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thebeijinger 2015/12

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MOVERS AND
SHAKERS READY
TO ROLL INTO 2016



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AWARDS HALL
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JANUARY
EVENTS
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DECEMBER 10

Cover photograph of
Wang Ke. Photo by Uni.



The most important dates this month

WHAT'S HAPPENING



DEC 5

BATTLES

Legendary experimental rock comes to Yugong Yishan. The current line-up is guitarist/keyboardist Ian Williams, guitarist/bassist Dave Konopka, and drummer John Stanier, touring in support of their new album, *La Di Da Di*.

DEC 6

TEDxBEIJING

The TED folks are back with another slate of 18-minute, no question-and-answer presentations. TEDxBijing's year-end event will have 10 speakers covering topics including women's health, tech development, future food, and more.



DEC 13

RENAULT ART COLLECTION

The exhibition "A Modern Adventure" will showcase over 100 major works and span the mid-60s to the present, recounting the history of one of the main French industrial firms, the Renault Automobile company, through contemporary art.

DEC 19

YES VIRGINIA, THERE IS A SANTA CLAUS

Beijing Playhouse presents *Yes Virginia, There is a Santa Claus*, based on the *New York Sun*'s heartfelt reply to a letter written by eight-year-old Virginia O'Hanlon in 1897. One hundred percent of all ticket sales are donated to charity.



Visit theBeijinger.com for even more events and details.

For more events, see p56.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Did the year go by quickly? It seems like it was Christmas only recently, but Beijing's spring and summer don't seem like they were just a few months ago.

For our cover story this month, we thought we'd do a variation on Beijing's Most Interesting People, which we did in 2013 and 2014. This year, it's more a list of people we're watching for 2016, along with folks we thought stepped up their game over the last 12 months. As always, we were surprised by who finally made it. There's a big UK influence this year, and again, we're disappointed by how few women seem to be making their mark. Regardless, they're people with whom we're happy to share a city.

In our LGBT feature, Margaux Schreurs talks to Wang Ruoyu of the Beijing Queer Chorus. She also interviews Dutch journalist Fokke Obbema about China's relationship with the West. Kipp Whittaker takes us on a martini tour of Beijing, from Morton's of Chicago to James Bond, and visits a new cocktail bar that didn't try to drum up business by taking crabs for a walk around Sanlitun. Robynne Tindall talks with EAST Beijing Executive Chef Rob Cunningham about why chefs run marathons and steps out of her comfort zone to try Da Dong Duck, the new duck burger place from another of Beijing's best-known chefs.

Elsewhere, it's quite a mix of the old and the new for our last issue of 2015. There's the app, PingoSpace, which sees itself as "Uber for everything else," and a look at Beijing's first Pizza Hut, still operating in the exact same location after more than 20 years. There's also newly-opened Capital Training Center, current home of Fight Camp China, where some people are getting a head start on their new year's fitness resolutions. Finally, we bid farewell to the Peking Man, George Ding, whose final column appears in this issue.

I hope you enjoy the December issue and Happy Holidays from all of us here at *the Beijinger*.

Schwankert

Steven Schwankert
Executive Editor

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CITY SCENE

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50,000

The number of people who drown in China every year, according to official statistics. Most of those are under five years of age.

Now, we realize this is not a cheerful holiday statistic, but sometimes a number is so horrific that a point needs to be made. In contrast, in Australia, 271 drown per year, most over age 55. The Australian government aims to reduce that number by half.

Most fatalities are occurring in inland areas where swimming education is rare and rescue facilities are scant. Aside from the risk of children falling into rivers, lakes, and

ponds, it is also more likely that adults nearby would be unable to assist effectively, as most Chinese adults have also not learned how to swim properly.

However, the situation is changing. Adult and child swim classes throughout Beijing are packed (maybe not as packed as the pool pictured here), and learning to swim is seen as an essential skill for a new generation. Until then, China will have to prepare itself for several more years of sadness until education spreads and fatality rates can be reduced, especially among children.

PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA

IT'S PINGO TIME

NEW APP LOOKS TO CONNECT INSTRUCTORS, TEACHERS, SERVICE PROVIDERS WITH CLIENTS

Fans of Uber and Didi Dache may be getting spoiled, finally having the option to do little more than snap their fingers – more like tap their fingers on their cell phone screen – and a car appears and whisks them to their destination like a magic carpet. But what if you could do that for everything?

Similarly, services beyond learning Chinese, cooking Chinese, or studying wushu are often hard to find or involve taking a class at a larger enterprise or school. Can't I just find someone to teach me this in their spare time?

"This phenomenon becomes even more magnified when multiple cultures are involved, for example the current situation in China; locals and foreign expats simultaneously exist but seldom interact. PingoSpace steps into both worlds, providing a bridge for these disparate cultures," the company says on its website.

PingoSpace, a new app launched in late November seeks to do just that. Just as Uber connects spare car capacity with passengers wanting rides, along with payment facilitation, the app seeks to connect Beijingers, especially foreigners in Beijing, to the services that they need and want. Looking for a French teacher before that holiday on the Cote D'Azur? Need a tennis coach to improve your game? Getting married and want to learn salsa dancing for the reception? PingoSpace looks to fill exactly those kinds of requests.

On the provider side, someone wishing to offer a service registers on the app, and then creates a profile for herself or himself. The company producing the app, Ping Xing Shi Kong, is fond of using the phrase "branding" to describe this process. It includes photos, rates, and other information about the instructor or service provider. Unlike Uber, the service provider is not required to accept every request, although PingoSpace interactions are less likely to occur drunk after 2am.

For the user, it should be an Uber-like experience. Payment is made through WeChat Wallet, so it's no fuss, no muss on that side. Clients rate the provider, and that ranking pushes them up or down, encouraging better performance and potentially leading to more business.

PingoSpace was just launching as we were going to

press, so we didn't have too much opportunity to play around with it, but we already have a couple of areas lined up to hire instructors and teachers, along with registering to be providers. There has been a fresh, new crop of apps aimed at English-language users in Beijing or China lately, and PingoSpace looks to be joining it. We'll know it works as soon as "pingo" becomes a verb. *Steven Schwankert*

Available for iOS and Android beginning November 20. Visit www.pingospace.com for more information.



Every month we tally the hits from *thebeijinger.com* and bring you the most viewed blogs from our website.



1. Despite What You've Seen Lately, Beijing's Air Has Shown Exceptional Improvement in '15

Beijing's air quality has shown "exceptional" improvements in the first nine months of 2015, according to environmental watchdog Greenpeace. Greenpeace was quoted in an Associated Press report as saying that NASA satellite data suggests that 2015 has shown a wider improvement over 2014 than any other year-on-year comparison going back for 15 years.



2. Bar Personality of the Year Dave Bob Gaspar Waves Goodbye to Beijing in December

Winner of the Beijinger's 2015 Reader Bar and Club Awards Best Bar Manager will leave Home Plate Bar-B-Que and China by the end of this year. "The move is bittersweet," Gaspar told the Beijinger. "As much as I'm bummed to be leaving Beijing, I'm also happy to take the next step." He cited "personal reasons" for the decision, including his and his wife's desire to start a family.



3. China Shows off Its New Locally-Made Passenger Aircraft

The C919, manufactured by the Commercial Aircraft Corporation of China (Comac), seats 174 passengers, and is aimed at taking market shares specifically from Boeing's 737, but also from jets made by Airbus. China placed USD 55 billion in orders for Airbus and Boeing jets during the last couple of months, so let's see who adopts the C919 first (we're going to guess Air China).

4. Bikini-Clad Women Roam Wild through Jianwai SOHO

On November 3, scantily-clad bikini babes roamed around Jianwai SOHO, complete with scannable QR codes on their butts and instructions saying "use me," directing the beholder to scan their backsides. The publicity campaign was organized for a food ordering app called Nei Shenme, and as expected, went viral on WeChat and other social media platforms.



For these stories and more, check out theBeijinger.com/blog



5. Beijing Capital International Airport Named World's 10th Best by Skytrax

Global air travel passengers have voted Beijing Capital International Airport (BCIA) the 10th best airport in the world for 2015, according to an annual survey conducted by air travel research firm Skytrax. It's actually a drop down for BCIA, which placed seventh in 2014. BCIA remains the second-busiest airport in the world behind Atlanta's Hartsfield International.



6. The Great Click Forward: PC Gaming in China Just Got a Whole Lot Better, and Cheaper

PC gamers rejoice! As of November 4, Steam – arguably the world's largest PC gaming platform – has made the renminbi the official payment currency for people living in China. This is clearly a watershed moment for China's gaming industry, potentially on par with the lifting of the game console ban earlier this year.

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SCENE & HEARD



**The Hell's Club
at Migas on
Oct 31**
Photos by
Haoyuan



Halloween Brunch at Feast (Food by EAST) on Oct 31
Photos courtesy of EAST Beijing



Halloween Beer Mile at Jing-A Brewing on Oct 31
Photos courtesy of Jing-A Brewing

WANG KE

TATTOO ARTIST

Beginning her career doing tattoos for friends in the early '00s while attending Sichuan Art School in Chongqing, today Wang Ke is one of Beijing's most sought after tattoo artists, with a two-month waiting list and a fee of RMB 2,000 per hour.

Her style, which she describes as "neo-traditional" with a distinct feminine twist, developed after she moved to Beijing in 2008 and started to attend international tattoo

conventions. Since then she has become well-known for her creative collaborations with homegrown brands like Plastered 8, Gung Ho! Pizza, and most recently, Moka Bros (she created 24 limited-edition tattoos for the café's two-year anniversary). She also garnered attention last year for appearing nearly nude in an ad for PETA Asia's first "Ink, Not Mink" campaign, a cause that she supports along with her husband and fellow tattooist, Cha Cha.

BEIJINGERS TO WATCH

THERE'S SOME MOVING AND SHAKING GOING ON,
AND THESE FOLKS ARE DOING IT



IAN BURNS

ENTREPRENEUR/MUSICIAN



Where does Ian Burns find the time? Originally from the UK, Burns spends part of his days in Beijing and the rest in Qingdao, where his firm REDSTAR Works operates an English-language entertainment and lifestyle magazine, not unlike this one. But that's not enough, it seems. He's also the John guy in the Beijing Beatles, named Best Cover Band in *the Beijinger* 2015 Reader Bar and Club Awards, and played with London Mayor Boris Johnson.

But even that doesn't seem to sop up his time, so he also runs a separate business making and selling Beatles costumes to fans and fellow cover bands around the world. Oh, and he and REDSTAR organize the Punchline Comedy Club shows in Beijing and other cities. And somewhere along the way, he finds time to be a husband and father. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

JIM JAMES

ENTREPRENEUR

Jim James moved to Beijing from Singapore, where he had established a successful public relations business, in 2008, not because it was cold, but precisely because it was hot, the place for a UK entrepreneur to expand his company. Putting EASTWEST PR on solid footing, he then took on one of the most venerable brands in the automotive industry, Britain's Morgan Motors, and brought it to China, introducing the limited edition, handmade cars to some of Beijing's, and the nation's, wealthiest and

most discerning car owners.

James now serves on the China-Britain Business Council, continues to lead EASTWEST, serves as founder and managing director for both Morgan Cars Ltd. (HK) and Malvern Morgan Cars Beijing Ltd., and is now co-founder of the first Motor Sport Festival China, a five-day event to bring together British racing cars, Chinese drivers, and British trainers in 2016. For James, Beijing remains life in the fast lane.



KENN BERMEL

RESTAURANT OWNER

Perhaps more than any other, no Western-style restaurant and bar (or bar and grill, as they like to be called) has gone from strength to strength in 2015 like The Local. While his business partner Martin is no slouch, the person most closely associated with the place once known as Brussels is Kenn Bermel.

A former IT guy who did a stint at Gongti speakeasy Fubar, Bermel has quietly but consistently worked on making The Local into a primary Courtyard Four (that's

what that Bookworm-Q Mex-Nanjie-Home Plate BBQ-The Local area is called) draw. There's live sports; holiday parties; occasional comedy; and a menu that has not only gone from good to great, including the avocado dry rub burger that finished as runner-up in *the Beijinger* 2015 Burger Cup, it's also served until well into the small hours. Kenn, The Local is our local. Well done, and keep up the good work.



GEORGE ZHOU

BAR OWNER

When Q Bar closed quietly at the end of May, it appeared to be the end of an era, a continuous cocktail story that began in 2004 with Echo Sun, George Zhou, and Ralph Ziegenhorn at First Café on Sanlitun Nanjie, and then moved with Sun and Zhou to Q Bar atop the Eastern Inn farther down the street in 2006. The partners later split, with Sun remaining at Q Bar and Zhou going on to open George's at the Worker's Stadium and later Touch Beijing across from Nanjie in Courtyard Four. But Zhou knows a thing or two about reviving a classic,

first through his mixology, and now by bringing back the bar he helped start, re-opening Q Bar in July. At its soft opening, Jim "Beijing" Boyce wrote this of the new Q: "The addition of a quiet rooftop, a 40-foot bar inside, and RMB 50 martinis to the scene – not to mention touches like a 100 mbps Wi-Fi connection with USB ports embedded in the bar – is welcome... In the meantime, I plan to simply chill out at the new Q and have a martini or two." Boyce, we'll be right over.



NICK BONNER

ENTREPRENEUR/ARTIST

There probably isn't anyone on the planet that has met Nick Bonner but doesn't remember it.

