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CITY SCENE

What’s Happening: The most important dates this month
Stat: China is estimated to be home to 329 million retirees by 2050
China Buzz: Three little known WeChat functions
Best of the Blog: The most popular stories from theBeijinger.com
Scene & Heard: Take a look at yourselves, you beautiful people

COVER FEATURE

This issue we interviewed four of Beijing's original foreigners and listened to what these old China hands had to say about Beijing then and Beijing now

FOOD & DRINK

What’s New Restaurants: Pachakutiq, Sun Japanese Cuisine, Saigon Mama, Qimianting, Ying Chinese and Ying Japanese, Steamrhino
Prov Gov: Inner Mongolia Provincial Government Restaurant
Just Desserts: Maoxishi Dessert Shop
Wikipedia: T
Advertorial: East introduces their new chef Tim Hunt
P.S. We Ate You
Feature: Hot drinks recipes
What’s New Bars & Clubs: Mao Mao Chong, Vesuvio, High Town, Mokihi No. 3

GO

Feature: Beijing's best hot springs
Feature: Beijing's newest fitness studios
Feature: Temple fairs

MEET

Advertorial: Imprint Tattoo
A Chat With: Zhuang Yating
Mastermind: Gianluigi Perrone
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Maovember Review: Maovember raises 1.4 million mao
Playlist: Krish Raghav

REAR VIEW

Memories of old Beijing in 2018

NEXT ISSUE:
BYE WINTER!
BEIJING SPRING EXPLORATION

DAILY UPDATES, EVENTS, AND CLASSIFIEDS ON THEBEIJINGER.COM

Cover photographs by Uni You
WHAT’S HAPPENING

JAN 10-MAR 5

Coming into Fashion: A Century of Photography at Condé Nast
A comprehensive survey of the century-long history of fashion photography as captured by Condé Nast and on display at the UCCA. Photographers include Edward Steichen, Irving Penn, and Helmut Newton.

JAN 18

Metallica WorldWired Tour 2017
One of the most successful rock bands, having sold 110 million albums worldwide, tour China, including a stop at Beijing's Wukesong LeSports Center.

FEB 18-19

Beijing International School Expo
Join beijingkids and over 52 of the city’s best international schools at the Crowne Plaza Beijing Chaoyang U-Town. This marks the event’s sixth consecutive year and is always a hit with families.

JAN 27

Chinese New Year Party
Ring in the Year of the Rooster with good music, red envelopes, fireworks and firecrackers, delicious food, and good drinks. Check out our website for full listings of Chinese New Year events taking place around town.

Visit theBeijinger.com for even more events and details.
Letter from the Editor

We decided to do things a little bit differently this issue, and were honored to get to know some old China hands: foreigners who have lived in Beijing for longer than most of us expats have been alive. Wanting to know what we had missed, we delved into their time in Beijing and China, to understand why they came here and just how much our city has changed.

Once you’ve soaked up a Beijing passed, read about some of the people shaping the city into what it is today. We spoke to Krish Raghav of Split Works about the musical road that led him to work as media coordinator for the China-based gig promoter, as well as Mark Bayles of Open Doors, an LGBT meetup group taking the focus away from dating apps and the bar scene.

As always, flip to our food and drink section to read about our metropolis’ newest dining and boozing establishments. However, if you’re looking to start the year in a less gluttonous manner, skip the feast and get a start on your New Year’s resolutions with our feature on the city’s newest gyms – we made sure to collect only those which inspire more than the usual treadmill-packed fitness centers in order to keep you motivated for as long as possible.

Finally, in preparation for Spring Festival, which falls a little earlier this year starting on January 27, read about the history of temple fairs, the home to some of the most contentious Chinese New Year’s events in the city.

We hope you have a great Spring Festival and enjoy the January/February issue of the Beijinger!

Margaux Schreurs
Managing Editor
The number of estimated retirees (people over 65 years of age) that China will be home to by 2050 i.e. over three times the current number, and more than the combined populations of Germany, Japan, France, and Britain. A combination of 36 years of life under the one-child policy and huge improvements in healthcare, – helping to increase life expectancy and decrease birth rates – means that China is heading towards a period of extreme social and economic uncertainty presented by a vast ageing population.

One of the biggest economic knock-on effects will arise from that fact that by 2040, China’s workforce will dwindle from five workers for every retiree to an average of just over one (the working-age population shrank by nearly 5 million people in 2015 alone). Such a decrease will cause drastic losses in production capabilities and put exceptional strain on the country’s healthcare services, which will have to cater to the needs of these additional seniors.

There are also questions of how China will implement a nationwide pension system that will help provide basic healthcare to poorer rural families. It is unlikely that the belated loosening of childbirth restrictions will ease China’s demographic woes, as many now deem it too costly to have a second child, and women are more inclined to seek work over settling to care for a large family.

If there’s one upside to all of this, it’s that you’re unlikely to ever be alone if you do decide to stay on in China, but you better go claim your spot on the neighborhood play set now.
THREE LITTLE KNOWN WECHAT FUNCTIONS YOU NEED TO TRY

From messaging to topping up our mobile minutes to sending hongbao (red enveloped with lucky money), there seem to be few facets of our lives that haven’t become dominated by WeChat. Now, the ever-evolving app has even more functions that will blow your mind and leave you to wonder how you ever survived without them. Below, we’ve listed a few fun functions that have been overlooked by even those of us who consider ourselves WeChat masters (be warned: nearly all of these functions require users to have some basic Mandarin reading skills).

Barcode scanner
China-Channel, a firm specializing in WeChat consulting (ID: China-Channel), recently posted a how-to about scanning products with your WeChat to conveniently find out how much they cost, along with other product information like delivery availability, not to mention where to purchase such items more cheaply online. The author popped into his local 7-Eleven to give this function a try, zapping a bottle of baijiu, a can of Red Bull, and a Colgate toothbrush.

The verdict? “Comparing prices of things in store with those online is an ingrained habit of price sensitive and mobile savvy Chinese consumers … Using the WeChat scanner is not only convenient but also facilitates social sharing of the product information.”

A major flaw is the fact that Taobao and TMall can not be searched with this function, but stingy customers can likely use it to find savings on JD.

DIY postcard
Who says apps shouldn’t be old fashioned? The DIY postcard function allows users to send a nostalgic, timeless token by turning the digital photos on their phone into cute little postcards. You pick a picture via the Photoshop-esque design page, choose from a few different backgrounds, and then have the company print the image out as a tangible postcard before mailing it to the lucky recipient of your choice for RMB 5 (RMB 10 express). The function could certainly use more design features; while the handful of background options currently on hand look quite nice, they’ll need to widen the variety considerably to keep users coming back. Still, the function has promise overall because of its fun factor and its past-meets-future concept.

Get a table at Hai Di Lao
We’ve all experienced the following situation at Hai Di Lao: looking forward to tucking into some delicious, bubbling hot pot on a chilly winter evening, only to be met with throngs of likeminded patrons upon arrival, leaving you literally out in the cold.

Fortunately, Hai Di Lao, the frequently packed-out hot pot chain, is endeavoring to address this issue with a new WeChat function. The restaurant’s use of this high-tech function was detailed on e-commerce platform WalktheChat’s (WeChat ID: walkthechat) rundown of several innovative ways that the food and beverage industry is using the social media app to burnish their businesses, connect with customers, or modernize their products and services. Many of the features on the list are a bit too heavy on the jargon to apply to casual readers, but Hai Di Lao’s function stands out because it’s extremely user-friendly.

The function helps cut down on customer wait times, creating a WeChat waitlist that allows prospective patrons to peek at queue sizes from home, before deciding whether or not to venture out to the restaurant, or check on their place in that line while waiting for a table.

The next time you’re hankering for some spicy boiled fare, give the function a try by searching for haidilaohotpot via WalktheChat. Kyle Mullin
1. Officials Wasting Anti-Pollution Funds; Smog Will Wreck Your Heart
In news that will shock basically no one, officials in several cities in China have been caught embezzling funds earmarked for pollution control.

CRI reports that USD 3.5 billion of the money alloted to fight pollution has been spent on such time-honored pollution control activities such as office building renovations, entertaining guests, and buying contraptions that don’t help control pollution.

Beijing and nearby Tianjin are among those to have been investigated, along with several counties in Anhui and other locales. Economist Zhang Lianqi called it a violation of budget laws, while the Ministry of Finance vowed to recoup the embezzled funds.

2. We Just Got Our First Closeup of the New China Work Permit
We just got our first look at the new foreign work permits that now replace the brown books that all of us laowai previously required to call ourselves street legal in China. The flashy new permits are printed on perforated sheets of A4 paper, are not laminated, and we’ve been told by the Labor Bureau not to punch the cards out to make them easily stored in a wallet.

The cards are now handed out to those receiving their work visa for the first time, and will gradually be extended to those already holding a work visa throughout the year.

Most remarkably, the identity cards also hold a shenfenzheng number that will potentially make it easier for foreigners to do things such as order online.

3. Oh Lord, Now Even Mickey D’s is Whoring Michelin Stars in China with Two New Fancypants Burgers
Well that didn’t take long. McDonald’s, now realizing that China – perhaps even more than the rest of the world – blindly worships Michelin stars, is rolling out two new Michelin star chef-endorsed burgers to dupe Chinese consumers into thinking it’s not fast food they’re eating.

4. Capital Consumption: You’ve Heard of Beijing’s 798 … But What About 998?
Ahh, Wuksong, home to the LeSports Center, the PLA General Hospital, and a colossal shopping mall affixed with the following three digits: 998. Seems reminiscent of 798 Art District, doesn’t it? Well, if Dashanzi, as the aforementioned arts center is also known as, is supposedly the artistic capital of the capital, then Wuksong, with its god-knows-where-it-came-from numeric designation, is gunning to be its consumption capital.

So why haven’t you heard of this place before? Well, partly because much of it is still under development, and lamentably, because it also happens to be in Wuksong.
5. More Than 20 Beijing Restaurants Make it Onto List of World’s Best

Beijing frequently gets snubbed by restaurant rankings and guides such as Michelin and the San Pellegrino Asia’s 50 Best Restaurants, but a recently released guide looks to finally give our city’s dining scene the recognition it deserves. More than 20 Beijing restaurants made it onto La Liste 2017, a French ranking of the world’s best restaurants that launched last year. Beijing’s top restaurant, Hong Kong Jockey Club (technically more of a destination rather than a single restaurant since it is host to six different venues), ranked 20th of all restaurants worldwide.

6. Over 75 Percent of Historic Residences in Beijing Fail Preservation Standards

Over 75 percent of historic residences in Beijing fail to meet preservation standards, Global Times reported, citing a government survey released last month which concluded that of the 332 listed historic residences in downtown Beijing, only 80 met official standards cultural relics.

At issue is who is responsible for maintaining historic structures which are – frankly – old and badly in need of repair works and renovation.

