shell out the extra few *kuai* you'll enjoy your morning toast or evening booty that bit more. That being said, there are passable value options available. Except Qaiek. Never buy Qaiek.



PARLOR

OLD SHANGHAI IN XINDONG LU

WHAT'S NEW BARS & CLUBS

Daily 6pm-2am. 39-9 Xingfu Ercun, Xindong Lu,
Chaoyang District (8444 4135)
朝阳区新东路幸福二村39-9号

 700m northeast of Dongsishitiao station (Line 2)

Jeff Ji of Mai Bar and Malt Dog has been known to turn out a boss cocktail, so when we heard he was opening a Shanghai 1930s-style speakeasy, we expected, at the very least, a boss cocktail. Never mind those inapt faux deer heads mounted behind the bar, or the mural-sized print of a woman in last season's prom dress taking a call on a rotary phone, or even the fact that Elvis Presley's "Hound Dog" clangs through the speakers, Parlor does indeed deliver the drink.

Ji's menu was in its development phase when we visited, but still offered many of the classics from his hutong hideout alongside a few surprises. The traffic cone orange Maiden Blush (RMB 70), while an unlikely fit for a demure den, is illicit in the way a dieter would feel guilty about sneaking cake from the fridge – its fresh, healthy juices and carrot stir are punctuated with a potent serving of Ketel One. This same vodka permeates through an unusual pairing of Kahlua and fresh durian, which is hand blended into ice cream and served in a delicate porcelain dish. Lost in Thailand (RMB 70) seduces with its blend of coconut, lemongrass, ginger, and lime-infused Havana rum. But it's the inclusion of chilli that delivers an unexpectedly pleasant bite.

Ji's joint has no shortage of bourbon and whiskey cocktails laced with wintery flavors like fig and hawthorne. He also aspires to having perhaps the most expensive drink in all of China. Priced at a whopping RMB 5,888 and made with a whiskey of almost 40 years, maybe it's a good fit for patrons who would be prepared to shell out at least RMB 50,000 to gain access to the glittering peacock-lined members-only walls of the second floor. Up there, one might imagine wading through the heavy stench of swollen cigars and the ear-grinding clank of Mahjong tiles while a player piano bangs out jazz standards. Except instead of ivory keys, Parlor's VIP level has a glitzy KTV room.

You might ask of Ji's Gatsby-inspired bar: where is the absinthe, the cognac, and the art deco? It's certainly no Astor House Hotel, and yet, it just might be enough to dress the part at one of Parlor's themed parties in order to feel that twinge of authenticity. *Jessica Rapp*

Also try: Janes and Hooch, Mai Bar



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IRON (BAR) CHEF

BARTENDERS BATTLE FOR BEST THEMED COCKTAIL

Three barmasters. Three “secret” ingredients. One judge. Will Beijing’s confident mixologists fumble when faced with an unusual condiment or fruit? Or can they concoct a drink to impress one tough taster? In the spirit of *Iron Chef*, we put our bartenders to the test by announcing a secret ingredient, giving them ten minutes to mix, and finding out just how creative a cocktail can get.



THE CONTESTANTS



Gordon Kutil,
The Big Smoke Bistro



Tao Chao,
Beer Mania



Jack Zhou,
Groovy Schillers



Jerry Zheng,
D&M Bar

THE JUDGE

ROUND 1

SECRET INGREDIENT: SPICY MUSTARD



Jack: Gin, dry vermouth, three olives, with mustard, salt and lime juice around the rim



Gordon: Bourbon, mustard, apple juice, orange juice, lime juice, salt, pepper, Worcestershire sauce, and basil



Chao: Cointreau, mustard, tequila, lime juice

Verdict: Gordon's complex "pork chop martini" beat out Jack's aromatic dirty martini, but it was a close call.



ROUND 2

SECRET INGREDIENT: BLUEBERRIES



Jack: Vodka, blueberry juice, a dash of Cointreau, a dash of cranberry juice, a dash of lingon berry juice



Gordon: Blueberry, sour apple liqueur, Pimms, Drambuie, spiced rum, ginger beer



Chao: Campari, vodka, Grand Marnier, blueberries, blended with ice

Verdict: Chao's cocktail took the prize for "most aesthetic," but Jack's blend of class and strength came out on top.



ROUND 3

SECRET INGREDIENT: PINNACLE COOKIE DOUGH VODKA



Jack: Vodka, Frangelico, dash of Baileys, cookie dough vodka



Gordon: Baileys, cookie dough vodka, cocoa, milk, cream, nutmeg, cinnamon, served hot



Chao: Cookie dough vodka, fresh mint, Sprite

Verdict: Jack and Gordon's creamy drinks were too sweet for Jerry. He went for Chao's mint chocolate chip mix.





BASEMENT

LIVE MUSIC HITS COURTYARD 4

Daily 8pm-late. Courtyard 4 (across from Kro's Nest), Chaoyang District (133 6690 1518)
朝阳区工体北路4号院

 500m west of Tuanjiehu station (Line 10)

High-reaching cement walls meet exposed piping, while thin lamps cast yellow squares of light on the concrete dance floor of Courtyard 4's latest late-night installment. The smattering of golden glow is like the shine of a street lamp through a rain-covered basement window. Add in the fact that brick is the backdrop of the main stage, and you could say Basement lives up to its name. It gives off a vibe that predictably lends itself to a place for pimply adolescents to practice their latest punk ditty where their neighbors can't hear them.

Then things start to go wrong. Ruby gems dangle from too many shiny, white, floral chandeliers that looked like they were purchased in the depths of Fourth Ring's furniture city. Cotton-colored porch chairs surround heavy, cuboid tables. You start to wonder where you are. Another triplet of crystal chandeliers (four-star hotel?)

shimmer above a bar lined with edgy, red light (Gongti club?). The drums start rolling and a six-piece cover band belts out rock tunes (MAO Livehouse?), soon-to-be-joined by a sparkly suit-clad dance crew, who mount the bar, twirling their canes. When the act ceases and Rihanna and David Guetta blast from the sound system via a Kokomo DJ, it's dizzying.

All of this occupies an ambitious space that has potential to fill a live music void in Sanlitun. Take away the gaudy light fixtures and you have a hip design concept: a spacious stage wrapped with a curved bar, *à la* front row seats if you're ordering a RMB 50 cocktail at their February Beijing Beatles show. Just keep in mind that it'll be the nosebleed section if you're caught grabbing a drink during one of the cane dance performances. *Jessica Rapp*

Also try: Ink, LIV

TROUBLE BAR

THE DRIVE-THRU MARK II LANDS AT CHINA VIEW

Daily 2pm-late. China View, 2-101 Gongti Donglu, Chaoyang District (8590 0390)

朝阳区工体东路中国红街2-101号楼

 1km west of Tuanjiehu station (Line 10)

The new venture of Ryan O'Neal Johnston formerly of The Brick in Shuangjing and then The drive-thru, picks up where the aforementioned beer shop left off. A spot for him to indulge his twin passions of beer and biking, the China View venue already hosts Beijing Brewing Society meetings and is likely to interest other gatherings with some of the trappings planned or already installed. With a projector screen, and a touch screen jukebox en route to add to the table football set up on the spacious second floor, and the cycling regalia on sale, the sizable space makes an attractive proposition for a varied cast of patrons.

An eclectic beer collection (RMB 30-1,600) will

certainly do its bit, and his previous experience of dealing in drink at The drive-thru has left him with an encyclopedic knowledge of his subject. Luckily, he doesn't mind discussing the nuances of the varietals he stocks.