The longest-residing Beijinger on our list, Bonner is a wall of sonic and kinetic energy, which makes his area of expertise seem surprising at first. Bonner's early involvement with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, or North Korea) and his co-founding of Beijing-based Koryo Tours has given him a continuous window into life there. Once upon a time, he was also

involved with Beijing's top expat nightclub, Poachers Inn...but that was a while ago.

Bonner has made a career out of introducing Westerners to the people of the DPRK, through person to person contacts, through their art, and more recently, through documentary films and the nation's first romantic comedy, *Comrade Kim Goes Flying*. Bonner is the Beijinger that we can never wait to see what he comes up with next.



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

FOOD & DRINK

WARMING WINTER DISHES // HAINAN // MARTINIS // BAIJIU AND WINE GIFTS



It's the most wonderful time of the year and restaurants and hotels across Beijing are celebrating with festive menus and promotions. Check out the Events section on p. 58 for more Christmas dining events.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SWISSOTEL BEIJING

The Ju'er Hutong branch of **Saveurs de Corée**, the Korean restaurant with the French name, will be closing at the end of year, the ownership citing the landlord's unwillingness to renew their lease. Fans of Saveurs de Corée's MSG-free, mostly organic Korean cuisine and inventive soju cocktails shouldn't worry too much though – the Xiang'er Hutong branch near Beixinqiao is still going strong. Look for details of a new menu at Xiang'er Hutong to come soon.

We had a preview of California-inspired, farm-to-table eatery **Napa's** long-awaited Chaoyang Park space at the end of November. Set on the south side of Park Avenue, the light and airy space will also have an expansive roof terrace come spring. Lest you think the Napa team (primarily Andrew Hsu and Colin Smith) has been kicking their heels since their pop-up deli on Chunxiu Lu closed in July, rest assured that they have been busy forging relationships with local suppliers such as Little Willow organic farm (who also supply Okra 1949) and Tianfuyuan Farm near Mutianyu.

Sticking with the unintentional healthy theme, by the time you're reading this a new branch of **Obentos** should be open at Grand Summit in Liangmaqiao. For

this new location, they're shifting their focus slightly from "healthy Japanese" to just all-round "healthy lifestyle," with an all day menu that will take you from breakfast to dinner.

China World Hotel's Western fine dining restaurant **Aria** was one of our favorites for a while, but when former Chef de Cuisine Phillip Taylor moved on to greener pastures (specifically Shanghai), we wondered what their next move would be. Well it looks like they've come back fighting with their first ever a la carte-style, five-course set brunch menu. The menu is put together by new Chilean-born Chef de Cuisine Maiker Valdivia, who joins Aria after a stint at Gongti Spanish restaurant, Puerta 20.

After nearly 15 years of "if it ain't broke, don't fix it," **Tube Station** have decided to introduce some new menu items, including a truly kooky spaghetti pizza, topped with your choice of spaghetti Bolognese or creamy bacon spaghetti. Great for indecisive eaters we guess. We are big fans of their crispy-coated chicken wings, each of which is split in half vertically to make them easier to eat.



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WINTER WARMERS

HEARTY CHINESE DISHES TO KEEP YOU
WARM THIS BEIJING WINTER

By Margaux Schreurs

Winter is here, meaning we are no longer pining after *liangpi* and other traditional cold Chinese dishes. As the temperatures outside change, we have gathered our favorite easy Chinese dishes to warm you up. Some are found at street stalls, while the rest can be found in your local neighborhood Xinjiang, Sichuan, Chongqing, and Beijing-style restaurants, providing both single servings and huge, meaty dishes perfect for sharing.

Yangrou Paomo (羊肉泡馍 *yangrou paomo*)

Imagine lamb noodle soup with added tasty croutons: that is exactly what *yangrou paomo* is, perfectly stodgy for winter and full of northwestern Chinese flavors. Get this soup at **Zhangji Mianguan**, complete with a generous topping of succulent lamb.

**Chongqing Noodles** (重庆小面 *chongqing xiaomian*)

If spice is your chosen method of warming up this winter, Chongqing noodles are a great way to achieve that – full of character, spice, and everything nice. Get yours at one of the many branches of **Chongqing Ciqi Xiaomian**.

**Sweet Potatoes** (红薯 *hongshu*)

You will have seen them on the roadside – their arrival always coincides with the onset of cold weather: the sweet potatoes, or *hongshu*, roasting on hot tins throughout the city. They make for the ideal Beijing snack, whether it's to eat at your desk or on the go, going down a somewhat messy treat. They also warm your hands, which is an added perk. To find *hongshu*, just head out onto the street, they're usually available near subway stations. Just make sure you peel them – the barrels in which they are roasted were not necessarily sanitary before being converted for cooking.

Dapanji (大盘鸡 *dapanji*)

This Xinjiang-style dish of potatoes and chicken is hearty and full of flavor, and is ideal for sharing among friends. Order some extra naan bread for dipping in the leftover sauce, and you're sorted. We recommend getting your plate of *dapanji* at **Jianghu Weidao**, where the whole

spices really bring the ingredients to life.

Geda Tang (疙瘩汤 *geda tang*)

A big fan of fried egg and tomatoes? *Geda tang* is basically that – steamy tomato and egg soup with delicious dough balls to fill you up. Great to accompany a meal, or just by itself, this dish is available at many *jiachang cai* restaurants throughout Beijing, but **Lvshi Gedatang** are the self-proclaimed specialists.

Roast Leg of Lamb (烤羊腿 *kao yangtui*)

A long-time favorite, roast leg of lamb, or *kao yangtui*, is a great way to experience hutong dining with a large group of friends. Don't forget to try all the different sauces and spices for dipping. Our favorite spot is on Beixinqiao Santiao, the hutong just north of Beixinqiao Station. Try **Tanhua Kaoyangtui** for a solid leg of lamb.

Wonton Soup (馄饨 *hundun*)

This southern Chinese treat of small dumplings in soup is quick and steamy, with warm soup keeping the parcels hot. Go for shrimp and pork for the traditional southern Chinese version, or try something unique like lamb. We highly recommend the wonton at **Hundun Hou**, one of the oldest wonton establishments in the city with branches throughout.

Directory Listings

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26 Dongsì Beidajie, Dongcheng District (5710 8890)

江湖味道: 东城区东四北大街26号

Lvshi Gedatang

108, 4/F, 100 Balizhuang Xili, Chaoyang District (8586 9759)

吕氏疙瘩汤: 朝阳区八里庄西里100号4号楼108号

Tanhua Kaoyangtui

63 Beixinqiao Santiao Hutong, Dongcheng District (138 0129 3221)

碳花烤羊腿: 东城区北新桥三条胡同63号

Hundun Hou (Dongda Qiao branch)

14 Gongti Donglu, Chaoyang District (6507 6003)

馄饨侯 (东大桥店): 朝阳区工人体育场东路14号

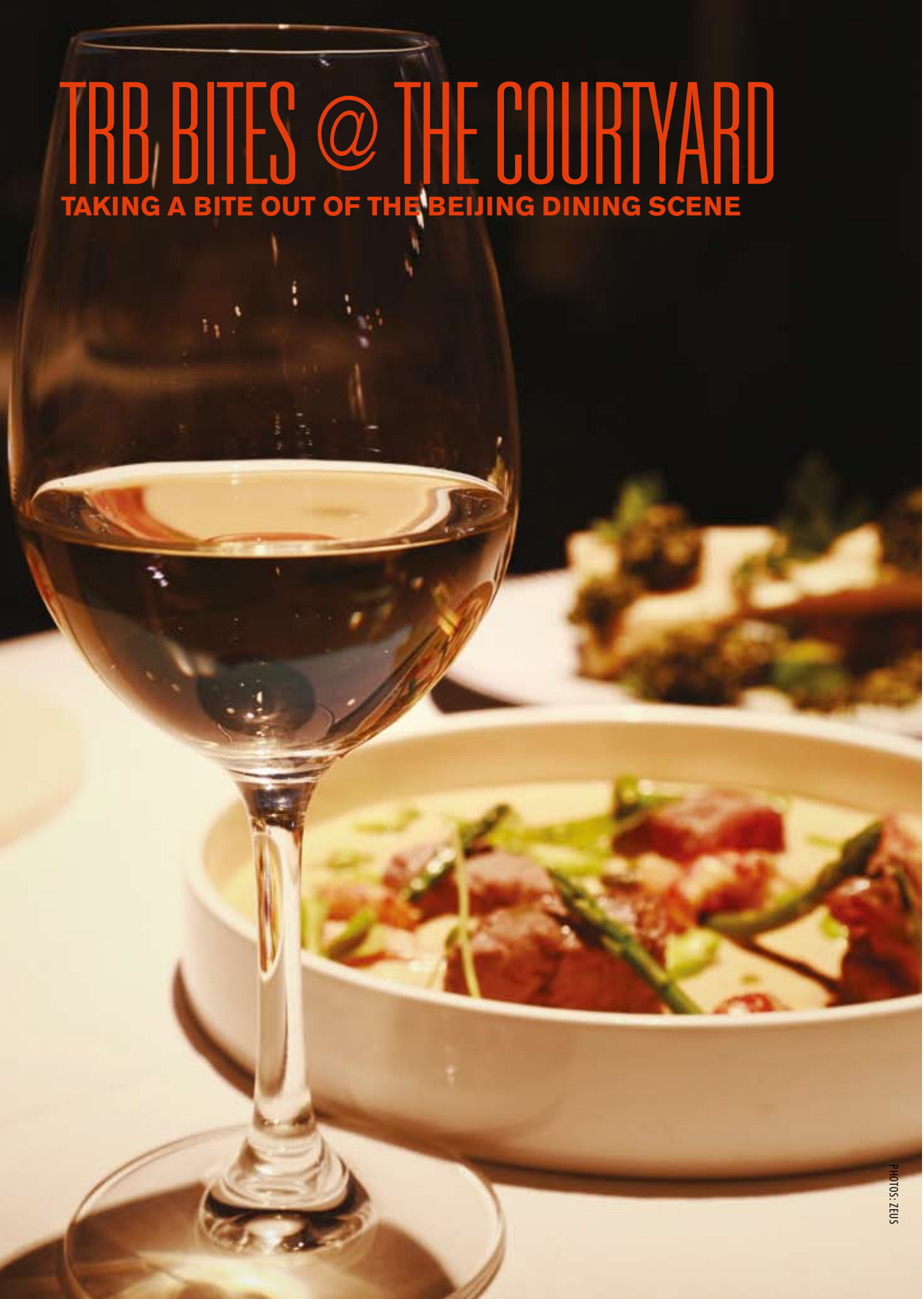
Zhangji Mianguan

38 Zhongguancun Nandajie, Haidian District (6217 2489)

张记面馆: 中关村南大街38号

TRB BITES @ THE COURTYARD

TAKING A BITE OUT OF THE BEIJING DINING SCENE



WHAT'S NEW RESTAURANTS

Daily 11.30am-10.30pm. 95 Donghuamen Dajie,
Dongcheng District (6401 6676)
东城区东华门大街95号

🚶 1km north of Tian'anmen Dong (Line 1)

When we heard that Beijing's leading fine dining restaurant was due to open a "casual, modern" dining concept we were intrigued. How would they translate their signature slick service and classy atmosphere to a more informal venue?

Taking over the previously-Brian-McKenna-managed The Courtyard, the TRB Bites space certainly feels more casual, with a steady buzz of conversation and music as opposed to the hushed ambience of TRB. One thing that hasn't changed is the service – glasses of sparkling wine appear as if out of nowhere almost as soon as you sit down, the gracious staff swooping artfully around the room picking up napkins and delivering course after course (after course) of food.

Whether you choose three courses or five (RMB 188 for three courses) at TRB Bites you are sure to come away absolutely stuffed. The bites part of the names comes from the procession of amuse-bouches, snacks, palate cleansers, and pre-desserts that arrive throughout the meal. We were especially glad that our favorite goat's cheese croquettes have also made the journey over from TRB. The menu is structured to allow diners to pick and choose from a selection of courses and design their own meal. Fancy having three desserts? You only have your conscience to judge you. If you do take the sweet road, however, you will be missing out on savory marvels such as the rose-pink lamb loin with mustard seeds and onion jam, or the standout roast bone marrow with snails, garlic, and parsley.

Overall, we can't help but wish TRB Bites were just a hint more casual – more soup and a sandwich than starched serviettes, if you will – but with TRB-quality food at these prices it's hard to complain. *Robynne Tindall*



WHAT'S NEW RESTAURANTS



N'JOY

ENJOY YOURSELF

Mon-Fri 6.30-10am, 11.30am-2pm, 5.30-9.30pm, Sat-Sun 6.30-10.30am, noon-2.30pm, 5.30-9.30pm. 1/F, Nuo Hotel Beijing, 2A Jiangtai Lu, Chaoyang District (5926 8888)
朝阳区将台路甲2号北京诺金酒店1层

 1.5km northwest of Jiangtai (Line 14)

Under the reign of juice cleanses, veganism, and gluten-free, the all-you-can-eat hotel buffet stands like a remnant of times past, ready to be relegated to the same museum exhibit as three-martini lunches and smoking in the office. And yet still we come because whatever self-imposed diet you're on, the allure of all-you-can-eat sushi is just too strong.

