

CHINESE COLD DISHES ★ KO TAO ★ LIAM GALLAGHER ★ HANOI

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HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS

YOUR COMPLETE GUIDE TO
HOUSE HUNTING IN BEIJING



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EVENTS, AND
CLASSIFIEDS ON
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COM

Cover photograph taken
by Dave's Studio



The most important dates this month

WHAT'S HAPPENING



JUL 21

Yen 13th Anniversary Party

One of Beijing's longest-running mega-party crews celebrates 13 years in the business with an array of local stars on the decks at Migas. Things are bound to get steamy.

JUL 22

Chelsea vs Arsenal in Beijing

London soccer teams Arsenal and Chelsea meet for the first time ever outside of London at Beijing's National Stadium. A pre-season friendly match not to miss.



JUL 28

While She Sleeps

This socially conscious British metalcore crew earned rave reviews with their latest album, *You Are We*. One critic called it the "best album so far about post-Brexit anxiety." You can headbang along to those heavy political anthems at Yugong Yishan.

AUG 18-20

Sister Act: The Musical

Based on the hit 1992 comedic flick of the same name, this Tony nominated play features music written by veteran composer Alan Menken (famous for *Beauty and the Beast* and various other Disney films). Beijingers can see *Sister Act* at the Century Theater.



Visit theBeijinger.com for even more events and details.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF YEN, NUSANTARAN.COM, COURTESY OF SHARP TONE RECORDS, COURTESY OF SISTER ACT

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

// I can't wait to rush around the city checking out empty houses. There are just so many great homes to choose from!" said nobody in Beijing, ever.

House hunting in China's capital is probably one of the most stressful, and sometimes downright demoralizing experiences you'll face when moving here, but it's one that cannot be avoided. Unless you want to reside on your friend's couch forever, of course.

We don't want that – no one wants that, which is why in this issue Jeremiah Jenne has put together some tips on how to find a suitable place to live, Tracy Wang looks at how to get your mountains of stuff into your new pad, and Tom Arnstein investigates why it pays off to decorate or entirely revamp your new home.

Now you've found your haven it's time to settle in. Carmel Moersalim guides you through some easy, seasonal cocktail recipes to greet your guests at your housewarming party, while Kyle Mullin outlines how to stay safe inside from lurking particles that may arise from renovating.

Elsewhere in this issue, research where to spend your summer holidays with my tips for visiting Thailand's idyllic island of Ko Tao, whereas Tom Arnstein delves into our southern sister Vietnam's capital Hanoi and surrounding areas. As always, we also went to check out some of the hottest bar and restaurant openings – you'll want to get out and explore your new area while relieving the stresses and strains of moving.

When we started planning this issue a few months ago, I did not realize quite how apt the theme of our July/August issue would be, as I too now pack my bags (unending boxes ...) to head down south and begin my own house hunting adventure in a new city. For that reason, I'm sad to announce that this will be my last issue as Managing Editor at *the Beijinger*.

I would like to say thank you to everyone who has made my time in Beijing, and particularly my two and a half years experiencing the city to the fullest with *the Beijinger*, so exhilarating and fulfilling. To all the friends I've met along the way: I'm sure we will still see each other around. It's a shockingly small world after all.

Margaux Schreurs
Managing Editor

Margaux

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CITY SCENE

STAT // BEST OF THE BLOG // SCENE & HEARD



RMB 71.24

Last year's data from Diyi Caijing puts Beijing's average rent in the not-so-desirable spotlight as China's highest. The average rent per month, per square meter in our fair city was RMB 71.24 in 2016, an increase of 13.46 percent year on year. That puts a 130 square meter three-bedroom apartment of at approximately RMB 9,000 a month.

For anyone living within the Third Ring Road, that's likely to be much lower than what you're paying, but bear in mind that this information includes data from the further outlying districts of Tongzhou and even Changping, where the cost of living is much lower.

The only city that comes close, as you might

have already guessed, is our arch rival Shanghai, with RMB 66.34 per square meter per month on average in 2016, also up more than 13 percent when compared to data from 2015.

Placing themselves in third and fourth place on the list of China's most expensive places for rent, we have the southern cities of Shenzhen and Guangzhou, coming in at an average of RMB 66.25 and RMB 44.47, respectively.

Capping off the list is Shijiazhuang, the capital of neighboring Hebei province, where you can find a house for almost a quarter of what you'd pay in Beijing, the only downside is that you then have to live in Shijiazhuang (sorry, SJZ, we love you really).

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



1. After Told Not to Touch Emergency Door, Passenger Deploys Emergency Chute at Beijing Airport

A Beijing Airport passenger accidentally deployed the emergency chute to her airliner by pulling the lever to its emergency exit right after she was told not to touch it.

A Xiamen Airlines flight had been preparing to leave Beijing Capital International Airport Monday morning. A Weibo user said airline staff had just completed the safety announcement in which passengers were explicitly told “not to touch the emergency doors unless it was an emergency” when a passenger simply opened the door.

2. Traffic-Violating Expats Used by Police to Teach Chinese “Awareness of the Law”

In China, many traffic regulations are broken by both expats and locals alike. And yet, even though Chinese media has shown a preference for focusing on the former, this is done in order to influence the latter.

With green cards being in such short supply, expats only make up a very small proportion of the Chinese public. So why is there such outrage when expats are caught disregarding Chinese law?



3. Cultural Diets: The Reason Why China Thinks Foreigners All Hate Cilantro

Food is, by far, the topic that expats in China are questioned about the most. But, strangely, it always seems to be about the same things. For example, locals will commonly ask expats about their chopstick skills, or grill them over their daily preference for hamburgers.

Another odd generalization gravitates around foreigners’ belief that eating cilantro is equivalent to eating soap.



4. Mandarin Month: How to make Friends With Your Taxi Driver (And Avoid Scams)

The most convenient way to get around Beijing is by taxi (出租车 *chuzuche*) thanks to the abundance of yellow cabs on the roads and taxi apps like Didi at your fingertips, which now has an English version. Yes, you might get caught in rush hour on the Third Ring Road if you are not careful, but at least you can serenade your taxi driver with Chinese pop songs instead of being squished on a stuffy and smelly subway carriage.

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



5. Going Solo: The Best Things to Do Alone in Beijing

Life in Beijing moves pretty fast and it can be hard to find a moment to yourself. Yet when we do finally get that time to ourselves we often end up wondering “what should I do now?” Whether you are looking to relax, treat yourself, or simply explore the city, there are plenty of great ways to enjoy Beijing by yourself.

We look at some of the city’s best things to do when you’re free to spend some you time, and looking to relax.

6. You Voted: Q Mex Crowned Beijing’s Best Burger After Six Weeks of Battle in the *Beijinger’s* 2017 Burger Cup

Q Mex took the crown following six weeks of intense burger battles as part of our 2017 Burger Cup. On their way to the top, Q Mex slipped past VSports, squished Ketchup, took away Fatboy’s lunch money, then eliminated last year’s champ Slow boat before finally squeaking by dark horse Cannon’s Burger to take their much-deserved spot at the top.



7. Bottega Xinyuanli Soft Openings: A Huge Space to Fill With Hungry Patrons Hankering for Some of Beijing’s Best Pizza

Bottega is back! And we are really, really relieved, because we missed the pizza more than we’d like to admit ... during their two-week closure.

After boxing up their original Sanlitun location, and the team’s accompanying Aperol spritz bar Vesuvio, we will soon have two new locations and double the excuse for a reason to drop by one of the city’s most popular Italian restaurants. The smaller, Nali Patio spot is still in development at the time of print, but that barely matters given that it may have already been overshadowed by the new (and massive) branch next to Raffles Medical (previously International SOS) in Xinyuanli.



8. Creamy Crack Time: 6 of Beijing’s Delivered Bubble Milk Teas Rates Just in Time for Summer

Milk tea (*naicha*), and more specifically, milk tea with pearls/bubbles (*zhenzhu naicha*), may just be the reason I’ve stayed in Asia for this long (sorry, girlfriend; screw you, friends). Its combination of liquid silk and sweet beige spheres of chewy rabbit poop heaven add up to one of the best experiences you can have in Beijing, which is why we went ahead and reviewed six types in Beijing that you can get delivered to your door.

SCENE & HEARD

+0 Wine Tasting

Jun 6, Rosewood Hotel. Photos courtesy of Activation Liquid



Casti Beef & Añejo FC Party

Jun 3, Q Mex. Photos courtesy of Q Mex





2017 Burger Cup
May 20-21, Galaxy Soho.
Photos: Uni You



HOW TO FIND A HOME

TIPS ON HOW TO FIND YOUR DREAM HOUSE

By Jeremiah Jenne



PHOTO: DAVE'S STUDIO

Finding the right apartment at the right price is never easy. A volatile real estate market, shaky legal protections for both tenants and landlords, and differing expectations between renter and owner all make Beijing an especially challenging place to house hunt.

Stricter enforcement of existing rules on property rentals, part of the campaign by the Dongcheng and Chaoyang District to “clean up” Beijing, have added a new wrinkle for those looking to escape the high rises and settle down in local neighborhoods.

Jimmy Selent, best known for his work behind the bar and organizing events for Great Leap Brewing, was recently forced to move from his hutong hideaway near the bar’s #6 Courtyard.

“Turns out that it was *gongjia* [public housing] and only members of the family listed on the official certificate can live there; otherwise the owners lose their rights to the space. The district decided to check this year,” Selent says.

Now ensconced 11 floors up in an apartment complex not far from his original digs, Selent offers this bit of advice for tenants: “Make sure when you’re renting the house that the people you’re renting from actually own it. When I rented my new place, I made sure they showed me the deed and title in their name.”

Josh Kernan, director of educational programs at The Hutong and a resident of Beijing for over a decade, concurs. “In terms of looking for renovated hutong spaces, aim for landlords who are private owners and avoid sublet situations. This will put you in a stronger position as a tenant.”

But not all recent changes are bad for prospective renters. Kernan strongly suggests taking advantage



of WeChat to streamline and simplify the process of flat finding.

“Add lots of different agents on WeChat,” he says, before calling the social media platform a “game changer” because “in the past, you’d go, and the apartment you’re viewing would be absolute garbage, or someplace you’ve seen before. Being able to friend several agents on WeChat means you can look at accurate photos before you go.”

It helps too, to view the process of house hunting from the perspective of local landlords. Ms. Zhao owns two homes, one she lives in now in Chaoyang District, and the other one near Niujie Mosque and Xuanwumen. She offers some advice about what landlords look for when selecting tenants.

“When I decide to rent out an apartment, I want to find the person who can rent as long as possible. It’s not easy to find the right people to rent your house and using agents – and dealing with the contract and agency fee – is troublesome. If we can find someone to rent for more than a year, or even two or three years, we’re willing to reduce the price.”

Developing a good working relationship between tenant and landlord – especially if there are language or cultural differences – can be tricky barriers for both sides.

“When I’m looking at a place or meeting the owner for the first time, it’s an opportunity to see if this will be a good fit. A great place can turn out to be a disaster if it’s owned by a crappy or dishonest landlord,” says Ms. Zhang, a 14-year resident of Beijing. “If the landlord is pushy, cheap, or just a pain in the ass before you’ve even signed a contract then it’s unlikely they are going to get any better after you’ve signed your name on a lease.”

Property owner Ms. Zhao says it’s the same from the landlord’s perspective. “I want to make sure the renter has a decent job, but I also look at how they behave and the language they use when they are looking at the apartment and negotiating. It’s always tough because you want to rent as high as you can, and they want to pay as little as possible, but the tone of the negotiations tells me a lot about what kind of tenant they are. If there are uncomfortable feelings or something doesn’t quite feel right I’d rather not rent the house.”

Like much of life in Beijing, building the right relationship can be key to a stress-free living situation. While it can be tempting to settle after looking at only a few places, those who have the luxury of time should spend as much of it as possible finding the right situation and the right location before signing the lease.



A HOUSE WORTH STAYING FOR

TIPS ON HOW TO TURN YOUR FLING WITH BEIJING INTO SOMETHING MORE

By Tom Arnstein

Concluding my interview with Italian architect Virginia Chiappa Nuñez, who has now lived and worked in Beijing for six years, our discussion naturally moves onto future plans and how long she intends to stick around. Nuñez playfully describes Beijing as great boyfriend material but she'd never go as

far as to marry it – a metaphor that most if not all expats here can relate to. The initial thrill of being all-consumed by life in China can quickly transition into habitual living that is later accented with tedium and frustration and the occasional blowout, promising that you'll get the hell out. Something else also happens during the seemingly

PHOTOS COURTESY OF VIRGINIA CHIAPPA NUÑEZ

VIRGINIA CHIAPPA NUÑEZ'S APARTMENT BEFORE THE RENOVATION (TOP RIGHT) AND AFTER



endless trawl of unavoidable house hunting upon arrival; an accrued snapshot of fellow foreigners' broken homes and dirty secrets also begins to emerge: insecure Ikea shelving, tainted grotty walls, and bloated, unkempt furniture that is overdue a wash.