Carrying two draft lagers, Kriek and Schofferhofer Hefeweizen (RMB 40 and presently subject to a buy-one-get-one-free offer), with space for a third option, he says the plan is to regularly rotate the draft drops while continuing to stockpile his arsenal of over 150 bottled brews, some of which, you won't find elsewhere in the city. *Paul Ryding*

Also try: Heaven Supermarket, El Nido



PHOTO: KEN

COCKTAIL PROFILER



Parnas is the latest venue to enter the nightlife scene at the ever-evolving Nali Patio, and despite an elaborate restaurant-club-bar-gallery scheme, it's the

exceptional cocktails that are worth the trip. The man behind the dynamic recipes is Pavel Donchev, who honed his craft in Ukraine during a eight-year bartending stint.



PETER

Interesting fact: Peter likes fruity feminine beer like Kriek, but he can never order it because it doesn't look cool.

The resulting drink:
Cool Kid

with crushed ice and a lemon peel garnish.

Ingredients:
30ml cognac
15ml amaretto
15ml fresh lemon juice
15ml sugar syrup

"I wanted something super cool and super sweet that doesn't look girly, and that's exactly what I got. It looks cool and tastes amazing. I'm not going to drink anything else."

Served: Shaken into a lowball glass, topped

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.



ALESSIA

Interesting fact: Alessia leads a secret double life in Beijing – business woman by day, singer/songwriter by night.

The resulting drink:
One Night in New York

Ingredients:

45ml bourbon
60ml fresh grapefruit juice
15ml fresh lemon juice
15ml sugar syrup

Served: Shaken into a lowball glass and garnished with grapefruit slices.

"It's a really masculine drink, which reflects my personality – it's strong."



NANA

Interesting fact: Nana is a girly girl with a bubbly personality and a zest for life.

The resulting drink:
Nana's Zest

Ingredients:

30ml vodka
30ml Champagne
25ml peach liqueur
15ml pineapple juice
Dash of grenadine

Served: Shaken into a Champagne flute and garnished with cherry and aloe.

"My drink is really cute. It's pink and bubbly – it suits my personality."



VINCENT

Interesting fact: Vincent has a Russian girlfriend and cryptically says that since meeting her, he's been in jail. He also failed to tell us he does not like cucumber.

The resulting drink:
Desire of Liberty

Ingredients:

45ml gin
30ml fresh cucumber juice
30ml fresh apple juice
15ml fresh lemon juice

15ml sugar syrup

Served: Shaken into a lowball glass and garnished with cucumber.

"Fresh, really fresh, but I don't like cucumber!"



MADE IN CHINA

IN DEFENSE OF GANBEI

TIPS ON ENJOYING BAIJIU FOR PEOPLE WHO DON'T

by Jim Boyce

Sixty-plus bottles of *baijiu* in six hours. I tried them after taking an overnight train from Beijing to Shanghai last June to catch a mid-morning tasting. Some of my fellow expatriates in Beijing shook their heads at that trip, at spending time and money on a liquid they often described as tasting like jet fuel or paint thinner.

I don't blame people who think that way. Not only because *baijiu* is an acquired taste, but also because I've had my fair share of experiences that inspired similar comments and the next morning made me wonder if someone had grabbed a jackhammer and started renovations in my skull.

But just as watery lukewarm lager and the plonkiest of local plonk only touch on what beer and wine can be in China, the average *baijiu* experience hides the diversity of the spirit.

The point is: *baijiu* is a part of the drinking life in China, including in Beijing, where we often face a "light aroma" spirit known as *erguotou*. And many of us will be forced – or strongly encouraged – to drink it *ganbei*-style with family, friends or acquaintances, especially during the upcoming Chinese New Year. You could refuse or use tactics like adding water or secretly spilling it on the floor. But for those who plan to drink it, and shudder at the thought, here are a few ways to make the experience less loathsome.

Don't breathe while you drink. The reason you can't taste anything when you have a cold has more to do with your nose than mouth. Not inhaling while imbibing will reduce the potency of the *baijiu* taste.



PHOTOS: FLICKR USERS

Chill that bottle.

Spirits tend to be less aromatic when colder. Throwing *baijiu* in the freezer is not common but you might get it as a concession if forced to drink while visiting friends.

Use a mixer.

I recently had a shot that was equal parts *erguotou* and caramel liqueur. The savory/yeasty smell of one and the confectionery smell of the other created a pleasant saltwater taffy effect. It also dropped the alcohol content because the liqueur is 30 percent while the *erguotou* puts a stranglehold on your liver at 58 percent. Don't like caramel? Try another mixer.



Find your brand. For those who do not read Chinese, looking at a store aisle of *baijiu* brands is, well, like looking at a wall of Bordeaux for those who don't read French. I've heard people say, "I don't really like *baijiu*, although I once had a bottle that was OK." Which one? They usually can't remember. Next time, take a photo or write down the name. And if you are ever in a position to order or bring a bottle of *baijiu*, get that one.

Finally, limit your intake. The people who often tend to get messed up most are the ones who get too involved. Oh, you *ganbei'd* me? That's fun! Let me *ganbei* you, you and you! Bad idea at a time it is best to be a wallflower. As they say, the nail that sticks up highest gets most hammered.



TRULY EGGS-CELLENT

PHILIPP BLASER, EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT
MANAGER, THE OPPOSITE HOUSE

by Cat Nelson

Hospitality pro and Hong Kong native Philipp Blaser has been at The Opposite House since 2011, with much of his time spent overseeing the smooth operations of city venue favorites like Sureno and Mesh. A foodie to the core, he gives the scoop on the best spot for a home-cooked meal in Beijing and his favorite DIY snack when tipsy.

What was the first thing you remember eating as a child?

My dad was a chef for many years, and for Sunday dinners, he would always whip up something very simple, but tasty. My first memory was a roasted chicken and garden vegetables with his homemade gravy.

What's the most memorable food city in the world?

The cuisine in and around Milan. Every restaurant, deli, and café I went to was fantastic. It's usually very simple, but the quality is superior.

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

Eggs – there are so many variations of great egg dishes. My doctor would not be a fan though.

What's your favorite dish from any one of The Opposite House venues?

My favorite dish at The Opposite House is the Beijing roast duck from Jing Yaa Tang. Its crispy skin and succulent meat is just fantastic – you really get the aroma from the date wood-fired oven. The duck sauce that goes with the paper-thin pancakes is very refined and tasty. In the build-up to the opening of Jing Yaa Tang, I had tried many Beijing roast duck restaurants in town, and I must say that the Jing Yaa Tang roast duck is up there.

What's your favorite food to make for yourself at home after a boozy night out?

A mozzarella, tomato paste, and mortadella toastie with lots of cracked black pepper and a bit of pesto.

What's the best restaurant that no one's ever heard of?

I really enjoy a simple home-cooked meal from My Soup in Central Park. Their Cantonese chicken soup and brisket of beef rice is fantastic.

What's your strangest recurring food craving?

Blue cheese on a celery stick with a little honey drizzle on top.

What's your ideal breakfast?

Eggs Benedict on a bagel with a generous serving of hollandaise sauce. Life is too short to not have enough sauce!

Lunch out at Jing Yaa Tang, get a taste of their new set menu (RMB 88), and cash in on their latest promotion – tables of four pay only for three.

P.S. WE ATE YOU

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



garlic sea salt dry ribs

Plan B, RMB 35

A recent overhaul of dining options available at the Shuangjing venue saw a few gems unearthed. An instant favorite was this quick filler. Dusted generously in a sea salt and garlic seasoning, the bite-sized pucks of boiled pork rib are a chewy delight and a bargain at 35 *kuai* for a pound.

salad pizza

Pizza Plus, RMB 15 (one piece)

This moist and tangy square of chewy Italian crust is topped with chicken, mozzarella, cherry tomatoes and lettuce and drizzled in olive oil and lemon juice. Consider this for a refreshing, yet filling snack or a healthier binge option to accompany your Friday night DVD.

raw beef pho

Pho at Beijing, RMB 30

This piping hot bowl of beef broth and pho noodles comes to the table with a layer of raw beef still cooking in the soup. Dump in the extras: a squeeze of lemon, leaves of cilantro and a few chilli slices before taking a moment to bask in the fragrant steam and melt away your winter woes.

quarter chicken dinner

Uncle Otis, RMB 85

Uncle Otis's southern-style rotisserie chicken will quell your hankering for US soul food. Try the dark quarter chicken dinner, with macaroni and potato salad. This combination of flavorful dark meat, smooth pasta topped with parmesan cheese and potatoes in a light mayonnaise dressing will have you hollering, "giddy up!"

single burger

Fat Burger, RMB 40

Dribbling with the juices of a succulent 100 percent lean beef patty, this fast food burger is as delectable as you can get over a mall counter. Served with the usual toppings of your choice and the option to have with fries and a milkshake, this 15-minute meal seduces the inner glutton just fine.

