

# Eating ■

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# Eating

Two pointed sticks of ivory or ebony, do the office of knife and fork; their meats are cut into small square pieces, and served up in bowls; their soups are excellent, but they use no spoons; so that after sipping the thin, the grosser parts of it are directed to mouth by their chopsticks.

An Historical Account of the Embassy to the Emperor of China, Sir George Staunton (1797).

It's hard to overstate the pleasure the Chinese take in eating. Meal times in China are unrestrained, raucous affairs, where voices are raised along with glasses and no one stands on ceremony. The dishes arrive in waves and as soon as they hit the table, everyone starts digging in with a gusto that will startle those who aren't aware of China's not-too-distant history of famines and food shortages. Běijīng's restaurants can seem like organised chaos, as the *fúwùyuan* (waiters) weave around packed tables, the decibel level goes through the roof and stray debris from the meal ends up on the floor.

In the past, food, or the lack of it, was an absolute obsession for the Chinese. The older generation still greet each other with the phrase '*nǐ chī fàn le ma?*' (literally, 'have you eaten rice yet?') Now, dining out is the main social activity for the Chinese. It's over meals that the Chinese hold family reunions, hang out with friends, romance each other or do business.

Restaurants are where you'll find the Chinese at their most relaxed and convivial. Big groups of people are seated around circular tables, dishes are communal, diners fill up other people's glasses before their own, toast each other liberally and there's always a competition to pay the bill.

Běijīng's restaurant scene has changed dramatically in recent years, as rising incomes and the influx of foreigners have transformed the city into a haven of fine dining. Běijīng

## STREET FOOD BĚIJĪNG STYLE

Off the main roads and in Běijīng's alleys is a world teeming with steaming food stalls and eateries buzzing with activity. Be adventurous and eat this way, and you will be dining as most Běijīngers do.

Breakfast can be easily catered for with a *yóutiáo* (油条; deep-fried dough stick), a sip of *dòuzhī* (豆汁; bean curd drink) or a bowl of *zhōu* (粥; rice porridge). Other snacks include the crunchy, pancake-like and filling *jiānbǐng* (煎饼); *jiānbǐng* vendors are easily spotted as they cook from tricycle-mounted white painted wooden stalls where pancakes are fried on a large circular griddle. The heavy meat-filled *ròubǐng* (肉饼; cooked bread filled with finely chopped pork) are lifesavers and very cheap. A handy vegetarian option is *jiūcài bǐng* (韭菜饼; bread stuffed with cabbage, chives, leek or fennel and egg). *Dàbǐng* (大饼; a chunk of round, unleavened bread sprinkled with sesame seeds) can be found everywhere and of course there's *mántou* (馒头; steamed bread). *Málà tàng* (麻辣烫) is a spicy noodle soup (very warming in winter) with chunks of *dòufu* (豆腐; tofu), cabbage and other veggies – choose your own ingredients from the trays. Also look out for *ròu jiāmó* (肉夹馍), a scrumptious open-your-mouth-wide bun filled with diced lamb, chilli and garlic shoots. Another must are *kǎo yángrou chuàn* (烤羊肉串; lamb kebabs), without a doubt Běijīng's favourite cheap snack. You can find kebab chefs all over town; try the more expensive **Donghuamen Night Market** (p128), **Wangfujing Snack Street** (p124) or cheaper options that are hidden away down Běijīng's alleyways (look for the billowing plumes of smoke), where you can pick up a skewer for between ¥0.50 and ¥1. If you want your kebabs spicy ask for *là* (辣); if you don't, ask for *bù là* (不辣). Vendors usually belong to either the Muslim *Huí* or Uyghur minority.

*Hóngshǔ* (红薯; baked sweet potatoes) are cheap, filling snacks (¥2) sold at street stalls throughout the city during winter. Vendors attach oil drums to their bikes which have been converted into mobile ovens. Choose a nice soft sweet potato and the vendor will weigh it and tell you how much it costs.

cuisine (京菜; *jīngcài*) is one of the four major Chinese styles of cooking (p40), so there's no shortage of local specialities for visitors to enjoy, but you can find food from every region of China here. Then there is the ever-increasing number of restaurants that take their inspiration from all the world's continents. If you think that eating out in Běijīng just means the obligatory visit to a Peking duck restaurant, then you're in for a pleasant surprise.

The finest Chinese chefs gravitate to Běijīng, making the capital the best place in the country to sample the huge variety of China's cuisines. Foreign chefs too, have descended on the city in droves. With all the new money sloshing around town, restaurants are opening every week to cater for the demand. And you don't have to travel very far to find them – most can be found within the Second Ring Rd and reaching even the most far-flung does not involve a major expedition. The main restaurant neighbourhoods are *Dōngchéng*, *Cháoyáng* and *Chóngwén* and South *Chaoyang*.

Even the most picky or jaded diner will find something to satisfy them here, so do as the locals do and pick up those chopsticks and dive in. Some of your most memorable Běijīng experiences will be when you're sitting around the dining table.

## Opening Hours

Běijīng restaurants are generally open from around 10am to 11pm. Some establishments shut after lunch and reopen at 5pm or 6pm. Generally, the Chinese eat much earlier than Westerners, lunching at around midday and having dinner about 6pm. Cafés open, and sometimes, shut earlier. All the cafés in this chapter have wireless access.

## How Much?

Despite the rich aromas around town, you won't pay through the nose for it all. One of the joys of Běijīng is that eating out is an inexpensive experience. But if you want to splash out, then there are plenty of upmarket places which will be happy to take your cash.

The restaurants listed below cater to all budgets. At cheap eateries, meals (for one) will cost less than ¥50, midrange dining options will cost between ¥50 to ¥100 and top-end choices more than ¥100.

Credit cards are still only accepted at most midrange hotel restaurants and the most expensive eateries. If you're dining anywhere else, make sure you have enough money on you.

Be warned that some (but by no means all) restaurants in tourist areas still fob off foreigners with an English menu (英文菜单; *yīngwén càidān*) with prices in excess of the Chinese menu. Unfortunately, deciphering the Chinese menu (中文菜单; *zhōngwén càidān*) will require either assistance or Chinese reading skills. But more and more places have picture and/or English menus now. All restaurants serving foreign food have English menus. Generally, very few waiting staff will be able to speak any English, no matter how expensive the restaurant is. Service too, can be erratic and/or lackadaisical.

If your preferred tittle is wine, then restaurants in Běijīng can be a financial challenge. The Chinese tend to drink beer or *báijiǔ*, which is a super-strong white spirit, with their meals. Some restaurants will stock domestic wines, like Great Wall, but many won't. In places that do have foreign wines, you can expect to pay well over the odds for a bottle.

A good option is to visit one of the supermarkets or Western delis listed later in this chapter and choose your own wine before going out to eat. Most places are happy for you to bring your own bottle and many won't charge a corkage fee.

## PRICE GUIDE FOR RESTAURANTS

The following guide is for one person

Y	up to ¥50
YY	¥50-100
YYY	¥100-200
YYYY	over ¥200

# CHONGWEN & SOUTH CHAOYANG

## 崇文、朝阳南

Busy with shoppers and tourists alike, these districts are packed with dining options and have places to suit all budgets. You can dine in style at any of the top-end hotels that gather along Chang'an Jie or delve into the areas around the embassy district of Jianguomen for reliably good food. Some of Beijing's most well known Peking duck restaurants can be found around the bustling Qianmen district and there are some excellent restaurants located in the catchment area of the Forbidden City and Wangfujing Dajie.

### WANGFUJING SNACK STREET

Map pp268-9 Chinese Mixed Y

王府井小吃街

West off Wangfujing Dajie; kebabs from Y3, dishes from Y5; ☎ lunch & dinner; ☉ Wangfujing

Fronted by an ornate archway, this quadrant has bright and cheery restaurants and stalls overhung with colourful banners and bursting with character and flavour. This is a good place to pick up Xinjiang or Muslim Uyghur cuisine such as lamb kebabs and flat bread. Also on offer are other dishes from all over China, including *màlà tàng* (a spicy soup from Sichuan), *zhājiàngmiàn* (noodles in fried bean sauce) and noodles in peppery sauce. Also being scooped by the bowl here are *Lánzhōu lāmian* (Lánzhōu noodles), *Shāndōng jiānbǐng* (Shāndōng pancake), *Yúnnán guòqiáo mǐxiàn* (Yúnnán across-the-bridge noodles) and oodles of Sichuan food. At most outlets you have to sit outside elbow-to-elbow with other diners.