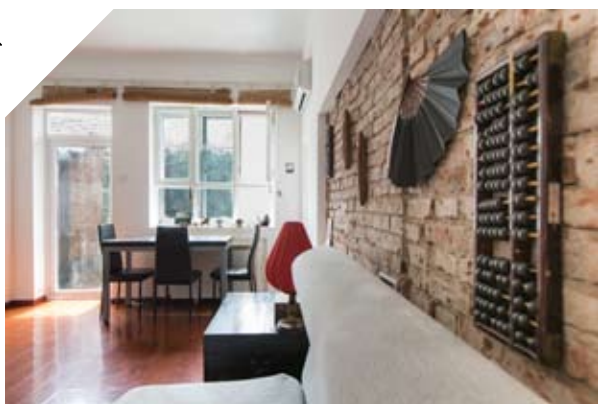
But there is an alternative. A small contingent, predominantly architects like Nuñez, have long been undertaking the task of transforming their homes as pet projects, driven by the simple belief that they can do better. Granted, they usually have cheaper access to materials and labor and have the necessary know-how, but that doesn't make their makeovers unattainable. The initial trick is not just to look for a suitable home – keep in mind a hutong house will be easier to restructure than an apartment – but also one with potential (in Nuñez's case it was the Confucius Temple-facing view from her Andingmen apartment). Chinese agents are more likely to show run-down apartments that are cheaper and riper for a facelift. If you go all-in and structurally remodel, you will want to secure a long enough contract to make the augmentation worth your time, as well as negotiate specific changes with the landlord. They are likely to show steadfast incredulity, but can be swayed by the thought of higher future rent.

Such adjustments may seem drastic and costly but they

soon repay in the contentment they provide. Aurélien Chen, a French-Chinese architect who remodeled his entire Zhangzizhong Lu-adjacent *pingfang* for a surprisingly low total of RMB 50,000, says of his family's abode: "We love this house and it feels like we've been living in it for longer than we actually have because we designed it for our needs." Chen states that the most effective alteration came by knocking down the wall that separated the kitchen from the main house. This allowed for space to build a glass hallway to connect the whole structure and leaving a boxed-off leafy courtyard. Failing the want to indulge in your sledgehammer fantasies, Chen also suggests a number of minor tweaks that go a long way to soothing cold feet, literally and figuratively. Those tips include buying a made to measure wooden floor to place on top of austere tiles, hiding unsightly electricity cables, moving gas canisters and water boilers to safer confines, and installing windows for added insulation and light.

Nuñez, who estimates her apartment remodeling to have cost a similar amount to Chen's, echoes his sentiment, observing, "The point of renovating is that

AURELIEN CHEN CONNECTED THE KITCHEN WITH THE REST OF HIS HUTONG SPACE WITH A SIMPLE GLASS CORRIDOR



you can return home and feel like it's your own, to enjoy the quality of what you end up with. It's not going to be cheaper; it's just going to be better." She recommends saving money by seeking out raw materials for the interior yourself, which also gives you the ability to prioritize what you want to look nice, using a mixture of market-bought products (wood, stone, fabrics, etc.) and final flourishes like handles for wardrobes and taps for sinks from Ikea or Taobao.

Nuñez also exalts the ease of use of free design programs like SketchUp, which allow you to create furniture outlines, designs, and blueprints. She finishes by saying that, "this is something anyone can accomplish, but do expect it to be stressful and challenging."

Opting for a less radical approach, Chen Xuan, whose company Shishang Architects specializes in luxury-

focused interior design and architecture, advises that if nothing else, the first thing you should do is banish any sign of China's ubiquitous fluorescent lighting, opting instead for a warming spotlight or lamp. A lick of paint or wallpaper can also make a big difference: "Before I used to hate wallpaper because my design background defines that the less material used the better, but now there are many interesting options."

Similarly, old furniture can be disguised with patternless, colorful fabrics, pairing them with curtains and getting rid of the tacky nylon drapes that usually come standard. For a final and inexpensive personalized touch, blow up pictures and print on canvases to hang, can be an instant way to enliven your home. Chen laments that markets for interior design goods are slowly being forced out of the city but a few hang on, including Chengwaicheng Furniture Market, Gaobeidian Furniture Street, and Shilihe Lighting Market.

The impetus to transform your residence from temporary dwellings to an actual home is not one that comes easily in Beijing. Whether it's because of indifference to change, perceived lack of better alternatives, or simply because we tell ourselves we might have to leave at any minute, expats here often settle for less. Do yourself a favor: you may have already accepted your time in Beijing as just a naughty fling, but you never know, with an open mindset, some chiseling, and fair amount of turning the other cheek, it could become so much more.

DIY COCKTAIL RECIPES

HOW TO IMPRESS AT YOUR HOUSEWARMING

By Carmel Moersalim

Looking for a quick cocktail recipe that will impress your friends but is actually really easy to make? Here are two refreshing and simple cocktail recipes from two up-and-coming Beijing bars that you can effortlessly replicate

MEXICO LAYOVER COURTESY OF PRESS RELEASE

Inspired by American novelist and beatnik Jack Kerouac's travels in Mexico, the aptly-named Mexico Layover is light, exciting, and leaves you wanting more. The cocktail is sweet and tart, with just a little floral kick courtesy of the squeezed grapefruit within. The rejuvenating combination of prosecco and grapefruit juice is a match made in heaven. Don't be fooled by how light the drink is – you can barely taste the tequila, but it's still there, lurking – a few of these and you'll be thoroughly sloshed. The recipe attached for Monin rose syrup (available at all supermarkets), but if it's too much of a hassle to find, replace it with simple syrup instead. The recipe below is intended for a tall glass of wine, but switch for a pitcher by simply doubling the measurements. One sip of the Mexico Layover and you'll be transported to a dreamy summer night, joyriding in a convertible with Kerouac himself.



at home. These recipes are tailored for balmy summer weather, require few ingredients, and can be easily doubled or tripled to serve a crowd.

INGREDIENTS (SERVING SIZE: 1 GLASS)

- 30ml tequila
- 60ml prosecco
- 30ml grapefruit juice (preferably fresh)
- 15ml Monin rose syrup or simple syrup (sugar: water 1:1)
- Grapefruit peel for garnish

METHOD

- Mix all ingredients except the prosecco
- Add prosecco
- Serve in wine glass
- Garnish with grapefruit peel

TOO LAZY?: GET A BARTENDER FOR YOUR HOUSE

By Tracy Wang

So, you've survived the move, (most of) the boxes are unpacked, and you're planning your housewarming party. Let's be honest: you're not kidding anyone if you think you're having an alcohol-free affair. If you'd like to give your humble abode the vibe of a professional bar, then consider hiring a bartender to take care of business.

The process is simple: 1) tell the bartender what you need (up to five different cocktails) a week in advance, then decide

whether you will prepare the liquor, fruit, mixers, syrup, bitters, herbs, and ice yourself or ask them to do it (if you're asking them to bring everything, make sure you bargain); 2) prepare a place that has easy access to a fridge/freezer and water, since bartending requires a lot of washing up; 3) decide who will prepare the glasses. One such bartender, Lin, offers home bartending services starting from RMB 1,500 for the first two hours (not including alcohol), after which you'll have to pay RMB 600 per extra hour. Call Lin on 185 1558 8405.



BITCH SMILE COURTESY OF RABBIT BAR

This drink is inspired by one of China's exotic summer fruits, the lychee. One type of lychee, known as concubine's smile, comes into season every summer. The strain is named because, as legend has it, couriers would gallop on their horses from Guangzhou to Xi'an to bring this fruit to Tang dynasty Emperor Xuanzong's favorite concubine, Yang Guifei. Those who were able to deliver her the fruit would win her smile. The translated name of this cocktail is not as mellifluous, but it's still a very invigorating drink. The acidic tang of pineapple and lemon juice is cut by the sweetness of the lychee, creating a perfect balance of flavor that masks the strong taste of the vodka. This drink was created with tropical nights in mind and is best enjoyed al fresco with friends.

INGREDIENTS (SERVING SIZE: 1 GLASS)

- 50ml vodka
- 20ml lychee syrup
- 20ml lemon juice (preferably fresh)
- 25ml pineapple juice (preferably fresh)

METHOD

- Combine all ingredients in a shaker half-filled with ice
- Shake
- Serve in a highball glass with ice
- Note: If you don't have a shaker, stirring vigorously will do the job

BEIJING MOVING SERVICES

By Tracy Wang

Moving sucks. In an ideal world – i.e. the magical and ultimately unrealistic world of the silver screen – you'd pack two suitcases and bid a cheery farewell before heading off to start your next chapter. However, the reality is, after you have been living in Beijing for a couple of years (and happen to be a hoarder), moving and packing can be a real pain in the arse. Fortunately, several companies around the city can help you to reduce the burden.

Stone Logistics, founded in 1994, has a team of 800 employees and 170 vehicles, and offers domestic moving, office relocation, as well as packing and unpacking services. The staff is trustworthy, friendly, and efficient. The minimum charge is RMB 168 per van or RMB 320 per truck, with extra fees depending on distance, special packing requirements, and flights of stairs. (english.stbj.com.cn, 8431 2266)

Beijing Brother, founded in 1993 in Beijing, provides office relocation, moving, packing, and storage services. Prices start from RMB 180 per van and RMB 300-400 per truck, with furniture, pianos, and air conditioners costing extra. (bj-brother.com, 8173 3388)

Likang offers office relocation and personal moving services, starting from RMB 300 to 350. Prices vary according to distance, floors, expensive furniture, and packing services. Rich kids can go for the fixed RMB 1,500 package, which includes packing, unpacking, and moving services. (lkbanjiags.cn, 5621 8333)

Final tip: Always be honest about the number of boxes, fragile items, and floors the movers will have to carry your belongings so as to get a fixed price before moving. This will prevent you from being ripped off or facing unexpected costs.



HEAD HOME, BREATHE EASY

LASER EGG'S LIAM BATES DETAILS HOW TO MAXIMIZE YOUR CLEAN AIR SUPPLY INSIDE

By Kyle Mullin

Sunny skies and warm weather mean one thing for many Beijingers: a fresh start in terms of accommodation. Or so it would seem, many of us unaware of the health risks that can come from slapping on a coat of paint.

Kaiterra co-founder Liam Bates struggled with such issues upon moving to a brand new apartment in 2013, when he was stricken with extreme eczema. He and his wife Jessica Lam were living there before they founded the Origins purifier and air quality monitor startup (since rebranded as Kaiterra).

"I idiotically thought, 'Maybe it's the pollution!'" Bates recalls, adding that he then shut all of his apartment windows and cranked up his air purifier. But that only made the problem worse. Research revealed the root of the problem: the total volatile organic compounds (TVOCs) in his apartment's furniture.

"Most furniture is full of glue, so it gives off lots of chemicals," he says of the TVOCs that were making the air toxic in his home. The cheap new furniture that many of us outfit our apartments with in the summer, not to mention the fresh paint some of us coat the walls with (or the paint that's already there), is rife with such toxins, which have been linked to cancer and other conditions.

In response to this issue, Kaiterra will release their Laser Egg 2+ air quality monitor later this year. The brand-new device will take TVOCs into account along with the more hyped PM2.5 smog particles, combining that information into an overall index. When Bates placed one of the monitors near a can of paint – during our recent visit to Kaiterra's Beixinqiao office – its pollution level reading shot up from the low 10s to a top-of-the-scale 500.

That means Beijingers should be sure to open their windows and air their apartments out for a few minutes both when they first wake up and then again at midday, regardless of how smoggy it is outside.

"Sure you might take in AQI 150 air for a few minutes. But it's better than breathing in TVOCs all day long," he says.

Keener home dwellers can take a further step by hunting down and using a special paint called diatomaceous ooze which Bates and Lam used on the walls at their office. Its natural components reduce its toxic emissions to almost nil, especially compared to standard cheap paint. However, simply airing out your apartment regularly should suffice for most Beijingers, according to Bates, because the special paint is so expensive.

Taking all that into account, Beijingers won't unwittingly turn their homes into a TVOC-laden haven.

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

FOOD & DRINK

COLD DISHES // SUSU // KLERM // RON MEXICO // F BISTRONOME



AUSTRALIAN STEAK EVERY DAY

THRU AUG 31 - Every day is steak day at the Heritage Restaurant, located on the sixth floor of the Sofitel Wanda Beijing, with juicy slabs of beef from Chef de Cuisine Yohan Fatela. Offerings include, among others, Black Angus and grass-fed Wagyu beef, all imported from Australia to ensure the highest quality. 11.30am-2pm, 6-9.30pm. Heritage Restaurant (8599 6666)

PHOTO COURTESY OF SOFTEL WANDA BEIJING

NIBBLES AND SIPS

Following much anticipation in recent weeks, **Migas Mercado** in China World Mall has officially opened. Departing from the style of the original Migas, this second project is more of a multifunctional space, divided into several different areas: three market stalls inspired by Barcelona's food markets, a taperia (serving tapas dishes), a bar, a fine dining area, and a 400-square-meter balcony with views of the CBD and the CCTV Headquarters. The first edition of their tasting menu includes dishes like roast Iberian pork belly, grilled foie gras fillet, tuna tartar, and lamb loin.

Speaking of hot off the presses openings, **Q Mex** is also in the process of launching a second location, a taco and tequila joint by the Liangma River. The food will move away from the crowd-pleasing Tex-Mex that Q Mex is known for, towards more "authentically" Mexican dishes.

Over in the hutongs, Jeff Ji, owner of popular cocktail bars Mai and JW Tailor Bar, has opened a breezy courtyard eatery called **Mai Fresh**. The menu is light, with plenty of brunch-friendly dishes such as a trio of open bagel sandwiches and a selection of wraps.

As the Great Bricking of 2017 continues apace throughout many areas of the city, we're happy to report that many displaced F&B businesses are coming out fighting, with new locations or reworked spaces.