GANGES

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A new spot for wax ticklers. p58

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Get surreal with Ji Dachun's exhibition, "Without a Home," at UCCA from Jan 19-May 11.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF UCCA

Groovy Gizmos

by Joey Guo



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The first edition of Chi Garden took the form of a petite, artsy boutique on Beiluogu Xiang. The two-storey shop could transport one from a dusty hutong street to an attic tastefully cluttered with the clothing menagerie of a '90s high-fashion fiend. Under bulbous glass covers and draped across sleek, white mannequins were one-of-a-kind designer pieces from past seasons, ideal for a glamorous night out.

Then, Chi Garden disappeared almost as soon as it appeared.

As if to reiterate the speedy evolution taking place in Beijing's fashion world, owner Wang Hua had changed her strategy. After just a few weeks, she had reimagined and renovated Chi Garden, this time, choosing a minimalist decor – bare white walls, mirror shelves, and ivory-colored pebbles – creating an optimal space for small-scale events and photo shoots. Because she received feedback from shoppers that her hutong location was far from convenient, Hua later expanded Chi Garden to a "moving closet" concept, where customers could browse looks online, request delivery to anywhere, and receive style advice.

Although Gulou's hutongs are slowly seeing more

independent multi-brand stores, like Wuhao and S.T.A.R.S., Hua is well aware there are still many clients who think Chi Garden's sophisticated and pricy clothes stick out like a sore thumb. But when asked why she doesn't relocate to somewhere like Sanlitun, it's clear that the Central Saint Martins grad sees her shop as much more: "I just want people to appreciate the design and the brand. If I sell in Sanlitun, all people will care about is whether or not it's fake and whether it's a luxury label."

Hua herself highly regards designers like Belgium's Martin Margiela and China's Yifang Wan, who boast androgynous, contemporary looks that apply concepts like deconstruction, elongated and oversized proportions, and offbeat adornments. Her picks reflect a style view in China that just recently started to bloom and is still rarely represented in mainstream fashion.

"The idea that women should dress to please a man is stupid," Hua says. "There are many ways to be beautiful. You don't just have to wear short skirts and high heels – you can be yourself." *Jessica Rapp*

Also try: S.T.A.R.S., Q Apartment



GET THE LOOK

SOLD ON STYLE

by Jessica Rapp



Wu Yingnan
Founder and Chief Designer
Rfactory

Her style: Simple, but stunning. She prefers to rock neutrals, but when she does do color, she chooses neon shades.

Style evolution: "Three years ago, I didn't wear the same clothes, even within a month. I tried everything. But now, my style is quite strong and a little bit bossy."

What she's wearing: Leather skirt, self-made; Coat, gift from Paris; Shoes, bought in France; Sunglasses, bought at a Brussels vintage market; Purse, "Penny" by Rfactory; Computer bag, "Madmen" by Rfactory

Who better to call style savvy than those running Beijing's premier boutiques? This month, we asked the people behind vintage den Q Apartment and handbag brand Rfactory to brandish their personal looks.

Shao Qing
Founder
Q Apartment

Her style: Qing prefers her look to be special when she goes out, so she dons elegant, vintage gowns that pop.

Favorite designers: Yves Saint Laurent, Alexander McQueen, and Jean Paul Gaultier

What she's wearing: Dress, Lincler (1970s); Shoes, Stella McCartney; Clutch, Mangiameli, (1950s); Pin, YSL (1980s)





MONO MG RECORDS

JOINING THE VINYL REVOLUTION

Daily noon-10pm. 2 Qianyuan'ensi Hutong, Dongcheng District (135 0137 0028)

东城区前圆恩寺胡同2号

 1km southwest of Beixinqiao station (Line 5)

Records have a special tactile quality that provides an intimate experience to go with their music. With the city's recent surge in vinyl collecting, the Beijing music *otaku* are hitting the streets hunting for those big, black, round, shiny discs that mysteriously make sound with needles.

Situated in Jiaodaokou, Mono MG Records is the perfect example of the growing hunger for LPs here in the capital. Boss Kenny Cao isn't entirely new to the game. He has been selling music through his other endeavors, Beetle in a Box and Concertino, for a while now. He is determined to make his new store a venerable source for all things vinyl.

With plenty of enthusiasm and demand, it is hard to keep a store filled with quality music, and it takes a Sisyphean proprietor to keep the shelves bursting with relevant records. Cao points out that he is exhausting as many methods as possible to keep the selection at his store vibrant, with monthly visits to Guangzhou and

imports from America being two of his key tributaries. With music available at the click of a button, it is important for record stores to provide patrons with something more. Mono MG offers an authentic collector's experience and succeeds at being a comfortable place you can explore, scavenge and experience the music.

Some albums have only reached China for the first time. One such gem is an original Factory Records compilation from 1978, featuring artists like Joy Division, Cabaret Voltaire, and Durutti Column (RMB 600) alongside more current output from artists like Merchandise and Oneohtrix Point Never (RMB 200).

If you are just getting started with your hobby, you can find all the necessary regalia and accessories, including turntables, vintage stereo equipment, and a menagerie of music and film posters designed by Kenny himself. *Kipp Whittaker*

Also try: The Other Shop, Blueline Records

YETANG

ONLINE STORE GIVES SHOPPERS THE "COOL FACTOR"

www.yetang.com

The red and blue wrapped hard candy that is the logo for Natasia Guo's latest online shop, Yetang, is misleading when taken out of context. It's not until you realize that Yetang translates to "wild candy" or you see the rather provocative shots on their Instagram that you discover Guo's shop mission is miles away from being sweet and innocent: "We want to teach Chinese kids how to party."

Yetang's "Nobody f***ing with me" temporary tattoos by brands Smokebomb and Neuf is just one of the ways Guo and her team might guide an open-minded shopper who may not quite yet understand how to get with the in-crowd. We suppose this means the cool kids in China are those seeking a touch of individuality in their style, and there's certainly no shortage of quirky, standout pieces at Yetang, ones that take your bizarre Xidan market find to another level. Take, for instance, the horned Devil Volt phone chargers, which seem to be an arch mockery of silly bunny ear cases. Or there's the baseball cap with playful cursive on the front, but instead of Chinglish, it says "Bull\$hit," fittingly supported with the slogan, "keep it real." Suddenly, that iridescent purple fur coat on the rack at that Korean boutique seems wearable because the model

from Yetang's Rimless brand can rock it.

The site, which consistently boasts affordable prices and deals, curates picks from the deepest corners of the world of hip, independent Chinese designers, which means one doesn't have to waste time on Taobao. Sure, Yetang has a Chinese-only interface, but it also has a cat-shaped search box. You win some, you lose some.

Unlike the similar website Nuandao, formerly managed by Guo, Yetang's products are primarily fashion-related and include make-up and accessories. But what really makes Yetang stand out from its e-commerce competitors are its edgy product shoots. Poses veer between the cutesy, puffed cheek snapshots you might find upon any glance at your WeChat Moments and leggy models in heels seductively pursing their lips. Add in the colorful tessellations layered on torn sections of printed nature scenes, and one is left with the kind of galactic cool that puts you in the middle of an Animal Collective music video. It doesn't get much wilder than that.