N'Joy, Nuo Hotel's all-day dining restaurant has the sushi. And the dim sum, the Thai, the charcuterie, and pretty much anything else you can think of too. The flagship weekend brunch buffet (RMB 388, RMB 188 for free-flow champagne, plus 15 percent service charge) is inspired by the voyages of Chinese Admiral Zheng He and it is indeed a picture of globalization – it's the only brunch in town (that we know of, anyway) that features a dedicated Middle Eastern cuisine section.

Smart diners will skip the hummus (everyone knows you're supposed to avoid starches at buffets) and head straight for the aforementioned sushi section, where a Japanese chef carves up a whole tuna every Sunday. Follow up the sushi with a trip to the carvery, where Brits will be delighted to note they will also find fresh Yorkshire puddings. Once you get tired of trolling the many buffet counters, grab a handful of table markers and order a portion of freshly-cooked pasta or Vietnamese spring rolls to be delivered to your table. This made-to-order twist, together with well-sourced ingredients – many from local Beijing suppliers – makes N'Joy a welcome change for those looking for a new Sunday brunch option. N'Joy's lunch and dinner buffets are equally as international although without the pomp and circumstance of the Sunday brunch. *Robynne Tindall*

PHOTO COURTESY OF NUO HOTEL BEIJING

WHAT'S NEW RESTAURANTS

DA DONG DUCK

ABSOLUTELY QUACKERS

Daily 11am-9.30pm. 1/F, 19 Club, China Central Place, 89 Jianguo Lu, Chaoyang District (6530 7200)

大董鸭: 朝阳区建国路89号华贸公寓19号楼101室

 300m northeast of Dawanglu (Line 1)

I'd be lying if I said I wasn't fully prepared to hate Da Dong Duck before I went. The idea of a fast food offshoot smacked to me of "cashing in" and I was dubious about how they would replicate Da Dong's famously lean and delicious Peking duck on a large scale.

I am willing to admit now that I was wrong, about the food at least. The restaurant itself is essentially a stylish take on a McDonald's – you still order and collect your food from a counter with back-lit menu boards displaying the dishes available, but the furniture is sleek and wooden, and not nailed to the floor. Helpfully, the menu is available in English and Chinese, although the staff didn't seem to have much in the way of English skills (this is a fast-food joint, after all).

The classic crispy lean roast duck burger (RMB 22) isn't exactly life changing but does manage to live up to the hype. Each sesame seed bun (a little dry and sweet for my tastes, a seemingly common malady with burgers in China) contains a substantial chunk of roast duck meat, topped with a piece of the fatty yet crisp skin that Da Dong is known for. I chose the "traditional" option, the bun spread with sweet bean paste and chopped scallions, but there is also a spicy version available for those that like it hot. All of the burgers are served with lettuce, tomato, and cucumber, for that essential "burger" feeling.

At RMB 31, the duck burger set, which comes with fries and a soft drink, is the same price as a medium Big Mac meal, but somehow feels worlds away. Upgrade your fries to salt-baked chicken nuggets (popcorn chicken by any other name) for an extra RMB 3 (RMB 12 for purchase individually) and you will not be disappointed – these crisp, ever-so-slightly spicy morsels will make you wonder why you ever bother with the subpar versions peddled by the likes of KFC.

Overall, we can't help feel that the market wasn't exactly crying out for a roast duck burger and it will be interesting to see how successful Da Dong Duck is after the hype has died down. Still, for a different, and affordable, take on fast food we still recommend making the trip to Dawang Lu.
Robynne Tindall



Venezia Carnival Christmas Eve at CBD International Cuisine

On 24 December 2015, CBD International Cuisine offers an amazing Venezia Christmas for you and your loved ones. The elegant buffet offers Italian traditional classics like Lasagna, Osso Bucco, Margaret pizza and so much more. This seasonal spread is priced at RMB1288 / RMB888 for adult and RMB688 for child, includes free flow of selected drinks & entry into a lucky draw. Limited seats are available. Book now!

CBD International Cuisine Hotline
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reservations@grandmillenniumbeijing.com
www.millenniumhotels.com

GRAND MILLENNIUM BEIJING 北京千禧大酒店

PIZZA VIEW

VIEW FROM THE TOP



WHAT'S NEW RESTAURANTS

Daily 11am-9.30pm. L2 25-26, 2/F, Parkview Green, 9 Dongdaqiao Lu, Chaoyang District (185 1000 7777)
朝阳区东大桥路9号侨福芳草地2层L2 25-26

🚶 500m south of Dongdaqiao (Line 6)

It could be argued that Beijing doesn't really need any more pizza. The more than 150 restaurants serving pizza we find during the Pizza Cup every year would certainly corroborate that argument. What Beijing does need, however, is good quality pizza that tries to do something different from the hundreds of other pies on the market.

Enter Pizza View. Operated by Chef Marino D'Antonio and the Opera Bombana team, Pizza View specializes in Roman-style deli pizza, the kind D'Antonio says people would grab on the go for a quick street snack. Continuing in this vein, the pizzas at Pizza View are sold by the slice – select a variety from behind the counter and the chefs will slide your slice into the oven to be served up moments later.

In case you're worried that pizza by the slice isn't really enough for a meal, be assured that these slices are full-on, 20cm monsters. The crust too is substantial, the Roman-style being thicker and crisper than, say, Neapolitan-style pizza, and with a strong taste of olive oil. The dough for the crust, made with the same imported flour that makes the bread at Opera Bombana so memorable and a decade-old "mother" yeast starter, is lovingly fermented for more than 30 hours. The crust stands up well to the plentiful toppings, for example the cooked ham, artichokes, mozzarella, and mushrooms in the Capricciosa (RMB 48 per slice), although we prefer the sparser Diavola, topped with spicy salami and a handful of arugula.

The pizzas are also available in 12-inch pies for bigger groups, of which the quattro formaggi (RMB 128) is a revelation, lent an appealing farmyard funkiness by Taleggio and Gorgonzola. If you're not full after that, Pizza View also has a selection of salads and panini sandwiches, as well as a gelato bar serving ice cream homemade from imported ingredients. *Robynne Tindall*



DONGZHIMEN PIZZA HUT

THE PIZZA RESTAURANT BUILT ON A SALAD BAR

by Steven Schwankert

Bill Heinecke is a guy who loves pizza. Long story short, Heinecke was born in the US but moved to Thailand with his family in the 1960s, and has been starting and expanding businesses there ever since. He partnered with Yum! Brands to bring Pizza Hut to Thailand, and in the early 1990s, decided to set his sights on a bigger target: China.

Beijing was a little different in 1992. To follow-up the opening of what was once the world's largest KFC outlet, in Qianmen, Yum! Brands and Heinecke's Minor Group decided China was ready for pizza, and opened two locations in Beijing, one in Qianmen, and one in Dongzhimen.

Reaching the latter became a quest undertaken by a then-fellow English teacher and I during a visit to Beijing in January 1992. Seeing an advertisement for Pizza Hut along Wangfujing, and not having had pizza for months, for 90 minutes we traipsed up and down first Dongzhimennei and then correctly, Dongzhimenwai, until we reached the exact same location where the restaurant is today, near the Australian and Canadian Embassies.

The menu was largely the same at the time, but there were two glaring differences about the restaurant back then: most of the customers were foreigners, and most of them diplomats or journalists, given the number that inhabited the surrounding area, and that paying one's bill required now-out-of-circulation Foreign Exchange Certificates (FEC), a currency different from the renminbi (RMB), and only issued when foreign currency was exchanged for them.

The other major difference was that unlike now, when huge dairy product companies sponsor some of the most popular television programs on Chinese TV, dairy was generally not popular with Chinese consumers, and of the dairy products that were, cheese most certainly was not one of them. As such, it was the salad bar that hooked the Chinese customers that could eat there. Foreign patrons, hoping to turn Chinese friends onto one of their favorite foods, could be seen chagrined as their companions took a slice of pizza, stabbed it in the middle with a fork, and then tried to catch it before it hit the plate after a first bite. Eventually, the cheese and the mafan of the pizza caused them to give up, and they made do with soup and

a single trip to the salad bar. The famous "salad bar towers" came years later, ironically after people in China (or more specifically, their kids) decided that they liked pizza, and after they could pay for their meal in RMB.

Today, Pizza Hut on Dongzhimenwai looks like ... a Pizza Hut. But if you haven't been to any of their restaurants in a while, it's worth a visit just to see how far tastes have come in China and how much they've changed. The salad bar is gone – abuse by numerous patrons in creating edible architecture led the chain to shut down that bit of their menu in 2009. Pizza Hut has wine now, with bottles starting at RMB 143. And while it started off in the 1990s with what were American standards, the pizza offerings now appear very Chinese, with quite a bit of seafood – only four of the restaurant's 26-page menu features pizza. It's ok, you can still order a Super Supreme (RMB 40-130), but you won't have to change money to do so.



PHOTO: STEVEN SCHWANKERT

HAINAN PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT RESTAURANT

NOTHING TOO FISHY ABOUT THIS PLACE

Daily 11am-9pm. 188 Andingmen Waidajie, Dongcheng District (6426 9558)

海南美食：东城区安定门外大街188号海南大厦1层

With my dining companions wearing thin as I dragged them from one mediocre restaurant to another even-less-than-mediocre restaurant, I prayed to all deities that the Hainan Provincial Government Restaurant would be better than the ones that came before it alphabetically.

Upon entering, operation Hainan seemed to be running more smoothly than any previous government-run provincial restaurant: the staff were friendly without being over bearing as they guided us to a suitable and clean table. There were even crispy white table cloths on the tables and they poured us cups of water without having to ask.

We flicked past the first few pages because they were a mix of abalone, sea cucumber, and other expensive but not very tasty dishes. The menu was bastardized with Sichuan dishes, and the cold dishes were mostly the typical Chinese *liangcai*, nothing particularly Hainanese.

We settled on a popular Hainan dish, in fact the one that Singaporean Hainanese chicken rice is based on: Wenchang crispy chicken (脆皮文昌鸡, RMB 188 for

whole, RMB 98 for half). While this is not one for the lazy or picky eater due to a large number of bones, the chicken was exceptionally tender and the skin certainly crispy.

The second meat dish was the stir-fried beef with pineapple (鲜菠萝炒牛肉, RMB 68), containing tasty and thin slices of beef. The pineapple was a bit too sweet when coupled with the sauce, and was mostly left behind, but it did add a nice tropical touch for the one or two slices we did eat. The dish could definitely do with more beef and less pineapple.

Our sides of steamed greens with olive vegetable (笼仔榄菜蒸菜心, RMB 38) and braised eggplant with sauce in casserole (陵水蛋家茄子煲, RMB 58) were both very flavorful. The greens were served in a little dim sum-style basket, retained their crunch, and had a dash of oyster sauce for flavor, while the eggplant was cooked thoroughly and topped off with mince in a dark sauce.

Perhaps this one is almost worth coming back to, especially for the crispy chicken, of which we could've easily ordered an entire one between three people. *Margaux Schreurs*



PHOTO: MARGAUX SCHREURS

RUNNING MAN

ROB CUNNINGHAM, EXECUTIVE CHEF, EAST BEIJING

by Robynne Tindall

You may think that the life of a chef is all rich food, heavy drinking, and staying up well after the kitchen has closed. Not so, says EAST Hotel Beijing's Executive Chef Rob Cunningham. As one of the most visible and active personalities on the Beijing F&B scene, Rob also stays active away from the kitchen as an avid marathon runner. We talk to him about what motivates him to run and his favorite places to do so in Beijing.

Why do think so many chefs (such as Gordon Ramsay and Michel Roux Jr.) run marathons?

Most chefs start their careers quite young. It's full on when you're young and your social life is closely connected to the industry. You finish work, you drink, you stay out late, and you get up early the next morning. By the time you get a bit later in life you start to think, "I really need to look after my health." After you get older, you realize that if you're going to continue to work long hours and do a demanding job, you need your wits about you – you need sleep, you need exercise, and you need a balanced lifestyle.

When did you start running?

My first half marathon was Beijing last year, and then my first full marathon was in Guilin with HeyRunning in October last year as part of a 100km race. Since then I've done five half marathons and two full marathons.

Do you mostly train with HeyRunning? How else do you train?

I train with HeyRunning on Mondays and Wednesdays and then I normally try and do one or two other runs through the week. If you're planning to run a marathon, I would do at least 40km per week, including pace training and at least one 20km run. The best thing about the HeyRunning training, it's not just about distance, it's about intervals, which helps build up your speed and your stamina.

What are some of your favorite places to run in Beijing – pollution permitting?

From Sanlitun, I run up along the Liangma River to the lake just behind the Agricultural Exhibition Center. The lake is 900m, so I usually run 10 laps, with including the route over is around 16-17km. If I'm at EAST, I run out and

back along the canal, which is about 18km. I also run up the stairs in the hotel, which was suggested to me by my trainer – that's 25 stories each way.

What advice would you give to someone training for a long distance race in terms of diet?

I tend to avoid a carbohydrate-heavy diet – if I do eat carbohydrates at all I tend to stick to sweet potatoes, things like that that aren't too hard to digest. I tend not to eat on the morning of a marathon – although that's a habit I need to change – I just drink a lot of water and have some salts.