### MEGABITE

Map pp268-9 Chinese Mixed Y

Dàshídài 大食代

Basement, Oriental Plaza, 1 Dongchang'an Jie; dishes from Y10; ☉ Wangfujing

This hygienic fast food emporium puts Cantonese, Yúnnán, Sichuan, teppanyaki, clay pot, Korean and porridge (粥; *zhōu*) outlets all under one roof. Look out for outlets like Hokkien Delights, Lanzhou Noodles, Hotplate Specials, Indian Roti Prata, Shànghǎi and Chinese Dumplings –

the latter puts together some great dumplings (饺子; *jiǎozi*) of pork, lamb and other fillings, and buns (包子; *bāozi*). Sichuan Delights serves up a fine chilli-oil red *dàndanmiàn* (担担面; Sichuan noodles in peppery sauce; Y9). The layout is both intelligent and spacious, and the food generous and good value – you can eat very well for around Y20. Don't pay in cash for your dish – buy a card (Y5 deposit; cards come in denominations of Y30, 50, 100, 200, 500 and 1000 units) at the kiosk at the entrance. Credits are deducted with each dish ordered so you can pick and mix your plates from different outlets (check the expiry date of your card). Don't get timid at the sight of half of Beijing eating here, it's very easy to order. Food is either cooked in front of you canteen-style or arrayed uncooked on plates – it's simply a case of pointing at what you want.

### NIÚGĒ JIǎOZI

Map pp268-9 Chinese Dumplings Y

牛哥饺子

☎ 6525 7472; Nanheyuan Dajie; meals Y15; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner; ☉ Tiananmen Dong East of the Forbidden City, this pocket-sized and homely restaurant dishes up dozens of varieties of Chinese dumplings. All the *jiǎozi* are listed on red plaques on the four walls but there's no English menu. Here's a sample of what you can order (*liǎng* means 'portion' here): lamb (羊肉; *yánròu*; Y5 per *liǎng*), pork (猪肉; *zhūròu*; Y3 per *liǎng*), beef (牛肉; *niúròu*; Y4 per *liǎng*), donkey (驴肉; *lǔròu*; Y8 per *liǎng*) and mushroom and cabbage (香菇白菜; *xiāngsū báicài*; Y4); but there are many other fillings, from pork and aubergine, to chicken and garlic, celery and chicken and shrimp. There are only around 10 tables draped in simple, embroidered tablecloths, busied over by the restaurant's unfussy and polite owners. The restaurant is opposite the building with the sign on the roof saying 'Hualong St'.

### MAKYE AME

Map pp268-9 Tibetan YY

Mǎjī Āmī 玛吉阿米

☎ 6506 9616; 2nd fl, 11a Xiushui Nanjie; dishes from Y20; ☎ lunch & dinner; ☉ Yongnanli or Jianguomen

Tucked behind the Friendship Store, this is one of Beijing's few Tibetan restaurants.

The homely, upstairs room has a great atmosphere. The walls are lined with Tibetan art and ornaments, there are sofas to sink into and a prayer wheel to spin. Some might say that the floor show, which consists of Tibetan dancers and singers in traditional costume, is a little over-the-top, but we like it. The menu is extensive, if pricey. Go all out for the lamb ribs (Y58), boiled yak with chilli (Y40), *tsampa* (roasted barley meal) and yoghurt (Y28), butter tea and cooling salads (from Y20). It's advisable to book.

### SEQUOIA BAKERY AND CAFE

Map p264 Café Y

美洲杉咖啡屋

☎ 6501 5503; 44 Guanghua Lu; coffee Y18, sandwiches Y25; ☎ breakfast & lunch; ☉ Jianguomen Derservedly popular with diplomats from the neighbouring embassies, this friendly café is a good place to pick up a caffeine fix if you're chasing visas in the area. Decent pastries and deli-style sandwiches too. There's another branch in Sanlitun (☎ 6415 6512; Bldg 15, North Sanlitun Beijing, ☎ 8am-8pm).

### SELF-CATERING

Eating outside of restaurants in Beijing is getting easier all the time, although, given the low cost of dining out many people abandon cooking for the duration of their stay. Those people staying in apartments may also find themselves stumped by the lack of an oven in their kitchens; Chinese cooking doesn't call for them.

There are now numerous supermarkets in Beijing. The best is the French hypermarket chain **Carrefour**, which moved into China early on and continues to expand at pace. There are currently six branches in Beijing and they stock just about everything you need, as well as providing ATMs and taking credit cards. They're open every day and are always crowded. You can find them in the following districts: **Cháoyáng** (☎ 8460 1043; 6B Beisanhuan Donglu) and (☎ 5190 9500; 31 Guangqumenwai Dajie); **Kuānwū** (☎ 6332 2155; 11 Malian Dao); **Fēngtái** (☎ 6790 9911; 15, Zone 2 Fangchengyuan Fangzhuang); **Hǎidiàn** (☎ 8836 2729; 56a Zhongguancun Dajie) and (☎ 5172 1516/17; Zhongguancun Plaza).

Other reliable supermarkets include **Olé**, which have a number of branches around town. The most convenient are the ones at the China World Shopping Mall in Guomao (basement of Oriental Plaza, Jianguomenwai Dajie; ☎ 9.30am-9.30pm; ☉ Guomao) and the Oriental Plaza Mall in Wangfujing (1 Dongchang'an Jie; ☎ 8.30am-10.30pm; ☉ Wangfujing). Then there's the two branches of the redoubtable **Friendship Supermarket** (☎ 6500 3311; 17 Jianguomenwai Dajie; ☎ 9.30am-8.30pm; ☉ Jianguomen) and (☎ 6532 1871; 7 Sanlitun Lu; ☎ 8.30am-8.30pm; ☉ Dongzhimen), once the only place in Beijing to go for a taste of home. Just north of the Great Wall Sheraton is the enormous Lufthansa Center, home to the **Lufthansa Center Youyi Shopping City** (p166), a multistorey shopping mall. The **Yansha Supermarket** (☎ 9am-10pm) is in the basement, chock-a-block with imported goods.

Despite being an acquired taste for the Chinese palate, coffee has become a cherished commodity in Beijing's flourishing café culture. Western cafés such as Starbucks have become hugely popular with middle-class Beijingers, despite the Western-style prices, and are always busy. Otherwise, there are an ever-increasing number of Chinese cafés that can rustle up a decent cup of coffee. Nearly all have wireless internet access too.

Many restaurants will also deliver food or do take-aways, but Beijing now has I-mart ([www.i-martgroup.com](http://www.i-martgroup.com)), an English-language 24 hour online supermarket that enables you to order groceries for home delivery. It's not cheap, but there's a wide selection of imported food and wine available for when you're feeling lazy. There's free delivery for orders over Y100.

### SCHINDLER'S TANKSTELLE

Map p264 German YY

申德勒加油站

☎ 8562 6439; 15a Guanghua Lu; dishes from Y35; ☎ lunch & dinner; ☉ Jianguomen

Foaming steins of beer and lots of sausages and sauerkraut make this reliable place a good option for anyone seeking a taste of central Europe in Beijing. Beer drinkers will enjoy the wide selection of German brews available. There's an outside terrace at the back in summer. You can walk off the meal afterwards in nearby Ritan Park.

### STEAK AND EGGS

Map pp268-9 Western YY

喜来中北美西餐甜点吧

☎ 8470 1550/1559; 5 Xiushui Nanjie; breakfast specials from Y45; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner; ☉ Yongnanli or Jianguomen

A home away from home for Americans pining for blueberry pie and grits in Beijing, Steak and Eggs' diner format hits the spot with early risers and families at weekends, as well as revellers looking for late-night sustenance. The American-sized portions

will satisfy all but the most ravenous. The breakfast specials are particularly good, but so are the sandwiches (from Y25) and the burgers (from Y35). Pasta, pizza and salads are all available too.

### FENGZEYUAN Map pp268-9 Shandong YY 丰泽园

☎ 6318 6688, ext 125; 83 Zhushikou Xidajie; meals Y60; ☎ lunch & dinner; ☉ Qianmen  
This Běijīng institution attracts crowds of locals who toast each other with rounds of snake wine and devour Fengzeyuan's Shāndōng specialities (鲁菜; *lǔcài*), such as sea cucumber with scallion or sautéed fish slices.

### XIAO WANG'S HOME RESTAURANT Map p264 Chinese Běijīng YY

Xiǎowáng Fú 小王府  
☎ 6594 3602/6591 3255; 2 Guanghua Dongli; meals Y70; ☎ lunch & dinner; ☉ Guomao or Yonganli

Treat yourself to home-style Běijīng cuisine from this excellent, bustling restaurant and go for one of Xiao Wang's specials. The deep-fried spareribs with pepper salt (*piāoxiāng páigǔ*; Y48) are simply delectable. Xiao Wang's fried hot and spicy Xīnjiāng-style chicken wings (*zǐrán jīchǐ*; Y35) are deservedly famous, as is the crispy and lean Peking duck (Y88 per duck, Y5 for sauce, scallions and pancakes). Also try the deep-fried crispy bean curd with mild chilli sauce (Y18) or the barbecue mutton slices with coriander (*zǐrán yángròu*; Y28). Xiao Wang – the cordial entrepreneurial owner – has devised a formula that goes down well with both expats and local Chinese. There's a swankier, more expensive branch inside Ritan Park (☎ 8561 7859; Inside North Gate of Ritan Park, Ritan Beilu).