Jessica Rapp

Also try: Brand New China, Nuandao



PHOTOS: COURTESY OF YETANG

SAILING WESTWARD: STEPHEN DAVIES' THE VOYAGE OF THE KEYING

A FLASHPOINT IN CHINESE MARITIME HISTORY

by Steven Schwankert

It's hard to imagine a time when buying a boat would have been illegal, but in 1846, that was the case. China, believing that the ships it built were the best in the world, prohibited the sale of its ships to foreigners. However, a group of enterprising Englishmen decided purchasing a Chinese junk would be worth the risk as a curiosity and tourist attraction for British and American audiences, and that year they smuggled one out of Hong Kong Harbour.

That scenario provides the backdrop for Stephen Davies' *East Sails West: The Voyage of the Keying, 1846-1855*. Former museum director at the Hong Kong Maritime Museum and currently its first China State Shipbuilding Corporation Maritime Heritage Research Fellow, Davies presents a thoroughly researched look at a forgotten chapter of Chinese maritime history and the West's first large-scale look at how China sailed the waves.

The Keying, known to Mandarin speakers as the Qiying and named for a Qing Dynasty official, sailed for the United States in December 1846 with 12 British officers and a Chinese crew of 30 under the command of Captain Alfred Kellett. Although Chinese crews had served on Royal Navy ships for some time, this was probably the first time that sailors from China were on board one of their own ships, but under British command.

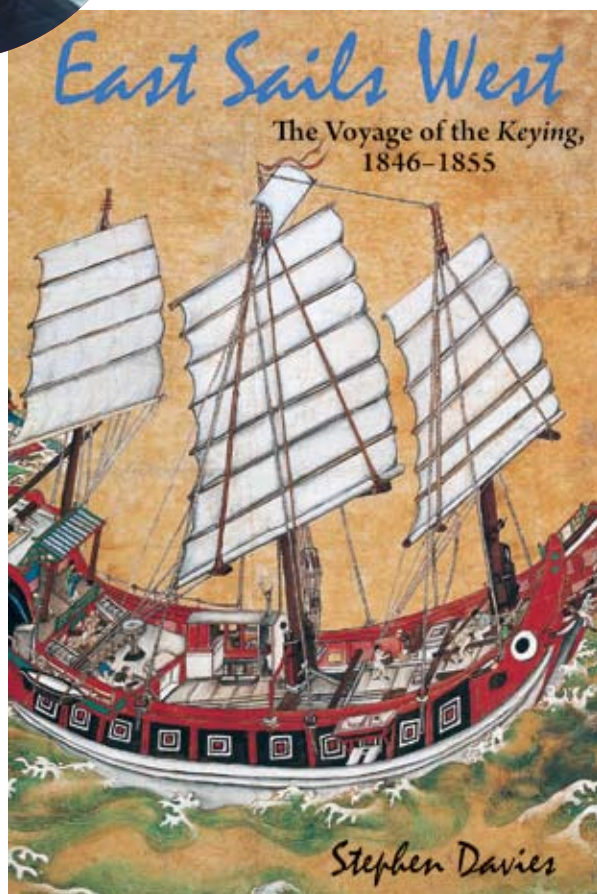
In order to gain the return on the investment that the boat's buyers sought, it would have to be sailed from Hong Kong to the US and then on to the UK in order to become the first Chinese ship in the waters of either country. Kellett was an experienced mariner, but such a long and treacherous journey in a craft of unfamiliar design and managing a crew not always keen to heed his orders made it even more difficult. After a seven-month sail, the Keying arrived in New York City where it was an immediate hit.

The ship later sailed to Boston and then to London, where Queen Victoria visited it. "There is not a more interesting

exhibition in the vicinity of London than the Chinese junk [the Keying]: one step across the entrance, and you are in the Chinese world; you have quitted the Thames for the vicinity of Canton," wrote the *Times of London*.

This isn't really a book for the casual reader; it requires some knowledge of nautical terminology and seafaring. However, it provides a comprehensive look at a period of Chinese maritime history when, given China's renewed interest in all things maritime, it may be on the up again.

Buy *East Sails West* at [The Bookworm](#), or from [Hkupress.org](#).



PHOTOS: COURTESY OF HONG KONG UNIVERSITY PRESS



HONG KONG

THE ULTIMATE WEEKEND GETAWAY

by Steven Schwankert

For Beijingers, there's still no better weekend getaway than Hong Kong. Sure, it's expensive, but so is every other city break that's within a reasonable air distance: Seoul, Shanghai, and Tokyo will set you back about the same. Hong Kong is the best of the worlds that we straddle. Although Hong Kong isn't always toasty during the winter, it's still a good deal warmer than here.

Hong Kong has two great advantages over Beijing: efficiency and size. Hong Kong is about money. Unlike Beijing, in Hong Kong, time is money. Therefore, the time required to handle most transactions is reduced as much as possible. A to-do list that would take all day in Beijing can be completed in a morning in Hong Kong, with time left before lunch. Although the level of English has declined since 1997, Hong Kong is much easier to navigate for the non-Chinese speaker than Beijing.

The Hotel Indigo Hong Kong is a mix between the true boutique or design hotel and a five-star chain. Owned by the InterContinental Hotel Group, Hotel Indigo is heavy on design, but without sacrificing comfort. Located in Wanchai, it's closer to shopping and to Central than the nightlife part of the district and overall different from the normal hotel experience. For example, the bed is in the middle of the room. It does what the W Hotels chain always succeeds in doing: it makes you feel like you're staying at your coolest friend's downtown apartment.

However, it's unlikely that your coolest friend has a pool in his or her building, and said friend's pool is most

certainly not on the rooftop and does not jut out over the street below. Bring your swim goggles because as you swim to the edge of Hotel Indigo's pool, a glass panel makes it seem as though you're about to swim off into the Hong Kong skyline, and before that flip turn, look down and see the cars and busses passing in the street. That's pretty cool.

For those heading to Hong Kong for a taste of the West, that's easy to do at any number of the city's restaurants. Opened by New York transplant Robert Spina, whose parents handle the catering at a prestigious private club there, Posto Pubblico on Elgin Street in the Mid-Levels is pure New York, down to the dishtowel napkins, the cannolis, and linguini in white clam sauce that will make you think a mob hit is about to go down at the next table. Definitely call for a reservation in advance. You'll need it. If it matters, Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie ate here and said they loved the meatballs.

During the daytime, get out of town. Sixty percent of Hong Kong is green space. No, really. Despite its reputation as an urban jungle, southern Hong Kong island and the New Territories are, in places, downright wild. Consider walking to the Peak from Caine or Robinson Road in the Mid-Levels, including the loop trail around Victoria Peak for a 360-degree view of the area. Similarly, take a ferry to Discovery Bay or Mui Wo and pick up trails near there. Take a look at the Hong Kong Hikers website (Hongkonghikers.com) for inspiration and information.

Introducing the people who matter

MEET

"I WAS VERY EXCITED AND DANCED ALL NIGHT UNTIL I GOT SICK" SEE P63

"GROWN ADULTS GO NUTS FOR SOMEONE IN A GIANT BIRD SUIT" SEE P65

"WE FIGHT AND WE MAKE UP AND WE RESPECT EACH OTHER" SEE P67

"IT IS A MAGICAL PLACE, AND I CAN ONLY TRY TO DESCRIBE IT" SEE P68

THE LUMINEERS // YOAN G // DAVE GASPAR // AMBRA CORINTI

CARSICK CARS TALK THEIR NEW RECORD ...

The third Carsick Cars record is definitely our best sounding album.

Carsick Cars will always be about two things: noise and a spirit of resistance.

Playing in a band together is just like marriage. It will only work if personalities mesh.

We spent just three days recording 14 songs.

Carsick Cars play tracks from their new album, 3, at Yugong Yishan on Feb 28.