My favorite ultra marathon runner is a guy called Rich Roll. He has a podcast where he invites a lot of other sportspeople and entrepreneurs to talk about health and fitness issues. The thing that brings them together is that they're all vegan. Many of the doctors that they invite onto the podcast say that it's a myth that you should eat a high-protein, high-carb diet while training for any kind of sport, and that it actually has an adverse effect. Basically, the more processed a food is, the worse it is for you.

Read an extended version of our interview with Rob Cunningham on thebeijinger.com/blog.



PHOTO COURTESY OF EAST BEIJING



O

... *osmanthus* 桂花

The fragrant flowers of the osmanthus tree are used to infuse a range of culinary products, from tea to liquor to sweet cakes. Thanks to its late summer-early autumn blossoming, osmanthus is closely associated with Mid-Autumn Festival and osmanthus-flavored wine is a popular choice for a “reunion drink” to be shared with family. Osmanthus is so culturally important that it is the subject of several idioms; our favorite, “breaking the osmanthus twig and mounting the dragon,” being a euphemism for ... well, we’ll let you work it out on your own.

... *ou* (lotus root) 藕

Just one of the many edible parts of the lotus, the “root” (technically a rhizome) is used as a vegetable in soups, stir fries, and braised dishes, among others. The root is sometimes dried and ground to a fine powder, which is then mixed with water and rock sugar to make a gelatinous soup. Lotus root can be served raw, but since there is a risk of parasite transmission, most recipes recommend cooking it briefly first.

... *oyster omelet* 蚵仔煎

This night market favorite is popular across Asia in regions that have been influenced by Chaozhou or Fujianese culture, such as Guangdong, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Thailand. However, the original and most popular version undoubtedly belongs to Taiwan, where it is a staple snack. Sweet potato starch is typically added to the eggs before cooking to create a thicker batter – all the better to hold on to those tasty oysters. The omelet is sometimes served with a savory, ketchup-like sauce.



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Corner of Taiyanggong Bridge,
Xibahe, NE 3rd Ring Road,
Chaoyang District, Beijing

彩云南
RAINBOW



YIN SUSHI

DON'T JUDGE A BOOK BY ITS COVER

Daily 6pm-late. 219 Gulou Dongdajie, Dongcheng District (south entrance of Baochao Hutong) (188 0108 8050)

隐寿司：东城区鼓楼东大街219号（宝钞胡同南口）

🚶 650m northeast of Shichahai (Line 8)

Nestled in a small shopfront at the south end of Baochao Hutong marked by a giant samurai statue, at first glance Yin seems like a pretty authentic take on a sushi bar. Rather than falling prey to the same temptation as many of Beijing's other Japanese restaurants and serving up everything from ramen to robatayaki, Yin's menu is focused on sushi (nigiri, maki, and hand rolls) and sashimi, with a few salads and small plates thrown in alongside. The fish in the mixed sushi platter (RMB 380) is silky and not previously frozen, although more squeamish diners will want to note that of the 12 pieces of nigiri on the platter, only five are recognizable tuna, salmon, or *hamachi* – the rest offer up more challengingly-textured clams. The rice for the nigiri is passably seasoned, as it is in the salmon *hosomaki* (RMB 35), although the latter suffers from an overabundance of wasabi, bespeaking a lack of confidence in the kitchen.

A side dish of wasabi octopus (RMB 25) uses the piquant root to better effect, the bracing sauce coating bite-sized pieces of tender octopus.

The wait staff presenting all of this are pleasant and attentive – seeing that we are three people spread along the sushi bar, they thoughtfully divide all of our dishes into two for ease of access and offer up a complimentary dessert of almond tofu.

Yet for all of these positives, Yin struggles to feel like little more than a theme park version of a Japanese restaurant, built solely based on pictures from the Internet. The lighting at the bar is too bright and, while well meaning, none of the chefs are actually Japanese. A good option for Gulou dwellers unwilling to head east, perhaps, but for the price you would be better off heading to Yotsuba or Midorikawa. *Robynne Tindall*

WHAT'S NEW RESTAURANTS

WILL CANNON'S FOOD LAB

DELICIOUS SOUTHERN FARE

Mon-Fri 8am-10pm, Sun 11am-2pm. 20-4, Area D,
Gaobeidian Dongqu, Chaoyang District (8579 1175)
朝阳区高碑店东区D区20-4

🚶 500m southeast of Gaobeidian (Batong Line)

Cannon's Food Lab is the latest and greatest venue for Western food in Gaobeidian, of which we can promise you, there aren't many. They are killing it with deliciously rich American cuisine that wouldn't be out of place in a food montage from the film *Fried Green Tomatoes*.

The place is run by a husband-and-wife team who want to spread the gospel of soul food in Beijing. We started our redneck culinary journey with their fried chicken sandwich (RMB 40), topped with Will's homemade pimento cheese spread along with a delightfully smothered basket of chili cheese fries. Both were top notch, and there wasn't a point at which we felt shorted by the portion size. We ended the meal with a bourbon caramel-glazed doughnut (RMB 15) and washed everything down with a creamy root beer float, then broke out the defibrillator to jumpstart our hearts from all the decadence.

The Cannon Food Lab's offerings don't end here. Journey to the basement, where they are giving the masses (mainly housewives) the chance to learn about the intricacies of Southern cuisine. Whether it is sandwiches, barbecue, or soups, they will be teaching it all in their weekly courses, and in the coming months, via online instruction videos. *Kipp Whittaker*



PHOTO: KIPP WHITTAKER

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Events Calendar

2015.12.05	The 6 th Canada Winter Fashion Show
2015.12.06	Nanshan Mellow Park Opening
2015.12.25	VOLCOM Peanut Butter And Rail Jam
2016.01.09	The 14 th Red Bull Open Qualifier (WST national level event)/Nanshan
2016.01.16-17	The 14 th Red Bull Open (WST international level event)/Nanshan
2016.01.24	The 2 nd Nanshan Freeski Open
2016.01.30	VANS HIGH STANDARD
2016.02.01	The 2 nd Nanshan Kids Ski Competition
2016.02.02	JBMC Method Off
2016.02.21	The 9 th Nanshan Ski Mogul Slope Championship



DOWN AND DIRTY, HIGH AND DRY

THE NITTY GRITTY ABOUT MARTINIS IN BEIJING

By Kipp Whittaker

Former American President Gerald Ford called the three-martini lunch “the epitome of American efficiency.” While we don’t necessarily associate martini guzzling with efficiency, it is hard to deny the culture that surrounds this classic drink.

Some say the martini came from the Martinez (a variation that included maraschino liqueur), or a Moroccan barman in Paris threw an olive in a glass and said “that’s a Martini man!” However, since it was created, it has become a staple drink, with countless variations. Here are some of the old, new, and most fun-inducing martini experiences that we’ve found in the capital.

The Mortini -- Morton's Steak House (RMB 45)

Their Mortini doesn’t deviate from the norm in any way, as it’s essentially just Barton’s Gin, shaken and garnished with an olive stuffed with blue cheese. However, this doesn’t prevent it from being one of the best martini spots in the city. Between the hours of 5-8pm on weekdays, Morton’s serves up their Mortinis at RMB 45 a pop, with all-you-can-eat mini steak sandwiches. Essentially you come for the martinis, but stay to eat as many tender filet mignon steak sandwiches as you can, or warm-up with the martinis at the bar and then move into the dining room for something more civilized.

DIY Martini Featuring Small Batch Craft Gin -- The Distillery (RMB 60-100)

To taste a little from what Beijing’s small batch gin boys are doing and how they work in a martini formula of three-plus ounces of gin and a thimble of vermouth, then check out The Distillery. You won’t find another gin like it in the world as they make it themselves, with new variations popping up all the time. They are constantly experimenting with new combinations of local and imported ingredients to build a gin that’s entirely their own. It’s buy one get one free every Monday (7-9pm) for all Martinis and at various price tags depending on which gin, vodka or vermouth you choose to imbibe.

Rum Martini -- Infusion Room (RMB 100)

If you are thinking, “hey wait a second, I hate vodka and gin, but I desperately want to like Martinis too”, maybe try one with rum. It’s delicious and is essentially not a Martini at all, but doesn’t lack the strength of the standard. These pyromaniac mixologists put a torch to some Chinese cedar to smoke out the glass before they add sweet and

dry vermouth to spicy dark aged rum, and then top it off with a dash of chocolate and plum bitters. The drink is served with an olive and a square of dark chocolate on the side to complement the bold flavors.

Vesper 007 Martini -- Revolution (RMB 65)

You can probably map the rise and fall of martini popularity with the release of successful James Bond films. If you want the exact variation created by Ian Fleming in the first book of the series, *Casino Royale*, then make sure to head over to Revolution. With a notorious liter-a-day vodka habit, Fleming developed this incarnation and named it after the story’s heroine, Vesper Lynd. Try it out at Revolution, made to the exact specs of the original, including Russian-style grain vodka (Ketel One), Gin (Bombay), Lillet Blanc (a French aperitif similar to vermouth), then shaken (not stirred) and served with a large lemon peel.





ENDURANCE IS VICTORY

OLD-TIME BARS ENDURE EVEN AS SOME VETERANS CLOSE

By Jim Boyce

When Frank's Place and Suzie Wong closed earlier this year, the ranks of Beijing's oldest bar veterans thinned once more. The bar business is notorious for high turnover so it seems somewhat miraculous these establishments lasted so long. Or even that Beijing still has bars that have been serving drinks in the same space since the last millennium. Here are five of them.

Jazz-Ya: Jazz-Ya is marking two decades of business this year in Nali Studio, in the same alley that includes Alameda and Bottega. While one of the original partners, Li Bo, is now better-known to some people for projects like Izaka-Ya, D Lounge, and Spice Factory, his first effort -- which The Washington Post described as part of a "blossoming" Sanlitun cafe scene in 1996 -- still draws a following. Cocktails are RMB 45 to RMB 60 -- old-timers swear by the potent Long Island iced teas. The food menu leans toward Japanese, including sushi, rice dishes, and pizzas, including a weird one with fish flakes that seem to wave back and forth as they cook.

The Den: While The Den elicits "wink wink, nudge nudge" comments about attracting the less savory elements of society, times are tame compared to when this place had a disco upstairs and Maggie's Bar was down the street. The Den has served as a home for sports fans and sports teams, as headquarters for Danes during the Beijing Olympics when it transformed itself into "The Denmark," and as headquarters for arguably the Beijing's best happy hour over the past decade -- half-price drinks and pizzas daily from 5-10pm. And few patrons go without eating, whether it's the nasi goreng, the eggs Benedict or, for those with strong hearts, the medley of deep-fried goodies known as The Den Combo. This place has weathered its own closing scare in recent weeks but, as of press time, remained open.

Passby Bar: Passby Bar had the Nanluoguxiang strip pretty much to itself for almost a decade before gawking tourists, souvenir shops and snack sellers invaded the strip. Given co-owner Xiao Bian'r is a partner in craft brew outfit NBeer Pub, it's no surprise to find rows of fridges stocked with

PHOTOS: STEVEN SCHWANKERT

over 100 drinking options. Poke about and you'll find bottles that originated everywhere from Vermont to Vietnam. Knock a few back with a hutong pizza -- topped with chuan'r (from their own ovens, not the pizzeria with the same name) -- for old time's sake. This place might be a bit weathered, but with its nooks and crannies, its guidebooks and knick-knacks, it still has the feel of a backpacker's haunt.

Schiller's: Schiller's might have changed its name in recent times -- adding a "Groovy" up front -- but it continues a tradition of serving decent pub grub near the Liangma River. If you rang in the Y2K New Year in Beijing 15 years ago, you might well have followed it up with brunch -- and perhaps an order of schnitzel -- at this place. Such fare still dominates, with the massive pork knuckle challenging even hearty eaters, and is paired with a large regular crowd, a good range of beers and spirits, and a friendly bar team that includes Jack Zhou, formerly of The Tree, Shooters, 1F, and The Bar fame.

Charlie's: Finally, Charlie's in the Jianguo Hotel is rather sedate compared to its heyday in the 1980s, when it

served as the city's business hub, a place where fierce negotiations between foreign executives and local officials were lubricated with ample amounts of booze. At the heart of Charlie's success: for a spell, it was in the only hotel with a fax machine. There must have been some hilariously illegible scribbles being transmitted from Beijing at 9pm and arriving in, say, New York just in time for the morning crew. You're now far more likely to find yourself beside a tourist than a hard-drinking, cigar-smoking American executive, but, if you are a fan of bar history, this place is worth adding to the visit list.

Those five places don't, of course, exhaust the list of veterans. That includes places from the Bell Bar in the British Embassy to venues like Morel's and Bleu Marine to brands that were forced to move but live on, like Dirty Nellie's, The Tree and Nashville. And they are followed by a slightly younger wave of bars in business a dozen years or more, places like Ichikura, Lush, Beer Mania and Centro, places that we don't hear about so much now but that still have a great deal to offer, and that hopefully be around for years to come.



WHAT'S NEW BARS & CLUBS



TANG

AMBITIOUS COCKTAILS IN COURTYARD #4

Daily 7pm-3am, Courtyard 4 (opposite Q Mex), Gongti Beilu (6415 9837)

朝阳区工体北路4号院

 400m west of Tuanjiehu (Line 10)

Stylish cocktail bar and dance club Tang takes over the former site of Pirate King, a spot that once housed a basement seafood restaurant with a pirate theme (whoever thought that was a good idea). Smartly redesigned, the new venue could be making a splash in the months to come in Courtyard 4, across from Q Mex and Kro's Nest.