One such venue is Sanlitun stalwart **Aperitivo**, which has relocated from Houjie to the comparably stable confines of Sanlitun Soho. Aperitivo 2.0 is smaller than its predecessor but has a more polished, modern vibe. The menus remain relatively unchanged, highlights being their famous bruschetta and affordable wine list.

Over on Xingfucun Zhonglu, **Frost** has survived the rash of closures in the area and is back with a newly renovated space and a smartly edited menu that features a number of bowls, rolls, and sandwiches.

Finally, **Rager Pie** is back with a bakery-only location and delivery business after their storefront was recently bricked up. The way it works is simple: add Rager Pie on WeChat (ID: wilnos), and message them with your order. Alternatively, you can find them on the Meituan and Baidu Waimai apps, or you can pick up from their new spot at 20 Beijianzi Xiang (北剪子巷20号).



Chill Out

A GUIDE TO POPULAR CHINESE COLD DISHES

By Robynne Tindall

With the steamy Beijing summer firmly upon us, our thoughts are turning to fresher, lighter dishes and cold salads. Chinese cuisine boasts a wide array of cold dishes, known as *liangcai* (凉菜), which are usually served at the

start of a meal to stimulate the appetite. These are just a few of our favorites, which can be found on the menu of most pan-Chinese and homestyle Chinese restaurants, as well as Ritz-Carlton Beijing's Cantonese restaurant Yu, where this piece was photographed.

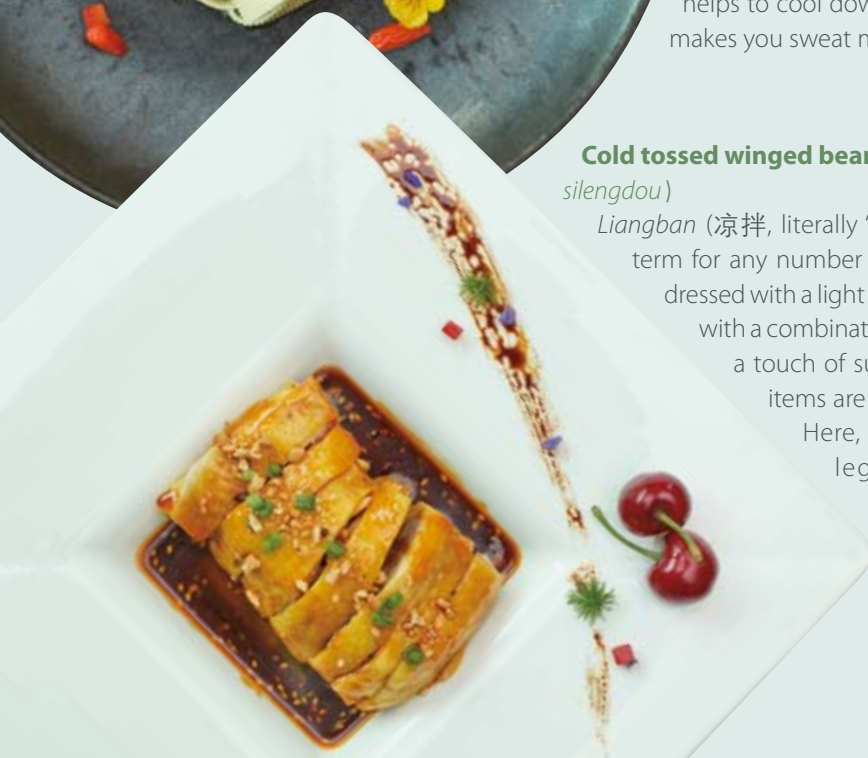


Shredded tofu skin salad (凉拌豆腐皮 *liangban doufupi*)

If you find the name “tofu skin” off-putting, try thinking of these flavorful strands of pressed tofu as “tofu noodles” instead. There are hundreds of variations of this dish, but it’s in northern China that you will most likely find the tofu skin mixed with finely shredded cabbage and carrots, and finished with savory soy sauce.

Sichuan chicken in chili oil (口水鸡 *kou shui ji*)

The name of this dish literally translates as “saliva chicken” and its spicy flavors with certainly get your mouth watering. Originating from Sichuan, this dish features tender poached chicken dressed with chili oil and Sichuan peppercorns. Some versions also include toasted sesame paste. As the people of Sichuan are well aware, eating spicy food actually helps to cool down your body in the long term because it makes you sweat more.



Cold tossed winged beans (凉拌四棱豆 *liangban silengdou*)

Liangban (凉拌, literally “cold tossed”) is a catch-all term for any number of cold vegetable dishes dressed with a light sauce, most often made with a combination of vinegar, salt, and a touch of sugar. These salad-like items are perfect for summer.

Here, winged beans – a legume popular in Southeast Asia – have been given the *liangban* treatment.





Century eggs with ginger (姜汁皮蛋 *jiangzhi pidan*)

Despite the name (and their slightly alarming appearance), century eggs are not actually 100 years old. After being preserved for a few weeks in an alkaline mixture, the eggs develop a salty flavor and take on their signature dark brown hue. Slices of pickled or young ginger are often served alongside preserved eggs to counter their richness.

Cold celery and lily bulb (西芹百合 *xiqin baihe*)

In the West, we may think of lilies as a decorative flower but in China, the bulbs are also grown for food consumption. Lily bulbs are considered to be a *yin* ingredient with a cooling effect on the body, making them an essential summer ingredient. They are often combined with celery, another cooling, fresh vegetable.



Smacked cucumbers (拍黄瓜 *pai huanggua*)

Of all the cold dishes in the Chinese culinary canon, *pai huanggua*, or smashed cucumbers, is perhaps the most essential, particularly on northern Chinese tables. The secret of this dish lies in “smacking” the cucumber (not a euphemism), which allows the flavors of the sauce – usually heavy on garlic and vinegar – to mix fully with the vegetable.



WHAT'S NEW RESTAURANTS

SUSU

POPULAR VIETNAMESE MAKES SUCCESSFUL JUMP FROM HUTONGS TO CBD

Daily 11.30am-9.30pm. NL5014, China World Mall (North Side), 1 Jianguomen Waidajie, Chaoyang District (8599 7757)

小苏苏：朝阳区建国门外大街1号国贸商城北区NL5014

We've been dedicated fans of Vietnamese restaurant Susu since it first opened in 2011, so we were delighted to hear that they were opening a second location in the recently-opened "new zone" of China World Mall. Located on the fifth floor, the new restaurant might be called "Little Susu" in Chinese, but you'll still find space to comfortably seat around 50 people. The restaurant has great views of the CCTV Headquarters and the Third Ring Road (so you can snicker at all the people stuck in traffic while you are enjoying your meal).

Much like the original Susu, the menu is fairly short but includes a full roster of Vietnamese classics, including fresh and fried spring rolls (RMB 42-58), steamy bowls of pho (RMB 58), zesty salads (RMB 48-58), and the Hanoi-style fish dish *cha ca la vong* (RMB 138), their signature offering and a relative rarity in Beijing.

We tried the beef pho, a test of any Vietnamese restaurant's mettle. Susu's version lived up to expectations, particularly in terms of the broth, which was flavorful and

stridently spiced, with clear notes of cinnamon and star anise. Alongside the pho we sampled the papaya beef salad (RMB 58), which had a pleasantly sweet and citrusy base of papaya and peppers (but not spicy like Thai-style papaya salad) topped with tender beef. The signature *cha ca la vong* is a tasty spectacle, the turmeric-scented fish sizzling on a heated platter in the center of the table, to be mixed with the smorgasbord of herbs, rice noodles, and seasonings served alongside.

If you visit at lunchtime, that pho is available as a lunch set for RMB 78, which includes a choice of daily side salad or fresh spring roll and a Vietnamese lime soda or soft drink. There are several other options to choose from, including *banh mi* (RMB 75) and *bun cha* (grilled pork patties with cold vermicelli noodles and salad, RMB 88).

Susu makes a fine addition to China World Mall, which is rapidly becoming one of our favorite dining destinations and we're glad to see their second location upholding the standards that made them a Beijing institution. *Robynne Tindall*



PHOTO: UNI YOU

KLERM

**CACHA CACHA RETURNS WITH
A REFRESHED TAKE ON THAI**



Daily 11am-10pm. NLG45, B1/F, Taikoo Li North, 11 Sanlitun Lu, Chaoyang District (5721 2286)
朝阳区三里屯路11号院太古里北区地下一层NLG45

While pockets of old Beijing have been wrestling with forced closure and reclamation over the past several months, Cacha Cacha in Sanlitun's Taikoo Li North was enduring their own property battle. Now, after nine months of lying dormant, and with the addition of the city's skinniest escalator having eaten into its floor space, the restaurant resurfaces just in time for summer as the peculiarly-titled Klerm. Fans of the former establishment will be relieved to hear that the original Hong Kong-by-way-of-Bangkok team remains intact and so does the kitchen's general premise: bright, fun, and modern Thai dining with nary a hint of arrogance.

We might as well start with that name: Klerm. Not so much a word that rolls of the tongue so much as a sound that you'd make after a serious head injury, Klerm means something in the vicinity of the drowsy or pleasant feeling you get while intoxicated. In that vein, the space itself exudes a supine disposition with colorful murals, dangling potted plants, and well-trained staff that are both friendly and attentive.

But even these elements pale in comparison to the food. Much like its predecessor, Klerm relies heavily on the cuisine of northern Thailand; hearty dishes laden with

spices and a fiery kick that might be too much for some (ask them to hold back if necessary), all embodied in rich and creamy curries, big chunks of juicy meat and seafood, and fresh, tangy salads.

Favorites from our Southeast Asian feast include the poached mussels in green curry (RMB 78), the clams some of the freshest we have tried in Beijing, bulging and ready to dipped in the puddle of curry below; and a gargantuan crab in thick yellow curry sauce with onions and tomatoes (RMB 298). The crispy seafood pancake (RMB 88) made for a good filler to mop up any remaining juices, that's if the accompanying sweet marmalade wasn't so hard to forfeit. However, the show stopper is the signature beef fillet (RMB 268), which comes sizzling on a metal bell contraption brought over specifically from Thailand, the huge slabs of steak then flambéed at your table.

Klerm is still in the process of polishing the final product – expect more focus on the bar as they settle – but the effort that they've put in so far in bringing a slice of Thailand to Beijing is plain to see. Given that the city already has slim pickings for good Thai food, Klerm presents a fresh option over some of the dreary and tired Sanlitun hangers-on. *Tom Arnstein*

WHAT'S NEW RESTAURANTS



RON MEXICO

HULKING TACOS, STUFFED BURRITOS, AND GENEROUSLY-TOPPED NACHOS

Daily 11am-late. 113-02 Jiadaokou Dongdajie, Dongcheng District (no phone)

东城区交道口东大街113-02

When Ron Mexico moved from its smaller Yongkang Hutong spot to its new, larger Jiadaokou location, we were thrilled for the very simple reason that the bar had gone from about 10 seats to approximately 50. Gone are the days of shuffling through a tiny space and crawling over drunk people to get to the bar for that much-needed top up.

That being said, when we heard that the new bar came with a bigger kitchen and that they'd be working on a more expansive food menu, it did take us a while to change our conception of it as a very small bar to the idea of Ron Mexico as somewhere to take large groups of friends and get a decent meal, too.

The new menu consists mostly of tacos, nachos, burritos, and wraps. Pick the stuffing of your choice, and the kitchen team will prepare it in any of the abovementioned formats. Whichever one you choose, you can be certain that the filling will be a plenty; not a

single one of the tacos we've ever had at Ron's wielded to our efforts to close it.

Having tried a couple of the options on several separate occasions (and in various states of inebriation) we can highly recommend the Caesar chicken, the pulled pork, and the Thai chicken tacos, the latter especially for their tangy, Southeast Asian touch. Go for the three taco platter (RMB 70) if you're looking for a meal, which allows for any combination of the tacos and ensures you won't look on at others' portions and feel disappointed.

The nachos (RMB 70) are a hit for the very simple reason that the toppings outweigh the chips. The pulled pork barbecue nachos have kept us coming back for their generous amounts of cheese, meat, and sweet barbecue sauce, and are perfect to share with those new friends that you're certainly going to make after an evening spent holed up with Ron Mexico's notoriously strong mixed drinks. *Margaux Schreurs*

PHOTO: JUN YOU

W

... **Wenchang chicken** 文昌鸡 *wenchang ji*

The progenitor of the Hainan chicken rice served throughout Southeast Asia, Wenchang chicken is both a type of chicken and a chicken dish, both of which hail from the area around the city of Wenchang in Hainan Province. The bird is poached whole in a fragrant broth, leaving the skin luscious and gelatinous, and the meat juicy.

... **wood ear** 木耳 *mu er*

It might sound like a debilitating skin condition, but wood ear mushrooms – *auricularia auricula-judae* – are actually a type of fungus. Wood ear mushrooms are popular in Chinese cuisine for their crunchy, jelly-like texture (which admittedly makes them rather an acquired taste). Having little flavor of their own, they are usually paired with strident flavors such as vinegar and chili. They are also a key ingredient in hot and sour soup.

... **wosun** 莴笋 *wo sun*

Better known as celtuce (a portmanteau of celery and lettuce) in English, *wosun* is a type of lettuce primarily

grown for its thick stem rather than its leaves. The stem is sliced and used in light stir fries or *liangban* (cold tossed, see more on p. 22-23) dishes. The fresh, slightly bitter taste of *wosun* is thought to stimulate the appetite.