YOAN G

FOUNDER, WANGBA MUSIC

Who would you most like to go out drinking with?

I like drinking with quiet people who are kind of mysterious.

If you could only imbibe one drink for the rest of your life, what would it be?

I could live on French red wine with a slight taste of oak from the barrel.

How old were you when you started drinking?

I was 16 or 17, and I had just started listening to heavy music like Led Zeppelin. I remember once I went to see Fishbone and Rage Against The Machine in my hometown. It was a really crazy night and the alcohol contributed to a really wild experience.

Tell us about the first time you were drunk.

I was very excited and danced all night until I got sick.

Tell us about the last time you were drunk.

I remember I was at Temple, but I don't remember how I got home.

What's the dumbest thing you've done while drunk?

Compare the size of my penis with my best friends'. Actually my friends thought that it was really dumb, but at the time, I really thought it was an interesting way to know the truth about what we were discussing. Maybe it was really stupid though.

Where's the dumbest place you've gone drinking?

In a washing machine. We were at a friend's house, and his parents were out of town. In each room, we tried to find different challenges that would lead to us drinking whatever kinds of alcohol we could find. By the end of the night, the TVs and beds were broken, there were holes in the walls, and I was naked in the washing machine. I don't remember anything from that night.

You're hosting a cocktail party, what are you making?

I don't like cocktails. I would prefer a glass of red wine. Wine is really natural and romantic. It always brings to mind my

ideas about death, the unknown, and mysterious things we can't fully understand. When I drink it, I'm melancholic and happy at the same time. I like this feeling because it's very similar to what I feel when I'm listening music.

What's your golden rule of drinking?

I always drink with good music.

What's your favorite drink?

The most expensive cognac I can find.

What's your idea of a good night out?

Going somewhere with interesting music, good friends and just enough alcohol.

Check out Wangbamusic.com for more on their X Nights Festival coming this spring.



DAVE GASPAR

BAR MANAGER, THE BRICK
SPECIALIST SUBJECT: AMERICAN FAST FOOD

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE

1. In what state was the first game of baseball played?

I want to say Missouri, but I have no idea. ✗

2. Which author created the character "Jeeves," now commonly known as the mascot for Ask.com?

I don't know any authors. The only author I know is Phil Jackson who wrote a book about basketball. And he had a ghost writer, so I have no idea. No – I should've said Dan Brown. ✗

3. The comic strip character Charlie Brown owns what species of dog?

Beagle? ✓

4. What is the lowest number on the FM dial?

Oh, for real? I haven't listened to a radio since the last time I owned a car, which was eight years ago. So I'm going to say, like, 91.1. ✗

5. What do you call a group of owls?

I should know this because I bet it's a super cool name. The "who." ✗

SPECIALIST SUBJECT

6. There are two chains generally credited as being America's first fast food restaurants. What are they?

Well, one is White Castle. And the other maybe has something to do with A&W because they were the first "roadside"? ✓

7. Lou Groen invented this McDonald's sandwich after discovering that his hometown of Cincinnati was almost 90 percent Roman Catholic.

Oh man, I don't know. A burger with a cross pick in it? Or one with a wafer they give you when you go to church? I have no idea. ✗

8. Which fast food chain came up with the slogan in the late 1950s, "Service With the Speed of Sound?"

Oh, that's easy. Sonic. They're the first ones to introduce roller skating. ✓

9. What is the variant of the McDonald's Happy Meal designed for preteens called?

Really? I don't know what it's called, but they probably



put some sort of contraceptives inside for a prize because that's what I would do. ✗

10. In the 1960s, Richard D. Burke designed an iconic red roof and trapezoidal windows for this fast food chain.

I can only think of Wendy's. I don't know, I don't look at roofs, I'm not an architect. Burger King, is that red? Pizza Hut – it's Pizza Hut! ✓

FINAL SCORE: 4/10

VERDICT: Dave needs to brush up on his McD trivia, but he has an excuse: His hometown is near Montpelier, Vermont, the US's only capital city without a McDonald's.

Try The Brick's latest cold weather drinks, including Sichuan mulled beer and an "Autumn Threesome."

WIN A HOTEL STAY!

Win a one night stay in a deluxe room with breakfast for two at **JW Marriott Beijing** by telling us:

What is Carsick Cars' new record called?

JW MARRIOTT
BEIJING



Answers to win@thebeijinger.com.

Answers
1) New Jersey, 2) P.G. Wodehouse, 3) Beagle, 4) 88, 5) a Parliament, 6) White Castle, A&W, 7) Filler-o-Fish, 8) Sonic, 9) Mighty Kids Meal, 10) Pizza Hut

BEN REDDEN

EVENTS MANAGER, THE BOOKWORM

Which uniform was the most flattering?

I was on the tennis team in high school. I look absolutely fantastic in shorts!

Which uniform was the worst fit?

I tried out for Little League baseball when I was young. The coach put me in the outfield, and I just started wandering around because I was so bored. I still don't really play baseball.

Did you ever feel transformed by wearing any of these uniforms? If so, which ones?

I was my school mascot in college, and I basically dressed up as a giant turkey. It was a total character transformation. It was so much fun to sign autographs, high-five everybody and to see grown adults go nuts for someone in a giant bird suit.

Did you ruin any of these uniforms?

I spent just one day serving ice cream at an ice cream stand. It was actually part of a fundraiser. I was a mess when I showed up and I was more of a mess when I left. Let's leave it at that.

Which uniform did you resent wearing the most?

I worked for Coca-Cola for one summer, and on my first day, my boss handed me the only uniform he could find. It was likely used and was three sizes too big for me. By the end of that summer, I truly appreciated a college education.

Which uniform do you feel most sentimental about? Why?

I was a Boy Scout for seven years. It got me really interested in the outdoors, and I think was a great program to build character.

Tell us a story about wearing a uniform somewhere where you felt out of place.

As a tradition at my school, the graduating mascots wear the oversized mascot shoes throughout the ceremony. Among the sea of black robes, it was a bit funny to stand out so much with a giant pair of bird feet.

Which uniform did you have the most fun in?

Gotta go back to the mascot with this one. I rode on the back of golf carts, crashed classes, crowd-surfed the football stadium, and did plenty of other things I can't tell you about.

Which uniform were you most mocked for wearing?

It wasn't a uniform per se, but in high school, I grew my hair into a mullet on a dare. People made fun of me a bit, but I honestly thought it was pretty funny. Though I received my driver's license while I had it, and that picture was on there for the next five years – poor planning.

Check out Beijingbookworm.com for details of events Ben has organized throughout February.



PLAYLIST



Your Brain with Mozart," and it really worked.

What is your work-out music?

Some minimal music, like ambient or minimal techno. It really helps me concentrate.

What's your favorite Chinese song, and why?

A Taiwanese band from the '90s called Ukulele have a song called "Stray Bird." It's about living a vagrant life, without a home or clear idea for the future.

What would be your wedding song?

Sonny Rollins "If Ever I Would Leave You." This song is just long enough for me to finish my wedding vows.

Which song lifts your spirits?

"Days in the Trees" by No-Man is a very poetic and wise song. I found it when I was 20, and it was the first time I was really shocked by a song.

What songs would be on your sex mix?

It must be "Scene D'Amour," a melody from Francis Lai's soundtrack *Billits*. It's very sexy.

Which singer would you bring back from the dead?

Nick Drake, what else do I have to say?

What song would you want to be played at your funeral?

Don Costa's "Adios" because it sounds like a happy ending melody for a funny guy leaving on a fun journey.

WU FEI

CO-OWNER, THE OTHER SHOP

What would you choose as your perfect break-up song?

Sade's "Love Is Stronger Than Pride" because she is so honest and sings her mind.

What was the first record you ever bought?

A collection of Mozart, called something like "Improve

WU FEI'S FIVE SONG PLAYLIST

1. "An Ending (Ascent)" by Brian Eno

It really is the best song for anybody who is alone in life, from beginning to end.