We can't stress enough just how great this place looks. It's like the designer created a bar from an alternate Twilight Zone-type universe where capitalism emerged as the victor in 1960s China. There are hundreds of vertically aligned Chinese abacuses that create a little privacy between lounge zones, and weird green shrubs that shoot out from the walls as you enter. It's an attractive place to throw back some drinks and possibly move your body to their wicked sound system.

No, they don't serve Tang, the powdered orange juice substitute made for space travel. Their bar manager has

moved over from Flamme, an establishment that in its heyday was the go-to place for quality cocktails and so-so steaks. We started off with their Rum Martinez (RMB 78). Although it sounds more like a cocktail sipped by a Puerto Rican gangster with a pencil thin mustache, it was just the perfect amount of sweet, and they use a magnificent 23-year-old Zacapa rum. It's always nice when a bar doesn't skimp by using the cheap stuff. Next we tried the East Meets West (RMB 78), which has a brandy base and is full of seasonal flavors like fig liqueur and Grand Marnier to warm you up.

The one thing they could probably change is the Western-style food. While not bad in the least, we think they should have picked up a cuisine that's more representative of the space, which has an undeniably Chinese vibe. Some cool variation on dim sum would undoubtedly kill here. *Kipp Whittaker*

THE REC ROOM

Fri-Sat 8pm-4am. 4/F, Tongli Studios, Sanlitun Houjie,
Chaoyang District (6413 1019)
朝阳区三里屯后街同里4层

 600m northwest of Tuanjiehu (Line 10)

Rec Room is attempting to throw down a little Dada-esque flair in the dirty Sanlitun Houjie area, known for seedier dance clubs like Kai Bar and the ever-so-sinful Kokomo. They have kicked off their stint in a cleaned up space on the fourth floor, having house and techno nights in a building known for the most detestable EDM music imaginable.

So the big question is: Can you polish up this turd of a space enough to make it a desirable option for people wanting the contemporary cool of Dada? This is the location where Beijing's nightlife was born, even though the years have led this zone to descend slowly into a chaotic whirlwind of fake booze and cheesy tunes.

The space has been renovated nicely, with cool visuals on the walls. The videos being projected reminded us of the scene in Hackers when Angelina Jolie is implanting a virus somewhere in a system's mainframe. Lucky for them we think Hackers is a pretty rad movie, but the look is still a little dated. The sound system is good for the venue size, and we believe the plan is to offer a mixed-genre program of electronic dance music and it's great they won't be complete fascists about the type of music they'll be blasting.

The drinks are all pretty standard, but tagged with lame prices in our opinion. The mojito (RMB 48) was way too sweet, probably because the bartenders here haven't evolved beyond the backpacker tastes of 10-plus years ago. We felt the whole concept of the club to be a bit lackluster, but we are eager to see what they will do in the coming months to prove us wrong. *Kipp Whittaker*





TAKING *BAIJIU* HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

A GIFT GUIDE TO LOCALLY-MADE BEVERAGES WORTH STASHING IN A SUITCASE

By Jim Boyce

So, you're heading home for the holidays this month and want some local intoxicants for family and friends to try. Sharing is caring, they say, so here are three wine, beer, and baijiu options to help ensure your loved ones have a fun experience.

When it comes to wine, China has gone from laughingstock to contender over the past few years. Veteran Grace Vineyard in Shanxi has helped lead the charge and this year took bold steps by releasing its first wines made from Aglianico, Marselan, and Syrah grapes, a welcome move in a market overly focused on Cabernet. Even better, Grace released four kinds of sparkling wines, ones that would serve you well on New Year's Eve. The three entry-level bubblyies are RMB 158 and include Cabernet Franc, Chenin Blanc, and Chardonnay, with the latter a good bet. Spend a bit more – RMB 288 – and get the tasty reserve Chardonnay. These are available from Grace's Tmall store (gracevineyard.tmall.com).

Shandong hasn't exactly wowed the wine world in recent years but Chateau Nine Peaks in Laixi is among

the operations worthy of attention. The team there put its initial energy into carefully crafting vineyards rather than building an all-too-common Disney-esque chateau and it shows. The fruity, entry-level Cabernet is RMB 198, while those preferring more oak can grab a bottle of reserve at RMB 298. It's available via Temple Restaurant Beijing's wine shop (trb-wine.com). TRB also stocks 1421, Helan Qing Xue, and several other Chinese brands.

Finally, this column recently covered seven better wineries in Ningxia, China's most promising region. If you only have space in your bags for one of those bottles, go with Kanaan, a small operation that makes a crisp, dry Riesling and a semi-sweet white blend, both priced from RMB 150. If red is your style, the "Pretty Pony" Cabernet-Merlot has earned praise at home and abroad, and ranks as one of China's must-try wines. Priced around RMB 288 at TRB and Pudao Wines.

While the local craft beer scene has grown by hops and bounds in recent years, bottled options by Beijing-based breweries are rare. Panda Brew is among the exceptions

PHOTOS: JIM BOYCE

with products like its red honey ale, with a mild slightly sweet profile aimed at budding local tastes, and the stronger Kuding Pale Ale. Check NBeer Pub or Passby Bar for these.

Yunnan operation Shangri-la Brewing also started selling its bottled beers in Beijing this year via the CHEERS wine shop chain. The beers, with beautiful labels that serve as colorful tributes to the local culture, include Yalaso Lager, Tibetan Pale Ale, and a dark brew, and cost RMB 15 to RMB 22 per bottle.

And there is always the option of hauling a growler of your favorite local craft brew home. Jing-A is among the leading options in Beijing and will have a pair of imperial stouts out in December, including a collaboration with fellow local brewery Arrow Factory, a beverage that might be especially travel-worthy given it is likely to be flatter than most styles.

Then there is baijiu, long a favorite gift if only because one can subject friends to the hilarity of 58 percent alcohol firewater shots. If you want to go a bit further and actually provide a crash course in China's national spirit, grab a bottle each from these three key baijiu categories.

Sauce aroma baijius tend to be the stinkiest, with

soy, yeast, and funky aromas, and are most typically associated with Moutai. While this brand can be pricey, a 500 ml bottle of the Prince" label is only RMB 89 on yesmywine.com.

Strong aroma baijius tend to be fruitier and spicier, with Wuliangye, made with five grains, ranking among the country's most famous brands. Again, unless you want to drop some serious coin, check [yesmywine](http://yesmywine.com) for your options.

Completing the trio are light aroma baijius, including the style known as erguotou, which is typically consumed in large quantities ganbei-style and has led many of us to loathe baijiu. Keep it local and grab a Beijing brand like Niulanshan – the green label with the bull – or Red Star, found almost anywhere.

Those three give you a who's who of baijiu and will allow your guests to compare and contrast. Better stick to sipping these spirits rather than slamming them as shots – your friends and family will thank you.

Jim Boyce is the founder of the nightlife blog www.beijingboyce.com and China wine blog www.grapewallofchina.com.


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WHAT'S NEW BARS & CLUBS



SCARLET A

WHIPPING GULOU INTO SHAPE WITH SCANDALOUSLY DELICIOUS COCKTAILS

Daily 10am-2am. 60 Gulou Dong Dajie, Dongcheng District (186 0041 1298)

东城区鼓楼东大街60号

 500m north of Nanluoguxiang (Line 6)

At Scarlet A, prepare to experience a slice of forbidden fruit, in the form of a modern speakeasy that serves succulent cocktails that are strong, sweet, bitter, and sizable enough for even the prickliest of drinking enthusiasts.

The journey inside begins with a wall of cafe paraphernalia that you have to slide over to enter into the main bar room. It's here that you'll encounter the bartenders hard at work, facilitating a variety of modern bar techniques that will leave you licking those cocktail thirsty lips in anticipation. Travel further in and you'll find an elegant, dimly lit back room for small groups or for a little privacy.

The cocktails are where this place truly shines. They are not only delicious but feature the stunning presentation that is currently lacking on Gulou. We loved both the Queen of Hearts (RMB 55), a caipirinha variation made with pepper-infused cachaca, and the Don Diego (RMB

90), a boldly flavored drink featuring a mezcal and Aperol base. Both we felt were unpretentious in terms of price and also generous enough to keep you coming back to suckle on these godly nectars. They need to do something with hawthorn, though. I mean, come on.

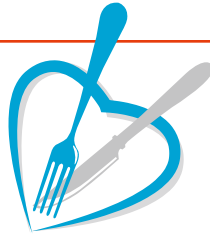
We would like to add that Scarlet A isn't a one-trick pony. These days it's not enough to be just another bar or a house with seven gables. They are also serving up a damn fine cup of joe (RMB 20-50) in the mornings and afternoons so that you can greet the day with a breath of caffeinated fire. Their beans are of the single origin variety from Yunnan and abroad and are prepared using a special water filtration system from Singapore, to ensure that you get only best from their enthusiastic operation.

Far from wearing the A as a letter of disgrace, this establishment wears it with pride and with deliciously seductive cocktails and coffee to match. *Kipp Whittaker*

PHOTO: KIPP WHITTAKER

P.S. WE ATE YOU

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



vegetable curry lunch set

Tandoor, RMB 58

Tandoor had been flying under our radar in terms of Indian cuisine in Beijing, but no longer, thanks to this extravagantly cheap lunch deal, available for delivery via Sherpa's. With basmati rice, bread, salad, and enough vegetables to make you feel like you're actually doing something good for your body.

tuna tartare

Okra, RMB 160 (small), RMB 260 (large)

We're usually fiends for steak tartare but recent reports about the danger of red meat have left us craving something lighter. Thankfully, Okra has come to the rescue with its DIY tuna tartare. A dish of minced tuna is served with seasonings including lemon salt, wasabi, and grated ginger, to be mixed to your taste and wrapped in sheets of nori.

red-cooked pork with cognac and pu'er

Transit, RMB 180

To paraphrase a certain well-known British supermarket, "This is not just red-braised pork belly, this is Transit red-braised pork belly." At Transit, humble pork belly is elevated to new heights with a braising liquor of cognac and pu'er tea, the burnished exterior giving way to layers of fat so luscious you'll need to keep your cardiologist on speed dial.

chai tea latte

Moka Bros, RMB 35

Admittedly we didn't eat this so much as drink it, but we found it tasty enough to justify including in this column. Much less sweet than your average chain-store flavored latte, Moka Bros' version is made with Tea Pigs' chai tea – leave the tea bag in longer for extra flavor. Perfect for the chilly winter months.

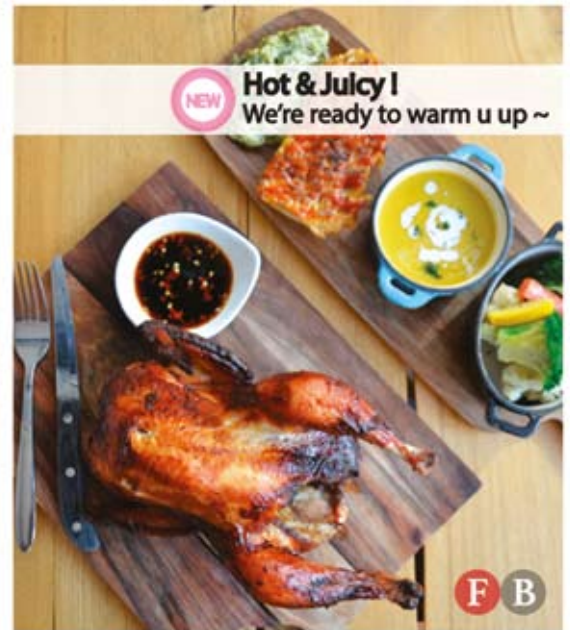
kimchi stew

Bibigo, RMB 48

Another accidental Sherpa's discovery, this piquant Korean stew from restaurant chain Bibigo is the perfect antidote to a frigid office. Packed with kimchi, tender tofu, and braised beef, the stew comes with a choice of rice.

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MISS ELIZA VINTAGE // TIAN SPA // CAPITAL TRAINING CENTER // KYOTO // GIFT GUIDE



YOKO ONO

NOV 14-JUL 4, 2016 - Japanese conceptual artist and sometime rock star, Yoko Ono, made her Beijing debut in November at the Faurschou Foundation Gallery. From now until July 4, 2016, you can go and experience her essential works like *Air Dispenser* and *Ceiling Painting* along with some new pieces made especially for this ground-breaking exhibition. Free. 10am-6pm. Faurschou Foundation Gallery (5978 9316)


PHOTO COURTESY OF THE FAURSCHOU FOUNDATION

MISS ELIZA VINTAGE

A VINTAGE FASHIONISTA'S DREAM

Daily 2pm-10pm. 9 Nanxiawazi Hutong, Dongcheng District (138 1061 9327)

东城区南下洼子胡同9号

 300m east of Shichahai (Line 8)

Upon entering Eliza's, you find something reminiscent of your glamorous grand auntie's massive walk-in closet, filled with fashion hits and misses. Although Eliza might also be a hoarder and on her way towards a televised intervention, she certainly has a treasure trove of fashions that traverses the decades.

There are few places that we've seen that have the same amount of quality foreign sourced garments and accessories. You won't find obscure old knock-offs or cleaned up rags from a Tianjin warehouse, but you will encounter classic designs from Versace and Valentina, vintage wool skirts, and more silk blouses than owned by Janice in accounting. Eliza acquires most of her items from Japan or through buyers who scour the planet and

return to China with their precious findings.

