



## **Restaurants, Pubs & Bars**

### **General Sector Specific**

The dining experience for Chinese Visitors to the UK is a key element of their overall visit satisfaction. This varies enormously depending on the type of visit, time schedule, availability etc.

In general Chinese guests are keen to experience new and different styles of eating and dishes but also like a degree of familiarity to help to enjoy their travel experience and as a fallback option.

For longer stay guests or guests on a tour it would not be unusual to seek out Chinese cuisine after a couple of days of Western style eating and operators can assist by providing Chinese cuisine themselves or recommending suitable alternative local venues. Chinese travellers are becoming increasingly interested in cuisine and visiting destinations for gastronomy experiences, yet in keeping with most travellers also seek the familiar.

Whilst the food and dining experience of Chinese travellers is normally a secondary experience of their travel trip it plays an important part in their wellbeing and sense of positive tourist satisfaction, so it is worth making the effort to try to meet expectations.

In China food in general, and eating and drinking together, is a very important part of the culture and an excellent way of getting together with friends and enjoying life.

Chinese rarely eat out alone and Chinese restaurant experiences differ from the West in that they are loud and noisy environments as diners are normally in groups and sharing dishes. They are also very family friendly environments.

Chinese guests are very adaptable, however where possible it can help to promote a more positive experience to offer some familiar dishes or products to Chinese visitors. Food quality, cleanliness, value for money, speed of service, friendliness of service staff and overall meal experience are important considerations to visitors.

Ideally groups should be seated together and their meals served all at the same time. If this is not possible (for example due to table availability or kitchen production restrictions) then explain to the group leader in advance and agree a suitable alternative arrangement e.g. serve in several smaller groups to ensure food quality. It is much better to manage expectations in advance and to explain and avoid any disappointments.

The tour guides role is very important and a quality tour guide should be able to give clear explanations about everything including food and food service to their group. At the very least they

should be expected to ensure the groups wellbeing and satisfaction and deal with any issues or shortcomings as soon as they arise.

### **Meal Times**

In China meal times tend to be earlier than in the West so operators need to be aware and prepare accordingly. Tour groups with busy itineraries will often require very early starts and quick service.

Restaurants in China are loud and noisy, often with lots of toasting and loud talking. Also groups like to be served together and take photographs of the food to show friends and family back home. You may wish to consider providing a separate area of the restaurant for Chinese tour/group guests so that they can sit together and feel more comfortable.

Typically Chinese guests eat three regular meals a day and like to start the day with a cooked or hot breakfast. Continental breakfast is not well received and every effort should be made to provide Chinese guests with a hot breakfast, certainly at the very least hot water for tea, instant noodles, etc.

**Typical meal times** – Breakfast from 6.30 am; Lunch from 11.30 am; Dinner from 6pm.

### **Meals & Menus**

**Breakfast** is an important meal for Chinese and they prefer a hot breakfast. English buffet breakfast items such as Boiled eggs, fried eggs, bacon, toast, fruit juices and cereals are familiar and acceptable to Chinese visitors less so are sausages, black pudding and scrambled egg.

Normal milk is acceptable but served warm. If possible try to offer soya milk. In general Chinese guests do not like cold drinks and will often avoid drinks with ice in them.

It is better to offer Hot water and a range of tea bags for guests to make their own drinks to suit. English Tea (normally taken black), Chinese Green Tea and Chinese Jasmine Tea are popular hot drinks or guests may prefer just to have hot water on its own or to use with their own preference tea bags from home.

Generally rice (for southern Chinese) and Noodles (for Northern Chinese) are in integral part of the diet and ideally should be available at all times if possible (including breakfast). This way guests who are unfamiliar with Western food will at least have a familiar dish to fall back upon.

If you have regular Chinese visitors and groups consider offering rice porridge - 粥 zhou or 稀饭 xi fan, also known as Congee (rice porridge), which is popular across the whole of South Asia and often served with a wide range of accompaniments- some sweet (Northern China) and some savoury (Southern China) including meat, vegetables, Chinese pickled vegetables and sauces.

