



**Ding's
Chinese
Restaurant**

3117 Houma Blvd.

Metairie, La. 70002

Ding's Serves Great Version of Classic Peking Duck

BY RICHARD H. COLLIN

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★★★ • DING'S CHINESE RESTAURANT, 4210 Veterans Highway. Closed Monday. Hours: 11-9:30, to 10:30 Friday and Saturday. Telephone: 885-2221. Reservations essential.

Ding's is a tiny Chinese restaurant that prepares versions of the classic northern Chinese cuisine to equal or surpass the best Chinese kitchens in San Francisco, New York and London. Just off of Veterans Highway near the Clearview Shopping Center, this new restaurant has two menus, the first featuring the standard chop suey and chow mein dishes, and a special northern Chinese menu featuring some of the grand dishes of non-Cantonese Chinese cooking. One should concentrate wholly on the non-Cantonese menu.

The tour de force at Ding's is an authentic Peking duck (a platonic dish) at \$8 (one duck serves as many as six). It takes a day to prepare Peking duck so one must call the day before (or sooner) to order the duck and for a reservation. Peking duck is the great dish of the northern Chinese cuisine; it bears not even the slightest resemblance to the locally popular Mandarin duck, a much simpler dish.

Peking duck begins with a Long Island duckling, dipped in boiling water, rubbed with herbs and honey and then hung to dry. It is then roasted for about three hours, to get the skin to the ideal point of crispness. Serving Peking duck is as ceremonial and important as cooking it. The diner is first shown the beautiful whole roasted duck; the duck is then cut up into two courses, the crisp skin and the meat. These are brought out together on a platter. Accompanying the duck are Chinese pancakes or crepes, slivers of

green onions (scallions or New Orleans shallots) and a rich fruity variation of hoisin sauce. One spreads the hoisin sauce on the pancake, then adds a piece of green onion and a piece or two of the duck skin. The crepe is then rolled and eaten like a sandwich. When the skin is all gone one proceeds in the same way with the duck meat.

For the Chinese this is a particularly festive dish eaten on very special occasions. Peking duck is an extremely difficult dish to make since the hanging and drying process is time-consuming and the roasting must be done by arduous hand-turning. The resultant dish is incomparable. Peking duck is one of my special favorites and I am delighted that we are now fortunate enough to be able to eat a fine version of it in New Orleans.

Ding's does many other good northern Chinese dishes well, most of them new to New Orleans. The best way to start the meal is with sweet and pungent soup (a platonic dish) at 65 cents and \$1.20. After the rather pedestrian

egg-drop soups of Cantonese American cuisine the great strength and delicacy of Chinese soup may be surprising. The sweet and pungent soup is rich and spicy, loaded with Chinese vegetables, black mushrooms and pepper.

A fine entree at Ding's is the beef with Chinese pickles (highly recommended) at \$2.80, available in degrees of hotness from mild to very hot. The medium hot is the best place to start. In the same vein is the chicken Ding, hot diced chicken, green pepper and Chinese mushrooms. More delicate is the mushroom with bean curd (a platonic dish), a dish which demonstrates the infinite delicacy of Chinese cooking and is primarily composed of Chinese vegetables sauteed in a light sauce (\$3).

Soup and Peking duck would be a more than ample dinner for two persons. For a party of four an additional one or two of the recommended entrees would make a first-rate meal. The Chinese dumplings (highly recommended) are another fine

Chinese rarity, steamed dumplings vaguely resembling ravioli (\$2.80) for 10; order in advance). If you fail to call a day in advance for Peking duck, the crisp chicken at \$4 is done by a similar cooking process but takes only a few hours' advance notice.

The perfect accompaniment to this superior fare is wine. Order a glass of warm sake, Chinese rice wine (50 cents). The presiding geniuses of Ding's extraordinary kitchen are two delightful female chefs, Hsien chi Kuo (Dolores) and Kuoi Tsai (Mary). They are two of the most gifted cooks you will ever encounter and their expertise with a rare and delicate cuisine has few rivals. Don't come here for the standard Cantonese cooking; there is a full menu of the usual dishes but these are a waste of the talents of this distinguished kitchen. In fact, I would hope that as New Orleanians become more familiar with the Northern Chinese specialties, the Cantonese dishes will be eliminated.