### BIANYIFANG Map pp268-9 Peking Duck YYY

便宜坊烤鸭店  
☎ 6712 0505; 2a Chongwenmenwai Dajie; economy/standard half duck Y69/84; ☎ lunch & dinner; ☉ Chongwenmen  
Dating back to the reign of the Qing emperor Xianfeng, Bianyifang offers midrange comfort reminiscent of a faded Chinese three-star hotel with sparse decoration. Roasted in the *menlu* style, the cheaper half ducks cost Y69 (plus Y5 for pancakes,

scallions and sauce), while ducks prepared in the more expensive Huaxiangsu style are Y84 (half) or Y168 (whole). Ducks find their way into numerous other preparations, including boiled duck blood in hot soup (Y22) and duck hearts in chilli (Y28). A bottle of Maotai will set you back Y430, but if you simply require the effect of the alcohol, why not settle for the rougher, locally distilled Erguotou (Y12). Otherwise, jasmine tea will cost you Y10. Be warned that waiting staff will steer you towards the special (read: pricier) duck, so be vigilant.

### LIQUAN ROAST DUCK RESTAURANT Map pp268-9 Peking Duck YYY

Líquán Kǎoyādàn 利群烤鸭店  
☎ 6702 5681; 11 Beixiangfeng Hutong; roast duck Y98; ☎ lunch & dinner; ☉ Qianmen  
This tiny eatery is buried away in east Qianmen in a maze of *hútòng* (alleyway) that are disappearing by the minute. It's well known and very busy – chefs scamper about as waiters scurry by with sacks of garlic and crates of Erguotou; no medals for service. Troll past the flaming ovens (fruit-tree wood is exclusively used, piled up outside) to reach your table, which may be next to a frame of ducks hanging from hooks. Waiting staff insist you phone first to reserve a table; otherwise turn up off-peak (eg 2.30pm) when most punters have moved on. You will have to wait about an hour for your duck. The duck is superb and there are other dishes on the menu.

### QIANMEN QUANJUDE ROAST DUCK RESTAURANT Map pp268-9 Peking Duck YYY

Qiánmén Quànjùdé Kǎoyādàn  
前门全聚德烤鸭店  
☎ 6511 2418; 32 Qianmen Dajie; half duck Y84, scallions, sauce Y5; ☎ lunch & dinner; ☉ Qianmen  
As fundamental to a Běijīng trip as a visit to the Great Wall, the sampling of Peking duck is an absolute must – to miss out you'd have to be completely quackers. Despite the restaurant's name and pedigree (dating back to 1864), service at this branch is pretty lousy (staff sling you sachets of sauce as though they're dealing cards) and it's geared mainly to the tourist hordes (both domestic and foreign). Enter to photos of George Bush poking a duck with his finger and Fidel Castro sizing up

## STORY OF THE DUCK

Without argument, most people would agree that Peking (or Běijīng) duck is the capital's most famous dish. Once imperial cuisine, now the legendary duck dish is served at restaurants around the world.

The culinary history of Peking duck goes as far back as the Yuan dynasty, where it was listed in royal cookbooks as an imperial food. The Qing poet Yuan Mei once wrote in a cookbook, 'roast duck is prepared by revolving a young duckling on a spit in an oven. The chief inspector Fang's family excel in preparing this dish'. When the Qing dynasty fell in 1911, former palace chefs set up restaurants around Běijīng and brought the dish to the public.

To prepare the duck, chefs go through a lengthy process. First the ducks are inflated by blowing air between the skin and body. The skin is then pricked and boiling water poured all over the duck. Sometimes the skin is rubbed with malt sugar to give it an amber colour and then is hung up to air dry before being roasted in the oven. When roasted, the flesh becomes crispy on the outside and juicy on the inside. The bird is meticulously cut into 120 slices and served with fermented bean paste, light pancakes, sliced cucumbers and green onions.

Perhaps the best Peking duck restaurant is **Liquan Roast Duck Restaurant** (opposite). The duck here is so popular that you need to call in advance to order one. The restaurant itself is a little ramshackle, but the sublime duck makes it a culinary experience to savour. The most famous restaurants in Běijīng that serve Peking duck though, are the **QuanJUde Restaurant** (opposite) chain, which first opened in 1864. There are six branches around town, but the flagship of the empire is at Qianmen Dajie. Ducks here are roasted with fruit-tree wood, giving the dish a special fragrance.

Another famous roast duck restaurant is **Bianyifang** (opposite), founded in 1855. Instead of fruit-tree wood, the ducks here are cooked in an oven with straw as fuel. Prior to being put in the oven the duck is filled with soup.

an imaginary duck with his hands (perhaps they were dining here at the same time), plus other luminaries doing something or other at QuanJUde. There is another branch nearby (☎ 6301 8833; 14 Qianmen Xidajie) and a superior branch just off Wangfujing Dajie (p131). There is an English menu and you can get your duck to go at the booth outside (vacuum packed duck Y68; vacuum packed pancakes Y5; vacuum packed duck sausage Y9.80).

### DANIELI'S Map pp268-9 Italian YYY

丹尼艾丽意大利餐厅  
☎ 6460 6688, ext 2440/2441; 2nd fl, St Regis, 21 Jianguomenwai Dajie; meal Y300; ☎ lunch & dinner; ☉ Jianguomen  
Ensnconed in the St Regis hotel, this gorgeous and classy restaurant is Běijīng's finest Italian dining choice, boasting a generous menu and wine list. Glide up the sumptuous marble staircase, past the crackled glass doors to a splendid alcove interior and sit down to a meal served upon marvellously decorated plates.

### TIĀNDÌ YĪJIĀ Map pp268-9 Chinese Mixed YYY

天地一家  
☎ 8511 5556; 140 Nanchizi Dajie; meals Y300  
☎ lunch & dinner; ☉ Tiananmen Dong  
Doing business from a restored building alongside Changpu River Park (p77), this

civilised and refined traditional Chinese courtyard-style restaurant is decked out with traditional furniture, water features and side rooms for snug hotpot dinners come winter. Further rooms upstairs include a banquet room and a balcony overlooking the Imperial Archives (p77). The expensive dishes – from Běijīng, Shāndōng, Zhèjiāng and beyond – include shark's fin and abalone. Cantonese dim sum (11am-2pm & 5-9.30pm) is also served. The elegantly presented menus (manufactured from traditional Chinese paper; English version available) may be delivered to your table by snobbish waiting staff – a fly in the ointment. MasterCard, Visa and American Express are all accepted.

## DONGCHENG 东城

This historic part of Běijīng is ideal for atmospheric and traditional dining options. Snackers can pick up tasty bite-sized morsels at the **Donghuanmen Night Market** (p128) or at hole-in-the-wall outlets scattered through the local *hútòng*, but there are plenty of fine dining options too. Dōngchéng has its own restaurant strip, known as Guì Jie (鬼街; Ghost St), which runs between Dongzhimennei Dajie and Jiadaokou Dongdajie and is hugely popular with locals. You'll find hotpot restaurants galore here, as well as speciality seafood joints.



## DONGHUAMEN NIGHT MARKET

Map p262 Snacks Y

Dōnghuāmén Yèshì 东华门夜市

Donganmen Dajie; ☎ lunch & dinner, closed Chinese New Year; ☎ Wangfujing

A sight in itself, the bustling night market near Wangfujing Dajie is a veritable food zoo: lamb kebabs, beef and chicken skewers, corn on the cob, smelly *dòufu* (tofu), cicadas, grasshoppers, kidneys, quail's eggs, squid, fruit, porridge, fried pancakes, strawberry kebabs, bananas, Inner Mongolian cheese, stuffed aubergines, chicken hearts, pitta bread stuffed with meat, shrimps – and that's just the start. Expect to pay around Y5 for a lamb kebab, far more than you would pay for the same snack from a *hútòng* vendor.

## CHUĀN BĀN Map p262 Chinese Sichuān Y

川办餐厅

☎ 6512 2277 ext 6101; 5 Gongyuan Toutiao, Jianguomennei Dajie; dishes from Y8; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner; ☎ Jianguomen

Every Chinese province has its own official building in Běijīng, complete with a restaurant for cadres and locals working in the capital who are pining for a taste of home. Often, they're the most authentic places in town for regional cuisines. This restaurant in the Sichuān Government Offices is always crowded and serves up just about every variety of Sichuān food you could want. As you'd expect, most of the dishes are spicy. The Sichuān cool noodles (Y10) won't singe your tongue, but the Bashu Boiled Fish (Y45), a Sichuān classic in which a fish floats in a sea of oil and chilis, will. But there's an English menu and the staff, who are surprisingly helpful given that this is a government-run restaurant, can help you avoid choosing anything too fiery.