For more advanced offerings consider Baozi (Chinese dumplings/steamed buns) or Jiaozi (lighter steamed dumplings) –numerous recipes and cooking guidance available on various websites.

It is good practice to have chopsticks available even when serving Western Food – disposable ones are available from a wide range of suppliers and local Chinese supermarkets.



Baozi



Jiaozi



Rice Porridge (Congee)

## **Menus**

In China menus are very extensive and most often have pictures of each dish.

Importantly to increase Chinese visitor participation in UK restaurants wherever possible it is recommended to provide menus with pictures of the dishes and a short explanation in Chinese. Even experienced travellers and Chinese living in the UK find Western menus difficult to understand and a significant barrier to entry.

Also it is important to be succinct in the descriptions and not to use French culinary terms or other language terms which are unlikely to be understood. An innovative option may be to produce a menu with pictures for tablet or mobile devices that can be easily updated and avoid printing costs.

In general Chinese prefer lighter style meals such as white meat, green vegetables and rice/noodles, salads and fruits, typically with smaller portions of meat than normally served in Western portions. Vegetables are an important healthy part of the meal for Chinese and they prefer green leaf type e.g. spring greens or green beans. Your local Chinese supermarket will stock a range of Chinese vegetables if you wish to expand your offering.

Soups tend to be clear and often served with vegetables, meat or noodles. Try to avoid serving rich creamy soups.

Chinese guests are unlikely to be used to large amounts of deep fried food or strong sauces such as barbeque sauce served with big portions of meat. This should be avoided on fixed menu offerings where possible or offered in smaller more delicate portions.

Desserts in Chinese Restaurants tend to be simply fresh Fruit or fruit based. Typical UK puddings portions and cakes are often seen as very rich, filling and sweet for Chinese guests although afternoon tea as an experience for Chinese visitors to the UK is very popular.

## **Private Dining**

Chinese guests, particularly business groups, may request private dining facilities. This is typical when conducting business meetings or entertaining visitors in China. If a separate room is unavailable then portioning off a section of the restaurant with screens may be a practical alternative to offer to the guests.

## **Service Charges & Tipping**

This is not normal practice in China so if service charges are applicable and relevant they need to be clearly explained in advance order to avoid any misunderstandings.

## **Drinks**

Chinese are unfamiliar with visiting a Bar solely for the purpose of drinking as traditionally all drinking takes place with eating in China. Even Chinese who have been in the UK studying or working do not feel comfortable in these situations, especially standing at a bar, and are only likely to visit a pub to drink with a group of friends or when invited .

This makes it particularly hard for them to visit pubs and feel comfortable despite such visits being high on their wish list of cultural experiences when visiting the UK.

Many Chinese visitors have identified a traditional “**British Pub**” visit as something to experience when visiting the UK from their social media and internet research before leaving China.

To encourage a positive experience consider offering welcome signage in Chinese and table service. Consider offering some familiar snacks with the drinks, offering table service for drinks, Visit Britain Great China Welcome welcoming signs in Chinese language, small Chinese flag or Visit Britain Great China Welcome logo in the window or entrance etc, to try to create as welcoming an experience as possible.

Also your local Confucius Institute may be willing to assist promoting your premises to Chinese visitors and making it more China welcoming. There are several branches around the UK offering language courses and the Confucius Business Institutes in Leeds and London are there to specifically help business become more China welcoming and to develop understanding of the Chinese culture.

Chinese Visitors are more likely to be comfortable visiting pubs at lunchtime and early evening where there is food served and space to sit down or stand with friends in a group and are particularly keen to visit historic or traditional venues with interesting features and décor.

If your premises have interesting historical, traditional or local interest features then make sure that you promote these in Chinese language.

**Red Wine** is increasing in popularity in China and Beer is a popular drink so Chinese guests will be interested to try these products in the UK, particularly if there is some local relevance or story attached to them.

In China “**white wine** “ is the name given to a strong Chinese spirit called Baijiu and when offering Western white wine it is best to proceed with the country name ( e.g. French white wine), to avoid any misunderstanding.

When serving water Chinese guests will often ask for it served warm or hot. If it is served cold or at room temperature then they are unlikely to want it served with ice.