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\* **Roasted Local Chicken**  
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Recipe on pg. 37

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# A New Chinese Cuisine

Fuelled by next year's Summer Games, major Chinese cities are experiencing staggering building booms, and top-notch hotels and restaurants are leading the way. Having just returned from a trip to China contributor **Nathan Fong** shares his discoveries.



Two views of the interior of the contemporary restaurant Jade on 36 located in Shanghai, China

China was a sleeping giant after the Cultural Revolution. Lately, however, the giant has awoken and is growing stronger and faster than anyone could have imagined. Renowned for its classic regional cuisines such as Cantonese and Szechuan, major urban centres such as Shanghai and Beijing are starting to feel the influence of globalization and the bright young Western chefs who are moving to China. The result is a whole new style of modern Chinese cuisine.

During the month of May, I ventured to mainland China for the first time and was both surprised and intrigued by some of the exciting food being served. Not only did I experience impressive cuisine, the restaurants had stunning interiors to match.

Shanghai, a city often referred to as the Paris or New York of Asia, has become one of the most vibrant and cosmopolitan cities I've seen. Like its counterpart Hong Kong, Shanghai has a lot to live up to, and it does so with style, class and great energy. Tall, modern skyscrapers are quickly being built, and just as quickly new restaurants are moving in and opening up. The food scene is alive—from small local restaurants where no English is spoken to sophisticated international celebrity chef outposts such as Jean Georges and the soon-to-be-opened Nobu, both from New York.

One of the most intriguing finds on my culinary quest was discovering a large Muslim population in the western provinces, notably in the city of Xian, and a style of Chinese Muslim cuisine. Night markets featured everything from marinated mutton and beef kebabs to handmade pulled noodles with chilies.

Beijing, the capital city of this 1.3-billion-population country, is supposedly a marked contrast to Shanghai, more conservative than the flamboyant eastern port city. But that was barely noticeable on my visit; building cranes were everywhere on the city horizons, mainly due to next year's 2008 Summer Olympic Games. The new construction will add some 60 four- and five-star hotels to the city in time for the international games. These include a new Four Seasons, Park Hyatt, Ritz-Carlton and a Shangri-la. Not only will these upscale hotels bring service standards to a new level, they will also showcase restaurants with a new generation of chefs willing to experiment and infuse traditional Chinese classics with modern Western culinary techniques.

Here are recipes from some of the top meals I had on my recent trip.

## JADE ON 36, PUDONG SHANGRI-LA

Situated on top of the new Tower Two of the Pudong Shangri-la hotel in Shanghai, this spectacular restaurant was designed by Adam Tihany (of New York's Le Cirque fame) and overlooks the city's famed Bund. Chef Paul Pairet, a passionate transplanted French chef, is one of the most innovated chefs I have encountered, creating sensational Euro-Chinese cuisine that truly excites the palate and plays with presentation. He plays with some molecular gastronomy too (a style originating in Spain's famed El Bulli). Foams and gels figure in his dishes, but not to extreme degrees, only to the point of wittiness.

A foie gras terrine is layered with port wine, passion fruit gel and cocoa powder to resemble the classic French "Opera" cake, but this is a savoury, not sweet, treat. A very light sardine mousse infused with mustard, soy and lemongrass, is served in a sardine tin with thin crisp hazelnut croutons. Jumbo lemongrass skewered shrimp are steamed with citrus skins, leaves and juices in a Mason jar. A sublime beef short rib is slowly braised for 12 hours and lacquered with a teriyaki-style glaze, orange reduction, fried garlic and served with a delicate truffle mashed potato pool. The presentation is nothing what it seems, but everything delivers more than what you would expect.

### Short Rib Teriyaki

Four 1-inch racks of short ribs  
8 cups beef bouillon

Teriyaki Sauce:	2 Tbsp ketchup
1/4 cup mirin	2 Tbsp honey
1/4 cup rice vinegar	1 Tbsp olive oil
1/4 cup soy sauce	1 1/2 cups orange juice

Fried garlic (available at Asian supermarkets)  
Mashed potatoes (with truffle oil, optional)

Preheat oven to 325°F.

Pierce meat between each rib to prevent curling. Lay rib rack meat-side down in a deep pan and cover with beef bouillon. Bring to boil, cover, place in oven and simmer for 2 hours or until beef is fork-tender. Chill meat completely in bouillon. Cut between every two rib bones to make neat servings.

Combine mirin, rice vinegar, soy sauce, ketchup and honey in saucepan over medium heat to make teriyaki sauce. Reduce until syrupy, about 15 minutes. Reserve.

In a small saucepan, bring orange juice to a boil and reduce until syrupy. Reserve.