## JĪN DǐNG CHUĀN

Map p262 Chinese Cantonese Y

金鼎轩

☎ 6429 6888; 77 Hepingli Xijie (by south gate of Ditan Park); dim sum from Y8; ☎ 24hr;

☎ Yonghegong

A giant, busy restaurant on three floors which serves up reliable and cheap dim sum, as well as standard Chinese dishes and good cakes around the clock. There's another branch in Cháoyáng (☎ 8596 8881, 15 Tuanjiehu Nanlu).

## TRAKTIRR PUSHKIN

Map p262 Russian YY

彼得堡西餐厅

☎ 8407 8158; 5-15 Dongzhimennei Dajie; dishes from Y16; ☎ lunch & dinner; ☎ Dongzhimen Russian restaurants were the first foreign eateries to appear in Běijīng. This is the newest and best of them, perhaps because the chef is from Moscow. Fans of Russian food will be in seventh heaven here, as you can tuck into hearty portions of borscht (Y16) and cold herring (Y24), or classics like chicken Kiev (Y30) and trout roll stuffed with mushrooms (Y42). There's also a good, all-day breakfast. Being a Russian restaurant, there's a sterling selection of alcohol to choose from. If you need a change from weak Chinese beer, go for the Russian variety (Y25), or wash down your meal with one of the many vodkas available (from Y10 a glass). At lunchtime, this is a popular spot for diplomats from the nearby Russian embassy. In the evening, there's a Russian singer in the downstairs section and the place becomes a little more louche as it stays open for late-night drinkers until 4am. But they stop serving food at midnight. Around the corner, there's a cheaper and more basic sister establishment, *Traktirr* (☎ 6403 1896; Dongzhimennei Dajie, Beizhong Jie, 1a Xiyangguan Hutong).

## CRESCENT MOON MUSLIM RESTAURANT

Map p262 Chinese Xīnjiāng Y

新疆弯月亮维吾尔穆斯林餐厅

☎ 6400 5281; 16 Dongsì Liutiao (off Chaoyangmen Beixiaojie); dishes from Y18; ☎ lunch & dinner;

☎ Dongsishitiao

You can find a Chinese Muslim restaurant on almost every street in Běijīng. Most though, are run by Hui Muslims, who are Han Chinese, rather than ethnic minority Uighurs from the remote western province of Xīnjiāng. The Crescent Moon, which is tucked away down a *hútòng*, is the real deal, owned and staffed by Uighurs, and it's possibly the best Xīnjiāng joint in town. The *yáng'ròu chuān* (lamb skewers; Y5) are meaty and succulent, or try the *dàpānjī*, a dish of chicken, potato, peppers and vegetables served over thick, pasta-like noodles. Towards the end of the night, the staff often dance Xīnjiāng style. Picture menu. Alcohol is served here.

## FISH NATION Map p262 Western Y

鱼邦

☎ 6401 3249; 31 Nanluogu Xiang; dishes from Y18; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner; ☎ Andingmen

A home from home for those who miss eating fish and chips, whether standing on a street corner in the rain in England, or sitting on the beach at Bondi. There's no sand at Fish Nation, nor does it rain very often in Běijīng, but there is a pleasant roof terrace that offers a view over the surrounding *hútòng*. Apart from obvious choices such as cod in batter (Y18), calamari in beer batter (Y20) and the chunky chips (Y12), they do decent salads here and serve their Big British Breakfast (Y50) until 4pm. There's a good range of foreign beers. It's very kid friendly too. There's a more basic branch that caters for the late-night drinking crowd in Sanlitun (☎ 6415 0119, Sanlitun Beijie).

## WAITING FOR GODOT Map p262 Café Y

等待戈多

☎ 6407 3093; 24 Jiadaokou Dongdajie; coffee from Y20; ☎ lunch & dinner; ☎ Yonghegong Bizarre but charming café that takes its name from Samuel Beckett's most acclaimed play. It maintains the literary theme by housing a Chinese language-only bookshop. During the day, it's a coffee house. At night, it's a quiet place for a drink.

## HUĀ JIĀ YÍ YUÁN Map p262 Chinese Mixed YY

花家怡园

☎ 6405 1908; 235 Dongzhimennei Dajie (Gui Jie); dishes from Y20; ☎ 24hr; ☎ Yonghegong

The food at this landmark Běijīng restaurant takes in various Chinese styles, from Cantonese to Běijīng cuisine via Shāndōng. The seafood is particularly good, especially the fish with bean curd (Y48) and the spicy and hot crab (Y88). That might be because the fish and various crustaceans get to await their death in nice, clean tanks, unlike some Běijīng restaurants where the fish float in murky water in distinctly dubious receptacles. Otherwise, you can take your pick from hotpot, dumplings, ribs – whatever you want really. The desserts are justly popular. With its atmospheric setting in a restored courtyard house, topped by a greenhouse-like glass roof, and a house

band that plays traditional Chinese music, this place gets busy at peak times. But it never closes, so it's particularly useful for night birds. English/picture menu.

## CAFÉ DE LA POSTE Map p262 French YY

云游驿

☎ 6402 7047; 58 Yonghegong Dajie; dishes from Y25; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner (closed Monday);

☎ Yonghegong

Just down the street from the Lama Temple, this is the closest Běijīng gets to an authentic French bistro. With its relaxed vibe and friendly service, it's popular with both French expats and locals. A small bar area where you can sip a glass of wine or a pastis opens into an intimate, nicely-lit dining area. The food is unpretentious and hearty. Try the chef's steak (Y78) and the chicken livers flambéed with cognac (Y65). But there are salads and a decent dessert menu too. The wine list starts from Y78 for a bottle of house red.

## BĀ GUÓ BÙ YĪ Map p262 Sichuān YY

巴国布衣

☎ 6400 8888; 89-3 Dianmen Dongdajie; dishes from Y30; ☎ lunch & dinner; ☎ Andingmen or Gulou

This celebrated and award-winning Chéngdū restaurant chain delivers fine Sichuān dishes from a marvellous Chinese inn-style setting with balconies, a central stairway and dolled up waiting staff. Enter through huge red doors to a traditional-style building just off Dianmen Dongdajie. There's music, occasional operatic events and a range of good value dishes including *Chóngqing làzi jī* (重庆辣子鸡; Chongqing hot pepper chicken Y38) and *xiānjiāo yúpiàn* (鲜椒鱼片; chilli fish slices). The food is first rate and the ambience bursts with both character and theatre. There's a branch in Xíchéng (☎ 6615 2230; 68 Xizhimen Nanxiaojie).

## PÂTISSERIE Map pp268-9 Chocolatier YY

苏 Yuan 酥园

☎ 8518 1234, ext 6362; Grand Hyatt Beijing, 1 Dongchang'an Jie; ☎ Wangfujing

This small outlet is a fine choice if you have to get your hands on quality chocolate – either as a present or to satisfy an admittedly costly (if you shop here) craving.

## PURPLE VINE TEAHOUSE

Map p262 Chinese Teahouse YY

Zitēnglú Cháyúguǎn 紫藤庐

☎ 6606 6614; 2 Nanchang Jie; tea from Y40;

☺ lunch & dinner; ☉ Dongsishitiao or Dongzhimen

Experience a traditional tea ceremony at the Purple Vine Teahouse, where you'll be greeted with the gentle sounds of *gǔzhēng* (Chinese zither) music and the smell of incense. Traditional Chinese furniture and century-old Shānxī wooden screens decorate this tiny oasis just outside the west gate of the Forbidden City. Choose from the menu of jasmine, black, green or oolong teas; a pot ranges in price from Y40 up to Y250 for oolong. There's another branch in Sanlitun (Map p264). The teahouse accepts all major credit cards.

## VINEYARD CAFÉ

Map p262 Western YY

葡萄院儿

☎ 6402 7961; 31 Wudaoying Hutong; set lunch

Y45; ☺ lunch & dinner; ☉ Yonghegong

A few minutes walk from the Lama Temple, this hip café/restaurant is an ideal spot for brunch or lunch. The British owner does an excellent full English breakfast, while the set lunch, a salad and pizza or quiche, is terrific value. There's a small outside area and lots of sofas to sink into. In the evening, it's a restaurant as well as a laid-back spot for a drink.