There's an impressive horde of gaudy 80s designer Italian purses that would probably make a fashionista from any country screech with glee. One Versace purse on display was simply stunning, made with red leather and covered in gold pendants and chains. If you are one of those ladies with a soft spot for headgear, check out her handcrafted fascinators (RMB 350), or accessorize with their massive collection of costume jewelry.

We were impressed by the focus of her shop, and we're sure that like-minded customers interested in boutique vintage will come running and throw down massive amounts of cash to get their stylish hands on some of this beautiful gear. *Kipp Whittaker*



PHOTO: KIPP WHITTAKER



TIAN SPA

ABOVE THE CLOUDS

Daily 10am-midnight. 59/F, Park Hyatt Beijing, 2 Jianguomen Waidajie, Chaoyang District (8567 1101)

天池水疗中心：朝阳区建国门外大街2号北京柏悦酒店

 200m south of Guomao (Line 1, Line 10)

People love a superlative and while Park Hyatt's recently relaunched Tian Spa may not be the highest spa in Beijing – that title goes to the one at China World Summit Wing – it is the second-highest, which is, well, the next best thing. Set on the 59th floor of the hotel, the interior design of the spa makes the most of its nevertheless very lofty position with a lovely cloud-inspired motif throughout the treatment rooms, gym, and 25m indoor swimming pool. Stop by on a blue-sky day and this should blend in spectacularly with the outside world – the Beijing weather gods were unfortunately not so kind during my visit. The design is uplifting and tranquil rather than necessarily plush, giving Tian more of a “day spa feel” than that of a pampering center.

Treatments cover the usual range of facials, and Western

and Chinese massages. Massage is a very personal thing, so it's hard to give an out and out recommendation based solely on one person's experience, but the 60-minute signature meridian massage (RMB 800) is likely to be a safe bet for anyone. Combining TCM principles with Western oil massage techniques designed to relieve chronic pain and tension, during my treatment the slightly perfunctory masseuse concentrated on my lower back, which made a welcome change from the painful shoulder kneading and accompanying lecture about bad posture that comes with many massages in Beijing.

The frequenting of hotel spas is hardly the cheapest habit, but for a special treat in serene surroundings (and with the added bonus of confident English-speaking staff), Tian Spa is worth adding to your routine. *Robynne Tindall*


PHOTO COURTESY OF PARK HYATT BEIJING

CAPITAL TRAINING CENTER

TOUGH TRAINING IN A CONVENIENT LOCATION

Daily 8am-10pm. Room 220, 2/F, Building B, Chaowai SOHO, 6A Chaoyangmen Waidajie, Chaoyang District (5869 1015.)

朝阳区朝阳门外大街乙6号A座二层220室号

 500m northwest of Jintaixizhao (Line 10)

In the space once known as Glee Gym, Capital Training Center (CTC) brings a less choral and more pugilistic spirit to Chaowai SOHO, which seems to be where everyone is going these days for some form of fitness or health food. Mornings, evenings, and throughout the day, various levels of boxers can be seen hitting bags, sparring, or doing everyone's favorite fat-burning exercise, the burpee.

CTC currently employs six coaches, including three from Thailand, along with three more from Brazil, Canada, and Scotland, all champions in various ranks except for himself, says, CTC boss Jian Piero (he's the Canadian), who has been in China on and off for six years. "Our goal is to bring the highest level of Muay Thai and mixed martial arts (MMA) training to China, and in the near future bring professional fight shows to Beijing," he said.

Both of CTC's rooms offer sufficient space for sparring and other exercises, with six heavy bags in the main

room for punching and kicking, two chin-up racks, and of course, a ring for actual boxing. Picture windows let in plenty of light during the day, alternately frightening or inspiring passersby below as they see the workouts taking place above.

CTC is also the current home of Fight Camp China, currently being conducted by professional Muay Thai fighter Sean Wright and former the Beijinger cover model Rory Van Den Berg, which, after bouncing between a couple of locations (including Glee), appears to have settled in comfortably here.

Former Glee customers will be pleased to see the expansion and reorganization that's taken place, namely the addition of changing rooms with showers and towel service in the gym's second room, a few steps away from its main space. For those employed or residing in the CBD, the Chaowai SOHO location makes it easy to squeeze in an hour of sweat before or after work.



PHOTO: SEAN WRIGHT

KYOTO

THE TRANQUIL HEART OF JAPAN'S PRE-MEIJI PAST

By Tom Arnstein

A two-hour ride west by bullet train, through brilliant, golden fields of barley, gives you time to decompress from the all-encompassing din of Tokyo and leads you straight to the cultural capital of Japan. Kyoto, which was Japan's imperial capital for over 1,000 years until it was relocated to Tokyo in 1868, is absolutely heaving with shrines, temples, and gardens, making a selective itinerary a must and an unplanned extension of your stay probable.

The sights are spread out around the periphery of the city and most can be reached within 30 minutes from Kyoto's urban center by bike. A word of warning though: for a country lauded for its safety, it seems surprisingly lax in its enforcement or regulation of bike lanes, which means that pedestrians and cyclists share the same pavement and can make for an infinite game of chicken. Before heading out, stock up on some local delicacies in the Nishiki Food Market, including our favorite tako yaki – balls of octopus and batter, brushed with sweet sauce and topped with spring onions and bonito shavings. Don't dive right in, however, as they're hotter than the center of the sun, as the roof of my mouth soon discovered.

Once fed, ride to the northwest corner of the city, skipping the bland Arashiyama Bamboo Grove and its surrounding tourist trap, and go see some of the country's finest temples instead: Ninna-ji, once the retirement home of the Emperor and located near to the famous Golden Pavilion, offers an escape from the crowds and a fine

example of exquisitely crafted halls, gardens, and pagodas, which you take in while walking barefoot, feeling the gentle creak of the centuries-old wooden flooring below. Ryōan-ji, the Zen temple and its adjacent 25-meter-long dry landscape rock garden, provides an equally tranquil experience, with specially selected pebbles arranged about larger boulders to give a calming ripple effect, which transfixes onlookers for hours.

Finish the day with a ramble up to Kiyomizu-dera, a Buddhist temple that sits atop a hill at the end of the ancient winding alleyways of Gion Shirokawa, overlooking the southeast corner of the city. This is the perfect setting to watch the sun go down and the last of the light illuminate the throngs of women dressed in their finest kimonos, emulating the elusive geisha that move swiftly between the buildings below. Just northwest of this wooden giant, one of Kyoto's many rivers dissects the city north to south and takes on an almost European feel, with groups of imbibing youths spattering the grassy river banks, ideal for meeting locals outside of the excess and noise of nearby karaoke bars later in the night.

This is only a tiny portion of what Kyoto has to offer and while some visitors are turned off by the vapid, tourist-tailored attractions (looking at you, bamboo) the number of outstanding examples of pre-Meiji architecture and cultural relics more than make up for the duds and will keep you captivated throughout your stay.

Presents with Presence

GIVE THE GIFT OF STYLE THIS CHRISTMAS



We've put together the ultimate guide for those looking to give a unique, design-led gift with a Chinese twist this Christmas, with the help of some of our favorite local brands.

JIAOZI RECIPE TEA TOWEL, APPROX. RMB 110

Pinyin Press

Pinyin Press' hand-drawn illustrations celebrate everyday China, from a steaming basket of *baozi* to the ubiquitous bicycle. This fun tea towel will allow *jiaozi* fans to unleash their culinary talents. Pinyin Press is based in Shanghai, but they deliver throughout China and internationally.

CHINESE GUARDIAN LION SILK LOAFERS, RMB 698

Zumu'Show

Add a little imperial Chinese flair to your gift giving with Beijing-based Zumu'Show's impeccable embroidery and brocade pumps. The designs capture the essence of traditional handicrafts and make them wearable for the modern, fashion-conscious consumer.

DIM SUM PAPER WEIGHTS, APPROX. RMB 190

Spin Ceramics

These white porcelain paper weights from designer ceramic company Spin come in four different iconic dim sum dishes – *shaomai*, *jiaozi*, *baozi*, and *huan juan* (buy all four for USD 133, approx. RMB 844). Presented in a cute bamboo steamer.

L'AMANT ROBE, RMB 5,000

Pillow Book

Pillow Book's designer Irene Lu is passionate about reviving and modernizing classical Chinese lingerie. The beautiful L'Amant collection, made from 100 percent silk, is inspired by the French film, *L'Amant*, set in 1920s Indochina – the fetching red palette is perfect for Christmas.

CHRISTMAS COOKIES, RMB 280 FOR NINE

Sweet Tart Bakery

Britt Langford's hand-painted cookies are inspired by time spent painting watercolors with her artist father growing up. The limited-edition Christmas cookies are a true delight (and not to mention, delicious).

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PERFUME GENIUS

DEC 12 - Split Works presents Perfume Genius, Seattle's Mike Hadreas, with a voice that melts stone and lyrics that bleed with profound beauty. The singer-songwriter's repertoire spans fragile heartbreaking ballads to menacing songs about personal struggles. RMB 180, RMB 140 (advance). 9-11.30pm. MAO Livehouse (6402 5080)

PHOTO COURTESY OF SPLIT WORKS



CHI FAN FOR CHARITY RAISES OVER RMB 550,000 AT BEIJING EVENT

PROCEEDS TO BENEFIT EGRC, BETHEL CHINA

Chi Fan For Charity's Beijing event brought in over RMB 550,000 for its 2015 charity partners, pushing the annual gathering's all-time total above RMB 4 million.

The latest total does not include Chi Fan For Charity Hong Kong, which was also held on Saturday, November 7, nor Chi Fan For Charity Shanghai, which was held on Saturday, November 14.

In all, 64 of Beijing's finest restaurants hosted more than 675 guests. Traditionally held in Beijing each year on the first Saturday in November, this annual event follows a simple formula: Restaurants donate a three-course meal with wine for a party of eight to 12, along with free admission to the after-party at Xian, featuring free-flow cocktails and live music. Each table is hosted by a community personality. Participants pay RMB 500 to 1,500 per person, depending on the venue, with all of that money going directly to that year's charity partners.

Proceeds will be split between Educating Girls of Rural China (EGRC), and Bethel China Foundation, this year's

charity partners. EGRC has sponsored over 500 young women from poor rural regions of Western China to achieve high school and university education with a 100 percent graduation rate. Bethel China Foundation serves the blind and visually impaired orphaned population throughout China by providing a sustainable solution for each sponsored child. The two charities were featured in the Beijinger's November issue.

Founded in 2009 with a mission of giving back to the Beijing community, Chi Fan for Charity is a modern take on the standard concept of a large, gala charity dinner. To date, Chi Fan for Charity has donated more than RMB 3,700,000 to local beneficiaries with 100 percent of table proceeds going directly to designated charities, not including money raised from this year's events in three cities.

The Beijinger is proud to have served as Chi Fan For Charity's exclusive English-language media partner for a third consecutive year. *Steven Schwankert*

MORESOUNDS

DUBBED OUT INTO OBLIVION



Dub fanatic and electronic music wizard Moresounds journeys to Dada on December 11, to present his unique far out sound that has been turning out dance floors like crazy since his 2013 debut. We sent over some questions so that he could drop a little knowledge about the origins of dub music and impart a little wisdom on how to get started in electronic music.

How do you usually describe the music that you make?

I do electronic music, mostly influenced by hip-hop, reggae, jungle, and the underground scene. I like to be free when composing music and not be stuck in any one genre.

Would you call yourself a student of King Tubby like your Resident Advisor profile proclaims? I can't say that myself, but I can say that Tubby is the man who influenced my way of making music the most.

What do you think are the origins of dub music? In your opinion, what was the first dub song?

It was kind of an accident that this very specific genre was created, with artists recycling recorded tracks, then remixing and cutting up these recorded sounds in the studio. I'm not sure about the very first dub song, but I would probably say it was something by Herman Chin Loy of Aquarius Records, but there weren't so many effects used at that time. The first I listened to, I think, is "The Blackboard Jungle" by Lee Scratch Perry. I heard that he had help from Tubby on this crucial LP.

We noticed you use some interesting samples. Where do you look for unique source material when sampling? What are some rules for deciding which material to remix?

Yes, I love samples and sampling sounds. I started making music by doing hip hop beats, and the sample

is the center of this genre of music. I pick samples from lots of sources including vinyl, tapes, TV, radio, and field recordings. Essentially, from anything that can produce sound. There are no rules for me, if I like a sample I'll try to make something with it. I think it's interesting to use samples when you can make something fresh and new from it. That's the most important thing.

We heard you are a hardware man. What's your most important piece of gear at the moment?

I love hardware. I have few synths, some old tape delays, reverbs and strange FXs, and all of these are plugged into my mixing desk. It's like the brain of the studio, which probably makes the mixer my most important piece of gear.