... **wotou** 窝头 *wo tou*

If you've got a hankering for classic American cornbread, you can try and ease your cravings with one of these. A staple of northern Chinese cuisine, *wotou* are made with rough cornmeal mixed to a dough with a little water, which is then shaped into a cone shape (hence the name, which literally translates as "nest head") and steamed. Although traditionally a peasant dish, it is said that Empress Dowager Cixi developed a taste for them when they were given to her for sustenance while she was fleeing from the Battle of Peking in 1900.



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WHAT'S NEW RESTAURANTS



F BISTRONOME

STRIKING A MIDDLE GROUND BETWEEN FINE AND CASUAL DINING

Daily 11am-11pm. NL7005 China World Mall (North Side), 1 Jianguomen Waidajie,

Chaoyang District (8595 9597)

福楼毕斯罗：朝阳区建国门外大街1号国贸商城北区NL7005

From Groupe Flo, the team behind establishments like the Beijing Restaurant Award-winning Maison Flo and Café Flo, now comes F Bistronome, located up high on the sixth floor of Guomao's China World Mall. The new concept strikes the middle ground between the fine dining Maison Flo and the more casual approach of Café Flo, emphasizing a group dining approach to French cuisine.

F Bistronome's decor whisks diners to Paris; elegant dark wooden floors with blue and beige leather chairs, high ceilings, and sophisticated chandeliers, tied together by the huge bay windows lining three quarters of the space. The whole package is then given a little Beijing flare with the backdrop of, you guessed it, the glorious CCTV Headquarters, and the less iconic but still somewhat mesmerizing Third Ring Road.

The food also lives up to the standards of F Bistronome's lofty perch, with the fresh oysters (RMB 215 for six Fine de Claire No. 3 or RMB 338 for six Ostre'Or Saint-Vaast), charcuterie (RMB 82 upwards), and *mises en bouche*, French-style tapas, perfect to whet your appetite for the mains to come.

Highlights include the salmon fume aux herbes (RMB

52) *mise en bouche*, a beautiful mass of succulent smoked Norwegian salmon, blini, and yuzu cream that belied its light taste. The foie gras (RMB 62) with caramelized apple and bell peppers was more subtle and sweet than other takes on this delicacy that we've sampled in the past, I for one happy to avoid the usual cloying and carthy notes.

Of the signature mains, the smoked veal short ribs (RMB 268 for a small, RMB 479 for a large) was the standout; a sizable and tender pot of meat, creamy mashed potatoes, and steamed vegetables that we could only imagine our mothers would have made on a special occasion, had they been French. The accompanying dauphinoise potatoes proved a decadent addition to an already robust main.

F Bistronome's focus on sharing makes it a great option to visit with a group of friends or family, as well as a solution for if you've always wanted to try Maison Flo, but haven't had the budget to do so.

Alternatively, head over during work hours as the business lunch menu starts at RMB 108 and includes a range of options to keep you coming back (Monday to Friday, 11am-2.30pm). *Margaux Schreurs*

BITEAPITTA

BEIJING'S BEST BET FOR A QUICK BITE

Sun-Thu 11am-11pm, Fri-Sat 11am-1am. 2/F, Tongli Studios, Sanlitun Houjie, Chaoyang District (6467 2961)

吧嗒饼：朝阳区三里屯后街同里2层

There are restaurants that have been around so long that they seem to be part of the very foundation of the Beijing foodie scene. Restaurants like Biteapitta, for example.

Starting out as a bakery and small restaurant in Nvren Jie in 2004, Biteapitta moved to its current location in Tongli Studios on Sanlitun Houjie in 2010. Having recently survived the bricking up of that strip (we'll save discussion of the legitimacy of the "Great Bricking" for another time, but suffice it to say we prefer looking out of the window onto flower beds over people making poor life choices at Pure Girl Bar), we thought we would revisit what it is that makes Biteapitta an enduring success.

What "it" is, of course, is simple Middle Eastern food, done well. Biteapitta are justifiably famous for their pita bread, into which all manner of delicious things are stuffed, most notably creamy hummus and knobbly homemade falafel. Said pita sandwiches are perfect for a grab and go lunch (and undeniably cheap, at less than

RMB 40 each) but those in search of a more substantial meal have plenty to choose from too.

The chopped chicken shawarma (RMB 69), accompanied by your choice of two side dishes, is a shortcut to a nutritious, filling meal – choose the majadra rice (rice cooked with lentils and onions) and simple chopped vegetable salad to keep it as healthy as possible. And if you're really settling in for a long meal, the stuffed chicken (RMB 127 whole, RMB 90 half), oven baked on top of a laffa pita to catch the juices, is worth the 25-minute wait it requires.

In an interview with *the Beijinger* in early 2016, owner Avi Shabtai said that his hope for the future of Biteapitta is "to keep our existing clients satisfied while sharing our Middle Eastern experience with as many people as possible."

Well, 18 months on from that interview, and 13 years since Biteapitta first opened, we can safely say that we remain very satisfied existing clients. *Robynne Tindall*



PHOTO COURTESY OF BITEAPITTA



NINGXIA PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT RESTAURANT

LAMB, CUMIN, AND MORE LAMB

Daily 11.30am-2pm, 5.30-9pm. Ningxia Dasha, 10 Xiejia Hutong, Andingmen Neidajie, Dongcheng District (6406 1155)
东城区安定门内大街谢家胡同10号宁夏大厦

Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region is strongly influenced by flavors traditionally associated with the Hui people, one of China's 55 ethnic minorities. Approximately 20 percent of China's Hui population resides in Ningxia. Cutting to the case and skipping the culinary superfluous jargon, Hui cuisine can be summarized by the ingredients lamb, cumin, and a helping of lamb on the side.

Bearing in mind that I've never set foot in Ningxia (can you tell?), but have lived next to the imposingly vacant-looking Ningxia Hotel, which houses the Ningxia Provincial Government Restaurant, for four years, it seemed that it was about time for me to whip out my tastebuds and dive into some lamb-a-licious northwestern cuisine.

The restaurant is located up a flight of grand marble stairs which marks the dichotomy between a quiet hotel lobby and an even more disappointingly silent restaurant. Tune in to hear the crickets playing their tiny violins (or the chef snoring, more likely).

Flipping through the menu we decided to first play it safe with some cold noodles, the *liangpi* (RMB 20), which was fantastic; crunchy shredded vegetables blended with chewy cold noodles in vinegar with just the right amount

of chili. The meal started off light, and that's important because everything else you'll eat here is lamb.

The fried lamb chops with cumin (RMB 98) and the fried lamb with peppers and onion (*yangrou xiaochao*, RMB 46), stood out, the latter for its lamb variation on the usual pork-based bread stew found in homestyle restaurants throughout the city. The lamb chops were suitably tender, the fat and cumin not overpowering, well, the lamb overnotes.

There are also a range of staple foods available, including baked goods, or even a great big, steaming bowl of *huixiang saozhi mian* (RMB 14-10), its mixture noodles, cubed carrot, and potato not steamy enough to bring beads of sweat to our brow, but nevertheless worth ordering for the perfectly-cooked and demonstrably hand-pulled noodles, and the richly flavored, and slightly sour, broth.

Despite the restrictive nature of Ningxia cuisine, we'd mark this a veritable Prov Gov win and will be back to dig further into its meaty offerings. We recommend visiting in a large group so that you can order to your heart's content (and add to the otherwise nonexistent atmosphere of the place). *Margaux Schreurs*

P.S. WE ATE YOU

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

seasonal bento

Obentos, RMB 78

The main attraction of this season's bento is a portion of seared sashimi tuna laid on a bed of salad and dressed with yuzu. The bento box is rounded off with your choice of rice and three sides of veggies.

chicken scotch egg

Beyond Yakitori, RMB 32

A scotch egg made of chicken instead of the usual pork, the yolk perfectly runny, comes into its own when dipped in the spicy mayonnaise and paprika sauce.

duck breast and basil pesto pizza

Tube Station, RMB 64-196 (depending on size)

A new, localized offering on the Tube Station menu, the coating of juicy Peking poultry chunks makes this pie juicy, hearty, and satisfying. The red and yellow bell peppers add a little crispiness, while the gooey mozzarella binds all of the ingredients together.

beef mango salad

Barn, RMB 80

A Thai-style salad presented beautifully, filled with mixed veggies, little Thai peppers, and, of course, beef and mango.

New York soho tower brunch

The Rug, RMB 388

A three-layered brunch tower with both an American and an Asian twist, the set includes a fish burger, a shrimp and avocado roll, a sweet strawberry and mango spring roll, and cakes to share.



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Migas
MERCADO
— BEIJING —

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86 810-65807579

THE GRANARY

LIVEHOUSE AND RESTAURANT BREAKS NEW GROUND IN FAR-FLUNG SHUANGQIAO

Daily 10am-1.30am. E25, Dream 2049 International Creative Industrial Park, 4 Sanjianfang Nanli, Chaoyang District (136 9131 4878)

太仓酒馆：朝阳区三间房南里4号院Dream 2049 国际文创园E25

Believe it or not, Beijing's best new livehouse is in a part of town you've likely never heard of. Yes, far off from the music epicenter that is Gulou, the Granary sits in an artsy industrial park that is most easily reached on Beijing's eastward Batong Line.

Despite the distance, it's worth the trek. That is in part because the sprawling livehouse and restaurant is a repurposed granary (duh), giving it a rugged, utilitarian vibe that aptly suits the indie rockers and DJs that pump out dubstep, techno, punk, and a range of other genres from its indoor stage. Outside it has plenty of green space for patrons to lounge on while DJs play sets for the venue's weekend afternoon parties that are poised to be some of the most lively events this summer.

One of the masterminds behind the joint is Dizzy Di, who has coordinated countless gigs at Mako and the now defunct 2 Kolegas livehouses. His experience in attracting crowds to gigs at both of those non-Gulou venues makes him well suited to work at the off-the-beaten-path Granary, and marks an effort to decentralize a music scene that is increasingly being pushed to Beijing's peripheries.

The students at nearby universities will surely also be grateful to have a quality gig destination so closeby.

The menu, meanwhile, is also impressive. There's an array of whiskies, Jing A beer on tap, along with succulent burgers (the eponymous prawn-topped burger being an especially memorable highlight for its sloppy decadence) and other pub grub readied by a team of four well-trained chefs with experience in the kitchens of the Beijing Kempinski and the Crowne Plaza. That team was assembled by Granary owner Yuan Wentao himself, a former waiter at Great Leap Brewing's flagship #12 location, who went on to study hospitality in Switzerland.

All these elements add up to a very bold foray into an untapped corner of Beijing. Even the most Gulou and Chaoyang-centric among us will enjoy the beats and breezy ambiance of this unique venue's weekend outdoor mini-festivals.

Yes, from the burgers to the drinks to the DJs, the Granary looks to provide plenty of incentive for us to break out of our downtown bubbles and head out east.

Kyle Mullin



PHOTO: UNI YOU

WHAT'S NEW BARS & CLUBS



OLD FASHIONED

AGED JAPANESE WHISKY AND TIMELESS VIBES

Tue-Sun 7pm-late. Room 211, Bldg 5, Sanlitun Soho, 8 Gongti Beilu, Chaoyang District (134 8866 8181)
朝阳区工体北路8号三里屯Soho 5号楼211室

If the name of this bar doesn't get the point across, the atmosphere certainly will – upon entry, you'll be struck by Old Fashioned's stark and simple, yet timelessly classy, setup. The Sanlitun Soho Japanese whisky bar's decor is defiantly dark, creating a straightforward vibe that places your focus neatly onto the one lit part of the room: the bar, its experienced mixologist Shirakawa Kotetsu, and his shelves of expertly selected whiskies.

Kotetsu spent years honing his craft at Bar Bagus in Chiba, a prefecture outside of his hometown of Tokyo. Be sure to ask him about Old Fashioned's world-class, rare-to-Beijing whisky varieties like Gordon & MacPhail Exclusive Caol Ila 2005 scotch, a glass of which will set you back RMB 160. Distilled at the Caol Ila Distillery in 2005 and bottled in 2016, Kotetsu's bottle is one of only 296 in the entire world, all of which came from one sole cask. It's a rich and smoky single malt that goes down so perilously smooth you'll be tempted to knock back more than a few.

Then there's the cocktails, which match the decor and title of this bar. You won't find any ostentatious signatures here. In fact, there aren't any signatures at all, much to my dismay when I first glanced at the menu (being that weird and offbeat mixtures are often my favorite part of any bar's drink list). However, Kotetsu's interpretation of classic cocktails have no shortage of creative twists, yet another subtle touch at a promising bar that is full of them. *Kyle Mullin*

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鲜啤吧：朝阳区建国门外大街1号新国贸饭店1层

Located on the first floor of the so-new-the-paint-is-still-wet Hotel Jen, Beersmith Gastropub has finally opened its doors to the public, and they certainly know how to make the most of a massive space. With 250 seats, 12 massive, 100-liter copper beer tanks (each embossed with a laser-cut Chinese zodiac sign), pool tables, and big screens for sports, this is somewhere you could post up for hours, if not days (given you have a hotel room).