COCKTAILS

MIXED DRINKS

Beer _____ .45

High Ball _____ .90

Cocktails _____ 1.10

Black Russian, Manhattan,

Bloody Mary, Martini,

Old Fashioned, Bacardi,

Daiquiri, Collins.

Margarita, Screw Driver,

Whiskey Sour

Call Brand & Extra Dry
_____ 1.25

J.B., Chevas Regal,

Beefeater, J. Walker (Red),

Jack Daniels, Southern

Comfort, Cutty Sack,

Canadian Club, Old Grand Dad,

V.O., Tanqueray

Special Hawaiian Drinks
_____ 1.75

Ding's Special, Mai Tai,

Fog Cutter.

Hawaiian Cooler.

Rain Killer

WINE

1/2 Bottle Bottle

White Wine

Chablis _____ 3.75 7.00

Guntrun

Liebfraumilch

_____ 2.75 5.00

Red Wine

Chateau

De Beffavent

_____ 2.50 4.50

Burgundy _____ 2.50 4.50

Rosé

Mateus _____ 2.75 5.00

Rice Wine

Sake _____ 3.00 5.00

Per Glass

Dubonnet _____ 1.00

Chablis _____ 1.00

Burgundy _____ .75

Sherry _____ .75

Sake _____ .75

After Dinner Drinks 1.10

Drumbuie, B & B,

Kahlua

BOOK-A-JOB

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SPECIAL
NORTHERN DISHES

APPETIZERS

| | | |
|-----|---------------------------------------|------|
| 21. | 蝴蝶蝦 Butterfly Shrimp | 3.50 |
| 22. | 酸味牛肉 Beef w. Chinese Pickles | 3.30 |
| 1. | Egg Roll (Hot or Regular) | 1.25 |
| 2. | Puffed Shrimp Mushroom w. Bean Curd | 1.95 |
| 3. | Rumaki Chicken w. Hot Sauce | 1.25 |
| 4. | Fried Wonton Mandarin Duck | 1.00 |
| 5. | B. B. Q. Rib Pork w. Pungent Sauce | 1.80 |
| 6. | Roasted Pork Beef w. Chinese Mushroom | 1.50 |
| 7. | B. B. Q. (Appetizer Plate) | 3.95 |

SOUPS

| | | |
|-----|-------------------------|------|
| 8. | Duck w. Mushroomi Soup | .50 |
| 9. | Wonton Soup | .65 |
| 10. | Pungent Soup, Small | .65 |
| | Large | 1.20 |
| 11. | Yet Ka Mein Soup, Large | 2.50 |

Shan Bread w. Filling, 1 Fire Pot, 1 Fried Rice, and choice of one dish from No. 20, 21, 22, 1 almond cookie, 1 fortune cookie, Coffee or Tea

Please order No. 32 in advance.

We also prepare orders to take out.

ALPHABETICALLY LISTED

CANTONESE DISHES

Fried Rice:

41. Shrimp ----- 1.90
 42. Pork ----- 1.70
 43. Subgum ----- 2.00

Egg Fong Young:

44. Pork, Shrimp or Chicken ----- 1.90

Sweet & Sour Dishes:

45. Pork ----- 3.00
 46. Shrimp ----- 3.50
 47. Chicken ----- 3.00

48. Moo Goo Gai Pan ----- 2.80

49. Chicken Almond ----- 2.80

50. Boneless Chicken ----- 3.00

51. Beef w. Broccoli ----- 2.80

52. Beef, Pork, or Chicken w. Vegetables ----- 2.80

53. Pepper Beef ----- 2.80

54. Shrimp w. Lobster Sauce ----- 2.90

55. Chop Suey, or Chow Mein ----- 2.50

56. Mixed Vegetables ----- 2.00

68. Child's Plate: Boneless Chicken or S. & S.
 Pork, Steam Rice w. Gravy ----- 1.50

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FAMILY DINNER

4.25 per Person

Egg Roll and Soup

Dinner for two — 1 from group A, and 1 from group B
" " three — 2 " " A, " 1 " " B
" " four — 2 " " A, " 2 " " B