2. "Music for 18 Musicians" by Steve Reich

You can treat this album as one nonstop melody. It opened my mind to a totally new idea of music. From the moment I first heard it, I realized the unique

beauty behind minimal art.

3. "Forbidden Colours" by David Sylvian & Ryuichi Sakamoto

I love the movie *Merry Christmas*, *Mr. Lawrence*, and I love David Sylvian and Ryuichi Sakamoto. It's the most romantic song I have ever heard.

4. "Home is Another Heart" by Fantastic Something

A very tiny pop song about taking control of your life, with clean guitar

sounds and pithy lyrics. It's easy to sing anytime anywhere, and it's very beautiful and touching.

5. "Mr. Fantasy's Love" by Fantastic Plastic Machine

It's a song that represents my life, with love, energy and happiness.

Check out Wu Fei's The Other Shop for all your electronic music needs.

SCHOOL OF ROCK

NEYLA PEKAREK, THE LUMINEERS

by Kyle Mullin



Class is in session. Today's lesson: the virtues of good old-fashioned folk. The Lumineers' Neyla Pekarek is used to schooling naysayers – from bratty teens during her stint as a substitute teacher, to audiences as cellist and backing vocalist for The Lumineers. She tells us how the classroom readied her for the world stage, how she learned to play nice with her male peers, and how she dealt with her band's hit "Ho Hey," inspiring some all-star class clowns.

You played in an all-female group before joining The Lumineers. What is the biggest difference between the two?

I think it's always hard to be the "only" anything in a group. I've typically been in situations that were much more female dominated, so this has been a big change. I've never been so aware of being a woman, but it makes me proud to be in the industry owning a business with my bandmates. The boys are like brothers to me, so we fight and we make up and we respect each other.

What did you learn then from the all-female barbershop quartet that still applies to The Lumineers today?

Barbershop gave me so many skills. It not only made me a better musician, but also gave me leadership skills, work ethic, ensemble skills, and the main thing really

applies to The Lumineers – doing what you need to do for the bigger picture to better the group as a whole. You're not always soloing or showing off what you can do. You're making choices to better the song that aren't always necessarily showcasing the best of your abilities.

Can you handle hecklers better thanks to your time in the classroom?

I'm quite happy to not be doing a whole lot of classroom management these days as that was never my forte as a teacher. It's tough, but I think it's an awful lot like performing. Especially as a sub, you have to walk in so confident so your students know they can't walk all over you. Taking a stage, especially as a newer band, is the same.

Jimmy Fallon recently performed a version of "Ho Hey" wearing a chicken suit. How does it feel to have a song that is popular enough to inspire comedians like him?

We thought our music was never going to be heard much beyond our family and friends, so having huge names like that singing our song, even if it was in chicken suits, we take it as a huge compliment.

The Lumineers perform at Tango on Feb 11. For more information, visit Spli-t.com.

AMBRA CORINTI

FOUNDER OF ZAJIA LAB BEIJING PROJECT SPACE

What was your favorite movie when you were a child?

My brother and I used to watch millions of movies. The one that I used to love most was *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*, a 1966 epic Spaghetti Western film by Sergio Leone with Clint Eastwood. We could recite almost all the dialogue. One line goes something like this: "You see, in this world there are two kinds of people, my friend. Those with loaded guns and those who dig. You dig."

Is there a literary adaptation that works better as a movie than as a book?

No matter if a film is adapted from a book or vice versa, I see them as completely different works, and I don't like to make comparisons. I prefer to read scripts of films already



released and then watch the movie to enjoy the director's imagination and interpretation. I find the process very interesting and inspiring.

Is there a certain movie or TV show that you like to have playing in the background when you do a certain task? If so, which movie/show and which task?

Down By Law by Jim Jarmusch when I am writing or when I am tidying my room. The soundtrack is terrific and the rhythm of the dialogues is musical too. Tom Waits's voice and environmental sounds mix together and make this film as enjoyable as a piece of music.

Is there a particular movie theatre that you have a sentimental attachment to?

The one I love most is Cinema Azzurro Scipioni in Rome. It is a magical place, and I can only try to describe it. The dark halls, small and functional, are decorated with objects of the early 20th century. There is a screening room with a piano (which you can play at the end of the screening), some of the seats are comfortable old chairs, and a lucky few can sit in original old Alitalia old seats. The best room is Lumière. Here, in the midst of old mannequins, movie posters and table lamps that act as room lights, true classics are projected. The manager, who speaks to you of Chaplin with a smile, could stand there in the dark talking about movies indefinitely.

Catch the Zajia Lab Film Platform on Feb 26.



PHOTOS: KEN

MENGFEI CHEN

PUBLICIST, PENGUIN CHINA



The books on my shelf that have the most sentimental value to me are Joan Didion's collected essays because no one writes about southern California the way she does, and a pink handbook that my mom got from the local community health center in Nanjing. It's a guide to childrearing for new mothers and is illustrated with the creepiest drawings of blonde children.

I'm usually in the process of reading several books at the same time. Currently they are Daniele Vare's *The Maker of Heavenly Trousers*, collected food writing by M.F.K. Fisher and Li Na's memoir *My Life*.

The last book I bought was R.J. Palacio's *Wonder*. I sent it to my little brother, and he tells me it's now his favorite book.

I can't pick one favorite "China writer." I think the first China book that really spoke to me was Peter Hessler's *River Town*. I enjoy the quiet humor in his writing and that he writes about the lives of people living outside of the big cities. Lao She's works are great, especially *Mr. Ma and Son*. I also enjoy the graphic artist Gene Leun Yang, though he is more of a China-America writer than a China writer. In fact, all three of them write more about navigating the intersection between China and some foreign place than about China, but then the experience of navigating

unfamiliar territory is pretty essential to present-day China.

I judge books by their covers more often than I care to admit.

I don't read on the subway because I don't use it very often. But I discovered the *Moby Dick* Big Read project a few months back. It's all 135 chapters of the novel read aloud by people like Tilda Swinton, Stephen Fry and Sir David Attenborough. It's perfect for biking or walking.

My favorite book from childhood is *Charlotte's Web*.

The book that I pretend to have read, but haven't is *Tom Sawyer*. We were supposed to read it in high school. I think I watched the *Wishbone* version instead.

The book I brought on my latest travels was *Middlemarch*. I know vacation reading is supposed to be light, but I see travel as an opportunity to strand myself with something I've been meaning to get to. It doesn't always work.

Follow Penguin China on Twitter and Facebook for updates on publications, events, and special promotions.

ECOLOGY

"POLLUTION IS NOTHING BUT THE RESOURCES WE ARE NOT HARVESTING." - R. BUCKMINSTER FULLER



An artist's rendering of a "blue zone."



DIAMOND MINING IN POLLUTION

**A BEIJING PARK MAY SOON CLEAN SMOG AND
TURN IT INTO A GLITTERY TREASURE**

By Kyle Mullin

In February, every Beijinger follows the same old, three-step routine. First: succumb to sputtering coughing fits. Second: mutter curses and pleas toward our smog-clogged heavens. Third: begin the beleaguered process anew. But Daan Roosegarde envisions a refreshingly new breathing cycle for China's capital – one that practically leaves him panting because he smells so much potential in those polluted plumes.

The Dutch designer and head of Studio Roosegarde (a pair of art, fashion and architecture “social labs” based in the Netherlands and Shanghai) says one of Beijing's parks can be outfitted with devices that use simple static electricity to “scrub” 70-75 percent of the pollution in a 40-50-meter radius. He hasn't decided on a specific park

yet for the project. Roosegarde compares the proposal to a grander version of the air purifiers used in most European hospitals. But a more fitting analogy would include the famed “Beijing breathing bicycle” that made headlines last year, designed by British-born, Beijing-based artist Matt Hope.