Those immense tanks are to thank for the 16 beers on tap, including an easy-drinking blonde ale with nutty and sweet tones (4.8 percent ABV); a full-bodied English porter with a fruity aroma (5.5 percent ABV); and an IPA with tropical and citrus notes (6.5 percent ABV), which went down the hatch particularly smooth. For a hotel bar, the prices are reasonable – a pint of beer costs RMB 48-60 and a flight of four is RMB 90 (including service charge and VAT).

“At Beersmith Gastropub, we take great care in monitoring the process every step of the way, from grain to glass, to ensure maximum enjoyment,” brewmaster Tom Ashton, who previously managed brewing at Great

Leap Brewing, explains. “My philosophy is using the best ingredients available, whether they are imported or local. We’re looking to create a beer range inspired by international styles from around the world: German kölsch, English porter, Belgian saison, New World IPA, New Zealand golden ale, as well as ciders.”

The gastro pub also offers hearty Western bar food to soak up all that beer, including classic snacks, soups, burgers, pasta, salads, and desserts. Among the highlights are the porter-marinated black pork ribs with mashed potatoes and corn (RMB 128), and the Wagyu beef burger (RMB 88) with its thick patty topped with cheese, tomato, and an aioli sauce that pops but doesn’t overwhelm. Perfect for munching while drinking, the PILS battered cod and chips (RMB 98) are certainly worth a mention, the crisp crust bearing a subtle beery flavor.

Given that Beersmith is officially CBD’s first brewpub, we expect productivity in the area to have dipped considerably come the next quarter’s results, but only time will tell if this hotel-affixed venue will attract Beijing’s beer lovers from further afield on the merits of its brew alone. *Tracy Wang*

GO

KO TAO // HANOI // BEAT THE HEAT // SWIMMING POOLS



THE BODYGUARD MUSICAL

Jul 22-30 - Back in the simpler times of the 90s pop ballads, nobody could hit, let alone hold, the lofty high notes attained by beloved diva Whitney Houston. And yet X Factor winner Alexandra Burke pays a more than moving and effective tribute to the late icon's songs in this musical rendition of the hit 1992 movie, in which Houston starred and sang. This stage version – a blockbuster since its 2012 West End debut that has gone on to have major runs around the world – features all the classic songs from the film including, of course, the unshakable "I Will Always Love You." RMB 180-1,000, 7.30-10pm. Poly Theatre (6500 1188 ext 5126/5127)

KO TAO

CATCH YOUR BREATH ON TURTLE ISLAND

By Margaux Schreurs



Thailand's Ko Tao, also known as Turtle Island, has the best of both tropical worlds: incredible beaches made to lounge on and deep blue waters perfect for snorkeling and diving. The island gets its name from the fact that it is an important breeding ground for hawksbill and green turtles, both of which you can see while out in the water.

Compared to Ko Phi Phi, Ko Tao is much calmer and a little more luxurious (i.e. there are fewer drunken backpackers), and doesn't get quite as much foot traffic as neighboring Ko Samui. However, if you're looking for a holiday far removed from any semblance of noise whatsoever, we would recommend Ko Lanta over Ko Tao.

PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

How to Get There

Fly into Ko Samui Airport or Chumphon Airport from Beijing and then catch a high-speed ferry to Ko Tao. Most people get the boat with Lomprayah, which is deemed the quickest, most reliable, and safest option. Make sure to bring headphones as the boat's TV screens play two terrible songs on loop tempting even the calmest person to start losing their mind. Tickets for the ferry need to be booked in advance as there are only three ferries per day (both inbound and outbound).

What to Do

If you don't know what to do on a tropical island, well, then perhaps you need to find another holiday destination. In all seriousness though, Ko Tao is one of the best spots in Asia to scuba dive, and also has lots of incredible snorkeling. Head over to Shark Bay to see the, thankfully, small sharks, and plenty of other sea life.

For a great sunset view, go to Mae Haad. If you're willing to walk somewhere inaccessible to motorists, hike out to John Suwan Mountain Viewpoint on the south of the island or Fraggie Rock in the north.

Where to Eat and Drink

For affordable, tasty Thai food try Su Chilli on the main road in Sairee, which is always busy. They also make good raspberry and strawberry daiquiris. If you're looking to be near the beach, head to Fizz Beach Lounge just off the main road on Sairee beach, where you can get good value Western food (they have some Thai dishes too), cocktails, and hang out on a beanbag enjoying Ko Tao's favorite pastime: fire shows.

How to Get Around

Rent a scooter for approximately THB 250 a day (in addition to a THB 3,000 deposit or give them your passport instead) to get around the island (at time of print THB 100 is equivalent to approximately RMB 20). Otherwise there are pickup trucks that serve as the main mode of transportation on the island, with prices starting at THB 400-500 per car to get anywhere (depending on the time of day and supply of trucks – bargain hard!).

A word of caution: It can be dangerous once you leave the main beaches, as many eroded dirt roads boast a 45 degree incline and thus should really only be attempted by skilled off-road motorbike riders. Lulled into a safe sense of security abroad, most people give it a go anyway, regardless of the quality of roads and blood alcohol levels, as evidenced by the amount of bandages you'll see.



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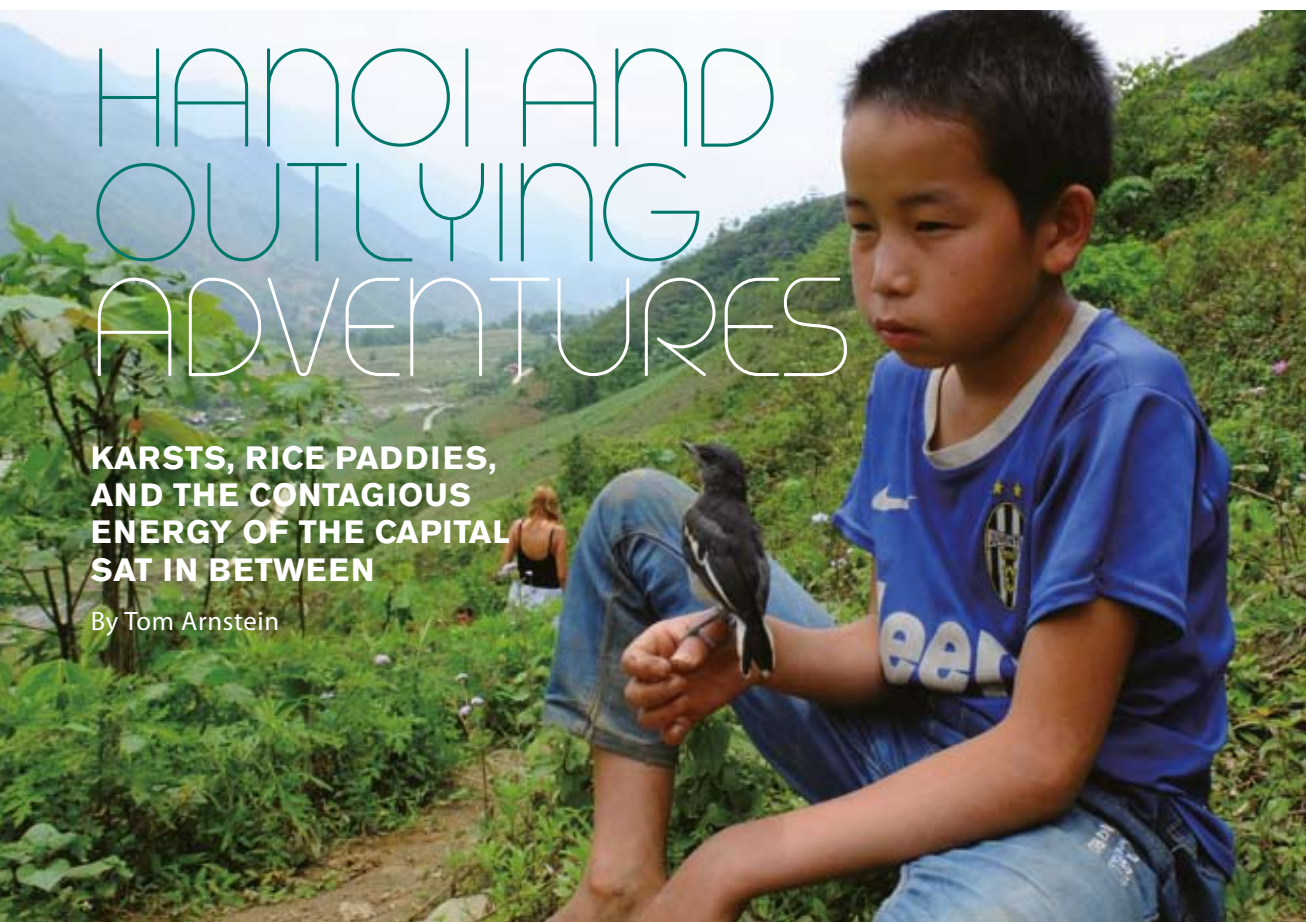
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HANOI AND OUTLYING ADVENTURES

**KARSTS, RICE PADDIES,
AND THE CONTAGIOUS
ENERGY OF THE CAPITAL
SAT IN BETWEEN**

By Tom Arnstein



Bordering China's southern provinces of Yunnan and Guangxi, Vietnam's place in Asia has not only been molded by its mammoth sister to the north, which occupied it almost continuously for over a thousand years between 111BC and 939AD, but also by modern French imperialist aspirations, and of course, the scourge and ultimate failure of the Vietnam War.

These attempts at control have etched themselves physically into the Southeast Asian country's long, inverted question mark of a border. They have also had a hand in creating a national psyche that is heavily indebted to the unwritten, interpersonal rules of Confucianism, as well as a rightful sense of pride from repeatedly fending off the world's crusaders. Coupled with an equator-bound climate, Vietnam's capital of Hanoi (flights approximately RMB 2,000) – arguably the more conservative, historical, and rough-around-the-edges rival to the business-oriented, southern city of Ho Chi Minh City – can be explored in a few days and makes for a frenetic and intoxicating destination when compared to Beijing's increasingly curtailed verve.

At the heart of Hanoi sits the jumbled Old Quarter, the frantic heart of the city's tourist trade (souvenir stands, hotels, travel companies abound) but also a heady mix of restaurants, cafés, temples, shops and markets, bringing tourists and locals together in a haze of dust and heat. Just exploring the Old Quarter and its narrow, humid alleyways lined with rickety colonial-tinged buildings will easily enthrall for a whole day, the intensity never subduing thanks to the infamous and ceaseless swaths of motorbikes battling for every inch of tarmac.

Just south, Hoan Kiem Lake allows you to catch your breath while taking in some favorite Vietnamese pastimes, a few of which will be familiar and include Vietnamese dama square dancing, *jianzi*, and leisurely lakeside gossiping and pontificating. This stretch is also home to the Thang Long Water Puppet Theater, where puppeteers, semi-submerged in water, perform centuries-old folk tales from behind the cover of a screen using animals, people, and dragons on horizontal sticks. As fun as the soggy and pyrotechnic performance is, the action is almost upstaged by the accompanying live band, and specifically,

the alien and enchanting sustained notes of the *dan bau*, a traditional single-stringed and vibrato-laden plucked instrument that substitutes as something of the aural equivalent of the Theremin of the East.

Wind your way down to Ho Chi Minh's Mausoleum via Hanoi's train track, which divides the city but not enough to stop the brave from building their houses on either side, making for a twice-daily white-knuckle wall hug as the massive locomotive chugs through. Entry into the mausoleum itself, the resting place for the much-aggrandized father of Vietnam's communist independence movement, may not entice unless you enjoy the physical embodiment of the half-wax, half-man purgatory state in which Mao has similarly found himself transfixed. Nevertheless, he attracts thick crowds of citizens wanting to show their reverence. Conversely, the adjoining grounds of Ho Chi Minh's preserved stilt house and palace are much less macabre. The former is a beautiful and envy-inducing open-air wooden structure from which Ho Chi Ming used to work, while the latter is an eyecatchingly brilliant canary yellow French colonial-style lesson in decadence, but which sadly cannot be entered.

If you want to flee the city, there are two convenient options depending on whether you're after a water or land adventure, with respectively, Halong Bay to the east and Sapa to the north.

Halong Bay

Defined by its high density of limestone karsts – topography similar to China's Yangshuo – the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Halong Bay is a two-hour bus ride from Hanoi and is almost as famous for the iconic fleets of red-sailed junk boats that wind through its peaks as it is for the stunning landscape. If you choose your cruise tactically (they're sold throughout Hanoi) it's easy to find one that avoids the crowds, and many even offer a night on an island (approximately RMB 600 all-in) rather than a boat, allowing you to unwind at your own pace and even extend your stay.

Sapa

Heading inland from Hanoi, take a night bus to the sleepy town of Sapa for an altogether different jaunt. Alighting from the bus, weary and red-eyed, minority women in colorful woven clothing are waiting to ambush travelers and promote their homestay. Once you've settled on a price (approximately RMB 200 per night, including meals and guide services) you'll start your five-hour hike

out of the dusty and chaotic center of town and up into the mountains. Leaving the sound of demolition trucks and rapid development behind in the valley, the hills open up to unveil a rich tapestry of fields, either intricately layered for rice terraces or divided in neat plots for cultivation of tea and corn, providing locals with their other dominant form of income. The homestays themselves vary depending on how much money has been put aside to renovate, and let's just say that I was conflicted upon hearing that my host's house was so modern because the last one was washed away.