Heat oven to 400°F. Heat oil in a skillet over medium-high heat. Add ribs and sear for 1 minute a side or until golden brown. Glaze with teriyaki sauce and place on baking sheet. Roast for 7 minutes. Turn over. Glaze again with teriyaki sauce and roast another 7 to 8 minutes, or until dark and succulent. Glaze again before serving.

Serve short ribs on a bed of mashed potatoes and drizzle with orange syrup and garnish with a sprinkle of garlic chips. Serves 4.

### Lemongrass Skewered Prawns with Citrus Aromatics

8 large jumbo shrimp, peeled, deveined and lightly blanched	4 quart-size Mason jars with snap-on glass and rubber lids
4 stalks lemongrass	4 Tbsp Thai sweet chili sauce
2 large oranges	4 tsp Vietnamese fish sauce
2 large lemons	2 cloves garlic minced
8 kaffir lime leaves	1 Tbsp finely chopped cilantro
4 thin slices of ginger root	

Cut lemongrass to fit the height of the Mason jars. Skewer blanched shrimp with lemongrass. Peel orange and lemon and divide the peel among the jars. (Leave it in chunks just as it was peeled.) Squeeze the orange and lemon juice into a bowl, mix together and divide among the jars. Add kaffir leaves and ginger to the jars. Add 2 inches of water to a large canning or stock pot and bring to a boil. Close and seal jars and add them to the pot, steam covered, until done about 10 to 15 minutes.

Mix together the chili sauce, fish sauce, garlic and cilantro and place in individual serving bowls.

To serve, place Mason jar on a serving plate. Each guest should carefully open the jar and smell the aroma. Dip shrimp into sauce. Serves 4.

### GUI HUA LOU, PUDONG SHANGRI-LA

Executive Chinese chef Ye Wen Chian is one of the Chinese celebrity chefs at the Pudong Shangri-la's Gui Hua Lou, the hotel's beautiful modern Shanghai-style designed restaurant. Trained in Cantonese and Szechuan cuisines, chef Ye has taken the classics and adapted them to a lighter and healthier approach compared to the traditional heavier cooking. This is an adapted version of the famed chicken with Szechuan chilies. It seems like a lot of chilies, but that gives this dish the flavour and the fire. The chilies are for flavouring, not for eating!

## Sauteed Chicken with Spices and Red Chillies

6 Tbsp vegetable oil  
1 lb combination of boneless and skinless chicken breasts and thighs, cut into 1-inch dice  
2 large garlic cloves, minced  
2 oz/60g whole dried red chillies (stems removed)  
2 oz/60g dry roasted peanuts  
3 green onions, cut into 1-inch pieces  
2 tsp hot chili oil  
1 tsp light soy sauce  
1 tsp salt  
1 tsp toasted sesame seeds

In a large non-stick wok, heat 2 Tbsp of the vegetable oil over high heat. When nearly smoking, add the chicken and stir-fry until golden. Remove chicken and set aside. Add the remaining vegetable oil and heat on high. When hot, add the garlic, red chillies, roasted peanuts, green onions, chili oil, soy sauce and salt. Stir-fry until fragrant, about 2 minutes. Add the chicken and sesame seeds. Stir-fry for about 2 minutes until well mixed. Serves four as part of a multi-course dinner.

## PALLADIO RESTAURANT, PORTMAN RITZ-CARLTON

The beautiful Portman Ritz-Carlton was one of the first Western luxury hotels to open in Shanghai more than 15 years ago and is a landmark located on the famous Nanjing Road. Right in the heart of the commercial, shopping and entertainment district of this bustling 18-million-plus city, the hotel features six restaurants, including chef Francesco Greco's Palladio Restaurant. A native of Milan, Greco has worked in some of the world's most esteemed restaurants, including Taillevent in Paris and the Principe di Savoia in Milan.

Here is one of his signature dishes, Lobster "Tegame" with sautéed baby artichokes and a reduction of spicy bisque.

## Lobster Tegame

Four 1 1/2 lb live lobsters  
1 Thai red chili, finely chopped

6 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil  
2 cloves garlic, minced  
2 Tbsp chopped Italian parsley  
20 small clams in shell  
4 Tbsp white wine  
1 lb baby fresh green or purple artichokes, cleaned, trimmed and halved  
1 Tbsp chopped fresh basil  
1 Tbsp chopped fresh mint  
3/4 lb fingerling or small new potatoes, blanched and cut into 1/2-inch coins  
1/4 lb cold unsalted butter  
1 1/2 Tbsp finely chopped fresh thyme

Take each lobster and cut through the neck in the middle of the head then place in a large steamer and steam for 3 minutes. Remove and immerse in an ice bath for two minutes. Gently remove the lobster meat from the tail and dry on paper towels. Reserve claws. Remove coral and the lobster trimmings, reserving the tail and head shells. Heat a heavy saucepan over high heat and toss the trimmings and coral with a small amount of olive oil to pan-roast. When fragrant, add enough water to cover and bring to a boil. Simmer for 2 hours, then strain, pressing all the coral through a fine mesh strainer. Discard trimmings. Add chillies to the liquid and reduce until thick. Set aside.