7. Fantastic Beasts and Where to Eat Them

At the end of 2016, the world appeared to go quietly mad for the film Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them.

If all fanaticism for fantastic beasts sent you a little creature crazy, you may now well be longing for your own monster-hunt. But if you’re put off by the cages of Beijing Zoo, the grey-green, greasy waters of Beijing Aquarium, or the sad and pining creatures that live in both, fear not. For what our fair city lacks in animal husbandry, it more than makes up for in bringing out the best in creatures brought to table.

In the spirit of discovering Beijing’s creatures at their very best, we compiled our top five list of animals you may not have encountered in Beijing, but that we assure you are worth tracking down.

8. Spice up Your Meat Free Monday with These Vegetarian Dandan Noodles

Along with Kungpao chicken, mapo tofu, and lazi ji, dandan noodles are one of the classic dishes of the Sichuan culinary canon. The name comes from the traditional carrying pole (担担 dandan) that was used by walking street vendors selling the dish. The pole was carried over the shoulder, with two baskets containing noodles and sauce attached at either end. Although you may associate this dish with street food, it is actually easy to do and makes an impressive side dish for a homecooked Chinese meal. Check out our blog for the full recipe.
The Winter Fayre
Dec 10, The Hutong. Photos courtesy of The Hutong

2016 Christmas Tree Lighting
Dec 1, Conrad Beijing. Photos courtesy of Conrad Beijing

Peng Label Night
Dec 9, Migas. Photos by Haoyuan
Christmas Tree Lighting
Nov 17, Kerry Hotel.
Photos courtesy of Kerry Hotel

Christmas Tree Lighting
Dec 2, Langham Place, Beijing Capital Airport. Photos courtesy of Langham Place
ISABEL CROOK
ANTHROPOLOGIST, TEACHER, AND REVOLUTIONARY
By Tom Arnstein
If you’ve ever studied China in any manner you’ll know that every statement and observation must be qualified as such: the country is astoundingly vast and has undergone incredible and rapid change. Very few people can proclaim to have witnessed a large portion of that change – let alone a Westerner – but Isabel Crook has and continues to till this day. Now 101 years old, Crook lives on the campus of Beijing Foreign Studies University, in the same third-floor apartment that she and her husband and partner in revolution, David Crook, chose in 1955 because of its views across the sprawling fields, now entirely engulfed by concrete and all the other trappings of modernization.

Talking to the softly spoken and enviably spritely Crook, and her son Michael (one of three sons born and raised in Beijing), I realized that to comprehend her story was to understand what draws any of us to stay in this beguiling, and often befuddling, land. Granted, her tale began much earlier than any of ours. Born in 1915 to Canadian missionary parents in Chengdu, Sichuan, Crook studied for an MA in anthropology in Canada before returning to China, where she was recruited in 1940 to conduct a survey on rural reconstruction among the 1,500 residents of a market township charmingly called Prosperity (Xinglongchang, now renamed Daxing Town in Bishan District).

Crook is an anthropologist in the truest sense – from the moment she returned to Sichuan she became completely wrapped up in her work, swept away by the kinetic energy of the rural reconstruction movement, and later with David in the communist revolution, each providing a new enterprise to get lost in entirely, a constant source of inspiration and analysis. During my meeting with her, Crook stated of her work, “I considered it to be very significant, as were the events that I was living through; experiencing the founding of a new society.” Crook’s commitment to the tasks that life as a communist party member provided is evident, putting aside her research to teach English to diplomats in training upon communist victory in the civil war.

That sense of duty also prompted Crook to wait until retirement before dusting off her notes and finally publishing her book *Prosperity’s Predicament*, 70 years after her initial research began. Michael explains, “My interpretation of why it took such a long time is that some people want to publish their own books because they need to get tenure or get a new job or get the royalties. They need the money, but with mum there was no rushing her. She loved the process so much that she wanted it to go on practically forever. She’d be writing this book and come to a word like “salt” a ubiquitous necessity in Chinese households and then suddenly say, ‘what was the salt production situation, the salt monopoly, and how did it affect the people?’” In this regard, Crook enjoyed the process of research so much that the outcome of publishing a book was merely incidental. In Michael’s words, “this is what gave meaning to her retirement.”

Crook has previously said that it was her inclusion as part of a team, both research and revolutionary, that found her at her happiest. She recounts an anecdote whereby she and her husband David were unable to set up a party group because, by themselves, they did not meet the three member minimum requirement. Upon asking to borrow a further member, to their giddy surprise, not one, but two of their Chinese comrades happily joined them to form an international party group. A photo taken by David shows Isabel and their new group strolling down a dirt path, accomplished and ready to begin drumming up support in the village.

Even as Crook’s memory begins to fade, she’s clear as to the legacy that her long and rich life will afford others who are curious about a China that now seems far removed from what we experience today. “My main contribution is that I always recorded what was going on and so although I may not remember everything, I have left very detailed records.”
JANE SU
WISCONSIN NATIVE DISCUSSES WHAT MOVING TO CHINA IN 1957 WAS LIKE
By Margaux Schreurs
Jane Su, a Wisconsin-native, made the move to China long before it was cool.

Su first came to Beijing in 1957, after marrying a Chinese heart surgeon in the United States, and excluding years spent in Xi’an and Chongqing, she’s lived here ever since.

“We had to come separately,” Su says about the move. While her husband took the boat to London, Su flew from Montreal, Canada to meet him. They originally planned to sail from there, but Su was five months pregnant at the time and the start of the Suez Canal War led to its closing. The ship would have to go round the Horn of Africa, which would take weeks. In the end, they bought a ticket “straight” to Beijing.

“First we went from London to Paris, just because we had never been there before, then to Prague, then Moscow, and finally to Beijing.”

Su adjusted to life in China without any major difficulties. “Living here is just what you make of it, I think. Slowly you get used to everything,” she says.

“I’ll tell you a story. I was here for about six months, and I was desperate to go out and live a normal life, although I didn’t speak much Chinese. I didn’t have a bicycle, so I borrowed one to go to the market because I wanted to cook some chicken. I didn’t really realize at that time that if you wanted a chicken, it had to be a live chicken. So the man gave me a chicken, tied it by its legs, which I had to hang by the string off the handlebars of the bicycle. I was so scared, all the way home the chicken was squawking. I didn’t want to ride because I was worried the chicken would peck me, so I had to push the bike the entire way home.”

Once in Beijing, Su found life was never boring, whether it involved carting live chickens around on bicycles or being a part of the shifting domestic politics. “Especially in the early days, life was so interesting. First came the Great Leap Forward, and then later on the other political movements like the Cultural Revolution or life under the Gang of Four. Every day you would go to work to hear all the latest gossip and find out the latest news.”

Through this ever-changing political environment, attitudes towards foreigners changed, although Su never found that people were downright rude and was never concerned for her personal safety.

“I don’t really worry, and in the end, I was right. I never really suffered any really bad things here,” she tells us.

Of course there were times when things were difficult, for example, when food was scarce during the Great Famine. “In the 1960s, there was a bad shortage of food. Slowly you’d go to the store, and find that the shelves were getting emptier and emptier,” she says.

“At some point, the only thing on the shelves was the African coffee, which was darn good, and jam made of coconut from Hainan. That was good. I bought all those things. But we would go weeks and weeks without eating meat.”

The other challenge of living in China was the understanding of the political movements and the overall political situation. But this, again, was also what helped make life in China so interesting for Su throughout all these years.

At the end of our interview Su says something that we can all relate to in some regard: “If I wanted to be bored I would go back to Wisconsin.”
A SCOTSMAN’S HUTONG HAVEN
EXPLORING BEIJING’S ALLEYS WITH OLD CHINA HAND
BRUCE CONNOLLY

By Kyle Mullin
It doesn’t take long for a conversation with Bruce Connolly to veer into a maze of tangents, akin to walking a winding route through the hutongs he adores. This is especially true when the Scottish journalist and photographer invites you to follow him through his favorite such alleys in the Dashilar area.

“Oh look at that rooftop! And oh, there’s a birdcage! And right along here there used to be a Mongolian bar!” Connolly, a broadcaster at Radio Beijing AM 774, says during a recent visit to Dashilar West Hutong, along with the adjacent Taitou and Yangmeizhu alleys.

When we begin at Dashilar West, Connolly’s boundless enthusiasm and wry sense of humor both become immediately apparent, as he says: “This is a pedestrian street, but there’s bloomin’ bicycles parked all over it. It’s a Chinese version of a pedestrian street, at least.”

From there he gestures to Tianhai Restaurant – a Beijing institution famous for its tofu and saucy noodles – that stands as one of the few landmarks that remain unchanged since Connolly snapped a photo of it back in 1999. He’s been here longer than that, arriving first for a visit in 1987, by rail from Glasgow to Hong Kong, while he was still working as a freelance broadcaster for the BBC. He then returned in 1992 before crisscrossing the country, camera in hand – from “Xishuangbanna to Everest” as he writes on his LinkedIn – eventually working as a tour guide in Beijing in 1998, before beginning his ongoing stint as a feature broadcaster, interviewer, and photographer at Radio Beijing AM 774 in 2004.

While he may be better known as a journalist, some of Connolly’s most memorable Beijing moments happened as he took people on tours of Dashilar. He brought one such group from the Royal Scottish Geographical Society (for which he has also worked as a public speaker) on that hutong journey, showing the tourists the wholesale markets, snack stands, and other aspects of everyday life in the alleys. A Chinese guide that accompanied him was aghast at the itinerary, saying: “Bruce, why are you showing them this? This is the old China,” to which Connolly replied: “Yes! That’s the part I love!”

Of course, Connolly is quick to admit that he empathizes with lao Beijingers who perceive the hutongs differently from curious foreigners like him, and that the rugged, vibrant hutong lifestyle not only makes for great photos, but also hard living.

With that in mind, Connolly brings us to a seemingly nondescript building on Qianmen Xiheyan Jie. However, once we enter, we’re struck by its expansive, two-story interior, featuring opulently curving wooden pilasters, a dynamically designed iron fence along the balcony, a sharp, arched roof, and rows of upper windows that let the light pour in. This was once a gallery at the heart of the first Beijing stock exchange, founded in 1918, and the worldly trading that took place there is reflected in its East-meets-West architecture. And while much of that distinctive design remains intact, it’s clear that the site has been left in disarray, as Beijingers now reside in its various rooms but leave the gallery’s balcony and main floor looking mostly abandoned, except for some stray rubbish or the odd bits of clothing hanging up to dry.

“The people living here aren’t squatters, they’re legitimately paying rent and I understand that they need to fix it up,” Connolly says, adding: “But I hope that they renovate it carefully, so that its unique architecture can be preserved, just like some of the other redesigns in Dashilar. I think this area has maintained its history so much more than other hutong neighborhoods.”