## SICHUAN RESTAURANT

Map p262 Sichuan YY

四川饭店

☎ 6513 7591/7593; 37a Donganmen Dajie; meals

Y70; ☺ lunch & dinner; ☉ Wangfujing

This spacious restaurant decorated with traditional Chinese eaves is rather worn in its old age and the manager's office is still forlornly decorated with a portrait of Mao, but the dishes are well worth your time and portions are generous. Try the filling crispy tinfoil-wrapped mutton (纸包羊肉; *zhǐbāo yángrou*; Y22), while the deep fried eggplant with garlic and chilli sauce (鱼香茄子; *yúxiāng qiézi*; Y26) is tender and swimming in a sea of hot red chilli oil. The menu extends to shark's fin and abalone, and other seafood such as the hot, sweet and spicy crab (香辣蟹; *xiānglà xiè*; Y58). You can sweat over a *yuānyāng huǒguō* (鸳鸯火锅; literally Mandarin duck hotpot) – the celebrated Sichuan hotpot that is

divided into hot (辣; *là*) and not-hot (不辣; *búlà*) sections. Note the countertop array of home fermented wines infused with various flora and fauna (for around Y20 a shot). The restaurant takes Visa.

## RED CAPITAL CLUB

Map p262 Beijing YYY

Xīnhóngzī Jùlèbù 新红资俱乐部

☎ 6402 7150 day, 8401 8886 night & weekend;

9 Dongsi Liutiao; dishes from Y60; ☺ dinner;

☉ Dongsishitiao then ☑ 113

Hidden away down a quiet *hútòng* is this meticulously restored Qing-styled courtyard house, offset by props from a 1950s Politburo meeting room and cuisine from Zhōngnánhǎi. It's pricey, leans heavily on the nostalgia pedal and the prolix menu requires dedication and patience (every dish has an accompanying myth), but the food hits the mark. Look for the big red doors with no sign. Reservations required. The restaurant is next door to the Red Capital Residence (p184).

## DALI COURTYARD

Map p262 Chinese Yunnan YYY

大理

☎ 8404 1430; 67 Xiaojingchang Hutong, Gulou

Dongdajie; set menu from Y100; ☺ lunch & dinner;

☉ Andingmen

Specialising in the subtle flavours of the cuisine of southwestern Yunnan province, the beautiful setting in a restored courtyard house in a *hútòng* makes it one of Beijing's more romantic places to eat. It's also one of the more eccentric. You have to book in advance and there's no menu. Instead, you pay Y100 a head (drinks are extra) and the chef decides what to give you, depending on what inspires him and what ingredients are fresh. Normally, that means five or six dishes, with an emphasis on fish and pork flavoured with Yunnan herbs. Specify your dietary requirements when booking.

## DǐNG DǐNG XIǎNG

Map p264 Chinese Hotpot YYY

鼎鼎香

☎ 6417 9289; 2f Yuanjia International Apt,

Dongzhimenwai, Dongzhong Jie; dishes from Y25;

☺ lunch & dinner; ☉ Dongsishitiao

Hotpot restaurants are a favourite with Beijingers. You sit around a bowl of boil-

ing water (the hotpot) flavoured to your specifications and cook the raw ingredients yourself. It's a fun, sociable way of dining and the staff are always on hand to help you out. Ding Ding Xiāng is at the posh end of hotpot dining and it's notorious for its offhand service and for charging for everything, including napkins. But the food makes up for it. Try the fish dumplings with vegetable flavour (Y26) and the superior assorted beef and mutton (Y68). Throw in some white king oyster mushrooms (Y18), the three kinds of beancurd (Y15) and a few veggies and you're away. Don't forget to order the excellent dipping sauces; the *xiāng xiāng* double-flavour sauce (Y9) and *dǐng dǐng xiāng* special sauce (Y3) are particularly good. Picture menu. There's another branch just down the road (☎ 6417 2546; 1f/14 Dongzhong Jie, Dongzhimenwai).

## QUANJUDE ROAST DUCK RESTAURANT

Map p262 Peking Duck YYY

Quànjudé Kǎoyādiàn 全聚德烤鸭店

☎ 6525 3310; 9 Shuaifuyuan Hutong; whole duck

Y168; ☺ lunch & dinner; ☉ Wangfujing

This huge and well-presented restaurant is less famous than its Qianmen sibling (p126), but more convenient if you're shopping along Wangfujing Dajie and less touristy. The prices are the same as the Qianmen branch though.

## FANGSHAN RESTAURANT

Map p262 Imperial Chinese YYYYY

Fāngshàn Fànzhǔāng 仿膳饭庄

☎ 6401 1889; Jade Islet, Beihai Park; set menus

Y200-500; ☺ lunch & dinner

Beijing's most elaborate imperial cuisine is served up in this restaurant in a pavilion overlooking the lake in Beihai Park (enter through either the west or south gate). All dishes are elaborately prepared, and range from delicately filled pastries to sea cucumber with deer tendon, peppery inkfish-egg soup and camel paw with scallion (no, it's not a real camel paw). The Y500 menu will get you a selection of rare delicacies. Reservations here are a must. Another less expensive branch (Map p262; ☎ 6523 3555; 12 Dongzongbu Hutong) can be found to the east of Chaoyangmen Nanxiaojie.

## HUANG TING

Map p262 Chinese Cantonese YYYYY

凰庭

☎ 8516 2888, ext 6707; Peninsula Palace Hotel,

8 Jinyu Hutong; meals Y300; ☺ lunch & dinner;

☉ Dongdan

Faux Old Peking is taken to an extreme in the courtyard setting of Huang Ting. Enter through a *sihéyuàn* (courtyard house) entrance with carved lintels and a wooden portal to an interior fashioned from grey bricks with stone lions, water features, bird cages, stone floor flagging, decorated lanterns and Ming and Qing dynasty-style mahogany and sandalwood furniture – it's like a Fifth Generation film set.

Despite its artificiality and location (in the bowels of a five star hotel), the setting is impressive, caressed by the sounds of *zhēng, pípa* and other traditional Chinese instruments. With so many of Beijing's *hútòng* falling to the sledgehammers of property developers, diners can toast their demise from the comfort of this simulacrum. Even the loos have their own wooden door and brass courtyard-style handles. Despite the Beijing setting there are also Cantonese dishes (including dim sum). Dishes include whole Peking duck (Y220), roast suckling pig (Y100), braised spareribs in tangy brown sauce (Y70) and braised 'Beijing style' meatball with cabbage (Y40).

## COURTYARD

Map p262 Fusion YYYYY

Sihéyuàn 四合院

☎ 6526 8882; 95 Donghuamen Dajie; meal Y400;

☺ dinner; ☉ Tiananmen Dong

The Courtyard enjoys a peerless location overlooking the Forbidden City. You may have to forage to find the entrance (up the steps curtained by fronds of bamboo), but once inside you will be guided to a table and through a fine menu. Among the dishes on the menu are black cod in fennel marmalade (Y185), braised prime beef (Y225) and grilled veal tenderloin (Y245). The superb starters include paradise prawns from New Caledonia (Y120) and salmon and tuna sashimi tartare in miso cream sauce (Y95). The wine list starts at Y200 and goes up to Y28000 for really big spenders. There's a 15% service charge here too.

## CHÁOYÁNG 朝阳

While restaurants can be found throughout the district, the dining action focuses on the Sanlitun bar and embassy area and the district around the Workers' Stadium. If you are on the hunt for non-Chinese dishes, this is a good place to start and there are plenty of bar and entertainment options for after the meal. The booming 798 Art District (p103) in Dashanzi (大山子) in the north of Cháoyáng (朝阳) is now home to an increasing selection of cafés and restaurants.

### APRIL GOURMET Map p264 Deli

Lǜyèzi Shípíndiàn 绿叶子食品店

☎ 8460 1030; Sanlitun Beixiaojie (next to Jenny Lou's); ☎ 8am-9pm; ⌚ Dongzhimen, then 🚗 416 A rival with Jenny Lou's for the affections of home cooking-starved Westerners, April Gourmet operates three stores in Běijīng. The selection isn't as extensive as Jenny Lou's, but the prices are similar. Cheese, fresh bread, butter, wine, sauces, Western soups, coffee, milk, meats and frozen food are all available. Another branch (☎ 6417 7970; 1f Jiezuo Mansion, Xingfucun Zhonglu), stays open till midnight.

### JENNY LOU'S Map p264 Deli

婕妮璐食品店

☎ 6461 6928; 6 Sanlitun Beixiaojie; ☎ 8am-10pm; ⌚ Dongzhimen, then 🚗 416 The most popular deli for expats and locals in the area alike, thanks to the fresh meat and the array of cheeses, as well as an impressive selection of wine. It stocks all the usual staples as well. Not cheap but they cater to a captive market. There are six branches. The most convenient are this one and the one by Chaoyang Park (Map p264; ☎ 6501 6249; west gate of Chaoyang Park; ☎ 8am-10pm).