Unlike the breathing bike, Roosegarde's plan would make use of pollution by compressing the smog's carbon until those grubby particles turn to dazzling diamonds (which could, in turn, fund the process in other parks). But this concept does share the same sentiment as Hope's more modest project. And like the diamonds he aims to pull literally out of thin (albeit filthy) air, Roosegarde's plan has a result that makes it all the more

beautiful. Below, the Dutch designer and Lia van de Vorle – a bio-technologist he recruited to help bring the project to life – tell us about the deeper message behind the futuristic plan, the technical workings of its devices, and how the gunk in our lungs could become the bling on our fingers.

How did you discover that smog could have benefits?

Daan Roosegarde: One day I was sitting in my hotel room in Beijing, looking out at the CCTV tower. By the next day, the view was completely covered in smog. I thought it was incredibly sad.

But then I thought, rather than trying to reduce pollution, what if we could use it as a tool? My team has created a lot of environmental projects where we thought of sustainability as doing something more, rather than less. We've developed sustainable dance floors which generate electricity as you dance on the floorboards and move them up and down. We also have a lot of experience with magnetic fields and static electricity. Right now, we're building a new road in Europe which charges electrical cars when they drive over it.

So I thought about static in simpler terms, like the way it electrifies balloons if they touch your hair. I thought the same thing could apply to smog.

How exactly will this work in the Beijing park?

Lia van de Vorle: The smog will be removed using the principle of positive ionization. Smog particles and polluted air will enter the device's system. A high voltage electrode gives the particles a positive charge, which makes them move to a negative collector electrode. The smog particles settle on this collector electrode until they form harmless, coarse dust. Then purified air leaves the system.

What will be the technical challenges?

LvdV: We had a successful pilot in the Netherlands, but the Beijing project's systems will be bigger and the volume of air that needs to be purified will be much bigger. The greatest challenge that we still need to address is the fact that it will be a fully open space with various wind directions, which will affect the system's configuration.

How much energy will it need to clean the air?

LvdV: We calculated that 240 cubic meters can be cleaned per hour with an energy consumption of 1500 watts. That's comparable to the energy used in a standard oven or microwave.

DR: It's quite energy efficient. The goal is to create a place that is at least 70-75 percent cleaner than the surrounding environment.

What would 70 percent less smog look like?

LvdV: This depends on the amount of smog. But as an example, Beijing's average PM2.5 air quality is 250-270. If our system was operational, the air quality would be in the range of 75-80.

What about critics, who might call this a waste of money or energy compared to filters and masks?

DR: I'm so completely tired of opinions, and I'm so incredibly interested in proposals. Chinese schools are being shut down because the air is so bad for children. If we don't invest in new ideas, then we'll suffocate. Literally. All my Chinese friends and colleagues say they want this. They keep asking me when the "blue zone" will be done. They gave it a nickname, they love it so much already.



What about the process of turning smog to diamonds? How will that work?

DR: During our pilot project, I had some of the collected smog particles placed in a plastic bag. It was incredibly disgusting, and I thought, "My god, am I breathing this?" It was a lot of waste, which we could have thrown away. But our scientists started talking about how smog mostly consists of carbon. And what happens when you compress carbon? You get diamonds.

We're only in the testing phase now. Our plan is to compress some of the smog enough that it becomes a grey gel, then compress other parts until they become pure diamond. That way our jewelry will have colored layers, and you'll be able to see bits in the diamond that used to be pollution. It'll give it a really unique look. It's doable – we've already made some, we're just fine-tuning to make it as energy efficient as possible. My girlfriend saw one, and now she keeps saying, "I want a smog diamond!" So there's no going back now.

For information about Studio Roosegarde's pollution scrubbing project, visit their website at Studi Roosegarde.net.

What are you planning to do?

EVENTS

OUR EDITORS PICK THE BEST OF THE MONTH

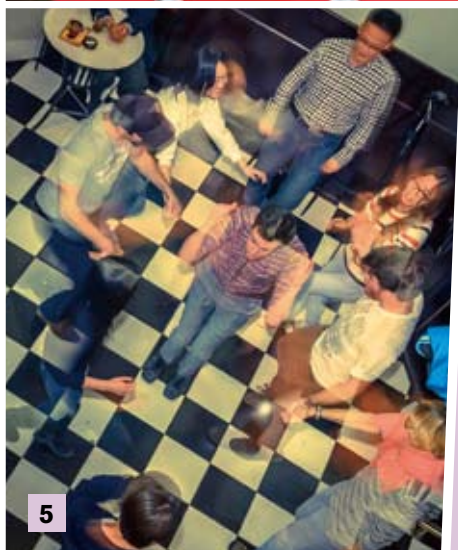
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SVEN VATH

FEB 22 – The techno legend returns to Beijing to devote a few hours of his 32-year stint to electro-ravenous fans.
RMB 300, RMB 200 (advance). 10pm. Tango. (6425 5677)



1. CAVERN NIGHT WITH THE BEIJING BEATLES

FEB 15 – Behold as the Basement magically transforms itself into the legendary Cavern Club where the Fab Four got their illustrious start. RMB 100. 10pm. Basement (6690 1518)

2. HOTPOT: VALENTINE'S EDITION

FEB 14 – Three dope DJ's play the freshest beats from all genres of dance music, including bass, house, trap, hip-hop, funk, and soulful bangers. Bass for that face, funk in the trunk. RMB 50 (free before 11pm). 10pm. The Bar at Migas (5208 6061)

3. CHARITY FASHION SHOW

FEB 15 – Style students from International School of Beijing put on a runway show featuring their own creations along with attire from brands like Nike, H&M, and Vera Moda. Proceeds from ticket sales go to The New Hope Foundation, which raises money for infants who need surgery. RMB 70, RMB 50 (students). International School of Beijing (isbcfs2014@gmail.com)

4. MY MOTHER'S RHAPSODY SCREENING

FEB 22 – Starring the director's 86 year-old grandmother, this documentary is filled with great anecdotes, both funny and tragic, as well as some fine storytelling. The screening will be followed by a special Q&A with director Qiu Jiongjiang. RMB 50. 7pm. Culture Yard (8404 4166)

5. SQUARE DANCE AND SINGLES MIXER

FEB 12 – The Hutong Yellow Weasels turn back the clock to the original speed dating party: the square dance. Grab your partner, swing her around, and maybe score a second date. Free. 9pm. Fubar (6593 8227)

DON'T MISS

VALENTINE'S DAY DINNERS

AMORE INFINITO

FEB 14 – Treat your *amore* to a six-course set of traditional Italian fare with dishes such as Jerusalem artichoke soup and oxtail ravioli. RMB 888+15% per person (includes a glass of Champagne). Cepe, Ritz Carlton Financial Street (6629 6996)

BE MY VALENTINE

FEB 14 – Capture someone's heart with a five-course meal that begins with Champagne and oysters. RMB 1,314 per couple (includes a drink and entrance to Vivid's Valentine's Day party), RMB 1,917+15% per couple (includes above, plus a deluxe-room, one-night stay and breakfast for two). 29 Grill, Conrad Beijing (6584 6300)

CANDLELIGHT VALENTINE'S

FEB 14 – The team formerly behind SALT presents a four-course menu including butter lobster and Champagne risotto at their newest venture, Factory. Reservations required. RMB 450 per person (includes a glass of sparkling wine). Factory (1108 0348)

IT IS NOT YOUR FAULT IF YOU ARE STILL SINGLE

FEB 14 – While you may not be to blame for being single, It's solely on you, should you miss this chance to meet your lifetime partner, says the InterContinental. Ticket includes a cocktail reception and dinner. RMB 398 per person. InterContinental Beijing Financial Street (5852 5888)

VALENTINE'S DINNER

FEB 14 – Little more says love than raw fish – or lobster. Get all that and more flavors of Japan with your sweetheart. RMB 521+15% per couple. Hagaki, EAST Hotel (8414 9815)