As we step back outside, Connolly gestures at the curving neighboring hutong rooftops, then the high rises that dominate the rest of the horizon. “I love this part of Beijing so much – old and new architectural styles, bikes parked in big jumbles, people out with their birds and puppies, talking to their neighbors. I love how it all contrasts and is cluttered together.”
GILBERT VAN KERCKHOVE
THE BELGIAN ENGINEER WHO PLAYED A KEY ROLE IN BEIJING’S OLYMPIC DREAM
By Scott DeVoy Su
As an old China hand, Gilbert Van Kerckhove did more than just witness China’s meteoric economic growth; he in fact played a helping hand in pushing China along the path toward modernization.

An electrical engineer by trade, Van Kerckhove first came to Beijing in 1980, where he was tasked with establishing a representative office for a utilities company. “I didn’t come to China to stay for 35 years,” he says lightheartedly; but as the years churned by, the gregarious Belgian accumulated a certain expertise — one that enabled him to bridge an important cultural divide when it came to doing business in China.

Leveraging that know-how, Van Kerckhove helped facilitate important infrastructure projects in Shanghai in the 1990s, including Line 3 of the Shanghai Metro and the electric equipment for the 88-story Jin Mao Tower in Pudong. His business savvy, firmly rooted in pragmatism and “understanding both sides,” made him the ideal intermediary between Chinese and foreign business entities.

In early 2000, Van Kerckhove accepted a position as a senior consultant to the Beijing municipal government. When the capital later won its bid to host the 2008 Summer Olympic Games, he soon found himself in a unique position as the sole foreigner admitted into the highest echelons of Beijing’s Development Planning Commission.

His responsibilities were daunting, chief among them: to secure financing for major construction projects, including the now-iconic Bird’s Nest and Water Cube. Nevertheless, the man nicknamed “The Fireman” — Van Kerckhove had garnered a reputation as a go-to when the situation was seemingly impossible to handle — was indeed up to the task.

He spearheaded negotiations with famed Swiss architect Pierre de Meuron; traveled to Germany to study the membrane technology used for the outer layer of the Water Cube; and when SARS struck (derailing the possibility for formal meetings), he moved the high-profile discussions to his favorite Belgian restaurant, Morel’s.

His contribution to the realization of Beijing’s Olympic dream was indeed significant. And for his part, in 2005, the Chinese government honored Van Kerckhove with the China Friendship Award, the most prestigious award attainable by “foreign experts.”

Today, the easygoing business strategist is still very much bridging the gap between China and the West, however, he now balances his time between writing, public speaking engagements, and being involved with various chambers of commerce and the Rotary Club of Beijing.

As an author, Van Kerckhove’s most recent book, Toxic Capitalism, examines the degradation caused by unbridled consumption and its ensuing waste. It’s an issue that’s timely, with much of the city’s ire fixed on air pollution, but it’s also an issue that’s meaningful on a personal level, as he has been diagnosed with chronic bronchitis (to which he attributes some of the blame to running five Beijing marathons).

Furthermore, he is often invited to give seminars on the topic of successful lobbying in China and how to work with the Chinese bureaucracy. The seminars are well-received with many Chinese students extolling the fact that they learned a lot about their own country.

Brimming with anecdotes, Gilbert Van Kerckhove has lived out his own version of the Chinese Dream. And although the China we live in today is a world away from the one he arrived to 37 years prior, his life story is a paragon for those foreigners looking to do business here.

When asked to share advice for those embarking on their own forms of enterprise, he responds: “Bring all the expertise and knowledge you have but don’t impose your way of doing business on the Chinese side.”

For more insightful views on Chinese business and the economy, visit Gilbert Van Kerckhove’s website blog.strategy4china.com.
WELLENDORFF AFTERNOON TEA
UNTIL MAR 31 - Enjoy a special Wellendorff Afternoon Tea at China World Hotel’s Lobby Lounge to celebrate the opening of the hotel’s Wellendorff boutique. Inspired by the German jewelry brand, the hotel’s executive pastry chef Jonathan Wu has put together a delicate combination of savories and sweets. RMB 298 per set (plus 10 percent service charge and 6 percent VAT). Midday-6pm. Lobby Lounge
Though many of us might assume that Peruvian and Japanese cuisines have little in common, Francisco Chia is more than eager to take the uninitiated on a flavorful, educational journey through his homeland’s Nikkei culinary tradition.

In fact the Pachakutiq co-founder’s descriptions of the restaurant’s dishes – be it their lineage from Japanese immigrants adapting their kitchen techniques to their new Peruvian surroundings, to how those sushi adept cooks became enamored by Peru’s abundance of seafood – are as vibrant and tantalizing as the food itself.

We visited the Peruvian eatery earlier this winter (not long after it moved from its original CBD pop-up locale into a more permanent space which it shares with Cafe Flatwhite in Sanlitun Soho). While there, Chia regaled us with fun anecdotes that should have been merely mundane details. The corn used in Peruvian cuisine, for instance, became a running joke throughout the night as he recalled trying to find the vegetable as a student in America, only to realize it was sadly lacking compared to that of his homeland. “In Peru, the corn is huge!” he enthused, his eyes and grin wide, before adding: “What I found in the States is the size that we’d feed chickens.”

And while Chia makes for a gracious host, Pachakutiq’s Nikkei fare more than speaks for itself. The wasabi ceviche (RMB 55), for instance, is a gloriously flavorful introduction to the more Japanese end of the Nikkei spectrum, though its sweetness and hint of spiciness is a welcome change from the fiery globs of green stuff that we’ve grown accustomed to at many local sushi joints. Pachakutiq’s other must-try ceviche includes the mango variety (which is abundant with the fruit in its title, along with salmon, scallion and shredded coconut; RMB 40) and the classic option with plenty of seabass.

Peru’s bounty of seafood is also well represented by menu items like the classic tiradito (consisting of seabass and glazed sweet potato, RMB 45) and the stuffed squid (RMB 99). The menu’s meatier options are equally tempting, especially the Nikudito beef tiradito (RMB 80). This dish’s hearty beef is torched on its upper layer and raw on its lower layer, making its flavors and textures eclectic and totally distinct.

Those dishes are rivaled in flavor and creativity by the drink list, which boasts frothy piscos in classic, kiwi, strawberry, and other tasty (and potently intoxicating) varieties. The chilcano cocktails (consisting of piscos mixed with fizzy soft drinks) are every bit as good. Indeed, by the time you finish this Peruvian feast (and the buzz from the strong beverages takes hold), you’ll find yourself talking about Nikkei cuisine with as much passion as Chia. Kyle Mullin

PACHAKUTIQ
SUCCESSFUL PERUVIAN NIKKEI POP-UP SETTLES DOWN IN SLT SOHO
Daily 5.30pm-late. B1, Unit 239, Bldg 2, Sanlitun Soho, 8 Gongti Beilu, Chaoyang District (131 2169 1411)
朝阳区工体北路8号院三里屯Soho2号楼B1层239
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Mon-Sat 5-11.30pm. 2/F, 43 Xinyuan Jie, Chaoyang District (135 5217 4797)
粲寿司：朝阳区新源街43号2层

Sun Sushi is located on the second floor of a quiet alley near Xinyuan Jie, a mere three minutes' walk to the west of Great Leap Brewing #45. And it's the real deal, good enough meet the needs of the pickiest sushi snob.

After being welcomed by deferential waitresses in traditional kimonos, you are given the option to sit around the 10-seat wooden bar, one of three private rooms, or at a table for two along the wall.

There are three set dinner options priced at RMB 380, 580, and 1,080. The first two each contain 10 courses, while RMB 1,080 gets you 12 courses. The set at RMB 380 contains two appetizers, seafood salad, assorted sashimi, shrimp and fish croquettes, steamed clam soup, mirin-dried mackerel, chawanmushi (egg custard with fish), assorted sushi, miso soup, and dessert. The set at RMB 580 is an upgraded version, with an Iberian ham salad, Australian wagyu croquettes, seared beef, foie gras, and uni sushi.

The duration of your time dining at Sun will feel more like a magician's show than a meal, with the wizardly chef in front of you preparing sashimi, skinning the jumping shrimp, carving the tuna attentively, and using a blowtorch to grill the surface of the saury. For anyone new to the serious sushi bar experience, it might be a bit overwhelming – your reaction to every single bite is watched by the chef standing in front of you.

This type of service, known as omotenashi in Japanese, involves the strict entertainment of guests, making sure everything is taken care of from collecting empty plates to topping up your green tea. They even provide masks on polluted days. At the moment, they can only cater up to 13 customers a day to maintain such meticulous quality.

For these reasons, and the fact that Sun is one of the best Japanese restaurants I have had the pleasure to eat at, calling in advance is a must. Tracy Wang
WHAT’S NEW RESTAURANTS

SAIGON MAMA
FAST-CASUAL VIETNAMESE CLASSICS

Daily 9am-9pm. S6-32, 3/F, South Taikoo Li, Sanlitun Lu, Chaoyang District (6461 3261)
朝阳区三里屯路太古里南区3层S6—32

Taking over one of the frequently-rotating spots on the third floor of Taikoo Li South, Saigon Mama is a fast-casual Vietnamese joint with roots in both San Francisco and Shanghai. This international pedigree shines through in the restaurant’s design, which eschews the potential kitschiness of a Vietnamese theme for an altogether more modern approach: bright colors, bench seating, and walls lined with Vietnamese ingredients.

As with many of the restaurants occupying Taikoo Li’s third floor, the space is light and airy, making it a great place to while away the afternoon over a traditional Vietnamese-style drip coffee (they clearly don’t mind lingering laptop warriors, since there are strategically placed power outlets next to many of the tables).

Unlike the decor, the menu sticks firmly to the classics: banh mi, bun cha, and pho, among others. As one might expect, the noodle dishes steal the show. The classic beef pho (RMB 58) comes packed with three types of beef – just-cooked rare, braised shank, and crunchy beef balls – and al dente rice noodles in a burnished broth with just the right amount of salt.

The bun bo hue (RMB 58), a spicy rice vermicelli soup from the central Vietnamese city of Hue, is similarly flavorful, its finishing slick of bright red chili oil giving it the edge on the pho. Both soups are practically big enough to drown in. This generous attitude to portion sizes turns out to be the downfall of the salad roll (RMB 40), which, while fresh, ends up being rather unwieldy and tasteless (although this can be remedied with a dip in the restaurant’s sinus-blasting homemade chili sauce).

With a well-polished concept and pocket-friendly price point, we can’t help but feel that Saigon Mama won’t be rotating out of Taikoo Li any time soon. Robynne Tindall
Punk isn’t dead. It just retired, moved to Chaoyang, and started making Japanese food. At least that’s certainly the case at Qimianting on Maizidian’s Ichiban Street; a slice of Japan frequented by the nearby office workers for lunch or late into the evenings for creamy draft and sake.