Group A

- A1. Moo Goo Gai Pan
- A2. Pepper Beef
- A3. Chop Suey or Chow Mein
- A4. Beef, Pork, or Chicken
w. Vegetables
- A5. Shrimp w. Lobster Sauce
- A6. Fried Rice

Group B

- B1. S & S Pork
- B2. S & S Chicken
- B3. S & S Shrimp
- B4. Boneless Chicken
- B5. Egg Foo Yung

(Dessert) Almond & Fortune Cookies Hot Tea
\$50 Charge for extra setting.

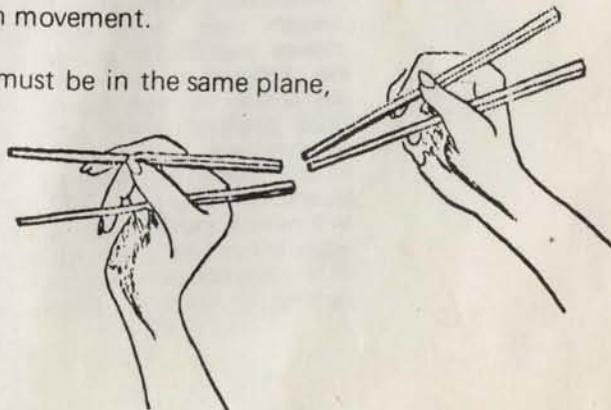
Place One Chop Stick under the right thumb, resting on the little or fourth finger.

This Chop Stick remains in this position and does not change at any time.

Take the Second Chop Stick and place under the thumb and between the third and second fingers.

This Chop Stick moves in a back and forth movement.

The two eating ends of the Chop Sticks must be in the same plane, even when meeting; otherwise nothing can be picked up with them.



SEE ILLUSTRATIONS:

Underground Gourmet Ding's Magnificent Restaurant

By RICHARD H. COLLIN

(©, 1972, Richard H. Collin)

*** DING'S CHINESE RESTAURANT, 3117 Houma Blvd., Metairie, La. Telephone: 885-2221. Closed Monday. Hours 11:30 a.m.-10:00 p.m. Saturday and Sunday 4:30 p.m.-10 p.m. One day's notice required for Peking Duck. Child care center available for children. Bar.

When Ding's Chinese Restaurant opened two years ago it marked a new era of Chinese eating in New Orleans. Ding's premises were modest and the original menu only indicated in a tentative way that the restaurant's true genius lay in the rarer, then almost unknown dishes of Northern Chinese cooking. At that time I wrote that Ding's versions of classic Chinese dishes equalled the best versions served in San Francisco, London or New York. Ding's has now moved to a much larger and grander restaurant just a block from the original one. The food is as good as it was before and the new restaurant is a pleasure to eat in — tablecloths, spaciousness, authentic Chinese decorations and fine Chinese taped music.

New Orleanians now have a fine range of great Chinese restaurants with Ding's, The Dragon's Garden, The Canton and the Chinese Tea Garden. The two great cuisines — French and Chinese — have much in common, delicacy, infinite variety, incredible subtlety. The depressing American-Chinese restaurants which have dominated local Chinese cooking and indeed most American-Chinese cooking for too long have thoroughly obscured the greatness of Chinese haute cuisine.

THE GRAND DISH at Ding's is the magnificent Chinese tour de force, Peking Duck (a platonic dish). Peking Duck is a carefully seasoned, slowly cooked duck roasted to the precise moment when the skin becomes perfectly crisp. First the whole duck is brought out to the din-

ner; this ceremony is part of the presentation of the dish. The duck is then cut up and the skin is separated from the meat. The sliced duck is served along with thin Chinese crepes (pancakes), a rich and sweet version of Hoisin sauce and green onions (New Orleans shallots). One spreads some Hoisin sauce on a crepe, then puts on a piece or two of duck — first skin pieces and after the skin is eaten meat pieces.