During your stay, you'll be treated to simple but wholesome home cooked meals to fuel the hours of hiking you'll accomplish each day, traversing the nearby fields and rivers. The eternally snotty-nosed and pants-less children are also an unending source of entertainment, digging through the watery fields for tadpoles, climbing trees, or in some cases even tending to their adopted pet owls. What's also striking is the villagers' general English proficiency, having quickly picked up tourism's tongue through daily interactions. This ease of communication, when coupled with the secluded nature of Sapa, adds another layer of depth to the experience given that the women who sit at the helm of this largely a matriarchal society are happy to chat about their daily lives with curious guests.

Granted, Vietnam is significantly more tourist-oriented than China is ever likely to be, which comes with its downsides (ceaseless haggling and undertones of aggression at times being but two) but the sheer vibrancy of life and varied sights (and let's not forget the food) make it an invigorating sojourn down south, as well as the closest thing China has to a little, feisty sister.





BEAT THE HEAT

ESSENTIALS TO SURVIVE BEIJING SUMMER

By Tracy Wang

Summers in Beijing aren't easy to deal with thanks to the burning sunshine, steamy-hot temperatures, and that constant fear of getting stuck in a non air-conditioned taxi on the Third Ring Road. Here are some of the essentials that will make this long season feel slightly more bearable.



Sunscreen

I'm infuriated by anyone who claims "it's smoggy, there's no need to put sunblock on." Don't be stupid, kids. Apply sunscreen regularly whenever you plan to spend time outdoors and choose a waterproof product if you are going swimming.

Where to buy: Watsons, Mannings, and 7-Eleven
RMB 60-plus

Banana Boat After Sun Gel

Cooling aloe vera gel is perfect if you've caught a little bit of

sun while on holiday, and you forgot to slather yourself in that sunscreen we just mentioned. Suitable for all skin types.
Where to buy: shop34050438.taobao.com
RMB 48



Ice Packs

Ice packs are the solution to chilled drinks at your next picnic or rooftop party. We prefer the type where you add water to the plastic bag, which, thanks to the magical powder inside, will become jelly-like to prevent leaking, and then can be put in the freezer to set to solid ice. They should last anywhere from 10 to 24 hours, after which you can simply pop them back in the freezer.

Where to buy: lanzoniab.tmall.com

RMB 30 for 10 packs



Facekini

Want to blend in with the *dama* on your China beach debut? A facekini can protect you from everything from ruthless UV to dirt and pesky jellyfish. You can find facekinis in every pattern under the sun, including Peking opera masks, reggae prints, comic book heroes, and cats and dogs, making them the perfect choice for those who want to express themselves visually while staying a pristine pasty underneath.

Where to buy: liangqishuishangyd.tmall.com

RMB 9.9-45

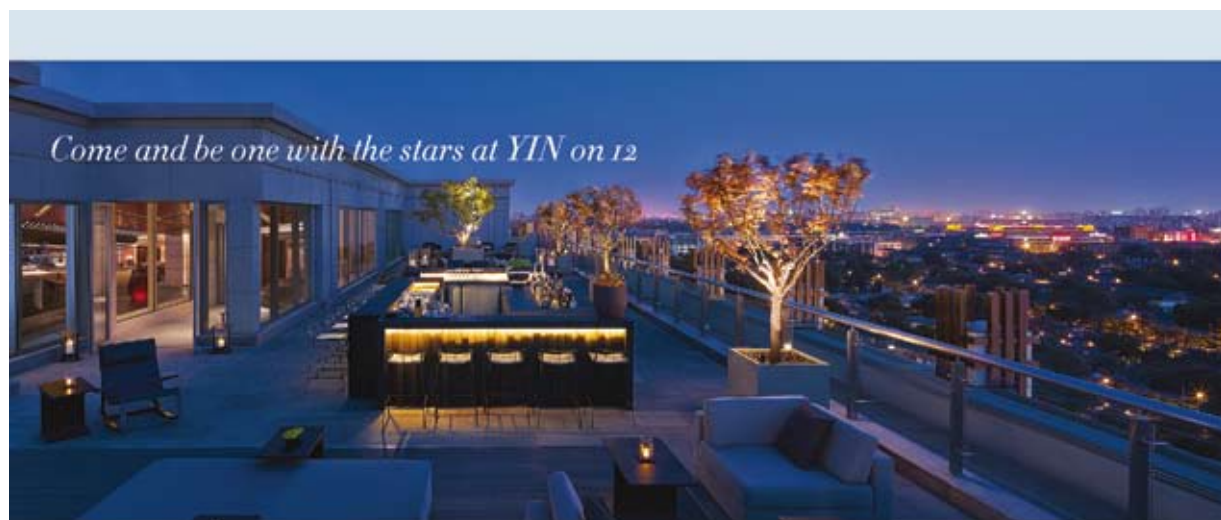


Ice Cold Beer

Beer was made for summer and it is so, so accessible. A big, cheap, green bottle of Yanjing or Tsingtao from your local hole-in-the-wall, an imported bottle, or a locally-brewed pint from Great Leap, Arrow Factory, Jing-A, Slow Boat, or NBeer ... you name it, you can find it in Beijing.

Where to buy: Everywhere

RMB 5-plus (depends on how thirsty you are)



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MAKE A SPLASH THIS SUMMER

BEIJING'S BEST SWIMMING POOLS TO SALVAGE YOU FROM THE HEAT

By Tracy Wang

The most obvious way to deal with the inevitably steamy, hot Beijing summer is to jump into the water, make a splash, and cool down. Here are a few of *the Beijinger's* favorite places to go for a dip, including something new, something old, something fun, and – of course – something blue.



HAPPY MAGIC WATERCUBE PARK

Happy Magic Watercube Park

Best for: Exploring thrilling slides

The former site of the 2008 Olympic water sport competitions, the Water Cube has since been transformed into a water playground. There's a wave pool, slides of varying intensities, and never-ending splash-tertainment. The water is cleaned on a daily basis.

Daily 10am–7pm. RMB 260 (adults), RMB 220 (kids between 1.2m and 1.5m), Free (kids below 1.2m). 11 Tianchen Donglu (in the Olympic Park, near the Bird's Nest), Chaoyang District (8437 8966)

水立方嬉水乐园：朝阳区北四环中路奥林匹克公园内（近鸟巢）

Dongdan Swimming Pool

Best for: Being *the Beijinger's* all-around favorite

This indoor 50m x 25m swimming pool has great facilities and is well-managed. It gets busy in the mornings, but evenings tend to be peaceful. Water here is on a filtration system, and the pool is one of the better Beijing public pools.

Tue–Fri 10am–9pm. RMB 50, RMB 30 (students), RMB 20 (kids).

A2 Dahua Lu, Dongcheng District (6523 1241)

东单游泳馆：东城区东单大华路甲2号

Sino-Japanese Friendship Center (21st Century Theater)

Best for: Swimming laps

An Olympic-sized swimming pool popular with serious swimmers, the water here is filtered using a mild salt solution, eliminating chlorine irritation and its distinct smell. This pool can be chilly, so be sure to warm-up first. Bathing caps are mandatory for all swimmers.

Mon–Sun 9am–9.30pm. RMB 98, RMB 66 (kids) for a single use, discount for multi-swim purchases. 40 Liangmaqiao Lu, Chaoyang District (6466 4805)

中日友好交流大会：朝阳区亮马桥路40号

Tuanjiehu Water Park

Best for: Pool-side lounging and daytime drinking

Tuanjiahu Water Park is more centrally located than many other water parks in the city and although its not that



big it boasts both a beach and wave pool. You can lay back, have a drink, enjoy a picnic, play on the slides, and even try and get a tan, all in one place. There are also paddle boats and other entertainment options such as rollerskating. The water facilities are hooked up to a 24-hour filtering device.

Daily 10.30am-8.30pm. RMB 60 (weekdays), RMB 80 (weekends). 16 Tuanjiehu Nanli, East Third Ring Road, Chaoyang District (8597 4677)

团结湖水乐园：朝阳区团结湖南里16号东三环路

Chenjinglun Middle School

Best for: Best CBD value

This pool belongs to Chenjinglun Middle School opposite Parkview Green. Regardless of the fact that it was actually built 20 years ago, this 1.4-1.6 meter deep indoor pool is clean, and attracts lots of crowds from nearby. Many locals and their children learnt to swim here.

Daily 10am-9pm. RMB 50. 38 Chaoyai Dajie, Chaoyang District (5703 7535)

陈经纶中学：朝阳区朝外大街38号

Trainyard

Best for: Serious swim training

Rich kids can try the latest addition to the CBD pool scene: This heated indoor swimming pool on the fifth floor of Hotel Jen Beijing. The pool is 25m x 10m with five lanes and a skylight to let in plenty of natural light. The only downside is that you'll need to become a member of the 24/7 gym to use the pool, which isn't cheap.

Daily 6am-11pm. One-time free trial, one-time one month trial at RMB 999, subsequently 12-month membership at RMB 17,500. 5/F, Hotel Jen Beijing, 1 Jianguomen Waidajie,

Chaoyang District (6505 2277)

新国贸饭店：朝阳区建国门外大街1号

Palm Springs

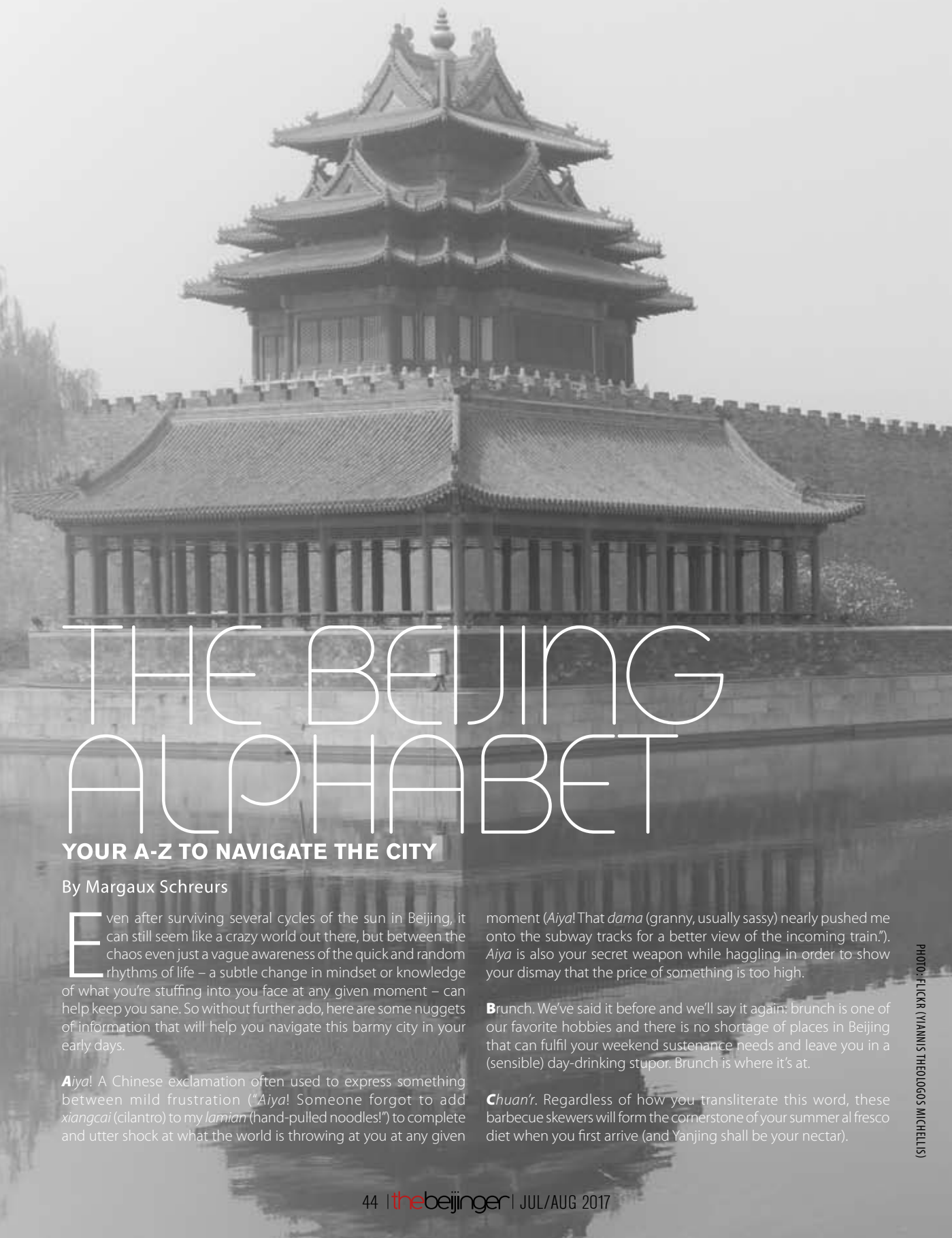
Best for: Hanging out by the pool with friends

Located south of Chaoyang Park, the Palm Springs International Apartment complex has two indoor swimming pools: a large 45m x 20m pool with a maximum depth of 1.8 meters and a smaller heated, round pool. Beach chairs line the main window and the ceiling is painted to look like sky and trick your brain into thinking you're outside. After hanging by the pool, head over to Napa down the road for healthy salads and sandwiches.