Replete with posters from Punk-O-Rama all-stars like Bad Religion, Rancid, The Descendents, and Dwarves, the aptly named, but charmingly low-key Chaos and his business partner, both busy mainstays on the Beijing punk scene, decided to open a little joint to escape the beer-drenched evenings of yore.

The space itself is both lively and laidback, the punk-to-country soundtrack giving a warmth and personality that you don’t find in other faceless joints. While carmine red walls work well alongside the wooden furniture to make this place inviting – five tables and 10 seats along the heightened bar adding up to sit close to 40 people – they perhaps don’t go so far as to make it romantic.

For starters we order the beef tongue, which comes as well-marinated and buttery slabs of meat in slightly sweetened soy, underneath a bed of scallions.

Moving onto the mains, this was my first time ever to try what were simply described as Taiwanese noodles (台湾拌面 taiwan banmian), a saucy mix of minced pork, scallions, onions, seaweed, spice, garlic, and a raw egg yolk. The balance of flavors couldn’t have been more comforting – after mixing, the bouncy noodles, soothing yolk, and umami meat sauce give way to the slight burn of the chili powder and raw onion. Upon finishing, you’ll want to (and are encouraged to) ask for a spoon of rice to soak up the remainder of the ingredients once the noodles have been long slurped down.

On the complete other side of the spectrum, the “slimy bomb bowl” (粘粘炸弹面 niannian zhadanmian) forfeits balance for texture, the name leaving little to the imagination. Cubes of preserved tuna are mixed with gooey mountain yam, fermented beans, and okra, pushing for the title of ‘gloopiest combination of ingredients in a single dish.’ Compared to the Taiwanese noodles, these left my tastebuds lacking, yearning instead for a more savory side, or stronger flavored tuna, to balance out the mild and sticky vegetables and beans.

That being said, next time you’re in the area and hankering for a bowl of thick noodles, a dose of buttery beef tongue, a side of punk, and some of the friendliest management around, Qimianting is there to pick you up off the mosh pit floor and fill your belly. Tom Arnstein
YING CHINESE AND YING JAPANESE
IT’S NEITHER ONE YING OR THE OTHER AT INTERCONTINENTAL SANLITUN

Daily 6.30-10am, 11.30am-2.30pm, 5.30-9.30pm. 3/F, InterContinental Beijing Sanlitun, 1 Sanlitun Nanlu, Chaoyang District (8516 0066)
盈中餐&盈料理: 朝阳区三里屯南路1号洲际酒店3楼

At the bustling heart of Sanlitun, the newly opened InterContinental Beijing Sanlitun has made a splash with its fabulous views over the neighborhood and several top-notch F&B venues. These include Ying Chinese and Ying Japanese, as well as Top Tapas, Top Bar, Char Dining Room & Lounge, and the Lobby Lounge.

The dining area on the third floor can seat 200 people. There’s no physical separation between Ying Chinese and Ying Japanese, allowing customers to order a little from both. Focusing on distinctive Chinese and Japanese seasonal cuisines, they thankfully eschew the scattergun global cuisine approach.

Chef David Lv is in charge of the Chinese restaurant which presents an array of traditional Cantonese specialties, including dim sum (RMB 38-42), roasted suckling pig, and barbecue. Meanwhile Wong Chishing, hailing from Hong Kong, is the chef in charge on the Japanese side, offering sushi, sashimi, and premium wagyu beef cooked over volcanic coals. We especially enjoyed the steamed shrimp dumplings, the umami flavors of the shrimp balancing the delicate but strong black truffle taste. The sukiyaki, a type of Japanese hot pot, is a must-try, helping to warm you from within during these nippy winter days.

All in all, the business lunch, priced at RMB 188, is good value for the more financially-endowed worker bees in close proximity, and its perfect time of year to be enjoying a mix of the hot Japanese and Chinese dishes. Tracy Wang
Mary had a lotta lamb

Following an intense debate over whether Inner Mongolia should fall under “I” for Inner Mongolia or “N” for Nei Menggu, we decided to stop procrastinating and just head over to Meishuguan Houjie one lunch time.

The menu consists mostly of hot pot (RMB 18 per individual pot of broth, with a choice of spicy, clear, mushroom or tomato) and the standard additions, with, as you might expect, a heavy focus on lamb. Diving straight in, we ordered two types: lamb meat from the hind legs and one meat from near the ribs. Both were of good quality and flavorful. Portions, which range in price from RMB 58 to 138, depending on the cut you are after, are also suitably sizeable.

Other hot pot trimmings offer the usual selection: fresh spinach, crispy cabbage, tofu, noodles, frozen dumplings, and large crispy slices of lotus root (RMB 8-28), paired with a sauce buffet which was nothing out of the ordinary except for a huge bowl of Bugles (the American potato chips kind). We happily dug in, only to find one of the Bugles was a little soggy, steering us clear of the snack section for the remainder of the meal.

Exploring the menu further, we found traditional Inner Mongolian shaomai (RMB 38 per basket), a lamb-filled variety as opposed to the usual pork. Larger than their southern Chinese cousins, the dough on these was thin and flaky at the top, and the lamb filling was juicy and tender. Even for someone who isn’t the biggest fan of lamb’s distinct taste (“what on earth are you doing at the Inner Mongolian Provincial Government Restaurant?” I hear you say – it’s all part of the job, folks) these were delicious, especially when dunked in a side helping of chili flakes and oil.

I hesitate to say that we were pleasantly surprised because that suggests that the food was actually good, when in reality, we had just heard and read so many terrible things that our expectations had been lowered to a point where it was almost impossible to still be disappointed. Would we really, really hate eating here again? No. But would we go back especially? No. Unless we had a sudden hankering for good meat and soggy Bugles. Margaux Schreurs
At first glance it’s hard to tell whether Steamrhino, located in Tayuan DRC, is a brewpub with lots of food or a restaurant with lots of beer. To avoid any confusion, we settled on describing it as a restaurant that brews its own beer on site.

Upon entering, don’t be put off by the eclectic decor, including wide bronze pipes lining floor to ceiling, colorful neon plastic boards hanging on the ceiling, a bright orange light box set in a stainless steel wall at the bar area, or the decidedly rustic men’s bathrooms.

We say Steamrhino is a restaurant because the menu is as thick as a book, featuring salads (RMB 20-58), main dishes, burgers (RMB 38-88), hotdogs, pasta, and desserts. The moreish big steak plate (RMB 168), designed for two or three people to share, holds a large pork steak, accompanied by shrimp crackers, grilled mushrooms, carrots, and zucchini. The slow roast lamb chop (RMB 188) is also worth a try, soft and juicy, and well seasoned with Himalayan sea salt and rosemary, and served with small potatoes, baby onions, baby carrots, cherry tomatoes, and curry rice. Steamrhino also offers a lunch set that allows you to choose one of 10 different hot dog options, two pastas, or rice, with a snack and a soft drink (sadly no beer) for RMB 68.

There are 11 brews on tap, and on our second visit, five of the beers had had their recipes adjusted and we particularly enjoyed the Five Words & Two Souls Wheat, which is refreshing and sour, having been brewed with fresh, instead of dried, lemon. The Steam Ale also featured the same citrusy notes but with a smooth and dry finish.

Families living nearby make up most of Steamrhino’s customer base, but we reckon it’s worth a trip for patrons of all ages to fill up on the good value and tasty lunch meals. We only wish their lunch deal would include the option to swap your soft drink for a brew. Tracy Wang
MAOXISHI DESSERT SHOP
TREATING YOUR WINTER DEPRESSION WITH COMFORT DESSERT

Daily 11am-9pm. 34A Sanlitun Nan (opposite Lucky Lopez), Xindong Lu, Chaoyang District (131 2177 5707)
猫西施甜品店：朝阳区新东路三里屯南甲34号院内（Lucky Lopez对面）

Situated opposite Lucky Lopez in the quiet yard of 34 Sanlitun Nan, Maoxishi Dessert Shop opened mid-August but it has come into its own in the colder months. That’s because this cozy 11-square-meter white-fronted shop has room for only two tables; four to six people can be seated inside, creating a welcoming den. The interior décor is simple: wood and matcha green and almond white walls.

Owner and food author Pan Xiaoye, who has a whopping 550,000-plus followers on Weibo, has filled the store with souvenirs from her travels as well as cat trinkets, a apparent love of hers.

Pan started off at the Farm to Neighbors Market in 2014, selling almond tofu, matcha tofu, and almond cookies. From there, she launched the Maoxishi brand. For her, the shop is “more like a salon to meet new friends. A lot of our customers who share the same philosophy of pursuing the good life become good friends. We do not only provide tasty desserts, but also a good atmosphere.”

The shop keeps its selection small and specialized: matcha (green tea) mille crêpe cake (RMB 40), cheesecake with almond and sesame (RMB 29), and matcha cheesecake with vanilla (RMB 32). Other offerings include snacks (almond tofu and cookies) and a handful of hot drinks. The crêpes are particularly special given that they only make 10 a day. Cakes come carefully presented on The Little Prince-patterned plates.

Our favorite of the lot was the matcha cheesecake with vanilla, which struck a balance between sweet, creamy (from the cheese), and smooth, thanks to the matcha powder imported especially from Kyoto. Pan explains: “There’s not much of a secret in the process of baking. If you insist on me divulging mine, it’s all about the ingredients. We only use the best ingredients we can find.”

Her attention to detail and delicious desserts make this humble shop a welcome addition to the neighborhood, and we can’t wait for it to garner greater appreciation. Tracy Wang
**...tea eggs** 茶叶蛋
The humble tea egg is the most portable of all Chinese breakfast foods. Pots of tea eggs can be found outside most convenience stores and hole-in-the-wall breakfast dives, drawing in passers by with the scent of their spiced broth. Traditionally, the eggs are hardboiled, then the shells are cracked before being returned to a broth scented with star anise, cinnamon, Sichuan peppercorns, bay leaves, and of course, tea leaves. The tea gives the broth a slightly bitter character, which infuses the eggs during their long soaking.

**...tong sui** 糖水
Literally translated as sugar water, tong sui is a catch-all Cantonese term for any kind of sweet soup or custard served at the end of the meal. The term tong sui is predominantly associated with Cantonese cuisine, since although similar desserts appear frequently in other Chinese regional cuisines they tend not to be counted as a separate category of dessert. Popular tong sui include black sesame soup (ground black sesame seeds cooked with water and rock sugar), guiling gao (a jelly-like dessert traditionally made from the powdered bottom shell of the three-lined box turtle), and sweetened soft tofu (douhua). Their frequently gelatinous and gloopy textures mean tong sui are often an acquired taste for the uninitiated.