### KEMPINSKI DELI Map p264 Deli

超市

☎ 6465 3388, ext 5741; Kempinski Hotel, Lufthansa Center, 50 Liangmaqiao Lu; ☎ 7am-10pm; ⌚ Dongsishitiao, then 🚗 701 heading east Just off the shuddering Third Ring Rd, the deli in the Kempinski Hotel (p186) is well liked for its desserts, breads and cakes (discounted after 8pm). Tables are available for patrons to park themselves for coffee and a chat in a smart environment.

## MANCHURIAN SPECIAL FLAVOUR JIǎOZOI RESTAURANT

Map p264 Chinese Dongbei Y

Dōngběirén 东北人

☎ 6415 2855; 1 Xinzhong Jie; jiǎozi Y6; ⌚ lunch & dinner; ⌚ Dongzhimen

With its singing waitress in their colourful *qipào* and a menu that proclaims, 'We all love you', this is a friendly, noisy place. As the name suggests, it specialises in the cuisine of northeastern China, a region of icy winds and biting cold. That means lots of hearty meat dishes such as Harbin sausage (Y15), stir-fried mutton (Y25) and shredded pork with wild vegetables (Y25). But the real deal here is the delicious and cheap dumplings, or *jiǎozi*. There's a whole range to pick from, but the green pepper and pork, Chinese cabbage and pork and pumpkin and egg are particularly addictive. If you're very brave you can try the minced donkey meat *jiǎozi*. Wash the meal down with a few bottles of Hapi, Harbin's very own beer (Y12). English menu.

### MIDDLE 8TH Map p264 Chinese Yúnnán Y

中捌楼餐厅

☎ 6413 0629; Sanlitun Zhongjie, Zhongba Lu; dishes from Y12; ⌚ lunch & dinner; ⌚ Dongsishitiao, then 🚗 701 heading east

The pace of Sanlitun's reconstruction has forced this sophisticated Yúnnán restaurant to shift locations along and off Zhongba Lu (Middle 8th St) a number of times. Here's hoping its latest home will prove to be more lasting, because it's a comfortable place with an authentic, wide-ranging menu. The deep-fried bamboo worms with spiced pepper and salt (Y22) make for an interesting starter. The mains include such signature Yúnnán dishes as drunken shrimps (Y22), pan-fried whole fish with dried pepper and vegetables (Y39) and braised rice with pineapple in a bamboo shoot (Y12). If you're feeling less adventurous, there's always the scrambled eggs topped with jasmine buds. A glass of rice wine (Y6) is recommended. English menu.

### AT CAFÉ Map pp258-9 Café Y

爱特咖啡

☎ 6438 7264; 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu; coffee Y15; ⌚ lunch & dinner; ⌚ Dongzhimen, then 🚗 909 heading east

As befits a café in the 798 Art District, this is a cleverly designed place – check out the holes in the interior walls – that serves the local artists and poseurs. Good coffee and juices, as well as pasta dishes (from Y28), salads (from Y25) and sandwiches (from Y20). There also a small outside terrace.

### VINCENT CAFÉ/CREPERIE Café Creperie Y

Map pp258-9  
北京季节咖啡店

☎ 8456 4823; 2 Jiuxianqiao Lu; crepes from Y15; ⌚ lunch & dinner; ⌚ Dongzhimen, then 🚗 909 heading east

A cornucopia of crepes is available at this French-run café in the 798 Art District (p103). The 'fisherman': shrimps, leeks and white wine (Y35), goes down a treat. Salads, pizzas, French onion soup, coffee and juices are also on the menu. Good chips and there is an outside area in the summer.

### KOSMO Map p262 Café Y

天荷坊

☎ 8400 1567; 225 Chaoyangmennei Dajie; coffee Y18; ⌚ breakfast, lunch & dinner; ⌚ Chaoyangmen

A trendy and relaxing café, Kosmo serves up ultra-health conscious organic herbal teas, fruit juices and smoothies, as well as a range of coffees. Smokers are segregated here. You can also purchase a variety of organically grown coffee from all around the world.

### CAFÉ PAUSE Café Y

Map pp258-9  
闲着也是闲着

☎ 6431 6214; 2 Jiuxianqiao Lu; coffee Y18, tapas from Y18; ⌚ breakfast, lunch & dinner; ⌚ Dongzhimen, then 🚗 909 heading east

Artfully designed, hip café in the heart of the 798 Art District which attracts a mixed bag of trendy locals and passing tourists. Housed in a converted warehouse, it has comfy sofas, intriguing light fittings and a small outside area. The central European-inspired menu features Vienna schnitzel (Y32) and Hungarian goulash (Y32), as well as an all-day breakfast (Y50). In the evening, it's a pleasant spot for a glass of wine. They mix decent cocktails (from Y35) here too.

### KIOSK Map p264 Western Y

南斯拉夫烤肉屋

☎ 6413 2461, Sanlitun Beijing; hamburgers/sandwiches from Y22; ⌚ lunch & dinner (closed Monday); ⌚ Dongsishitiao, then 🚗 701 heading east The perfect place for a quick lunchtime snack, or for early evening, pre-drinking sustenance, Kiosk serves up burgers, chips and sandwiches from a tiny hut just off Sanlitun's bar street. The big bite burger (Y29) is a classic, as is the grilled sausage sandwich (Y23). You can get a salad and a beer here too. There's a little outside area to eat at.

### BOCATA Map p264 Café Y

☎ 6417 5291; 3 Sanlitun Beijing; sandwiches from Y23, coffee Y18; ⌚ breakfast, lunch & dinner; ⌚ Dongsishitiao, then 🚗 701 heading east

Great spot for lunch, especially in the summer, located slap-bang in the middle of Sanlitun's bar street. There's a vague Mediterranean/Middle-Eastern theme to the food, as the name suggests, with decent hummus, but the sandwiches on ciabatta and top-class chips (Y12) are decidedly Western in flavour. The juices and smoothies (from Y30) go down a treat too. The large outside terrace gets busy if the weather's nice.

### PURPLE HAZE Map p264 Thai Y

紫苏庭

☎ 6413 0899; down a small alley opposite the north gate of the Workers' Stadium (first alley east of Xinjiang Red Rose Restaurant); dishes from Y24; ⌚ lunch & dinner; ⌚ Dongsishitiao Congenial Thai restaurant that serves up dependable food in a purple-coloured environment. The small café-like area at the front, which has a selection of dog-eared paperbacks, is a mellow place for a coffee during the day.

### XINJIANG RED ROSE RESTAURANT

Map p264 Chinese Xinjiang Y

新疆红玫瑰餐厅

☎ 6415 5741; opposite Workers' Stadium north gate, 5 Xingfuyicun; meals Y40; ⌚ lunch & dinner; ⌚ Dongsishitiao

This is a touristy, but fun restaurant with good value and tasty dishes from Xinjiang province. There's live Uighur music and dancers from 7.30pm every night and you



may find yourself dragged up on stage to perform with them. It gets very loud, so avoid sitting next to the speakers and prepare to shout. You can pass on the whole roast lamb (Y800) unless you're a crowd, but the roast leg of lamb, Y30 per *jīn* (0.6kg), is filling and chunky lamb kebabs (Y5 each) good value.

### **SOUK** Map p264 Middle Eastern YY

**Sùkè Huiguān** 苏克

☎ 6506 7309; by the west gate of Chaoyang Park; kebabs from Y8; 🕒 dinner; 📍 Dongsishitiao, then 🚶 431 heading east

Hip hangout in a strip of bars and restaurants on the west side of Chaoyang Park. If you get there early enough, you can kick off your shoes and eat in style in one of the curtained corner booths. As much a place for a drink as it is to eat, the Y100 jugs of sangria seem to disappear quickly here. The menu is standard Middle Eastern fare: kebabs, falafel, pitta bread and hummus. The couscous is good value at Y40. There's a big outside terrace in the summer.

### **GL CAFÉ** Map p264 Cantonese YY

金湖茶餐厅

☎ 6588 9963; 20 Chaowai Dajie (just behind the Full Link Plaza); dishes from Y15; 🕒 24 hr; 📍 Chaoyangmen

Busy Hong Kong-style eatery that serves up a wide variety of rice and noodle dishes with a southern Chinese flavour, as well as Western fare like omelettes, salads and sandwiches. There's a good range of coffee, shakes and tea, wi-fi access, and you can peruse the latest editions of the *South China Morning Post* while you're eating. It's the perfect place for late night/early morning munchies. There are other branches in the China World Shopping Mall (p162) and at 21 Jianguomenwai Dajie (next to the St Regis Hotel).