Daily 7.30am-9pm. RMB 5,188 for the season. Palm Springs International Apartment, 8 Chaoyang Gongyuannan Lu, Chaoyang District (6539 8888)

棕榈泉国际公寓园区：朝阳区朝阳公园南路8号





THE BEIJING ALPHABET

YOUR A-Z TO NAVIGATE THE CITY

By Margaux Schreurs

Even after surviving several cycles of the sun in Beijing, it can still seem like a crazy world out there, but between the chaos even just a vague awareness of the quick and random rhythms of life – a subtle change in mindset or knowledge of what you're stuffing into you face at any given moment – can help keep you sane. So without further ado, here are some nuggets of information that will help you navigate this barmy city in your early days.

Aiya! A Chinese exclamation often used to express something between mild frustration ("Aiya! Someone forgot to add *xiangcai* (cilantro) to my *lamian* (hand-pulled noodles!) to complete and utter shock at what the world is throwing at you at any given

moment (*Aiya!* That *dama* (granny, usually sassy) nearly pushed me onto the subway tracks for a better view of the incoming train."). *Aiya* is also your secret weapon while haggling in order to show your dismay that the price of something is too high.

Brunch. We've said it before and we'll say it again: brunch is one of our favorite hobbies and there is no shortage of places in Beijing that can fulfil your weekend sustenance needs and leave you in a (sensible) day-drinking stupor. Brunch is where it's at.

Chuan'r. Regardless of how you transliterate this word, these barbecue skewers will form the cornerstone of your summer al fresco diet when you first arrive (and Yanjing shall be your nectar).

Didi Chuxing. The city's top car-hailing app will take you from point A to point B easily. With an English version recently having been made available, the service is now easily accessible even if your Mandarin isn't up to the task.

E-Bikes. They're fast, and often you can't hear them buzzing behind you. If you're looking for a quick and breezy way to get around the city you might want to consider buying one, just make sure you're careful because cars will try to mow you down at every opportunity they get.

Fu'er dai. *Fu'er dai* are the "rich second generation," a term used to describe the kids of wealthy families, generally born post-1980, often found either racing shiny pink Porsche's around the city, or flaunting their Louis Vuitton bags at an Ivy League university.

Great Wall. One of the first things people think of when they think of Beijing, the Great Wall makes for a wonderful weekend escape. If you've been to Badaling or Mutianyu before, there's always other parts to explore like Huanghuacheng or Simatai. Spring and autumn are the best times of the year to visit, as summer tends to get very hot and sweaty, and winter gets very windy and cold.

Hutong. De rigueur stomping ground for Beijing's hippest denizens, the hutongs are a network of ancient alleys connecting Beijing brimming with a mish mash of traditional (lots of old Beijingers still live there) and modern China (hip restaurants and bars fill the alleys). If you're looking to learn more about the hutongs then the Shijia Hutong Museum is good a place to start.

Internet. It's slow, kind of unreliable, and you've got to deal with the Great Firewall. That's all we're going to say on this topic.

Jianbing. A favorite Beijing breakfast (and proven hangover cure), the beloved *jianbing* is a cheap and fast food often found by the side of the road from a hero among men with a food cart. They're usually located by popular subway stations or on roads near lots of office buildings.

Kaoya. *Kaoya*, or Peking Duck, is the food Beijing is best known for. The dish has been eaten since imperial times and was mentioned in record as early as 1330. Characterized by its thin, crispy skin, most authentic versions of Peking duck are sliced up in front of you, wrapped in pancakes with spring onions, and doused with hoisin sauce. The innards and bones of the duck are then boiled and cooked into a soup.

Laowai. The Chinese slang term for foreigners, which you will often hear after you are spotted by a particularly perceptive local. The phrase is contentious as some people consider it derogatory when used in a certain way, and it literally means 'outside old.'

Maidan. Literally 'to buy the list,' *maidan* is what you say if you want to ask for the bill in a restaurant or bar. This phrase is vital if you ever want to leave a restaurant, especially a busy one. If that fails, standing up to pretend to walk out also works wonders.

No. Something you will rarely have a Beijinger say to you, at the risk of them losing face. This is really important to understand, especially if you are asking directions, as some people would prefer to send you the wrong way rather than to admit that they do not know. It's a cultural thing.

Ofo. One of the many bike-sharing apps that are currently taking the city by storm. Ofo bikes are the yellow bikes, competing with Mobike, the silver and orange bikes, and the blue Bluegogo bikes.

Pollution. The thing that leads to most expats considering a move and the biggest hurdle to living a happy and healthy life in Beijing. Clearing up the dirty air is one of the best ways that we could see the city being improved. Regardless of many promises, the clean air at the end of the tunnel seems far away, for now.

Qipao. The *qipao* is a tight-fitting Chinese dress worn by women, still often seen at fancy occasions such as weddings. The dress originates from 1920s Shanghai, where it was first made fashionable by socialites and upper class women.

Reshui. Literally meaning 'hot water,' you'll quickly learn that Chinese people tend to never drink their water (or any drinks, for that matter) cold but rather prefer drinking warm or even boiling water because this is believed to be better for your health(y). In restaurants it's common for people to confirm whether you want hot water (*reshui*) or cold water (*liangshui*).

Shifu. It is easiest to get around Beijing by subway if you're new to the city and don't speak Chinese, because of these dudes: the *shifu*, literally translatable as masters, a term used to describe Beijing taxi drivers. The vast majority of them are grumpy and unwilling to do their job, leading many people to use car-sharing apps like Didi Chuxing (see D) instead.

TRB Hutong. Multiple the Beijinger Restaurant Award-winning restaurant TRB, or Temple Restaurant Beijing, is one of the nicest spots in town, boasting impeccable service, delicious food, and beautiful surroundings. A second branch, TRB Forbidden City, looks out over the east gate of the Palace Museum.

Umami. Umami, or savory taste, is one of the five basic tastes and is tasted through taste receptors specific to glutamate (as in monosodium glutamate or MSG), widely found in savory products. MSG is found in a lot of Beijing restaurants, but there isn't much evidence to say it is as bad as people make it out to be. If you don't want it in your food, all you have to say is "*bie fang wei jing*" 别放味精.

VPN. This nifty little IP re-router is something you'll have to get on your computer or phone to get around the Great Firewall. Without it, you won't be able to access things like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Gmail, and even Google while in China.

Xishoujian. *Xishoujian*, or literally hand washing room, is the easiest way to ask for the bathroom when you're out and about. Another way to ask for it is *cesuo*, which is more translatable as bathroom.

Yiyuan. A really important word, meaning hospital, of which there are lots of different types in Beijing, both international and local, ranging drastically in price. Beijing United Family, Oasis International Hospital, International SOS Clinic, and Raffles Medical are some of the go-to international ones for the (well-)insured.

Zhajiangmian. These noodles are a Beijing staple, laden with fatty pork, sweet bean paste, cucumbers, and shredded radish. The noodles are served up cold; just don't forget to mix everything together before you dig in.



HUTONG LIVING

MODERN DAY LIFE IN AN OLD SCHOOL COURTYARD

By Jeremiah Jenne

"You realize the romanticism of courtyard living wore off for me in the first 14 years of my life? Also, the pipes in the bathroom are frozen again."

Such was courtyard living circa 2008. My wife and I lived in a *pingfang*, a courtyard within a courtyard set out of sight – although not out of earshot – of 32 households of neighbors surrounding us. It was a communal experience not unlike Burning Man or one of your nicer labor camps, except that we were paying RMB 4,500 a month for the privilege. A bargain in these days of avaricious landlords and runaway rents. We almost forgot that the bathroom was a short walk outside of our house.

It was an eventful few years. During our time in the courtyard we gained two cats and lost a hamster (sadly, these events were related). We also adopted a turtle.

The turtle was nearly a victim of our lackadaisical approach to courtyard maintenance when we came back from a long weekend only to find our heater had stopped sometime the night before, or at least that's what we estimated from the thickness of the ice in the turtle's bowl. Fortunately, we were able to thaw him out with a hair dryer and he was no worse for the experience. Strong stuff, these hutong wee turtles.

Living in the hutong was also a great way to improve the ability to engage in multilingual small talk. I learned this the first time I came home from work and the first

neighbor I encountered looked at me and exclaimed, "You've come home!"

I wasn't sure how to respond. "Yes?" "I'm here?" "Is this an existential question?"

No, it was just the local art of making conversation: Observe what somebody is doing and then ask them if they are doing it. The response is, of course, to confirm the observation. Easy peasy.

"Making dinner?"

"Making dinner."

"Bought groceries?"

"Bought groceries."

"Sitting on the stoop plotting bloody revenge against the neighbor shuffling your wife?"

"Sitting on the stoop. Plotting revenge against said neighbor."

I thought this would be a cool way to embed with the local culture. My wife disagreed. Or as she put it, tongue ever so slightly in cheek, "This would be like moving back to your hometown in New Hampshire and, because I wanted to get in better touch with you people, insisted we live in a trailer park for two years."

I accused her of being elitist, and to be fair she was kidding (sort of), but she did also have a point. She grew up in a large mixed yard in nearby Tianjin. For her, as for many of her generation, the courtyard was something to escape, to rise above.

Dolce and Gabbana recently ran afoul of Chinese social media when they scheduled a photo shoot depicting models posing in the hutongs. Detractors complained that the setting reinforced overseas impressions of China as being backwards and undeveloped. Why not in front of the National Center for the Performing Arts? Why not in front of the Parkview Green Mall? Where is modern Beijing?

Ultimately the desire of international residents to live in the hutongs suggests less a rejection of China's modernity than a different understanding of what it means for a city to be modern. In this alternative vision, modernity is not about malls with parking lots full of cars but neighborhoods which still function as living communities while preserving and respecting the past and Beijing's distinctive local culture.

Living in the courtyard can be a trip to the past, but maybe, just maybe, it can also be a glimpse into a possible future.

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Introducing the people who matter

MEET

SHAO QING AND SUSAN WANG // WILL YORKE // LIAM GALLAGHER // NYONYA KITCHEN



ELYSIA CRAMPTON

AUG 10 - Few artists have explored as varied an array of terrains as Elysia Crampton. From queer identity and South American spirituality, to the intersection between Latin, metal, the blues, and electronica, this burgeoning musician is giving voice to many a unique niche through her songs. Crampton's performance will be part of Split Works' Woozy Offline party, alongside several other still to be confirmed DJs. Price TBD. 10pm. Dada

PHOTO: JULIA GROSSI



SHAO QIANG AND SUSAN WANG

YUE SPACE MASTERMINDS SHARE THEIR ECLECTIC PLAYLIST

By Kyle Mullin

Although numerous Beijing livehouses have struggled – and all too frequently failed – to stay open in recent years, Yue Space has made a noble effort to fill the void for avant-garde musicians, folky singer-songwriters, and everything in between. The Beixinqiao-adjacent venue also boasts a strong collection of vinyl and cassettes. Then there's the bar, managed by the team behind Fang and El Nido, meaning you can expect great cocktails and a quality beer selection.

Below, Shao Qiang, Yue Space's manager, and Susan Wang, who handles the venue's English media relations, detail the playlist that soundtracks their adventures in Beijing's unstoppable music scene.

What song soothes you through a hangover after a night of booze and live music?

Susan Wang (SW): Actually, I don't think any music can help me recover from that [laughs]. But if I really had to choose then it would be Radiohead's *OK Computer*, especially the song "No Surprises." It might help to heal me while I'm in my dark apartment, even though it's probably already light outside.

Shao Qiang (SQ): The last time I got really hungover was after going to Yah Lab, near Yue Space. I listened to Otomo Yoshihide's experimental noise music the next day to help me feel better, but it just made me feel even more intoxicated.

What is one of the best songs you've heard performed at Yue Space?

SQ: Liu Donghong recently played here. He's so poetic, like the Leonard Cohen of China, and his song "Everyone," really touched me.

What new LP's at Yue Space are your favorite?


SW: I love The xx's *I See You*. I wasn't into this album at first, until I heard the song "I Dare You." It has really universal lyrics that helped me realize that we are all the same.

Susan, you spend a lot of time in both Beijing and Guangzhou. What songs best represent each city?

SW: Guangzhou is more relaxed than Beijing. People there are used to taking a nap after lunch, so I think dub and reggae music feel so right there.

I've been listening to a band called 3Step (三踩脚) recently. They blend dub and reggae into Yunnan traditional music. I like their song "Zhujiang Beer," named after a local Guangzhou beer, even though I don't like drinking it because it tastes awful.

I'd choose "Se de xin" (色的心) from Birdstriking to be my Beijing song. I really like one lyric in particular: "You were born on the yellow land but they give you a red heart . . . Mom you said my heart should be blood red." It's very powerful – about a young generation singing loud and wanting to change the world.



While many of us thankfully can't recall our worst nights out, Will Yorke remembers one such awful occasion all too vividly. In fact it was the first time ever that the would-be restaurateur behind such Beijing mainstays as Vineyard Café, Stuff'd, and Arrow Factory Brewing got sloshed back in his native Britain, an incident that still haunts him to this day.

A DRINK WITH WILL YORKE

**VINEYARD CAFÉ AND ARROW FACTORY RESTAURATEUR
REVEALS HIS BOOZY ESCAPADES**

By Kyle Mullin

"I remember the first time I got drunk very, very vividly," he says of the first time he tried to buy alcohol while hanging out at a sailing club near his home on the south coast of England, where his mother would drop him off as a 14 year old to get him out of the house. "They'd have these parties on the 'beach,' which was more like an estuary or mudflat. You'd hang around the shop, wait until an adult came by, and ask them to buy you some booze."

