

## John Chow's trip to Beijing, October/November 2005 Part 1

Part I is about the place and the food in general.

My host, Lucian Yao, is keen on good food. And to him, food mean really hot spicy food! Lucian loves hot chilly food from Hunan and Szechuan provinces Whenever we go out, and that is basically every day, and sometimes 3 meals a day, I ate hot spicy food.

Of the hot food, I remember 2 dishes most:-

- hot spicy dried duck.
- Hot spicy mutton steamboat

I love the hot spicy dried duck. So hot! But delicious. It burns the tongue. If you want some excitement at the dinner table and are willing to wrestle with the devil, try this dish.

Lucian also brought me to one of Beijing's most popular Beijing Duck restaurants. Genuine Beijing Duck, in Beijing.

Food is quite cheap in Beijing. If you are not fussy, it is actually very cheap!



Thinly sliced mutton for the steamboat



The steamboat, divided into 2 compartments. Note the chillies.



My hot spicy dried duck - what has become of it after we couldn't contain ourselves and ate it before remembering to take a photo.



Pumpkin buns – delicious.

Below are some of Chairman Mao Tze Tung's favourite dishes, and boy, I had a sampling too. I feel honoured.





Now, the place. Beijing is a big place. Many highways. The locals complain it is polluted and congested. However, I found that the air is not half as polluted as some cities in the world. Quite bearable.

Cleanliness? I expected some dirty smelly places, but was surprised that Beijing is reasonably clean for an old city.

Tourist places: For a bus ride of an hour, you can reach the Great Wall. Yes, the Great Wall. I thought it was just a wall, something to keep the invaders out. But what I saw was most inspiring. You may walk up a few kilometres of the wall. Some parts are steep, so wear non-slip rubber soled shoes. Read my thoughts on this great monument in my document "My thoughts on the Great Wall of China".

Next to see is the Forbidden City. This is essentially the palace and living world of the emperors of the Qing (Manchu) dynasty. Some earlier dynasties have based their capitals elsewhere in China, but most of the ruins did not survive China's history. This outing should take a day. Be prepared to walk.

Tian An Men Square. This is just in front of the Forbidden City. This famous square is enormous. It is made even more famous by the Tian An Men Square incident in which some believe were some misguided dissidents encouraged by foreign influences, tried to lead a revolution to overthrow the Chinese government mainly on the grounds of corruption. Paradoxically, this view may have some truth in it because many of the dissidents can speak good English, or seem to have much contacts in the West, or have been educated in the West, and have access to modern facilities and electronic equipment - resources available only to the privileged, powerful, wealthy and possibly corrupt officials - scarce resources which most ordinary Chinese do not have at that time, such that even to today, I have not figure out whether they understood what they were protesting about, or who they were protesting against - the government, the corrupt officials (who most probably are their own parents and relatives), or themselves. Anyway, that is politics, and politics is a dirty game, and we, the ordinary people are the pawns.

Summer Palace:- this is the cool palace where the emperor goes to seek refuge and entertainment during the hot Summer months.

Temple of Heaven: Built in the Ming dynasty for the emperors to offer annual sacrifice to Heaven on the day of the Winter Solstice every year.

Lama Temple: old Tibetan temple

Jing Shan Park: part of the Forbidden City until the early 1900s.

Bei Hai Park: This classical Chinese garden is in the centre of Beijing and is a great place to see some green open spaces and escape the crowds.

Ming Tombs: scenic burial places of most of the Ming emperors.

Please also read the next article about me teaching Arnis/Eskrima art of Kalis Ilustrisimo in Beijing during this trip.

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