Heat a small saucepan with 2 Tbsp olive oil over medium high heat. When hot, add the garlic, Italian parsley, clams and white wine. Sauté until cooked and shells are opened. Set aside warm.

In a large non-stick frying pan, add half the butter and 4 Tbsp of the olive oil and

heat over high heat. When hot, pan-roast the artichokes and lobster and add the chopped basil and mint. Add potatoes and toss to heat. Set aside warm.

Whisk in half of the butter to the reserved lobster reduction. To serve, slice and arrange the lobster meat with the reserved lobster shells and garnish with the artichokes, clams and potatoes. Drizzle with the reduction sauce.

## BLU LOBSTER, BEIJING SHANGI-LA

Beijing's culinary scene has always been overshadowed by Shanghai's more upscale dining scene. But since the announcement of the 2008 Olympic Games, the city has changed immensely, not only with the increase of traffic (reportedly some 1,000 new cars on the city streets every day!), but with hot new restaurants being built to showcase the incoming international media and tourist trade.

One of the latest additions to Beijing's expanding food scene is Blu Lobster at the Beijing Shangi-la Hotel. The young 29-year-old British recruit manning the kitchen is chef Brian McKenna, a protégé of international famed chefs Gordon Ramsey and Marco Pierre White. McKenna's talent is showcased with exciting dishes that surprise the palate and titillate the eyes. The dinner started with fresh-shucked briny oysters adomed with a delicate citrus passion fruit foam. A foie gras bonbon playfully sat on top of caramel "rice krispies" and a spiced watermelon gazpacho.

What followed was a whimsical tasting menu of sorts—from a sublime Asian spiced crab risotto garnished with avocado ice cream, lemongrass foam and crab tempura to a superb lobster coconut curry bisque with olive oil poached lobster, curry jelly caviar and lobster foam. The multiple dessert courses were kids' play for adults: mango and pineapple ravioli contrasted with its garnish of Szechuan peppercorn ice cream sitting in a pool of coconut and

lemongrass soup. A semi-sweet chocolate, raspberry and basil tart sounds simple but not when you bite into the filling and it starts to "pop" in your mouth like those candied pop rocks of my youth! The dinner ended with McKenna's continuing to play, serving coffee foam with a milk sorbet and coffee crumble, accompanied with a bevy of petit fours including a stunning wasabi ginger truffle with black sesame seeds.

To finish off what seemed a perfect evening, each guest was presented with a toothbrush and a "tube" of toothpaste . . . instead of dinner mints, a clever, mint-infused Italian meringue!

Here is Chef McKenna's exotic version of the traditional Italian risotto.

## Asian Spiced Crab Risotto

1 1/2 litres fish or shellfish stock  
2 Tbsp olive oil  
2 shallots, finely chopped  
2 small Thai chillies, deseeded and finely minced  
1 stalk lemongrass, white part only, finely chopped  
1/2-inch piece ginger root, finely minced  
1/2-inch piece galangal, finely minced  
1 clove garlic, finely minced  
1 1/2 cup (300g) Carnaroli or Arborio rice  
1/4 cup white wine  
1/3 lb fresh Dungeness crabmeat  
1 Tbsp chopped cilantro  
1 Tbsp chopped Italian parsley  
1 Tbsp chopped chives  
1/3 cup fresh grated Parnesan cheese  
2 Tbsp butter  
1/4 cup coconut cream

In a saucepan, heat up stock until simmering. In another heavy saucepan, add the olive oil and heat over medium heat. When hot, add the shallots, chillies, lemongrass,

ginger, galangal and garlic and sauté for a few minutes until aromatic.

Add the rice and continue to cook for a couple minutes to allow the rice to be infused by the flavours. Add the white wine and stir until evaporated. Add a ladle full of the hot stock to the rice and stir. When the stock has nearly evaporated, add another ladle full and repeat until the risotto is to desired texture. The rice should be creamy with a slight bite (al dente).

To finish, add the crabmeat and herbs, season with salt and pepper, Parnesan cheese, butter and coconut cream. Stir well and leave to sit for about 30 seconds to allow flavours to infuse.