**...twice-cooked pork** 回鍋肉
One of the marquee dishes of the Sichuan culinary canon, twice-cooked pork might not have the eye-catching nomenclature of dishes like “pock-marked old woman’s bean curd” (mapo doufu) or “husband and wife lung slices” (fuqi feipian) but is nevertheless delicious. The twice cooking in the name refers to the preparation of the pork, which is first simmered in water and spices and then refrigerated, before being stir-fried briefly with garlic, leeks, and spicy broad bean paste (douban jiang).
After years of serving up dishes for various superstars, Chef Tim Hunt is now bringing his talents to the masses at East Hotel.

The British chef certainly has big shoes to fill, taking over for his old pal Rob Cunningham after the beloved Australian kitchen master left the job in mid-2016.

However, Hunt is more than up to the task, explaining: “I have known East since the pre-opening period. I was good friends with Rob and also very good friends with Liu Kai, who was the old executive sous chef and a childhood friend of my wife’s. I was able to give my two cents to Rob and Kai during the pre-opening periods, so I felt like I was a part of the hotel from the beginning.”

Even without those old ties to East, Hunt’s storied culinary career would more than prepare him for the job. His prior positions include China Star Film Catering, the Westin, a simultaneous stay at the Le Royal Meridien Shanghai and the Mercedes Benz Arena, followed by a period at the Sheraton Sanya Resort Hainan, before arriving at East earlier this past summer.

Among the celebrities that have sampled Hunt’s tasty fare is none other than legendary director Quentin Tarrantino, whose film crew hired China Film Star Catering while they filmed the hit action flick Kill Bill in China.

“Quentin was a very cool guy,” Hunt says of the popular director. “He wouldn’t talk to you as if he was on some higher level, he was very accepting of everyone. Every Friday we’d all have a big dinner and party together to celebrate the end of the week’s shooting, and before that I got to see many scenes filmed, like when Uma fights in that crazy and bloody bar scene.”

Hunt partook in an equally star studded, but all the more stressful, affair ahead of the 2008 Summer Olympics, as he helped prepare to accommodate then American President George W. Bush and his delegation.

Now that Hunt has returned to the capital, he’s eager to have equally memorable experiences at East. “Beijing is like my home in China, and I am very proud to be back in the city that I love, and very proud to take over the helm here from Rob. Now it’s time to take this hotel’s restaurant to the next level.”

COOKING FOR POLITICIANS, CELEBRITIES, AND BEIJING FOODIES
SEASONED CHEF TALKS TAKING OVER AT EAST HOTEL

By Kyle Mullin
seasonal abundance bowl
Obentos, RMB 68
Obentos’ latest seasonal abundance bowl (pictured above) comes with quinoa and grains, an onsen egg, pumpkin, broccoli, lotus root, kimchi, rocket, and miso ginger. We are particularly fond of the addition of lotus root, which adds some welcome crunch.

classic beef pho
Saigon Mama, RMB 58
Steaming flavorful beef broth packed with three types of beef: barely cooked slices, braised beef shank, and crunchy beef balls. The rice noodles are satisfyingly al dente, and the dish has just the right amount of salt.

pork belly
TRB Bites, RMB 368 (part of four-course menu)
Slow cooked for more over 24 hours, this pork belly is crispy on the outside and succulent within. Topped off with a variety of leafy Sichuan herb, and presented on a bed of mash and gravy, this dish is sure to please.

big island spicy poke bowl
Poke Inn, RMB 48-68
New Sanlitun Soho eatery Poke Inn gives us a hit of Hawaiian sunshine with this exciting spicy poke bowl, featuring fresh salmon and exotic toppings like crunchy fried burdock potatoes and bubbly orange fish roe.
Heartwarming Buzz
Keep the Chills at Bay With These Hot Drink Recipe

By Kyle Mullin
Drink maker: Badr Benjelloun of Caravan
Drink: Hot tropics
Tipsy description:
“A delightful mix of buttered pineapple juice, ginger, honey, goji berries, and spiced rum! It might be cold and shitty outside, but inside your body, it’s aloha.

“Use one litre pineapple juice, six big slices of ginger, 50ml of honey, six cloves, and a dozen goji berries. Heat until boiling. Pour 45ml of spiced rum in your glass, top up with mulled pineapple, and decorate with slice of ginger and some gojis.”

Drink maker: Chris Peart of Mei Bar (formerly at Xian Bar)
Drink: A Tom & Jerry variation with chai and pumpkin
Tipsy description:
“It contains butter, brown sugar, dark rum, Chinese yellow wine, red mung bean paste, cinnamon and nutmeg. Mix the ingredients in order. It’s not super technical. The recipe is in keeping with Fang’s philosophy of innovating and using interesting local ingredients in its recipes.”

Drink maker: Dongdong and Zak Elmasri of Fang Bar
Drink: Mung bean hot buttered rum
Tipsy description:
“It contains butter, brown sugar, dark rum, Chinese yellow wine, red mung bean paste, cinnamon and nutmeg. Mix the ingredients in order. It’s not super technical. The recipe is in keeping with Fang’s philosophy of innovating and using interesting local ingredients in its recipes.”

Drink maker: Kelly Sun and Kenn Bermel of The Local
Drink: Mulled wine
Tipsy description:
“We use red wine, but don’t waste expensive bottles on this! It features orange juice, a fresh orange with whole cloves pushed into it, dried orange peel, one star anise pod, a few sticks of cinnamon, and some brown sugar. We simmer it all day (don’t boil it). You can drink it as soon as it’s hot, but if you wait the flavors will infuse more thoroughly.”

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WHAT’S NEW BARS & CLUBS

MAO MAO CHONG

POPULAR HUTONG COCKTAIL BAR OPENS SLICK NEW CBD LOCATION

Daily 11am-2pm. Unit 218, Guanghua Lu Soho, Chaoyang District (158 4271 9052)

毛毛虫：光华路Soho一期218室
The pollution is terrible today, so you’ll need to drink something,” says Eric Liu, mixing up a concoction brimming with pear juice, a fruity elixir with plenty of toxin fighting properties. But of course the Mao Mao Chong owner and bartender isn’t readying a purely wholesome drink – it also has a generous splash of Grasovka vodka, along with bitters, honey, and a submerged cinnamon stick for a final touch of spice. Liu calls it the Peking Opera (RMB 60), and it’s one of the many new cocktails on offer at his recently opened Guanghua Lu Soho location.

This second branch couldn’t be more different from the original, more snug Nanluogu Xiang-adjacent Mao Mao Chong. It can easily fit 70 customers, and the kitchen has also expanded, allowing this fresh venue to serve up far much more food compared to the limited range of pizzas at the old Mao Mao Chong. Those items include straightforward Chinese dishes like plum sauce drumsticks (RMB 28) and sanhuangji sliced boiled chicken (RMB 26), along with a range of simple Western fare.

Aside from the more abundant food and new beverages like the Peking Opera, Liu has also tinkered with an array of Champagne cocktails, one of the few varieties that hasn’t been overdone in Beijing’s increasingly crowded speakeasy scene. Liu is serving them for a cheap RMB 50 each.

Liu says his longtime hutong regulars are welcome to drop by and have their first round on the house at this new Guanghua Lu spot. And while those alleyway dwellers will likely have trouble adjusting to the sight of a slicker Mao Mao Chong, CBD locals will surely be stoked to finally have a trendy new cocktail bar in their comparatively parched part of town. Kyle Mullin
VESUVIO

AN EXTENSIVE WINE SELECTION MEETS DIY NEGRONIS

Located above popular Italian food haunt Bottega, the new comparatively lavish bar, Vesuvio, is small and cozy, with a stairwell and curtains separating the two establishments.

The focus at Vesuvio is on wines, with a menu sporting bottles from all over the world in a range of price categories (by the bottle or by the glass; there are more options for by-the-bottle purchases), and negronis. Said negronis are build-your-own, so you can choose gin, vermouth, and your bitters, for the perfect combination. To make the whole experience even more exclusive, there are a number of special vermouths available, such as Del Professore, hailing from Rome and are exclusively available in China here.

Prices for negronis range from RMB 75 to RMB 125 depending on what you add. We opt for Gin Mare (a gin with hint of rosemary from Spain), Del Professore, and Campari (the popular Italian bitter). The resulting drink was smokey, bitter, but still a little bit fruity. Although this combination comes to RMB 115, the well-balanced blend and special nature of the drink makes it worth the price.

Vesuvio also has a snack menu, featuring antipasti like bruschetta, polenta fries, and pane parmigiano. We sampled the tartara di manzo, featuring red wine button mushrooms topped with marinated beef tartare (RMB 78). These small bites (a portion of four) retain the initial chewiness of the mushroom casing before giving way to the crisp onion and smooth beef tartare center.

While bargain hunters should skip Vesuvio, it is a great addition to the city: warm and comfortable, with high-quality stiff drinks, all set above the city’s best pizza joint.

Margaux Schreurs

Daily 6pm-2am. 18 Sanlitun Lu, Chaoyang District (6416 1752)
Fast changeovers are nothing new in Nali Patio, where High Town has taken the space previously occupied by Particles Kitchen, less than a year after its opening.

The straightforward vibe begins with the black wall outside, and continues through to the 300-square-meter interior, which is divided into a bar area and a larger dining area by the brewing facilities.

Jenny Zhao, the manager of the space, which can fit approximately 130 people, tells us “High Town’s position on the second floor gives it a good view over the town. This, coupled with the fact that we consider beer to be a social lubricant, and getting high from beers is in our opinion one the best feelings, gave us the idea to name the space High Town.”

The menu is simple, with various popular comfort food options: six different sandwiches (RMB 58-68): beef, masala chicken, lamb, pork, prawn, and veggie; four salads (RMB 58-68); two pastas, pizza (RMB 68); and several other main dishes. You can also order snacks such as french fries, nachos, fried fish, and fried onion rings (RMB 18-48), if you’re looking for something a little greasier to go along with your beers. Irresistible cheesecake and lava cake round off the offerings, and most likely your belly too.

Twelve out of the 17 taps are currently in use. Nine of them sport imported beers (Kentucky Bourbon Barrel Ale, Kentucky IPA, No. 18 Milk Stout, Boulevard Tank 7 Farmhouse Ale, Firestone Ale 31, Finn Pilsner Lager, Foxes Rock Red Ale, Liefmans Cuvee Brut, and Cider Republic Apple Cider), plus another three brewed on site: Wheat Beer, High Town IPA, and Osmanthus Ale. Considering the good-quality craft beer and large portions of food, High Town is a great addition for group dining in Nali Patio.

Tracy Wang
WHO’D HAVE EVER THOUGHT THAT ONE OF BEIJING’S BEST NEW BARS WOULD BE HOUSED IN THE DINGY, TACKY CORRIDORS OF 3.3 MALL? YET THAT’S VERY MUCH THE CASE, AS MOKIHI NO. 3 ATTRACTS COCKTAIL ENTHUSIASTS TO THE UNLikelIEST OF LOCALES.