### **LOTUS IN MOONLIGHT**

Map p264 Vegetarian YY

**Hétángyuè** 荷塘月色

☎ 6465 3299; 12 Liufang Nanli (inside a housing complex, just off Zuojiashuang Jie); dishes from Y15; 🕒 lunch & dinner; 📍 Liufang

Bèijīng isn't the best place in the world for vegetarian dining. Vegetarianism is a puzzle to most Chinese (with the exception of Buddhist monks). This smart place though,

will satiate those in search of meat and fish-free dishes. There's a wide variety of tofu-dominated options.

### **BELLAGIO** Map p264 Taiwanese YY

鹿港小镇

☎ 6551 3533; 6 Gongrentiyuchang Xilu; dishes from Y23; 🕒 lunch & dinner; 📍 Dongsishitiao, then 🚶 701 heading east

Despite the Italian name, this is a slick, late-opening Taiwanese restaurant conveniently located next to the strip of nightclubs on Gongrentiyuchang Xilu (Gongti Xilu). During the day and the evening, it attracts cashed-up locals and foreigners. After midnight, the hipster club crowd move in. There's a seemingly endless menu, which includes Taiwanese favourites like cold noodles (Y28), stir-fried squid and celery (Y37) and hot and spicy boiling fish (Y63). But the real reason to come here is for the wonderful puddings. The shaved ice cream desserts are rightly renowned. Try the red bean ice cream (Y26) or the fresh mango cubes on shaved ice (Y32). The coffee is top-notch too. English menu. There's another branch in East Chaoyang (☎ 8451 9988; 35 Xiaoyun Lu).

### **CHINA LOUNGE** Map p264 Chinese YY

唐廊

☎ 6501 1166; south gate of the Workers' Stadium; dishes from Y28; 🕒 lunch & dinner; 📍 Dongsishitiao, then 🚶 701 heading east

Chinese cuisine from all over the country gets served up at this elegant restaurant next to the Blue Zoo inside the Workers' Stadium. The thoughtful design means you're not elbow-to-elbow with other diners, even if that makes the place seem a little cold when it's not busy.

### **THREE GUIZHOU MEN**

Map p264 Chinese Guizhōu YY

**Sāngè Guizhōu Rén** 三个贵州人

☎ 6551 8517; inside the west gate of the Workers' Stadium (around the cnr from Bellagio), Gongrentiyuchang Xilu; dishes from Y35; 🕒 lunch & dinner; 📍 Dongsishitiao

Hip but relaxed restaurant specialising in the spicy cuisine of southwestern Guizhōu province. The food here is delicious, some of the best in Bèijīng. The fried pork ribs (Y58) are a must, but almost everything on

the menu is good. Try the stir-fried grass roots with Guizhōu bacon (Y35), or any of the superb salads. The Guizhōu smashed potato (Y25), a regional version of mashed potato, is sublime. The spacious dining room is decorated with Chinese contemporary art and the only drawback is that they don't do wine by the glass. There's another branch in Jianwai Soho (☎ 5869 0598; Jianwai Soho, Bldg 7, Dongsanhuan).

### **SERVE THE PEOPLE** Map p264 Thai YY

**Wèi Rénmín Fúwù** 为人民服务

☎ 8454 4580; 1 Sanlitun Xiwujie; meals Y50; 🕒 lunch & dinner; 📍 Dongzhimen, then 🚶 416 heading east

It has been around a while, but Serve the People is still Bèijīng's best Thai restaurant. You'll find all the classics here, red chicken curry (Y35), *tom yum goong* (Y48), as well as superb fish cakes with plum and chilli sauce (Y40). It's the warm atmosphere and central location that attracts the crowds though.

### **HAITANGHUA PYONGYANG COLD NOODLE RESTAURANT**

Map p264 Korean YY

平壤海棠花冷面馆

☎ 6461 6295/6298; 8 Xinyuanxili Zhongjie (on the cnr of Xin Donglu); cold noodles Y50; 🕒 lunch & dinner; 📍 Dongzhimen

There aren't many North Korean restaurants around the world, but then there aren't that many in the DPRK itself. A night at this kitsch hangover from the Cold War is rather more fun than an evening out in Pyongyang though, thanks to the accomplished singing waitresses who take it in turns to serenade the diners with a selection of classic Korean tunes. There's not much difference between North Korean and South Korean cuisine; apart from the cold noodles, it's *kimchi* and barbecue all the way.

### **LE BISTROT PARISIEN** Map p264 French YY

巴黎乐事多餐厅

☎ 6417 8188; 1f Tongli Bldg, Sanlitun Houjie; daytime set menu Y60; 🕒 lunch & dinner; 📍 Dongsishitiao, then 🚶 701 heading east  
Upmarket French eatery in one of Sanlitun's busiest areas. The French chef certainly knows what he's doing and this is a good place for Francophones to enjoy such

delights as marbled foie gras with port and red wine preserve (Y108), or the excellent cheese plate (Y58). The two-course set menu, available between 11am and 6pm, is decent value. Good, if pricey, wine list. But you can get a glass of the house vino for Y25.

### **BOOKWORM** Map p264 Western YY

**Shūchóng** 书虫

☎ 6586 9507; Bldg 4, Nan Sanlitun Lu; lunch set menu Y78, dinner set menu Y108; 🕒 9am-1am; 📍 Dongsishitiao, then 🚶 701 heading east  
A combination of a bar, café, restaurant and library, the Bookworm is a Bèijīng institution and a comfortable, friendly place to while away an afternoon or an evening. Perhaps it's the 14,000 books you can browse while sipping your coffee, or working your way through the extensive wine list, but some people spend whole days in here. The food ranges from sandwiches (Y35) to pasta dishes (from Y45), but the set menus offer more substantial fare. The Bookworm though, is much more than just an upmarket café. It's one of the epicentres of Bèijīng expat life and hosts lectures, a classical music club and a poetry reading night, amongst many other things. Any author of note passing through town gives a talk here. The local listings mags will tell you what events are coming up. There's a Y300 annual fee to join the library, but you can also buy new books here, including Lonely Planet guides, and magazines. There's a roof terrace in the summer and it's one of the few places in Bèijīng to have a non-smoking section.

### **MOREL'S** Map p264 Belgian YYY

莫劳龙玺西餐厅

☎ 6416 8802; Gongrentiyuchang Beilu, opposite north gate of Workers' Gymnasium; dishes from Y35; 🕒 lunch & dinner (closed Monday); 📍 Dongsishitiao

Top-notch steaks and fine fresh fish are the trademark of this homely Belgian eatery. The food is pricey, but you get a lot of it. The Brussels pepper steak (Y118), Flemish beer beef stew (Y68) and the pot of mussels (Y98) are deservedly popular. Good desserts and a vast selection of Belgian beers. It's advisable to book in the evenings. Near the Lufthansa Centre, you'll find another brand (☎ 6437 3939; 27 Liangmaqiao Lu).



**ALAMEDA** Map p264 Western YYY

☎ 6417 8084/6413 1939; Sanlitun Beijie; set lunch menu Y60, set dinner menu Y128; ☺ lunch & dinner; ☉ Dongsishitiao, then ☑ 701 heading east Consistently high-class fusion cuisine with a Brazilian twist in a light and spacious environment makes this Běijīng's finest Western restaurant. The Brazilian chef changes the menu daily, but regular dishes include filet mignon in a rosemary and red wine sauce with roasted potatoes and pan-fried whole tiger prawns. There is an à la carté menu but the two-course set lunch and dinner menus will satisfy most people's appetites. Dessert costs extra though, while the extensive wine list is not cheap (from Y200 a bottle). Sophisticated without being snobbish, it's a place to splash out. It's essential to book.

**MARE** Map p264 Spanish YYY

Gǔlǎohǎi Xīcǎnting 古老海西餐厅  
☎ 6417 1459; 14 Xindong Rd; set lunch Y75, tapas from Y15; ☺ lunch & dinner; ☉ Dongsishitiao, then ☑ 701  
Don't be fooled by the view through the front windows of Běijīng's best Spanish restaurant. The seemingly cramped space opens out into a big, tastefully decorated dining area. The tapas are authentic and include sizzling garlic prawns, stir-fried chorizo with potato and *patatas bravas*, while the Sunday paella (Y90 per person) is justly popular. Extensive, but expensive wine list (from Y240 a bottle). The set lunch doesn't include dessert.

**BEIJING DADONG ROAST DUCK RESTAURANT** Map p264 Peking Duck YYY

Běijīng Dàdōng Kǎoyā Diàn 北京大董烤鸭店  
☎ 6582 2892/4003; 3 Tuanjieshu Beikou; duck Y98; ☺ lunch & dinner; ☉ Dongsishitiao, then ☑ 431 heading east  
A long-term favourite of the Peking duck scene, this restaurant has a tempting variety of fowl. The hallmark bird is a crispy, lean duck without the usual high fat content (trimmed down from 42.38% to 15.22% for its 'superneat' roast duck, the brochure says), plus plum (or garlic) sauce, scallions and pancakes. Also carved up is the skin of the duck with sugar, an old imperial predilection. Fork out an extra Y20 and get the duck of your choice. The menu also dishes up some fine local non-duck dishes.