## For lemongrass foam:

1/2 litre coconut milk  
2 stalks lemongrass, coarsely chopped  
2 Tbsp butter

Bring coconut milk with lemongrass to a boil; remove, cover and refrigerate overnight. The next day, strain mixture discarding lemongrass and heat the milk to simmer. Add the butter and with a hand blender, process to create foam.

To serve, add a portion of the risotto to a warm serving dish. Garnish around with coconut foam and add a small scoop of the avocado ice cream (see below). At Blu Lobster, this dish is also garnished with tempura-fried crab claw! Serves 4.

Here are a trio of Chef McKenna's whimsical ice creams

## Avocado Ice Cream

This smooth rich delicacy was the garnish for the hot crab risotto, which made such a contrast between the hot risotto and the cool and silky texture of the ice cream. This would make a great garnish as well for a summer heirloom tomato salad.

1/2 pint (250 mL) whipping cream  
1 Tbsp fresh lemon juice  
1/2 cup sugar  
3/4 pint (375 mL) milk  
3 ripe avocados

Peel the avocados and remove the pits. Place in a blender with the milk and make a puree. Pour the puree into a mixing bowl, add the sugar, lemon juice and cream and beat until creamy. Then transfer the complete mixture into an ice cream machine and follow the manufacturer's instructions.

## Szechuan Pepper Ice Cream

This delicately spiced ice cream accompanied the mango and pineapple dessert ravioli, but it would make a splendid garnish with a bowl of our local strawberries or raspberries.

2 cups homogenized milk  
1/3 cup half and half cream  
1/3 cup whipping cream  
7 large egg yolks  
3/4 cup sugar  
1/2 vanilla bean, split  
1 1/2 tsp crushed Szechuan peppercorns (or to taste)

Heat milk and creams with the split vanilla bean to scalding. In a large mixing bowl, whisk together the yolks and sugar, then slowly add a small amount of the hot cream/milk mixture (about a cup), while whisking. Do not add it too quickly or you will have scrambled eggs! Then slowly add the rest of the hot cream mixture, stirring constantly. Pour the mixture back into the pot and place back on stove, cooking over low heat until liquid coats the back of a spoon (being very careful not to boil). Cool over an ice bath and then process in ice

cream machine as per instructions. Add pepper to machine during the last few minutes of spinning.

## Parnesan Sorbeto

This light, infused sorbet enhanced a sublime dish of seared diver scallops with tomatoes and basil. Or add this to a simple dish of cut melons.

1 cup Parnesan cheese, freshly finely grated  
3 cups skim milk  
3 large egg yolks  
1 pinch salt  
1 pt (500 mL) whipping cream

Soak the grated Parnesan in a small mixing bowl with 1 cup of the milk for 1 hour.

Heat the remaining milk in a heavy pot until boiling point. When the milk reaches boiling point, add the Parnesan/milk mixture and stir with a wooden spoon to keep the milk from sticking to the bottom of the pot. Simmer for 2 minutes.

Line a small strainer with heavy cheesecloth or paper towels and place it over a mixing bowl. Pour the hot cheese/milk mixture through the cheesecloth and let stand for 1 hour to drain completely. Discard the gummy residue of the cheese remaining in the strainer. (This residue will have lost the flavour of years of aging and will resemble the bland fresh curd of Parnesan. The flavour will have been absorbed by the milk.)

Be sure the liquid in the bowl has no cheese grains in it. If so, it can be strained again. Transfer the drained milk to a heavy saucepan and stir in the whipping cream. Bring to a scalding point.

In a large mixing bowl, whisk together the egg yolks and the salt, then slowly add about a cup of the hot milk/cream mixture to the egg yolks. Slowly add the rest of the hot cream mixture, stirring constantly. Pour the mixture back into the pot and place

back on stove and cook over low heat until liquid coats the back of a spoon (being very careful not to boil). Cool over an ice bath and then process in ice cream machine as per instructions.



## Crab Risotto at the The Shangri-la Hotel Beijing

### The Hotels

The Portman Ritz-Carlton  
1376 Nanjing Xi Rd., Shanghai, 200040  
[www.ritzcarlton.com](http://www.ritzcarlton.com)

The Fudong Shangri-la Hotel  
33 Fu Cheng Lu, Shanghai, 200120  
[www.shangri-la.com](http://www.shangri-la.com)

The Sofitel on Renmin Square  
319 Dong Xin St., Xian 710004  
[www.accorhotels.com/asia](http://www.accorhotels.com/asia)

The Shangri-la Hotel Beijing  
29 Zizhuyuan Rd., Beijing, 100089  
[www.shangri-la.com](http://www.shangri-la.com)

Raffles Beijing Hotel  
33 East Chang An Ave., Dongcheng District, Beijing 100004  
<http://beijing.affles.com>