V-DAY DATE NIGHT

FEB 13 – Great Leap Brewing, Mercante, The Orchid hotel, and the Beijing LGBT Center gather forces for an evening of home-style Italian, craft beer and wine. Tickets include four Great Leap beers and a set menu with wine from Mercante with all proceeds benefitting the LGBT Center. RMB 400 per couple. The Orchid (0192 6120)

BE MY VALENTINE

FEB 14 – Celebrate Valentine's Day with a buffet of lobster, oysters, sashimi, steak and the chance to win two round-trip tickets to Sanya and a two-night stay. RMB 428+15% per person. Asia Bistro, JW Marriott Beijing (5908 8995)

LOVE ON THE SQUARE

FEB 14 – Gaze over Qianmen while enjoying a four-course menu with options including a *foie gras* terrine, butter-poached cod and a Grand Dessert platter for two. RMB 488+10% per person. Capital M (6702 2727)

CULINARY JOURNEY OF LOVE

FEB 14 – Take that someone special on a wine-paired culinary adventure, starting with aperitifs and canapés in the Presidential Suite and finishing with desserts and live entertainment in Centro. RMB 1,888+15% per couple. Centro, The Kerry Hotel, Beijing (156 1190 6392)

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1

1. BEIJING'S OFFICIAL SUPER BOWL PARTY

FEB 3 – Root for your favorite team with NFL China and a full American-style breakfast buffet including unlimited Budweiser beer. RMB 188-300. 7am. Kerry Hotel Beijing. (6561 8833)



2

2. THOUSAND HAND BODHISATVA

FEB 19-22 – With seven years of preparation, Taiyuan Dance Company's large-scale dance drama masterpiece the *Thousand-hand Bodhisattva*, will leave you awestruck as they perform these ancient movements with beautiful grace and precision. RMB 100. 7.30pm. National Center For The Performing Arts (6655 0000)



3

3. BEFORE MY LIFE FAILS

FEB 16 – The folks at Hotpot Music bring a hardcore treat. From the land of the rising sun comes an explosion of blast beats, fast guitar and fierce vocals from this group of sinister party animals. RMB 120, RMB 90 (advance). 9pm. Yugong Yishan (6404 2711)

1. PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOP

FEB 2 – Do you have a digital SLR and don't quite understand its basic functions? Get on down to Culture Yard as they take you on a step-by-step tutorial, so you can be on your way to becoming the next Nan Goldin or Man Ray. RMB 370. 1pm. Culture Yard (8404 4166)

2. BOB MARLEY DAY 2014

FEB 6 – Join Mei Wenti Productions as they celebrate the life and memory of reggae legend Bob Marley. It will be a night

filled with lightning ghost flare. Be a part of the Rasta magic going down. RMB 100. 7pm. Yugong Yishan (6404 2711)

3. BURNING MAN FILM SCREENING

FEB 23 – Experience this epic music and art festival without ever leaving the frigid climate of Beijing. Filmmakers will be presenting the Burning Man festival on the big screen in all of its desert glory, with the latest news for those planning to attend the 2014 event. Free. 4pm. Dada (183 1108 0818)



EVENTS



1. WASABI SOUND FOUR YEAR ANNIVERSARY PARTY

FEB 21 – The brains behind the Footprint series are back with a hefty, spicy selection of talent from Beijing's underground international and local DJ scene. RMB 50. 9pm. Lantern (135 0134 8785)

2. DJ WALSH

FEB 21 – Hong Kong bass boss DJ Wash takes a break from his post at international dubstep radio to bathe the Syndicate crew with a healthy dose of DNB. RMB 40. 9pm. Dada (1108 0818)

3. THE LOOP

FEB 28 – The Loop's no-smoking, all-analogue party returns after Chinese New Year with heavy hitters Mickey Zhang and Elvis T. RMB 60 (includes one drink). 8pm. d lounge (186 1090 6102)

4. LUNAR SILHOUETTE WITH NOVA HEART

FEB 15 – Join Nova Heart for their full moon homecoming, as they return from their Australian tour. It has been a long and grueling journey, so come by and show them some love. RMB 11, RMB 70 (advance). 9pm. Yugong Yishan (6404 2711)

1. RETRODANCE CHINESE NEW YEAR

FEB 2 – Count down to the Year of the Horse with Tansuan Radio's RetroDance team DJs Demone and Brass Funky Joker. Free. 9pm. Dada (1108 0818)

2. VALENTINE'S DAY PARTY

FEB 14 – Treat your guy or gal to a menu of handcrafted champagne cocktails and a sultry, soulful set by resident DJ

Vinnie Q. Free. 9pm. Cicada Ultra Lounge. (6418 9898)

3. THE DETROIT SERIES: MINISTRY OF SOUND

FEB 7 – This month, The Detroit Series has a real London flavor about it as they pay tribute to the legendary Ministry of Sound, London. Expect classic house tunes that will shake what your momma gave you. RMB 30. 10pm. The Bar at Migas (5208 6061)



PRISON BREAK

GEORGE PLANS HIS ESCAPE

by George Ding

I found myself in a locked cell. It was barren save for a bookshelf and a cabinet with a locked compartment.

Martin was locked in a similar cell to mine. We could see each other but it was too far to reach or pass anything between us. Both cells were cinched with a padlock; mine required a four-digit code, his a key. Outside our cells were a desk with a computer, and a door handle locked and chained to the wall. That handle was our ultimate goal.

I rummaged about in my cell. The bookshelf contained a key and the unlocked part of the cabinet held a length of string, tied across pegs in a mysterious shape. The key did not fit the cabinet's lock.

The two serial killers had escaped and locked us in their cells.

I heard a click.

"I've got it!" Martin said as he stepped out of his cell.

Not that we were in competition or anything, but I was sure I'd get out of my cell first. This development was a severe blow to my self-esteem.

Martin started searching the outside room. There was nothing on the computer but he found a locked box inside the desk and a safe which needed a key code. I handed him the key I found in my room and he opened the box. Inside was a USB stick. Martin stuck it in the computer. As the explorer window popped up, the computer crashed. He restarted the computer but it crashed again. Martin pounded on the door to call for help.

Up to this point, I had convinced myself that I really was trapped in a locked room with no one to save me. When she came in, she found me sitting against a wall, thinking about how I'd have better luck tunneling out, *Shawshank*-style.

"You still haven't gotten out of your cell?" she asked. I didn't appreciate the sound of surprise in her voice. "Do you need a hint?"

"No."

Martin told her our problem and she shifted the computer desk. His leaning on the table was nudging the plug out of the power socket. She left, and the illusion was shattered. I checked my watch. Forty minutes of our allotted hour had passed.

Martin pulled up files on the computer and I stood, trying to get a look. That's when I noticed a folder I hadn't seen before on the computer desk. I grabbed it and inside was a picture of 12 saints, each with a unique number and shape on their vestments. Recognizing them immediately, I went to the cabinet and saw that the pattern of string was actually four distinct shapes.

I matched them to the numbers on the picture and tried the combination in the lock. It opened.

The flash drive contained a series of ciphers and a set of police dossiers. Before we could decipher what this meant, there was a knock at the door. The employee came in and told us we were out of time.

As she reset the room, she walked us through the rest of the puzzle. The news clippings revealed which policeman was on duty at the time of the escape; his birthday, included on the dossier, was the key code to the safe; the safe contained the key to the locked compartment in my cabinet; inside we would have found the floor plan to the prison, which, combined with the ciphers, would have given us the password needed to unlock the chain around the door handle.

We had spent an hour in the room and only gotten about halfway through the puzzle.

"This is only the medium room," she said. "Maybe next time you guys can try easy."

With our tails between our legs, Martin and I walked out of our fake prison. I thought about what would happen if something like this happened in real life. Forget solving mysteries. I'd have to do what Andy Dufresne did and tunnel my way out with a rock hammer.



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