AS YOU MAKE YOUR WAY TO THE MALL’S SIXTH FLOOR, AND THROUGH THE BAR’S UNASSUMING ENTRYWAY, YOU’LL SUDDENLY FIND YOURSELF WHISKED TO THE PROHIBITION ERA, AS IF YOU’D JUST WALKED THROUGH A DRUNKARD’S RENDITION OF THE MAGIC WARDROBE IN THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA.

THAT RETRO ATMOSPHERE IS ATTAINED IN PART THROUGH THE BAR’S STRATEGIC PLACEMENT OF OLD PROPS (INCLUDING AN AGED LITTLE ROULETTE WHEEL ON THE BAR AND A DOWNRIGHT ANCIENT-LOOKING CASH REGISTER NESTLED NEXT TO THE BOTTLES OF BOOZE). THE MENU ALSO FITS THAT MOTIF, WITH ITS IMAGES OF 1920s AMERICA.

BETTER STILL ARE THE PRICES, WITH RMB 70 CLASSIC COCKTAILS AND ORIGINALS FROM RMB 80-90. ONE OF THE HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE LATTER LIST IS THE SCOFFLAW. ITS MIX OF RYE, DRY VERMOUTH, FRESH LEMON JUICE AND GRENA dine make it highly bitter, so much that it enchants your palate and is mixed expertly enough to avoid the wince-inducing bite of cruder establishments, instead going down nice and smooth.

THAT EXPERTISE SHOULDN’T COME AS A SURPRISE, HOWEVER, AS MOKIHI NO. 3 WAS OPENED AND IS RUN BY SEASONED BAR OWNER MOTO UCHIYAMA, BETTER KNOWN AS ONE OF THE MASTERMINDS BEHIND THE ORIGINAL MOKIHI AND OTHER POPULAR (BUT SINCE DECEASED) WATERING HOLES LIKE APOTHECARY AND TWILIGHT. BASED ON THE SERVICE, PRICE, AND BALANCED MIXING OF THE COCKTAILS SERVED DURING OUR RECENT VISIT, WE’RE SURE THAT MOKIHI NO. 3 WILL PROVE JUST AS POPULAR AS UCHIYAMA’S OTHER BARS AND HOPE THAT IT HAS THE SHELF LIFE TO BOOT. KYLE MULLIN
METALLICA
JAN 18 - “We’re off to never never land ...” With that raspy refrain, from the 1991 hit ‘Enter Sandman,’ Metallica frontman James Hetfield essentially proclaimed the new chart-topping hard rock era that the band would preside over. That reign continues 25 years later with their new bestselling album Hardwired ... to Self-Destruct, the tour for which brings them to a hotly anticipated Beijing gig. RMB 480-2,280. 7.30pm. Beijing LeSports Center
As the winter wind rattles your bones, and the frigid air leaves your skin feeling parched, it can be difficult to find comfort or relief. Thankfully Beijing and its surrounding areas play host to a number of cozy hot springs that can soothe your winter blues and melt away your icy aches. Below we list a few of our favorites.

**Chun Hui Yuan Resort**
Rose, milk, and red wine remedies are all available to augment the invitingly hot water at this Shunyi resort. Shops, restaurants, hotel rooms, and meeting rooms also feature in addition to its 13,000 square meters of hot springs. To get here, take bus 942 from Dongzhimen to Yuzhuang. From the stop it is a 2km walk or taxi ride. **Daily 9.30am-midnight.** Yuzhuang Village, Gaoliying, Shunyi District (6945 4433)

**Huaqing Hot Springs**
Situated in the northeastern part of Chaoyang, this popular hot spring resort is more conveniently located than some of its further-flung counterparts. It has 12 types of indoor and outdoor pools, along with nine private Japanese and Thai spa rooms, a sauna, hot stone kangs, and TCM massages. **Daily 9am-midnight.** 2 Lishui Qiao, Chaoyang District (8482 6665)

**Jinyu Fengshan Hot Springs Resort**
This new hot springs resort sprawls over 12,000 square meters and features more than 70 kinds of hot springs. Some pools are surrounded by lush forest backdrops, while others are nestled between mountain trees or housed indoors. The resort also has four-star facilities comprised of 310 guest rooms, a villa club,
and restaurants. To get here on public transport, take bus 886 to the stop labeled Fengshan Hot Springs. 
Open 24 hours. 10 Mangshan Road, Changping District (6071 1188)

金隅凤山温泉度假村: 昌平区蟒山路10号
Price: RMB 298 (except Tuesdays), RMB 198 (every Tuesday except public holidays until March 31)

**Jinhua Resort and Convention Center**
Billed as one of China’s four major ancient hot springs, Jinhua’s staff also like to tout the skin rejuvenating minerals in its water. Ten restaurants, 60 meeting rooms, and 1,200 guest rooms are also on hand. Get here by taking a cab (approximately RMB 25) from Tiantongyuan Bei on Line 5 or take bus 984 to its terminus. Daily 8.30am-midnight. Jiuhua Heights, Xiaotangshan, Changping District (5618 0908)

九华山庄温泉度假村：昌平区小汤山
Price: RMB 180 per person

**Longxi Hotspring Resort**
If spending hours soaking in hot water isn’t an indulgent enough experience for you, then you might want to opt for this luxurious resort. It’s rounded out by a golf course, as well as a glitzy recreation center. Take bus 53, 84, or 122 to Guang’anmen Nan and then transfer to 937 to Guaxiang Bridge. Daily 9am-2am. 8 Shunjing Lu, Panggezhuang, Daxing District (8928 2222)

龙熙温泉度假酒店：大兴区庞各庄顺景路8号
Price: RMB 239 (weekends), RMB 199 (weekdays). Hotel stays start at RMB 1,500
If you’ve ever bought a gym membership only to find 12 months have passed and you can’t remember the last time you actually went, then Beijing’s new crop of fitness studios could be for you. Instead of flogging you a membership and leaving you to your own devices, they focus on interactive classes designed to make you feel like part of a community, whether that community is sweaty spinning fanatics or serene yogis. Over the next few pages, take a look at our rundown of Beijing’s best new fitness studios. All four studios allow you to view, purchase, and book classes either via WeChat or their app.

**Glo Kitchen + Fitness**

Glo is a CrossFit box with a difference, the difference being that they also have a café onsite serving healthy (often paleo or gluten free) meals so you can refuel after your WOD (that’s workout of the day to you and me). In addition to CrossFit at varying levels – beginners are very much welcome – they also offer yoga and stretching classes. Glo’s original CrossFit box is in Guanghua Lu Soho, but as of December 2016 they have opened a second location in Dawang Lu.

Individual class: RMB 150

**Unit 103A, Guanghua Lu Soho,**
22 Guanghua Lu, Chaoyang District (5385 4960)

朝阳区光华路22号光华路Soho1期103A

WeChat: glo-for-it
SpaceCycle

The clue to SpaceCycle’s signature offering is in the name: upbeat spin classes set to the latest, greatest beats. It’s not all about spin, however. SpaceCycle also offer barre classes at varying levels of intensity and core-focused yoga classes. With frequent one-off events, including artist spotlights and live DJ battles, you’re unlikely to get bored with classes here. Members also get discounts at local health brands like Tribe Organic and Juice By Melissa.

Individual class: RMB 258

N4-40A, 4/F, Taikoo Li North, Chaoyang District (8451 6101)
朝阳区太古里北区4层N4-40A

WeChat: spacecycle
Ms. Uptown

This women-only gym offers energetic and uplifting yoga, pilates, dance, and functional training classes in a holistic environment. Small but using its space well, the studio is fully equipped with shower and changing facilities, a free gym area, and even an adjacent café. Many of Ms. Uptown’s instructors speak English, making it a great option if you don’t feel confident following the occasional instruction in Chinese.

Individual class: RMB 199

B1-151, Tower A, Galaxy Soho, 2 Nanzhugan Hutong,
Dongcheng District (186 1189 4423)

WeChat: msuptown

尚城健身
Inspired by America’s cult-like Soul Cycle, GuCycle sells its 45-minute spin classes as a “party on a bike,” with ever-changing playlists and a funky black-lit studio. Set smack bang in the middle of the CBD (so there’s no excuse to skip that after-work class), GuCycle only uses upmarket Schwinn stationary bikes and Shimano shoes. If you’re new to spinning, they offer a GuCycle Light class to help you find your form and rhythm.

Individual class: RMB 180

Room 32, 1/F, Fraser Suites, 10 Jintong Xilu, Chaoyang District (4000 805 181)

朝阳区金桐西路10号远洋光华国际D座1层32室

WeChat: gucycleapp
Lunar New Year in Beijing: Dumplings, bad TV, a heady mix of alcohol and cheap explosives, and, of course, temple fairs. Depending on the last temple fair you visited, these annual events might seem like an excellent window into local custom where people from all walks of life gather like clouds to ring in the new Lunar year, or a dangerously overcrowded venue offering overpriced dribbly food, performances reliant more on volume than talent, and rows of rigged carniv games.

But wherever you land on the temple fair divide, they are an indelible part of Beijing’s cultural history. Today’s New Year festivals are the last vestiges of an important system of markets and fairs which were a regular part of the city’s commercial and religious calendar.

During the imperial era, markets rotated throughout the year among the city’s Daoist and Buddhist temples. Two important markets which date back to the 15th century were at Longfusi, near the Dongsi neighborhood, and Huguosi, on the other side of the city in the Xisi area. Longfusi held markets on the 9th and 10th of each month alternating with Huguosi, where the markets met on the 7th and 8th. Other temples throughout the city also held regular monthly markets and fairs. These were opportunities for residents to shop, meet friends for tea, or catch an opera. The festivals also provided a steady source of revenue for the temple, and there is evidence of competition between religious institutions over who could attract the most people to their periodic markets.

The festival calendar reached its annual zenith during the Lunar New Year festival. One of the liveliest fairs each year took place in Changdian, an open area in Liulichang just to the southeast of Qianmen. Liulichang was long known for its shops of books, paintings, and antiques, and scholars knew that the Changdian Festival was a great time to buy that hard to locate Ming manuscript while also munching on candied hawberries (tang hulu).

Changdian wasn’t the only fair to capitalize on a neighborhood’s reputation for a particular product. In the days leading up the lantern festival (held annually on the 15th day of the Lunar New Year), Beijingers would head over to the glittering stalls and shops of the appropriately named Dengshikou located outside the eastern gate of the Imperial City. There they would buy lanterns and supplies to decorate courtyards or just browse while strolling along the nearby lanes, marveling at the exquisite colorful lights on display.

While many people came to the festivals to shop, others came to be entertained. Regular performances during the Lunar New Year fairs included knife-throwers, acrobats jumping through flaming hoops, sword swallowing, and the juggling of sharp or highly flammable objects. Then, as now, Beijing’s residents never let a little thing like safety get in the way of a good time.