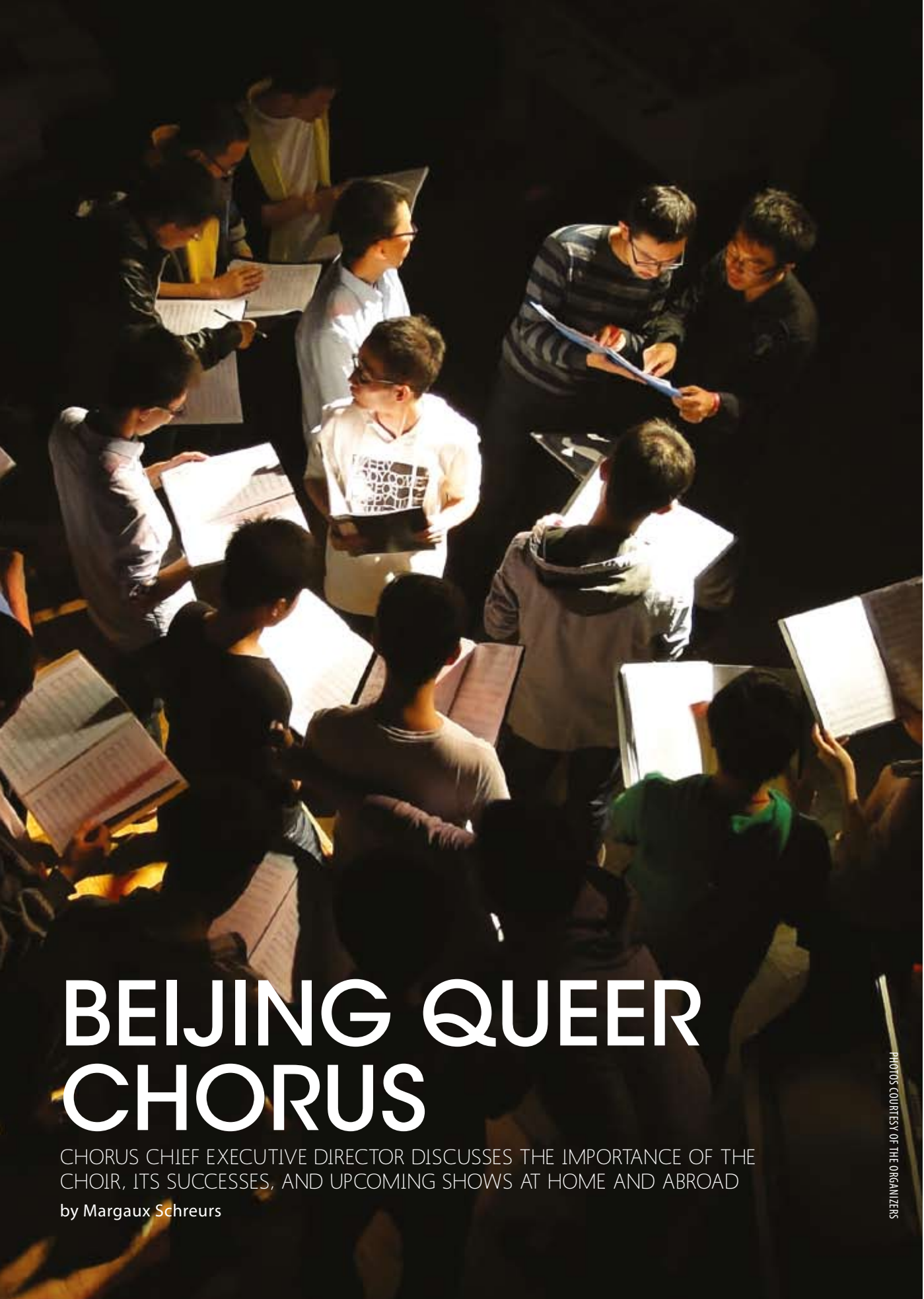
What are some essential techniques for an electronic music performer to adhere to when playing live?

For a live act, there are so many ways to do it, so I think it's a very personal process. It depends on what kind of music you are doing and how you like to do it I guess. With my live set, I like to keep the dub spirit alive, splitting my own tunes with my mixer and cutting them apart with some effects, just like the early dub techniques.

What do you think are the best steps to take when getting into playing music and performing music?

Today, computers are very affordable. Many DAWs are easy to use with a bunch of quality plug-ins on board. I think starting with a computer is a good option (to get your footing) and if you really start to produce or play music you can buy some small hardware synths. The synth industry is making a crazy come back with loads of cheap, small synths popping up all the time.

See Moresounds at Dada on December 11.



BEIJING QUEER CHORUS

CHORUS CHIEF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DISCUSSES THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CHORUS, ITS SUCCESSES, AND UPCOMING SHOWS AT HOME AND ABROAD

by Margaux Schreurs

Founded in 2008, the Beijing Queer Chorus (BJQC), previously known as the Shining Jazzy Chorus, is seven years old this year. We talk to its Chief Executive Director Wang Ruoyu about the choir, its importance to its members, successes, and upcoming shows both at home and abroad.

"I joined [the choir] in 2010, and was just a participant from the beginning. After some time I became chief executive director. Formerly, the BJQC was more like an interest group, but now we have a board to make decisions together," Wang explains.

The choir fills important roles in some of its members' lives, perhaps more important than the other groups in which they participate. This is because most of BJQC's members sing in multiple choirs, but not all members are out to their colleagues, friends, or even their family. In that sense, the choir also provides a network of unconditional support and a way to meet other people with similar life experiences and situations.

"Firstly, the choir fulfills our musical needs. Chorus music is a part of our members' lives: some of us started have sung in choruses since we were young, some are now singing in several different choruses, not just the BJQC. In our daily life, we read and share Bach's works, discuss and watch the Swingle Singers' performing. Nothing can replace the happiness we feel when we get together and produce colorful and beautiful harmony," Wang tells us.

He continues, "Secondly, the BJQC is the only LGBT art group performing to the public in Beijing. Just like any other LGBT group, it supplies identity, respect regarding sexual orientation, and a platform to meet friends, especially for our closeted members. The best way to describe it, using a song from our repertoire: 'Let there be music, let there be love.'"

Some of the members in the BJQC are still in the closet. Those who are closeted still perform, but wear masks while on stage to hide their identity from the public. "Losing their job seems to be their first worry," Wang says, "but our members who are still in the closet still want to contribute their voices to the overall sound."

"Hopefully the amounts of masks on stage will be decreasing as time goes on, and we hope that one day, on our stage, nobody will have to wear a mask to hide their identity from the world," Wang says.

As for the public, nobody has interfered with the choir during their performances in Beijing. "While the activity of singing is mild, and doesn't lead to trouble, the words

and music are powerful and enlightening for people," Wang says, but finding a venue is a different story. In the past, venues have denied the choir on the basis of their sexuality.

"Most theaters will say no to us when they find out we are gay, so we are always extremely thankful to the Penghao Theatre, where we hold our annual concert, and the German Centre for Industry and Trade Beijing Co. Ltd, which sponsors our rehearsal venue."

The BJQC doesn't just stop in China, they also take their magic abroad, traveling to Taipei this November together with the Shanghai Hyperbolic Singers and the Chengdu Wutong Gaymen's Chorus, who will all perform at the First Asian LGBT Chorus Festival.

"And next year in July," Wang says, "sponsored by the Gay and Lesbian Choruses Association, we will perform in Denver in the United States. Last year, with the help of the London Pink Singers, and Dublin Gloria, our delegates performed at Various Voices Dublin, an LGBT chorus festival hosted in a different European city every four years. This made us one of the first two Asian choruses to appear at an international LGBT chorus festival."

If you want to catch the BJQC in action closer to home, they will perform a free show at Penghao Theatre on Nanluogu Xiang on December 12. To reserve seats or for more information, email your name and phone number to beijingshining@hotmail.com.

The choir is always looking for new members, so if you are interested, email bjlgbt.chorus@gmail.com. You'll have to pass an audition to demonstrate you are able to sing based on sound, and are capable of sight-singing. After that, you can try out at rehearsal, which are held every Saturday, 1.30-5pm, at the Landmark Tower in Liangmaqiao.



CHINA AND THE WEST

DUTCH JOURNALIST FOKKE OBBEMA DISCUSSES HIS NEW BOOK, CHINA'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE WESTERN WORLD

By Margaux Schreurs

Author and journalist Fokke Obbema, who works on the foreign desk at Dutch newspaper *de Volkskrant*, discusses his new book *China and the West*, in which he examines the past, present, and future for Western nations' relations with China.

Obbema became fascinated with China after he visited the country for the first time in 2008. "The energy and dynamism of its people contrasted quite strongly with the pessimism that abounded in Europe at the time, where the credit crisis had shaken the financial system and the mood was one of gloom," he says.

The author recognized the large amount of pessimistic

discourse about China throughout the media at home, as China is frequently "the other" in both the news and books being written on the subject. "The feeling was that China was about to take over Europe, that we would live in the shadow of China's dominance."

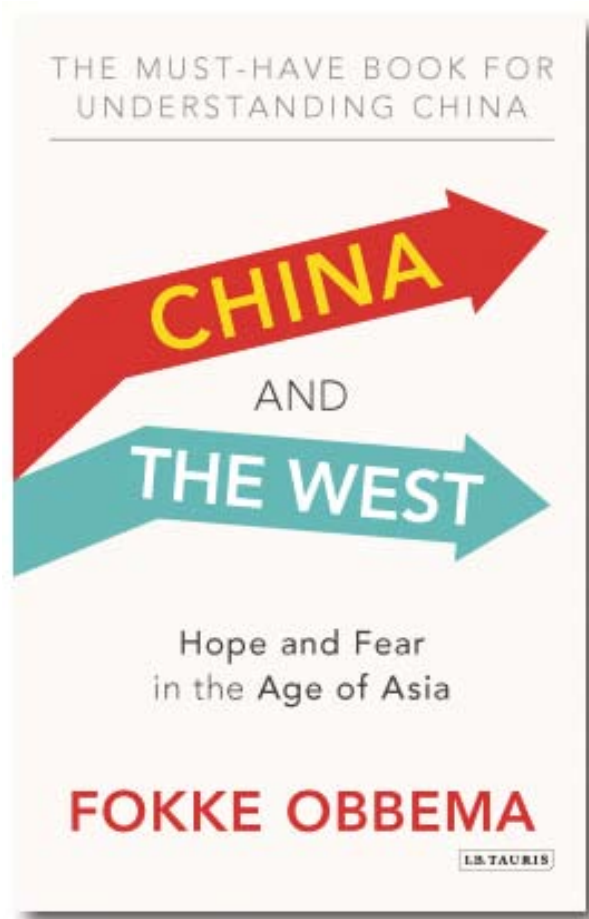
In response to this, Obbema decided to take a clear-headed and balanced approach to discussing the relationship between China and the West instead. "Being neither a panda-hugger nor a China-basher, I would say my approach is mostly balanced, both towards China and the West; they both deserve some sweet and sour remarks. Moreover, my perspective is a European one, so for instance with regards to matters of security, I'm far less a partisan than a Chinese or American observer would be."

"In those days, some literature claimed that China would rule the world, and that the end of the Western world was near." It was in that context that Obbema's book, *China and the West*, became a bestseller.

"In my eyes this different perspective was needed, not only as China's rise is arguably the most important development of this century, but also in view of the world problems we share, like climate change. In order to solve these issues an open dialogue between China and the West is indispensable and my hope was to make a small contribution to that effect."

China and the West also makes some suggestions for the future, particularly for China and Western nations with a fair and strong future for both as the aim. "This requires far more intellectual curiosity towards China from the West, as at the moment we tend to reduce the country to a big market. As for China, it requires less suspicion when Western politicians address the issue of human rights."

Furthermore, the future is not only up to the leaders of all nations involved, as contact between ordinary people is also vital to a strong future for the entire world. "My hope for China and the West is centered on the positive impact these people-to-people contacts might have on mutual understanding."



CARLY J. HALLMAN

AUTHOR

Which books on your shelf have the most sentimental value to you?

My signed books, especially those from authors I've met. There's something magical about meeting a favorite author, although I'm usually too nervous to do much of anything besides stammer and sweat in the presence of greatness. Nevertheless, I cherish signed copies of *Dress Your Family in Corduroy and Denim* (David Sedaris), *The House on Mango Street* (Sandra Cisneros), *Shanghai Baby* (Zhou Weihui), *Dancing Through Red Rust* (Murong Xuecun), and *Postcards from Tomorrow Square* (James Fallows), among others.

What's the last book you read?

Fates and Furies by Lauren Groff. It's the perfect solution if you're desperate to meet your 2015 great American novel quota, but don't want to fork over your hard-earned money to the likes of Jonathan Franzen. *Fates and Furies* is, as great American novels tend to be, about the oh-so-complex marriage of two beautiful, successful white people who live in New York.

Book you wish you had written?

Escape from Baghdad! by Saad Hossain. It's this darkly funny, deeply imagined story set in wartime Iraq, with a wee bit of magical realism sprinkled in for good measure. The pacing is perfect and the dialogue is sharp as hell. There's a corrupt American marine who's gone semi-AWOL, a top-secret society, two Iraqis who come into the possession of a war criminal from Saddam's toppled regime, and plenty of explosions. Who wouldn't want to have written that?

What is the book that changed your life?

Leonard Cohen's *Book of Longing*. I've consulted it regularly for years, like a book of spells or a bible. I even got lines from the poem "S.O.S. 1995" tattooed on my arm: "let them off the hook/help them off the hook/recognize the hook."

Book with the best beginning?

Yu Hua's *Brothers*. Give me a disenchanted Chinese tycoon sitting on a gold-plated toilet while contemplating buying a USD 20 million ticket to travel to outer space, and I'll give you my unwavering attention for the next 600-plus pages.

