

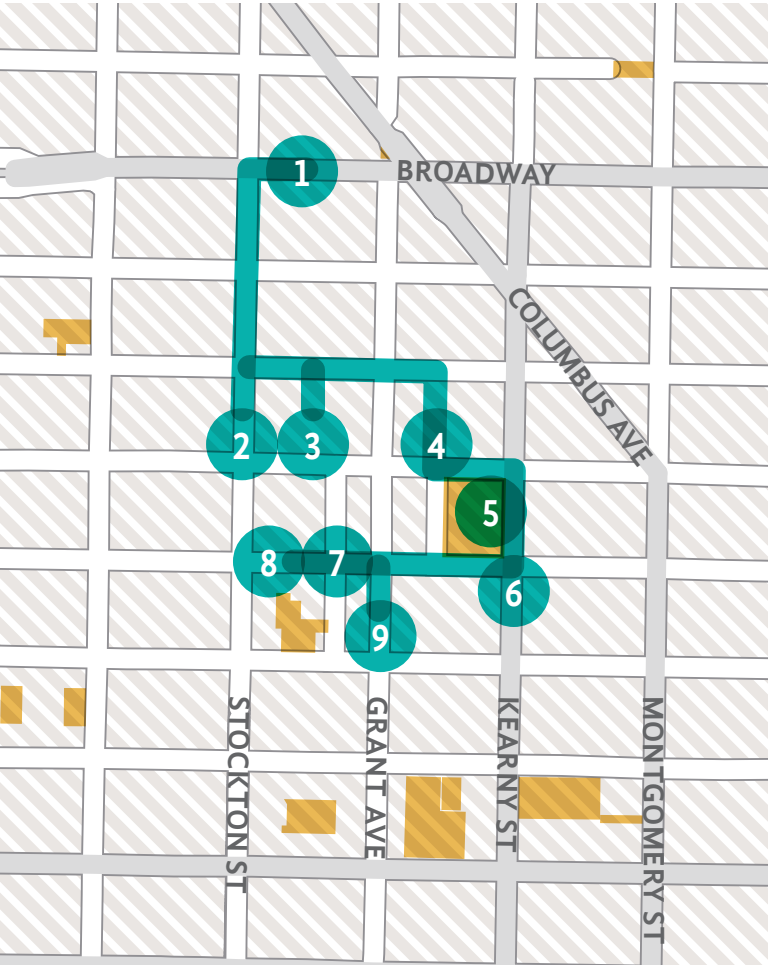
CHINATOWN SELF-GUIDED FOOD TOUR



avital: LOCAL TASTES
LOCAL TOURS

SELF GUIDED TOUR STOPS

- 1 **Welcome Drink:** Introduction at China Live • 644 Broadway
- 2 **Course 1:** Good Mong Kok • 1039 Stockton St
- 3 **Ross Alley & Golden Gate Fortune Cookie Factory**
56 Ross Alley
- 4 **Course 2:** Z&Y Restaurant • 655 Jackson St
- 5 **Portsmouth Square**
- 6 **Course 3** (except Tuesdays or afternoons): Sam Wo
713 Clay St
- 7 **Waverly Place**
- 8 **Course 3** (on Tuesdays and afternoons): Capital Restaurant
839 Clay St
- 9 **Dessert:** Dragon Papa • 752 Grant Ave





**THIS ROUTE IS AVAILABLE EVERYDAY
11:30AM - 8:30PM. ESTIMATED TIME IS 3 HOURS.**



**ESTIMATED COST PER PERSON IF MINIMUM
2 PEOPLE ON TOUR: \$25**

On the self-guided experience, you will be taken away from the “tourist traps” and will get a glimpse into how everyday locals feast. You will get to taste a variety of dishes from different Chinese regions, both traditional and modern.

Let us show you the hidden culinary side of Chinatown!

Here’s some tips to keep in handy before you start your experience:

- All of the selected dishes we recommend eating at each restaurant only budgets the base price; tax and tip are not included
- Many of the restaurants and stores are cash only, so be sure to stop by an ATM
- If you do happen to go during the weekday lunch rush or weekend dinner rush, be prepared to wait for seating at some of these restaurants
- If at all possible, call Z&Y Restaurant when starting your experience to make a reservation
- Please let your server know if you have any food allergies
- Don’t be afraid of the language barrier, most merchants speak great English
- How to say thank you: Xiexie (pronounced shi-eh shi-eh)
- Parking is tough here. Metered parking and garage parking can be pricey. We recommend taking public transportation. <https://goo.gl/maps/Npf54Bjf6152>
- Wear comfortable shoes. This route is precisely 1 mile along even pavement, but some parts do have a small incline.
- Bring a jacket. San Francisco weather can be hot one second, and freezing the next, so be sure to dress in layers.

THE AVITAL PHILOSOPHY

Remember to **#BreatheCuriosity** - step away from the fears of the language barrier, over population, and most importantly, unknown foods, and let us show you what's so great about this neighborhood. Try something new.

Interact with the community members, ask merchants about their history in this neighborhood, be ready to share a family style table with people you may not know - **#CreateCommunity**

When walking down the streets, **#EmbraceQuirky** - you will pass by many stores unfamiliar to you. Fish markets, stores selling peculiar looking spices, and shops filled with products you've never seen before. Atmosphere will be a little different than you're use to, but remember that's what makes Chinatown unique.