There were also less dangerous amusements as well: teams kicking the jianzi (the hacky-sack shuttlecock...
The History Behind Spring Festival’s Most Crowded Tradition

so beloved by retirees in today’s parks), peep shows, stilt-walkers, and lion and dragon dancers. The latter could also be a perilous gig for the performers. It was not unheard of for the audience to throw firecrackers or hot objects at the dancers to make the lion or dragon “appear more lively.”

Operas, plays, and other musical performances were always a highlight. Today, many consider attending indoor staged renditions of Peking Opera to be somewhat akin to listening to cats being waterboarded. But Peking Opera, like the bagpipes, was always meant to be more of an outdoor performance art. It was delivered on stages set above surging noisy crowds, more like what one would expect at Bonnaroo rather than the local opera house.

The temple fairs also offered a range of services, some specific to welcoming in the new year. There were fortune tellers, itinerant dentists, pharmacists, professional letter writers, and seal carvers. The festivals were also a high point on the calendars for Beijing’s criminal classes. Gambling was a favorite activity for many attendees who might also take a moment to light incense in honor of a particularly lucky icon as added insurance for that afternoon’s games of chance.

Praying for luck at the cricket fights wasn’t the only religious element to the fairs of course. In the days leading up to the celebration, temple clergy would wash images, perform sacrifices and carry out rituals to purify the space and to exorcise the temple of any unwanted spirits or hungry ghosts. In the 19th and 20th centuries, missionaries would sometimes try and infiltrate the fairs, setting up tents to preach the gospel to a crowd perhaps side-by-side with beggars and the indigent burning bundles of incense in a hope to attract the needed blessings of the God of Wealth.

Today’s temple fairs are a link to this past. While they can be crowded and the goods, food, and entertainment on offer a bit different, attending a temple fair is one way today’s Beijingers, foreigners and Chinese alike, can take part in an activity which has echoed through our city for centuries. Jeremiah Jenne
Introducing the people who matter

MEET

IMPRINT TATTOO // ZHUANG YATING // GIANLUIGI PERRONE // OPEN DOORS

WORLD MUSIC STAR VIEUX FARKA TOURÉ
JAN 15 - He’s been called the Hendrix of the Sahara, and for good reason. Over the course of seven albums, Mali-born guitarist and songwriter Vieux Farka Touré has dazzled world music fans with his “ethereal, filigree guitar picking” (as the Boston Phoenix put it). Vieux is the son of fellow Malian guitarist and Grammy winner Ali Farka Touré, and he is quickly gaining on his father’s legendary track record, receiving both critical acclaim as well as invitations to perform at major gigs like the opening ceremony of the 2010 FIFA World Cup, where he shared the bill with Shakira and Alicia Keys. RMB 150, RMB 100 (presale). 8.30pm. Yugong Yishan
In bustling Sanlitun, Imprint Tattoo’s brightly lit, modern interior doesn’t exactly bring to mind a traditional tattoo studio. With four professional, experienced tattoo artists, top-quality instruments, and a relaxing atmosphere, Imprint Tattoo is not just a place to get an impeccable tattoo, but also a place to share art and break people’s preconceptions of the tattoo industry. We spoke to the team about current trends in the tattoo industry.

**What is the tattoo industry like in Beijing? Has it changed a lot in recent years?**

It has only been a decade since the idea of tattoos started spreading in Beijing. With the development of the economy and changing consumption habits, the tattoo industry in China is developing rapidly. As tattoos have become less taboo and more popular, they are now seen as fashionable in China, becoming a popular art form.

**What style of tattoo does Imprint offer?**

There are four tattoo artists working in our studio, each with their own unique vision. Yu Haiyang has been working in the industry for nearly 20 years. He is one of the first generation of tattoo artists in China and has tattooed many Chinese actors, including Deng Chao, Han Geng, and Ding Zhicheng. He specializes in traditional styles, including Chinese ink, Japanese-inspired designs, and the New Traditional style.

Liao Lijia started in 2006 and his specialties are portraits and sketching. Over the years, he has participated in an *Esquire* cover shoot, joined the Perth Tattoo and Body Art Expo in 2014, visited Melbourne’s Tattoo Art Exhibition in 2015, and did arm tattoos for Nicolas Cage in 2012 and 2013.

Xi Jianhong started painting when he was younger and entered the tattoo industry in the 1990s. He is good at traditional styles and sketching, and has created tattoo for famous Chinese badminton player Lin Dan.

Last but not least, young female tattoo artist Zheng Hengchen became professional in 2014 and is already a specialist in both the New School and Old School style, which are popular among young Chinese people.

**What sets Imprint apart from other Beijing tattoo studios?**

For many people, tattoo studios are dim, dark, and dirty, and customers often don’t feel comfortable visiting them. We want to change this stereotype by providing genuinely good service, as well as a bright and clean atmosphere. We want to encourage people to see tattoos as art. We would never ask customers to make a snap decision on a tattoo; a tattoo should represent a happy memory of youth, a relationship or faith. Everyone is different and as a result, every tattoo is different.

**How long in advance do people need to make an appointment? How much does a tattoo cost?**

It’s normally best to make a reservation at least a week in advance, to make sure that the tattoo artists have enough time to design. You need to pay a deposit of RMB 1,000 when making an appointment, then choose your tattoo artist, then make another appointment to have the tattoo done.

The minimum charge is RMB 1,000, and if the tattoo takes more than half an hour, an additional RMB 2,000 per each hour thereafter.
A CHAT WITH

A CHAT WITH ZHUANG YATING
5LMEET CONSULTANT AND FOUNDER OF DESIGN STARTUP WENYUJIAMENG
By Tracy Wang

Dongsi Jiutiao co-working space 5LMeet is composed of a multitude of shops sharing one communal space, including a café and bakery, MissC Boutique; a gym, Community Sports; restaurant and food incubator, Hatchery; a bookstore, Unread; a 24-hour self-service convenience store, 15 Minutes Delivery; an app, Joyrun; an open working area in the basement; a living space; a 400-square-meter rooftop garden; and plenty of room for pop-up events.

The 5LMeet project is the branchchild of Mao Daqing, founder of UrWork, and designed by Zhuang Yating, founder of Wenyijiameng, and author of several bestselling books. We sat down with Zhuang Yating to discuss how the project came about.

What is the aim and motivation behind Wenyijiameng, your first startup company?
Many young people want to open their own shop or café having traveled around the world and seeing successful business in other countries, but finding that they have limited options to do so in their own city. We act as consultants to help them to open their own shop or café.

Our team is made up of a number of lifestyle editors, who have an insight into the lifestyle market, from down-to-earth products to brand luxury. We collated their advice and published a series of books called Storelab.

Could you introduce the 5Lmeet project?
The five “Ls” of 5L stand for livable, linked, liberal, lively, and landscape. Like most Beijingers within the second ring road, I live in the hutongs. For me, the hutongs represent authentic life within the big city. However, hutongs can’t meet the needs of the young generation in terms of living standards; a lot of people won’t accept public toilets, and basic sanitation facilities are not good enough, especially since people need larger spaces to socialize. For this project, we first considered what young people need, then we upgraded our hutong space according to those needs. Within that, we added quality food and drink options, lifestyle brands, and a nice living area.

What is your plan for the near future?
We would like to cooperate with more venues. Our dream is to have our own vibrant city block in every city. We would like to work with the urban planning authorities, bring promising young programs to the neighborhood, and combine the art and commercial worlds.
And the winner is …"

Movie buffs will instantly recognize that phrase, which is uttered by every presenter before they hand out Oscar trophies. And as the February 26 date for this year’s 88th Academy Awards ceremony draws near, Beijing-based, Italy-born film lover Gianluigi Perrone takes our Oscar-themed Mastermind quiz. A screenwriter and filmmaker in his own right, Perrone is currently funding a VR studio called Polyhedron, in order to explore how high-tech headsets can advance cinema.

1. Even though the Oscar-winning film *The Last Emperor* (1987) is about the Chinese royal Puyi, it was actually helmed by which director from your Italian homeland?
   Bernardo Bertolucci. √

2. Which actor of Italian descent won the Academy Award in 1990 for his role in *Goodfellas*?
   Joe Pesci as Tommy. √

3. Which 1974 film, about a very famous Italian-American family, won the Academy Award for Best Picture?

4. OK, wise guy. Anyway, your countryman Roberto Benigni won the Oscar for Best Director in 1999 for what film?
   Trick question. Benigni won with *La Vita e’ bella* (*Life is Beautiful*) for Best Actor. It also won Best Foreign Film. But Spielberg won Best Director that year (for *Saving Private Ryan*). √

5. Wow, you’re good. Ok, let’s switch topics from Italian artists. What actor starred in the back-to-back Best Picture winners *Gladiator* and another film?

6. What was the first animated film to be nominated for Best Picture?
   I would say a Disney movie. Maybe *Bambi*? ×

7. In 2006 *Crash* was awarded Best Picture. This was controversial, because many people thought another nominee should win. Name that film.
   *Brokeback Mountain*. *Crash* is basically a spoof of *Magnolia*. √

8. Who has hosted the most Oscar ceremonies?
   Billy Crystal, I guess. ×

9. Who was the first female director to win an Oscar for Best Director?
   Kathryn Bigelow. √

10. Hattie McDaniel was the first African American to win an Academy Award for her role in *Gone With the Wind*. What character did she play?
    Mammy, which actually became a sort of stereotype for black women. √

Final Score: 8/10

Answer Key:

1. Bernardo Bertolucci
2. Joe Pesci
3. *The Godfather*
4. *La Vita e’ bella*
5. Russell Crowe
6. *Bambi*
7. *Brokeback Mountain*
8. Billy Crystal
9. Kathryn Bigelow
10. Mammy

"And the winner is …"
Beijing’s LGBT scene is pretty active, but where do you go if you’re not surfing the usual apps or meeting people in bars? Hoping to fill this gap, and make it easier for the introverted or the technologically-challenged, Mark Bayles has taken on the Beijing chapter of Open Doors, started by Arizona-native and Shanghai-resident Andrew Shainker (known to his friends as AJ), organizing events throughout the city. We talked to him about Open Doors’ origins, organizing for all different types of people, and how you as a Beijinger can get involved.

Shainker started Open Doors in Phoenix, Arizona, as a means to organize social activities outside of the bar scene and by the time he decided to move to Shanghai it had over 1,000 members. As of last year, the Shanghai branch had accrued over 350 members.

When Bayles first touched down in Beijing, he surfed social website Meetup.com for Beijing LGBT events but was disappointed by the offerings. From there he took matters into his own hands and founded Open Doors Beijing with Shainker, as a way of creating their own social network and providing the opportunity for others to do the same. The group had over 280 members as of the end of 2016.