Rather than doing the somewhat responsible thing of asking for a six pack of beer, or another somewhat manageable option for a first timer, Yorke instead went all in with a bottle of hefty vermouth. "I didn't know anything about it. I thought 'I've heard of this drink called martini.' Probably from James Bond. And I saw this green bottle and I thought I'd order that, and be smooth like 007. I drank the entire bottle. And then vomited vermouth for about two days."

He has certainly come a long way since then – becoming a wine connoisseur and much admired cook and restaurateur. He opened Vineyard Café over a decade ago, only to see it become a groundbreaking homestyle Western restaurant on Wudaoying Hutong.

He went on to sling craft sausages at Stuff'd and make Arrow craft beer with his pal and fellow brewer Thomas Gaestadius, parlaying that into a beloved Liangma River brewery. And though he's been driven to drink by many challenges over the years – not least of which was the sudden closure of his original Vineyard Café in April as part of the rampant restructuring of the hutongs – he also has plenty of reasons to raise a glass in celebration, including the opening of his new Chaowai Soho Vineyard Café takeout kitchen. Below, the seasoned F&B vet tells us more about his boozy escapades that led him to where he is today.

What are some of your favorite food and booze pairings?

There's this fantastic Spanish wine called Albarino. It's from the North Atlantic Coast, which means the air blowing in gives the wine a salty quality that goes really well with seafood, especially shellfish.

Do you have a go-to drink to help you unwind at home after a long day at work?

Well there's two kinds of "getting home" times for me. There's when I've already been to the brewery, already drunk, getting home and having one more, which is normally like a nail in the coffin. But let's not talk about that one.

Then there's me patiently waiting for the clock to strike 6pm, because that's the rule of course, and that when I like to grab a lovely chilled, Arrow Factory bottled Guanxi Pale ale, which is in shops now *[chuckles ruefully]*. It's crisp, refreshing, and comes with a nice label. Joking and shameless plugging aside, it is the perfect beer for a relaxed summer evening or a day of barbecuing.

So, beer is usually your go-to booze?

Well I always start with a beer. What happens after that is anyone's guess. But a beer takes the sand out of the throat after a long desert journey. Which is really what it is sometimes like in Beijing when you travel by bike.

And if I had to pick something I actually don't make *[laughs again]*, I'll take whatever's in lager form in April Gourmet, below RMB 8. Which is not Heineken or Carlsberg, because they're undrinkable.

What's a better alternative?

I'm quite partial to Warsteiner, the German pilsner. I think they sell it cheaper at April Gourmet to get rid of it, and I successfully drank them out of Warsteiner. It only took me about two years.

And what if there's not a drop of beer in sight? A gin and tonic is always a good idea. One of the great things about China is that gin made in London is actually cheaper here than if you buy it there. It's RMB 80 per bottle or something here, whereas in London it costs you about RMB 150.

Any varieties in particular?

Beefeater can do the job. I want a nice dry gin, without anything too fancy. Yesterday I had a Bombay Sapphire with tonic and I have to say, I don't like it. It's too botanical. Same goes for a martini. Again, never Bombay; it's like someone sprayed perfume in your martini. What you want is a good dry, crisp gin. So for me it's Beefeater. Purists will say "eww," but it works for me.

Lastly, we began this interview talking about your disastrous early bingeing on vermouth. I'm wondering if you got into any trouble for that.

No, not really. It wasn't long after that that my mom taught me how to fake my birth certificate so I could go in pubs. She'd give me correction fluid, tell me to write in a different year on my birth certificate, and then photocopy that and bring it in with me. So, really, in terms of behaving myself, I never had a chance.

MUSIC Q&A


LIAM GOES IT ALONE

**THE YOUNGER OF THE NOTORIOUS
GALLAGHER BROTHERS
ADDRESSES THE PRESSURES
OF RELEASING DEBUT SOLO LP**

By Kyle Mullin



PHOTO COURTESY OF YONGLE



When asked about his upcoming solo album earlier this year, Liam Gallagher made headlines – as the controversial former Oasis front man is wont to do – with a profane statement. He told the British publication *Metro* that if the LP (tentatively titled *As You Were* and likely to be released sometime before year's end) isn't successful he'll "probably f*ck off forever," leaving many Oasis fans antsy about the high-stakes release.

However, the 44-year-old Britpop icon says any speculation about retirement is premature. In a short interview with *the Beijinger* ahead of his China tour (which will see him stop at the National Olympic Sports Center Gymnasium on August 10) Gallagher explains: "I was joking when I said that. I'm never going to f*ck off, you're stuck with me forever."

That will likely reassure fans, who have followed Liam closely since he and his brother Noel shot to superstardom with their band, Oasis' 1995 sophomore album (*What's the Story*) *Morning Glory?* After all, it became the UK's fourth highest selling LP and spawned landmark singles like "Champagne Supernova," "Don't Look Back in Anger," and, of course, "Wonderwall."

However, Gallagher detractors – of which the abrasive brothers have more than a few – are likely just as eager to see Liam fall short of the now defunct Oasis' mid-90s glory with his upcoming solo LP.

Yes, whether it's egging Noel on by slipping curse words into Oasis' lyrics during concerts, getting into actual fist fights with his brother, or being banned from an airline for smoking on the plane and throwing his belongs at other passengers, Liam has gained quite a bit of notoriety in the years following Oasis' international breakthrough. But Liam insists such infamy doesn't bother him, explaining: "It's none of my business what people think about me; I know who I am and that's all that matters, not what I'm labeled as."

One would think the pressure to live up to past triumphs, and prove the naysayers wrong, would also be compounded by Noel's post-Oasis band, High Flying Birds, which has garnered solid reviews from critics and enthusiastic responses from fans (he announced a new LP of his own in May, saying it would arrive in November). Noel has taken time out from forging his own solo career to trade barbs with his brother in the press over the years but Liam says that hasn't led to extreme sibling rivalry, at least not in a professional sense.

"I don't feel pressured into making music," Liam says of the turmoil, bad press, and high expectations that he has seemingly set for himself between Oasis' dissolution and his upcoming solo debut. On the contrary, he says: "It's only rock 'n' roll, not heart surgery."

His confidence might stem from rumblings about some of the new album's songs. He's sung a few of them on recent solo tours and at a May 30 benefit concert for victims of the terrorist attack at a Ariana Grande concert in his hometown of Manchester.

Equally intriguing: in 2015 he headed to the Irish town of Charlestown and strummed one of those tunes acoustically for tavern patrons, which lead to positive buzz in the press. Liam says he wouldn't describe the occasion as a gig, but instead a fun little sideshow on his way to "visit my mother, who has a house there as it's where she grew up. Me, my brother Paul, and my eldest son went to the pub to watch the football and had a couple of drinks and spontaneously sang a song with some local musicians."

In a way it seems like Liam left his heart in that tiny pub, because he talks about his album with the confidence of a barstool bard, holding court in front of a few dozen everymen rather than a much-maligned celebrity with plenty to prove. "I'm proud of every single song on the album," he tells us with blunt nonchalance, adding: "I'd describe it as honest, heartfelt, and pure rock 'n' roll."



LEE PING PING AND KIM LOH

**NYONYA KITCHEN FOUNDERS TALK SURVIVING
BEIJING'S TUMULTUOUS F&B SCENE**

By Kyle Mullin

Given the number of bricked-up businesses and crackdowns on long-running favorites, simply running a restaurant seems like no small feat in Beijing these days, let alone enduring the capital's endless changes over decades. Yet Lee Ping Ping and Kim Loh have done just that, and more.

Today the couple – who hail from Kuala Lumpur and recently opened a new branch of their Malaysian-style Nyonya Kitchen in the new China World Mall – look back in near awe at all the tumult they've witnessed after 25 years in Beijing's restaurant scene.

"The biggest change of all is the purchasing power of the local Chinese," says Kim, who watched throngs of curious *lao* Beijing line up to buy takeaway roast chicken from their small outlets in the early 1990s, only to see those customers become worldly patrons perusing Nyonya's current menu at China World Mall. He adds: "I'm so happy that the average standard of living is going up, but these spenders are now also much more demanding."

He draws out the *a's* in demanding for emphasis, as a playful grin crosses his rotund, jolly face. The more reserved Lee adjusts her glasses but nods in agreement, saying that she and her husband have long been up to that challenge, because they strived to establish strong customer service at Nyonya's original location in Lido when it first opened in 2000.

At the time, it was a humble courtyard restaurant that prepared homey Malaysian *nyonya baba*-style dishes for Beijing's then fledgling Southeast Asian community, along with numerous foreigners and some curious domestic Chinese patrons.

Nyonya's cozy initial setup couldn't have been further removed from the circumstances that brought Kim and Lee to Beijing in the first place. Before going on to start their own successful small business, they both worked as accountants. Kim's company sent him and his family to China to help with major investments in 1991, including the opening of a Shakey's Pizza chain branch near Wangfujing. Just as that project was reaching completion, the entire venture was shut down as a result of Oriental Plaza's acquisition of the space. Kim recalls: "We came, spent almost two years building this three-story restaurant from scratch, and then they told us: 'The land on which you stand has been taken over by another group.'"

His superiors then asked Kim and his family to come

back to Malaysia and begin another assignment. But he declined, because he and Lee "were seeing the way China was developing, and it was so interesting." So he quickly snagged another accounting job here. Yet he didn't feel finished with the restaurant game, either. Despite the failure of the Shakey's Pizza branch, in their spare time he and Lee opened their own takeout roast chicken business on then Huanjie, which is now Dongsì Shitiao.

Kim recalls that, since most Beijingers had so little living space at the time, picking up a roast chicken to reheat at home was a convenient and novel. Lee smiles while remembering how "during festivals the queue would go right around the corner." At the business' peak, they had 20 such small outlets opened across town.

However, in 2002, China began opening up more quickly, leading to new Walmarts and Carrefours that sold roast chicken and much more, quickly rendering Lee and Kim's literal mom-and-pop shops obsolete. The couple had more sustained success after turning their roast chicken outlet in Lido into a sit-down Malaysian restaurant, the first proper Nyonya Kitchen.

After that Lido Nyonya restaurant took off, the couple opened another branch in the basement of the China World Mall, which became an even bigger hit thanks to the throngs of CBD office workers hankering after something different for lunch.

While the couple spent 2006-2010 in Australia's Melbourne for their children's education, they decided to return to Beijing after their young ones graduated in order to get back to running Nyonya Kitchen. And though the subsequent opening of their Taiyanggong branch only lasted a few years before they pulled the plug (Kim says the market there wasn't yet developed enough), the recent move from the basement of the old China World to the fifth floor of that glitzy new mall is a sign of Nyonya's staying power. That latest branch proved even more of a family affair than its predecessors, thanks to their son Christopher's involvement in the choosing and making of the modern décor.

Lee says they were happy to return to Beijing and try their luck in both Taiyanggong and the China World Mall, but not for the reasons one might expect. "Australia was pretty quiet for us, compared to here," she says, adding: "We didn't miss the restaurant, I think we missed Beijing, because the city is so vibrant."

HOME IS THE HUNTER

By Andrew Killeen

Our suspicions are first aroused when we are ushered into the elevator.

"But Mr. Yan," we protest, "I thought the apartment was on the first floor."

"No, it's on the 20th floor," he explains, "but 20 is an unlucky number here."

"Is it?" we ask. "We thought that was four."

"Oh yes, four as well," he says. "In fact most of the numbers from two to 19 are unlucky in one way or another."

A glance at the buttons on the elevator confirms that all the floors except the eighth are labeled "1."

"Isn't that confusing?"

"Oh, yes, very," he assures us with a smile. "But better to be confused than unlucky, wouldn't you agree?"

We emerge onto a landing, and look through a dingy window onto endless anonymous apartment blocks.

"Your advertisement said it was near CBD and Sanlitun," we say.

"So it is," Mr. Yan points out of the window. "That's the CBD right there; the Central Baozi District. More steamed buns per mile than any other part of Beijing."

"And Sanlitun?"

"That's the name of my dog. He's chained up outside."

"And you said it was handy for the subway – wait a minute. That's Subway, isn't it?"

"Now you're getting the idea," Mr. Yan slaps us on the shoulder. "Don't you just love their Meatball Marinara?"

He pushes open a steel door, and enters the apartment. We try to enter behind him.

"One-hundred and fifty square meters, you said?"

"That's right. We keep them in a cupboard over there. They're two dimensional, you see, so it's more convenient to stack them up, rather than have them spread all over the floor. And over here is the washing machine ..."

"That's a sink."

"And the bed."

"That's an ironing board."

"I like you, you're observant," Mr Yan smiles. "Now, sign here. Nothing important, just a formality."

"Is that the inventory?" we ask.

Mr. Yan hurriedly conceals the document behind his back, but after an undignified struggle, we manage to wrestle it from his grip.

"I don't recall seeing the Fabergé eggs you've listed here. Are they in the cupboard too?"

We open a door, then quickly close it again.

"There appears to be a family of migrant workers living under the sink."

"Oh yes, don't mind them," Mr. Yan says. "They're very quiet. Really nice people."

"Mr. Yan," we ask, "do you have any idea why Beijing landlords have such a terrible reputation?"

"I don't know," Mr. Yan says sadly. "After all, as the Great Helmsman said, 'the generosity and excellent accommodation of the landlord class have made them beloved throughout society.'"

"That's not the quote as we remember it," we tell him, but Mr. Yan is unconcerned.

"Sometimes," he says, "even timeless wisdom needs to be brought up to date."

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* All illustrations are indicative only.