Tell us about *Year of the Goose*. Was it written here in Beijing, and how much of it relates to the city?

Year of the Goose is a dark comedy set in China, where the era of the tycoon has reached its climax, and where the lives of a snack food heiress, a hair extension magnate, and the nation's most cherished goose are about to collide. I wrote 99 percent of this novel in Beijing – in my apartment, at work, and in cafes. However, most of the book is set elsewhere: in Wuxi, Shanghai, Lhasa, and the Yunnan countryside. The novel's setting is my own absurdist version of China, not "the real China." For whatever reason, it was easier to go completely nuts making stuff up about places less familiar and immediate to me than Beijing.

What is the one book you would recommend to other writers in Beijing and why?

Sheng Keyi's *Northern Girls*. This novel is so full of life that it practically pulses in your hands. It's funny and incisive and also very sad. The characters encounter endless employment woes, relationship debacles, and sexual and socioeconomic discrimination. But they carry on. They sass. They laugh. Humor is present in every uncomfortable twist and turn. This is what they talk about when they talk about the "unbreakable spirit" of the Chinese people. And this is what we (both Chinese and foreign) should all strive to achieve in our writing about China – nuance, stubbornness, vitality, and wit.

Carly J. Hallman's novel, Year of the Goose, will be published by The Unnamed Press in December. Look for it at the Beijing Bookworm.



What are you planning to do?

EVENTS

OUR EDITORS PICK THE BEST OF THE MONTH

UPLOAD YOUR EVENTS AT THEBEIJINGER.COM/EVENTS

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



BATTLES 2015 CHINA TOUR

DEC 5 – Hailing from New York and considered one of the most influential math rock bands ever, Battles, are bringing their tunes to China. They will be supported by San Francisco-founded Moon Duo, with their hypnotic and grooving sonic textures. RMB 200, RMB 150 (advance). 9pm. Yugong Yishan (6404 2711)

PHOTO: DARKROOM.BALTIMORESUN.COM



1. A CHRISTMAS CAROL: A ZANY TWIST ON A TRADITIONAL HOLIDAY CLASSIC

DEC 2-21 – Beijing Playhouse brings you a twist on Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol. Join Bob Cratchit, Tiny Tim, and the ghosts of past, present, and future, as Ebenezer Scrooge discovers the true meaning of Christmas. RMB 260. 7.30-9.30pm. Beijing Playhouse (137 1890 8922)

2. THE WORLD OF SEAFOOD DINNER

DEC 3 – Taka Yamamoto (Sake Manzo, Happi Sake), Omar Maseroli (Mercante, Fiume), and Alejandro Sanchez (Niajo)

come together for a global six course seafood menu to be paired with fine sake. RMB 498. 6-10.30pm. Happi Sake (6582 8216)

3. BCD MOVIE NIGHT: MEAT THE TRUTH

DEC 1 – Beijing Community Dinners' monthly movie night for December is a screening of Meat the Truth, a high-profile documentary forming an addendum to earlier films on climate change. This documentary's pivotal focus is intensive livestock production. Free. 7.30-9.30pm. The Breathing Space (400 863 0600)

EVENTS

1. HANDEL'S MESSIAH

DEC 5 – Join the IFC for their 13th annual performance of Handel's Messiah. They perform with their sister orchestra Peking Sinfonietta and British guest bass soloist Jeremy Williams. RMB 180-280. 7.30-10pm. Harrow International School Beijing (6444 8900)

2. CHINA THROUGH CINEMA: CHINA THROUGH JAPANESE EYES

DEC 6 – This month's film session focuses on how Japanese films about China portray their neighbor. The chosen film is Red Angel from 1966, directed by Yasuzo Masumura. RMB 50. 7pm. Culture Yard (8404 4166)

3. CARL STONE, HOWELL, CHARM, AND NOISE ARCADE

DEC 10 – American composer Carl Stone, one of the pioneers of live computer music, has been on the scene since 1986. Now he is bringing his skills to Beijing to play alongside Shanghai-based Howell and Beijing's very own Charm and Noise Arcade. RMB 50. 10pm. Dada (183 1108 0818)

4. LE NOIR: FIVE YEARS OF TRANSIT FEATURING DJ SILKY

DEC 12 – Transit marks five years of critically acclaimed contemporary Sichuan dining with a celebration all in black. They welcome back the sounds of London/LA-based DJ Silky, who spun his dark deep house sounds at the original Transit opening. RMB 200, RMB 150 (advance). 10pm. Cicada Ultralounge (6418 9898 / 6418 9090)



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1. DIM SUM DISCO CHARITY BALL FOR CHUNMIAO LITTLE FLOWER

DEC 11 – Heat yourself up with rare groove tunes brought to you by the usual Boflex and Crystal Bones this time assisted by French Toast and DJ Murge from the UK. The night is in support of Chunmiao Little Flower, a non-profit in Beijing that helps provide for abandoned children with medical needs. RMB 50 (donation goes to Chunmiao Little Flower). 10pm. The Bar at Migas (5208 6061)

2. THE HUTONG'S CHRISTMAS FAYRE

DEC 12 – Traditionally one of the last Christmas markets of

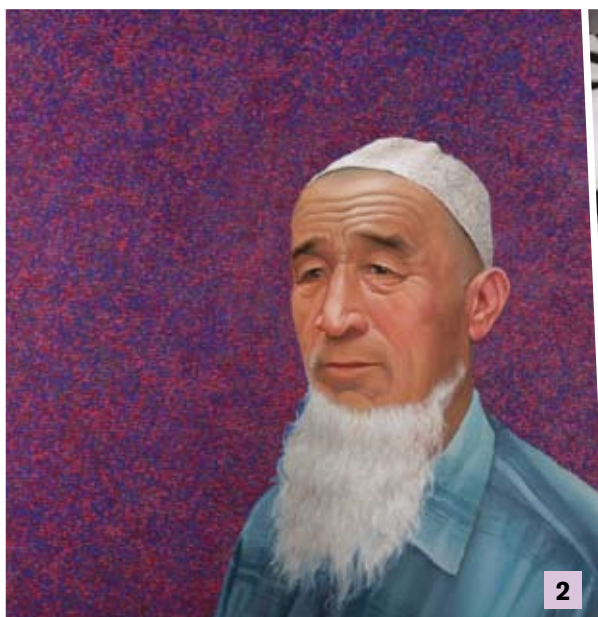
the year, pop down to the Hutong if you're still in Beijing. Expect lots of vin brulé, homemade jams, teas, baked goods, chocolates, handicrafts, photography, jewelry, paintings, and unique holiday cards. Free. 11am-4pm. The Hutong (6404 3355)

3. AUSSIE CHRISTMAS PARTY

DEC 11 – The Australian community celebrates Christmas with Christmas-themed mouthwatering buffet stations, cheap drinks, and a live band busting out Christmas carols. Don't miss this opportunity to get into the Christmas spirit! RMB 230, RMB 180 (members). 6.30-9.30pm. Grand Hyatt (8518 1234)



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1. TASK FORCE XX DECEMBER: HACKING A CHRISTMAS TREE

DEC 17 – This event, part of a Women in Tech series of meetings, will discuss how to hack our own Christmas tree (LED lights and music). There'll also be more talks aimed at inspiring or helping women to get their projects started. 7pm. 8-Bit (134 8878 3848)

2. ART SHOW OF KYRGYZ AND UKRAINIAN ARTISTS

DEC 17-27 – Sharpen Studio and Kamilla Ailchieva bring something different to China: art works from Kyrgystan and Ukraine, presenting a largely unknown perspective. The

show will also be in support of a dog rescue center right here in Beijing: Open Every Cage. Free. Weekends 11am-5pm, weekdays by appointment only. Sharpen Studio (186 1253 7382)

3. THE SYNDICATE PRESENTS JUNGLE BELLS

DEC 18 – The Syndicate's blow-out returns in December where Kay C may or may not be wearing a comedy Santa bear, Donkey Tonk may show up riding a reindeer, and Blackie may make everyone cry into the turkey. RMB 30 (free if wearing Christmas-themed attire). 10pm. Dada (183 1108 0818)



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1. CHRISTMAS EVE DINNER AT MOSTO

DEC 24 – Mosto's newly arrived chef Juan Mateus serves up a cozy, candle-lit Christmas Eve feast, featuring foie gras, beef tenderloin, and rich chocolate dessert (vegetarian options available). RMB 398. 5.30-10pm. Mosto (5208 6030)

2. XXXMAS EVE

DEC 24 – A festive evening presenting Senders_Chen and Ooops2 a wide range of electronic music while the good kids are tucked away in bed sleeping and Santa does his run. Free. 10pm. Dada (183 1108 0818)

3. VIENNA NEW YEAR CONCERT 2016 IN BEIJING

DEC 31 – The annual Vienna New Year Concert will be held in the Great Hall of the People, the most musical way to bring in the New Year. Make sure you get your tickets on Damai in advance as they sell out fast. RMB 120-1,680. 7.30-9.30pm. The Great Hall of the People (400 610 3721)

CHANGES TO VISA APPLICATION GUIDELINES FOR FOREIGN VISITORS

by George Ding

Below are the latest changes to the guidelines for visa applications for foreign visitors, effective December 1, 2015.

Tourist Visa ("L" Visa)

Applicants must present a roundtrip air ticket and proof of travel arrangements (hotel accommodations or couch availability) in addition to an invitation letter issued by a relevant entity or individual in China whom we can hold responsible if you step out of line.

Foreign visitors must apply for a residence permit at the local Public Security Bureau within 12 seconds of entry into China. Failure to register in time carries an arbitrary fine to be determined by the Public Security officer on duty.

Journalist Visa ("J" Visa)

To better protect foreign journalists sent to cover China, holders of J1 and J2 visas are now required to equip a GPS-enhanced leg brace upon entering the country. The journalist may choose which leg the brace will be attached to. Upon departure from China, the correspondent will return the brace and be held responsible for any damage incurred.

Journalists are advised not to remove the brace as it is programmed to self-destruct. Trying to slip the brace down around the heel or "accidentally" banging it against the wall will cause the device to self-destruct. Tampering with the brace or sawing your leg off carries a fine of RMB 20,000.

Student Visa ("X" Visa)

Students applying to study or intern in China are required to submit a notarized document vowing to spend less than three nights per week in Sanlitun or less than 50 percent of their time in the office on Facebook.

Upon entry, holders of X1 and X2 visas agree to start a sporadically updated blog about the life-changing experience of living in China. Approved posts include:

- Meet my new Chinese friend!

- My AMAZING trip to Xi'an!
- Apology for not updating the blog as often as you'd like.

High-Level Talent Visa ("R" Visa)

R visas will be issued to foreigners with skills urgently needed by China, such as an understanding of overseas tax shelters or the real estate market in California.

Yellow Fever Visa ("Y" Visa)

Foreigners with an unhealthy obsession with Asian men/women may apply for a Yellow Fever visa, provided they show sufficient proof of their affliction.

One of the following documents is required:

- An 800-word essay on why applicant is unable to find suitable Asian men/women in applicant's home country.
- Invitation letter from a relevant entity or individual in China. The letter should include the name, gender, and date of birth of the invitee, in addition to a description of how bad they've got it.
- Prom photograph of applicant with Asian date.

Consular officers will determine the number of entries and duration of stay depending on the severity of Yellow Fever. Ten-year multiple entry visas are available with proof of three consecutive Asian boyfriends/girlfriends.

Whistleblower Visa ("W" Visa)

Foreign nationals seeking asylum in China should apply for the whistleblower visa, provided they show proof of top-secret information stolen or otherwise procured from their home country, including but not limited to:

- Blueprints for fighter jets or missile defense systems.
- Compromising information regarding foreign leaders.
- Evidence of clandestine surveillance programs that directly contradict a foreign country's purported commitment to freedom and independence.

Foreigners may apply for the whistleblower visa upon arrival. Applicants will be housed in a five-star hotel of their choice while their documents are inspected. Once their documents have been verified, the applicant will be granted a lifelong W visa.

8 things you might not know about *Annie's* ...

1. We do awesome outside catering!

Annie's has catered for some of the biggest international companies in Beijing, including the Italian embassy! From a cocktail buffet to a formal sit-down banquet, Annie's has got it covered.

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3. Our pizzas are the real deal

We import '00' flour from Italy for our pizza bases, which are fired in wood-ovens for that authentic char. Yum!

4. Our delivery is free, and always has been!

We've delivered millions of pizzas to hungry Beijingers since 1999, and we even send out our main courses and pastas on proper plates and bowls.

5. We love families!

We have high chairs, a dedicated kids' menu and coloring activities for kids in all our restaurants, and we love hosting birthday parties too. We'll even put your little one's picture up on the wall!

6. We now use less oil and salt

We've cut the salt in our salad dressings by half, and we provide organic sea salt on every table for you to top up, together with Italian olive oil.



7. We are serious about wine

We carry over 58 reds, whites, roses and sparkling wines on our menu, and several of our restaurants have walk-in wine fridges. We also import several wines personally from the Lodari vineyard of Piedmont, a Beijing exclusive!



8. We care deeply about value

Fair and honest prices is what Annie's has always been about. We use our scale and experience to pass the savings on to you. After 16 years, our margarita pizza is still just 38 RMB!



Vandergheeten *Merry*
Wishes You *Christmas!*



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