“We’ve got everything including picnics, hikes, walks, a lot of dinners, movies, museums, and more,” Bayles tells us. “We just had our first poker night last week. It’s been a really great experience for me because I’ve met people from all over the world. I’ve met Beijing residents and it’s really opened my eyes to how everyone seems to be totally the same: they just want to love, be loved, be happy.”

He adds: “I had one Chinese guy who told me that he had been a hermit after he broke up with his boyfriend about a year ago. After he saw my post on Meetup, and gave it a try, he has made a lot of friends and he’s doing a lot of activities with people he’s met through Open Doors, even outside of Meetup.”

This platform is important, Bayles argues, because not everyone is confident enough to walk into a bar or start swiping on an app. “I’m kind of an introvert, and just going to a bar or just walking up to somebody is intimidating. This has been a very good avenue for me, getting together with people with similar interests through the Meetup platform.”

Open Doors is always looking for more people to help organize events and get involved. If you are interested, get in touch with Open Doors at opendoorsaz@gmail.com. For upcoming events, check out their page meetup.com/opendoorsbeijing or their website opendoorsbeijing.com.
The fourth annual Maovember charity campaign teamed thousands of people in dozens of venues across six cities for two good causes, and the Beijinger was once again proud to act as media sponsor.

Maovember, founded in Beijing in 2013, is a play on mao, the currency worth a 10th of a yuan, and Movember, a global health awareness drive held each November. It is based on the idea that small donations lead to big results.

This year’s campaign raised just over 1.4 million mao or 140,000 yuan. The money will help furnish reading rooms at underfunded schools via The Library Project, which donates books and libraries to underfunded schools and orphanages, and train late-teen orphans for jobs in the coffee trade via GoodWorks, a fairtrade coffee and tea organization. The site maovember.com will be updated as the money is put to use.

Maovember raises funds through events with both a drink or food special and an activity such as a quiz, wine tasting, beer pong, corn toss, or poker tournament. It also collects money through personal donations and by selling signature Maovember pins.

The six-week campaign began at XL Bar & Restaurant in Beijing on October 14 and spread to dozens of venues, including those in cities such as Kunming, Shanghai, Taipei, Tianjin and Wuhu. Two events – MaovemBeer with 14 venues in five cities and The Mystery Wine Party with 11 food and drink suppliers – particularly showed the power of partnering for charity. The campaign finished on November 30 at Beer Mania with a contest to decide the fate of owner Thierry de Dobbeleer's substantial beard: it raised RMB 20,000 and saw him sacrifice his facial hair.

Venue and events sponsors included Arrow Factory Brewing, Beer Mania, Beijing International Ice Hockey (BIIH), the Beijinger Pizza Cup, Boxing Cat Brewery, Cafe de la Poste, Caravan, Cheers, Dirty Duck Pub, Eton Beijing, Faith Bar, Fubar, Great Leap Brewing, Hockey Bar, Jing-A Taproom, Irish Volunteer, Migas, Paddy O’Shea’s, Panda Brew, Pop-Up Beijing, Q Bar, Q Mex, Slow Boat Brewery, Taihu Landmark Tasting Room, The Turtle, Tiki Bungalow, WE Brewery, and XL Bar & Restaurant.

Maovember Pin sponsors included Beer Mania, BIIH, Cafe de la Poste, Caravan, Cheers, Irish Volunteer, Home Plate BBQ, Paddy O’Shea’s, Punjabi, and Sherpa’s.


Last, but certainly not least, individuals making substantial donations included Ailish, Dustin Merrett, Hannah, James Shepheard, Jen Ambrose, Jona, Keith Robinson, Kelvin Tam, Martin Winchell, Mike Peters, Neil Holt, Patrick Cranley, Peter Spiranac, and Steven Schwankert.

The members of the Maovember 2016 steering committee were Alex Jennings, Edouard Simon, Jim Boyce, Paul Rochon, Steven Schwankert, and Zach Lewison. Among those that have participated in all four Maovembers are Dave ‘Bob’ Gaspar, formerly of The Brick and Home Plate BBQ but now in Taipei where he organized an event, Julian Tavalin, formerly of Tavalin Bagel but now in Belarus where he still designs the annual pin, Jim Boyce, who handles general coordination and the website, and Cheers, Irish Volunteer, and Paddy O’Shea’s.
Krish Raghav, when not helping fill up Beijing’s gig calendar with top-notch foreign acts as the Content and Media Coordinator for China-based gig promoters Split Works, is busy doodling away for his hobby of love: comics. We take a look at the musical road that led him to work in promotion, including which coveted bands he’d choose for an ultimate five-track playlist. Also, keep an eye out for Raghav at Split Works’ January 15 show at Yugong Yishan, in which Malian guitarist Vieux Farka Touré – son of the legendary Ali Farka Touré – promises to bring warmth to a frigid Beijing.

What was the first record you ever bought?
It was a cassette. Early 90s. The Indian “hip-hop” artist Baba Sehgal’s breakout album, Thanda Thanda Paani, which means ‘Cold Cold Water,’ and contained a barely disguised ripoff of Vanilla Ice’s ‘Ice Ice Baby.’

It was slim pickings for music heads in that time – MTV had just entered India, and they’d chosen the bubblegum sounds of what was then called Indipop to be their mainstay (listen to Alisha Chinai’s ‘Made in India’ for the best (worst) example of this era).

But despite my snobbery, I realize retrospectively that it was Indipop that created a market for alternative music in India, beyond Bollywood.

Baba Sehgal, meanwhile, has now re-emerged as a minor Twitter celebrity.

What was the first concert you saw? How did it go?
My family was deeply embedded in the Tamil classical music scene, and I went to many many Carnatic music concerts early in life. It’s a refined, tasteful, intellectual scene – which meant it was also spectacularly boring for kids like me. It’s a shame that my family’s sincere efforts at molding me into a cultured classical music kid backfired so soundly.

Which touring band has changed your life/inspired you more than any other?
Back in the late 2000s, as a young journalist in India, I followed the Bangalore alternative band Lounge Piranha (now defunct) very closely – they were crowdfunding their own gigs in a country with barely any infrastructure for live music, they did DIY tours and self-published their own (excellent) albums. The drummer (who publishes as Appupen) also drew comics, which was a major inspiration for my own drawings.

Who is the one musician/band you’d love to book in Beijing?
So many. I’d love to see the Indonesian folk-rock band Trees and the Wild, the Japanese groups Afrirampo, Radwimps, and Sakanaction, the Korean trio Asian Chairs, the Beirut band Alif, the Pakistani musician Slowspin, the Indian band Sky Rabbit, and the Siberian garage-rock band Jack Wood.

I’m also dying to see some Afrobeat and space jazz up here … so, Kamasi Washington, The Comet is Coming, Idris Ackamoor and the Pyramids, Soil and Pimp Sessions, Seun Kuti and the Egypt 80. I think Beijing would like all of them.

By Tom Arnstein

PLAYLIST

Playlist (Your Top Five Songs)

‘Sar Jo Tera Chakraye’ by Mohd Rafi [From the film Pyaasa, 1957, India]
‘Space Carnival’ by The Comet is Coming [2016, UK]
‘Godspeed’ by .gif [2016, Singapore]
少年少女 ‘Boys and Girls’ by Jagatara [1987, Japan]
‘Djin’ by Mashrou Leila [2015, Beirut]
EVERY DETAIL IS CRAFTED, EVERY MOMENT HEARTFELT

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or call +86 (022) 2716 6688
Due to a rip in the space-time continuum caused by a shoddily-built time machine we bought on Singles Day, we are able to bring you this exclusive article from the Beijinger January 2068 issue:

We find him down at the park with the other old-timers, hands moving in mysterious, time-honored patterns. We are eventually able to persuade Lao Yang to take off his VR headset and talk to us about his memories of Beijing and the world in the early 21st century.

“Ah, those were the days!” he wheezes. “Beijing was a boomtown, and if you were rich, you let everyone know by buying a ‘car’.”

‘Cars’ were metal boxes in which old Beijingers would sit in long lines, sometimes for hours at a time, beeping their horns and burning up the last of the world’s fossil fuels. But not everything was high tech.

“The toilet facilities were pretty basic,” Lao Yang admits. “Can you believe we still had some old-fashioned Western-style ‘sitties’? Of course that was before science proved the health benefits of squatting. And drinking warm water.”

It’s hard to imagine now, but Lao Yang came to Beijing as a fresh-faced young dreamer, planning to spend a year or two here before returning home to impress women with his travel anecdotes. However, like many expats, he was stranded in Beijing following the collapse of Western civilization.

“It all began with President Trump,” he recalls. “After his shock election, the Millennials organized an armed uprising. However, they wouldn’t fight until they’d been given a ‘safe space’, and by the time they’d agreed what pronouns to use for each other they were rounded up and captured by a couple of rednecks with AK47s and a pickup.”

“President Trump promised to make the US as successful as his businesses,” Lao Yang continues, “and he lived up to his promise when the entire country went bankrupt within six months. Trump then relaunched with a new strategy of selling the rights to the name ‘America’ to other countries, but the value of the brand was somewhat diminished by his insistence on expelling everyone who was a different color to himself. Eventually, the whole population of the USA consisted of Trump, Arnold Schwarzenegger, and some Oompah-Loompahs, surrounded by a giant wall. The rest of the country heaved a collective sigh of relief when it was invaded and annexed by Cuba.”

America was not the only country facing crisis, Lao Yang tells us.

“After Britain left the European Union, the entire City of London rose into the air on a cushion of Champagne bubbles, and flew over to land on top of Frankfurt, pausing only for the bankers and stockbrokers to symbolically urinate over the edge onto the white cliffs of Dover, ‘because,’ as they explained, ‘we can!’ The government’s plan to replace its financial sector by exporting marmalade and shortbread was unsuccessful, and they were eventually reduced to auctioning off the Queen.”

The decline of the West transformed the sporting world, too.

“By the mid-2020s, China was the only country that could still afford to host major sporting events,” Lao Yang recalls. “The 2030 Guangzhou Winter Olympics were hailed as a qualified success – most commentators reckoned that replacing snow with packing peanuts had been a bold but ultimately failed experiment. Everyone agreed though that hockey was vastly improved by cutting out all that sliding around on ice, and stripping it down to its essentials: heavily armored men whacking each other with sticks.”

He is rambling, so we show him some pictures of old Beijing.

“Yes,” he says, “the city looked very different then. There were still some of those old places where people used to hang out, work and eat communally – what were they called? – oh yes, ‘malls.’ Nowadays, of course, we just put on our headsets and go shopping on Taobao.”

“Which reminds me, I have to go now,” Lao Yang says with an impish smile. “I have a date with a hot widow in the café of Virtual Ikea.”

We leave Lao Yang with a smile on his wrinkled old face, and try not to imagine what he’s doing with his hands.
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