**PURE LOTUS VEGETARIAN**

Map p264 Vegetarian YYY  
Jīngxīnlíán 净心莲  
☎ 6592 3627; Zhongguo Wenlianyuan, 10 Nongzhanguan Nanlu; meals from Y100; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner; ☉ Dongsishitiao, then ☑ 431 heading east  
The monks who run this place serve up some of the tastiest and most creative vegetarian food in the city, but they charge a lot for it. The spicy chopped vegetable chicken (Y108) is good, as is the boiled vegetable fish (Y88) and the Wutaihan mushroom (Y188).

**1001 NIGHTS**

Map p264 Middle Eastern YYY  
Yīqiānlíngyī Yè 一千零一夜  
☎ 6532 4050; opposite Zhaolong International Youth Hostel, Gongtrentiyuchang Beilu; meals Y100; ☺ lunch & dinner; ☉ Dongsishitiao, then ☑ 701 heading east  
Helped by its location just off the Sanlitun bar strip, the large outside dining area and nightly belly dancing, this is still the most popular Middle Eastern restaurant in Běijīng. The food is pretty good too; they throw together an excellent concoction of kebabs, falafel, hummus, pitta bread. No credit cards.

**SORABOL**

Map p264 Korean YYY  
Sà lā bǎi ěr 萨拉伯尔  
☎ 6465 3388, ext 5720; basement, Lufthansa Centre, 50 Liangmaqiao Lu; meals Y150; ☺ lunch & dinner; ☉ Dongsishitiao, then ☑ 701 heading east  
This dependably good Korean chain restaurant is the place to come for barbecue and *banfan* (rice, egg, meat, vegetables and hot pepper sauce), as well as *paigu* (roast spareribs). Another branch can be found at Landmark Towers (☎ 6590 6688, ext 5119; 2/F Landmark Towers, 8 Dongsanhuan Beilu) in Cháoyáng.

**Hǎidiàn 海淀**

**SCULPTING IN TIME** Map p271 Café Y  
Diāokè Shíguāng 雕刻时光  
☎ 8259 8296; Bldg 12, 1 Huaqing Jiayuan, Chengfu Lu; coffee Y20; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner; ☉ Wudaokou

An easy place to while away an afternoon, Sculpting in Time offers books and magazines to browse through, as well as sandwiches and pasta for when you get peckish. There are other branches in Hǎidiàn and also Cháoyáng (☎ 5135 8108; 2b Jiangtai Lu, Hairun International Apt, Shop 3a, near the Lido Hotel).

**MIMA** Map p271 Café Y

☎ 8268 8003; east gate of Old Summer Palace; coffee Y25; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner; ☉ Xizhimen, then minibus 375  
If you're visiting the Old Summer Palace (Yuánmíng Yuán), then be sure to check out this great, eccentric café. From the bar made up of books, to the most memorable toilet in Běijīng, this place is all about creative design. It's particularly nice in the summer, when you can sit outside surrounded by a small army of cats.

**ISSHIN JAPANESE RESTAURANT**

Map p271 Japanese YY  
日本料理一心  
☎ 8261 0136; 35 Chengfu Lu; set meal Y35; ☺ lunch & dinner; ☉ Wudaokou  
Just off an unpromising looking road, about 50 metres north of the traffic lights at the intersection of Chengfu Lu and Wudaokou subway station, Isshin is well worth tracking down if you're in the area. With its thoughtful design, laid-back atmosphere and reasonable prices, it's a place where business types, expat Japanese and students can all feel at home. The sushi starts from Y20, or you can just order a plate of Isshin sushi or sashimi (Y68). The menu includes hotpots, Udon noodles and teriyaki dishes. The set meals (from Y38) are good value.

**XICHENG 西城**

The main cluster of restaurants worth visiting in Xichéng is located around Houhai and Qianhai Lakes and in the surrounding *huitong*. Some offer views over the lakes, which are swamped with pedalos in the summer. The boats give way to ice-skaters in the winter, when the lakes freeze over. The west side of Qianhai is home to a touristy, mostly over-priced and over-rated strip of bars and restaurants known as Lotus Lane.

**HÀN CĀNG** Map p262 Chinese Hakka Y

汉仓  
☎ 6404 2259; by north gate of Beihai Park (just off Dianmen Xidajie); dishes from Y12; ☺ lunch & dinner; ☉ Gulou  
In the summer, when the large outside terrace comes into its own, this is one of Běijīng's hot restaurant destinations. It's still good in winter too, especially if you get one of the upstairs rooms that have a great view over the frozen lake. Hakka (客家; *kèjiā*) cuisine uses a lot of fresh fish. Go for the baked crab with ginger and onion (Y48) and the whole fried fish with pine nut (Y38). But there's also plenty here for meat-lovers. The roast beef fillet with garlic and wrapped in a lotus leaf (Y28) and the baked *san huang* chicken with salt (Y28 for a half chicken) are both worth trying. It gets loud here and it's always crowded, so book, or be prepared for a wait, if you want an outside table in the evenings. English and picture menu.

**SOUTH SILK ROAD** Map p262 Yúnnán YY

南秀水街  
☎ 6615 5515; 12-13, 19A Qianhai Xiyuan Rd; dishes from Y18; ☺ lunch & dinner; ☉ Gulou  
Another addition to the growing army of stylish Yúnnán restaurants in Běijīng, this spacious, hip and busy restaurant is spread over two floors and offers a bird's-eye view over Qianhai Lake. The dishes are authentic Yúnnán, from the baked beef in Yúnnán tea (Y58) to the pot-roasted frog (Y58). There's a range of spicy barbecued fish dishes from Y38, a reasonable wine list and the beers start at Y25. There are two other branches, one in Soho (☎ 8580 4286; 3/F, Bldg D, Soho New Town, 88 Jianguo Lu, Cháoyáng) and another in Chaoyang (☎ 6481 3261; 2-3F, North Bldg 4, Area 2, Anhuili, Cháoyáng).

**RAJ** Map p262 Indian YY

拉兹印度音乐餐厅  
☎ 6401 1675; 31 Gulou Xidajie; dishes from Y28; ☺ lunch & dinner; ☉ Gulou  
With soothing sitar music on the stereo, comfy cushions, red drapes and an extensive menu of north Indian cuisine classics, such as chicken tikka masala (Y42), rogan josh (Y42) and assorted vindaloo and kormas, the Raj satisfies curry fanatics looking for a taste of the subcontinent in Běijīng. They deliver and take credit cards too.

**CAFÉ SAMBAL** Map p262 Malaysian YY

☎ 6400 4875; 43 Doufuchi Hutong (off Jiugulou Dajie); set lunch Y50, dishes from Y35; 🍴 lunch & dinner; 🍷 Gulou

Cool Malaysian restaurant located in a cleverly-converted courtyard house at the entrance to Doufuchi Hutong. The minimalist bar opens into a narrow dining area that has a temporary roof during the winter, but is open in the summer so you can dine under the stars and satellites. The food is classic Malaysian. Try the beef rendang (Y48), or the various sambals (from Y50). The wine list is decent and gets updated every six months, while the barman here mixes what many claim to be the best mojito (Y35) in town.

**HUTONG PIZZA** Map p262 Pizza YY

胡同比萨

☎ 6617 5916; 9 Yindingqiao Hutong; pizzas from Y52; 🍴 lunch & dinner; 🍷 Gulou

Nestling in a *hùtòng* that was one of the locations for the movie *Beijing Bicycle*, Hutong Pizza is hard to find but worth the

effort because they offer the best pizza in town. There's a wide selection to choose from, including veggie options, or you can build your own, and they're big: the large pizzas (Y85) will easily satisfy two hungry people. There are salads, burgers and pasta options, as well local and foreign beers. It gets busy, so it's advisable to book at peak times. They do deliver though. Watch out for the mini-pond just inside the entrance; put one step wrong and you'll be swimming with the fish.

**YUELU SHANWU** Map p262 Chinese Hunan YY

岳麓山屋

☎ 6617 2696; 10-11 Tianhe Fang (Lotus Lane); meals from Y80; 🍴 lunch & dinner; 🍷 Gulou

With a marvellous view over the lake of Qianhai, this pretty, neat and civilised Húnán restaurant and bar – the name means 'house at the foot of the mountain' – serves a range of hot and mild dishes from the province renowned for its searing flavours. If you're feeling flush, the spicy snake is a snip at Y320. English menu.

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