The crepe is then rolled up and eaten out of hand. The genius of this dish lies in the perfect and subtle balance of flavors — the perfectly roasted crisp duck, the absolutely plain pancake, the fruity sauce and the sharpness of the raw shallots. This is one of the world's greatest dishes. Ding's Peking Duck is \$10; the duck can serve at least two persons, three comfortably, and even four if you add a soup or appetizer. The dish is incredibly rich, so that a little goes a long way. Peking Duck must be ordered a day in advance, since the preparation involves preliminary immersion in boiling water and then a long period of hanging after the duck has been rubbed with herbs and honey.

NEW ETHNIC CUISINES often encounter problems. One is well illustrated by a series of misunderstandings which for a time threatened the Peking Duck at Ding's. Many diners were unfamiliar with Peking Duck and its classic preparation; they had never eaten Chinese pancakes or any crepes made without sugar and began to ask for American-style pancakes with this dish. The chefs complied and the result was an atrocity. The sweet breakfast pancakes required an adjustment in the sauce; the resultant dish was a sad parody of the great Peking Duck. The proprietors were under the impression that courtesy required them to accommodate the diners. Unfortunately courtesy such as this can totally undermine a unique cuisine.

It is a disservice to a restaurant, especially one as good as Ding's, to ask for such variations. If you don't like a particular dish order something else. Palates crude enough to demand changes in a perfectly balanced dish don't deserve to come in contact with Peking Duck, let alone corrupt it. Imagine requesting trout amandine with peanuts, Tournedos Marchand de Vin with ketchup or Trout Veronique with strawberries.

Ding's will no longer honor such requests and the only pancake that will be served here is the thin Chinese crepe without sugar; if you must have a sweet, thick American pancake go somewhere else and have breakfast. This is a challenge all unfamiliar ethnic restaurants must face: to stand fast and not change rather than give in to ignorance and become just another ordinary restaurant.

TO CELEBRATE its new location, Ding's has added several remarkable new dishes. The shrimp and sizzling rice (a platonic dish) is a mixture of finely cooked shrimp and peas in a sauce and rice which sizzles as the shrimp and the broth are poured over the chunks of fried rice. The result is a unique and delicious blend of flavors.

Another fascinating dish is the Chinese Fire Pot (highly recommended), a chicken base broth cooked at the table in a modern Chinese fire pot; to it are added Chinese celery, cabbage, beef, chicken, shrimp and Chinese noodles. When the ingredients are cooked they are poured into soup bowls containing Satay sauce, a spicy condiment resembling curry sauce. The resultant dish is another marvel of unique flavors. Another fine new dish is the steamed bread (highly recommended) with filling, a form of Chinese

dumplings with a heavier dough and a meat filling, served in an authentic Chinese bamboo steamer. (\$3.50).

Ding's older repertoire is as impressive as ever. The sweet and pungent soup (a platonic dish) at 65 cents is still my favorite prelude to a Peking Duck dinner. The mushroom with bean curd (a platonic dish) is a delicate dish based on lightly sauteed Chinese vegetables (\$3.50). The beef with Chinese pickles (highly recommended) is an excellent spicy Szechuan-type dish (\$2.80). The sweet and sour shrimp (highly recommended), also made on order with fish, is noteworthy in either version. Ding's is an exceptional restaurant with a magnificent kitchen. It now offers its patrons a very unusual service: the old premises have been turned into a child care center staffed by professionals who watch children while their parents dine. The cost is a nominal 50 cents per child and baby food and games are available. I think this is an excellent idea for parents whose eating adventures are hampered by the need to feed the children while they dine.

Ding's is a superb Chinese restaurant, a fine place for grand occasions and for those times you want to enjoy authentic versions of one of the world's oldest and most magnificent cuisines.