This guide contains a lot of recommendations curated by Avital Tours. If there's somewhere in here that you are not interested in going to, or want to step away to explore something else, **#SeizeOwnership**. Own your experience, embrace it the way you want to.

And finally, at Avital Tours, it's our priority to **#BuildAwesomeExperiences**. The sole purpose of this guide is to showcase the hidden side of Chinatown's culinary scene. We want you to to experience this neighborhood and shift your perspective.

In this guide, you will find a self-guided tour, some tips to keep in hand before starting your experience, and some additional stops we recommend you check out if you have a little more time.



INTRODUCTION

San Francisco's Chinatown is filled with colorful alleyways and streets, some with unusual smells and some with kitschy souvenirs. However, behind the Dragon Gates and pagoda rooftops is a vibrant neighborhood, which is home to generations of Chinese American immigrants and a new evolving Chinese American cuisine. Before your journey begins, let us tell you just how the oldest Chinatown in Northern America began, and the Chinese cuisine within.

The first example of Chinese American cuisine emerged in 1848, at the beginning of the Gold Rush Era. Many young bachelors, mostly from the Cantonese region of China, flocked to San Francisco to take part in the search for gold. After the frenzy, many of these young men decided to stay in San Francisco as there was a high demand for their cheap labor. At the end of a long hard day's work, many gold miners would congregate at eateries for dinner and drinks. Later, after the miners had finished their dinner, the hungry and tired Chinese workers would arrive at the eateries, but by then, the staff were tired, and kitchens were out of most ingredients. At that point in the evening, the chef would just throw together whatever food scraps he had left in the kitchen and called it a meal. This dish eventually become known as one of the first famous Chinese American dishes: Chop Suey.

Chinese men who arrived during the Gold Rush were not welcomed in San Francisco. Their appearance was different from the white men with long braided ponytails, different skin color. Speaking a foreign language, didn't help either.

Because there were few available jobs, the white man's verbal discrimination turned into violence, forcing the Chinese to self-segregate within the safety of their own neighborhood. Racism became so intense that the Chinese population would leave Chinatown for work then rush back at night to stay safe. This intense xenophobia led to the enactment of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which made it very difficult for anyone from China to immigrate to the United States or for American born Chinese to even become citizens.

Tension remained high for many years until the great earthquake of 1906 - a blessing in disguise to the Chinese community. The neighborhood was burnt down to ashes and dust. Chinatown was destroyed and this provided a chance to rebuild the community into something better, something more beautiful. City officials required that the newly built neighborhood had to be an asset to the city, so the Chinese saw this as an opportunity to design buildings catering to what Americans imagined "ethnic" China was like. More and more tourists began to pour into this newly rebuilt neighborhood and it was no longer labeled as a "slum".

As time went on, discrimination toward the Chinese lessened. Once the immigration laws were repealed in 1943, Chinese families came to America in search of a better life. Chinatown was now more densely populated by women and children in addition to working class men.

In 1960, Cecilia Chiang who later became known as the mother of Chinese American cuisine, moved to San Francisco's Chinatown. She originally came to visit her sister, who lived on the edge of Chinatown. One day, as she was walking down bustling Grant Avenue, she ran into some friends whom she had known while living in Japan. They were hoping to open up a Chinese restaurant, but needed Cecilia's help as they didn't know much about the cuisine. Her friends didn't speak great English and didn't even have checks to put a deposit down for the lease. So, Cecilia decided to help them out and wrote a \$10,000 check. They eventually backed out. By law, the landlord was not obligated to give Cecilia her money back, thus, she was stuck with a restaurant lease.

How was this young lady with no restaurant experience going to run a restaurant herself? Having come from a wealthy lifestyle raised on food cooked by private chefs, Chiang had no cooking or restaurant experience but was

determined to succeed. She noticed most so called “Chinese restaurants” were serving up dishes from the Gold Rush days like Chop Suey and Egg Foo Young, that didn’t taste very good. Chiang decided she wanted to be different compared to all the other Chinese restaurants in Chinatown and serve real, authentic Chinese food. She could only afford to hire a few staff including two cooks, an accountant, and a manager. Cecilia herself became the janitor, and the dishwasher, and did all the grocery shopping. With only the memories of what traditional Chinese cuisine tasted like, she tried her best to serve delicious and authentic dishes at her new restaurant, The Mandarin. At the time, many American were fascinated by this exotic cuisine, but wanted more dishes with familiar ingredients. She struggled to better understand the American palate and experimented with new menu items, sometimes changing menu items as frequently as every day.

After 2 years of being open, Cecilia began building regular clients, including Alexis Tangier, the owner of a high-class restaurant located in the wealthy Nob Hill neighborhood. He loved how different her food tasted compared to all the other Chinese restaurants he had eaten in and decided to introduce one of his friends, Journalist Herb Caen from The San Francisco Chronicle, to her restaurant. Caen instantly fell in love with Cecilia’s Chinese American dishes he had never tasted before. Soon after, he published a review about her cuisine that was widely read. As a result, the Mandarin became so popular, that Chiang had to relocate to a bigger, more elaborate space at Ghirardelli Square. Even until today, Chiang continues to influence the development of Chinese American cuisine.

Though she eventually sold The Mandarin (which later closed in 2006), Cecilia Chiang’s legacy continues. She has mentored famous chefs such as Julia Childs, James Beard, Alice Waters, and George Chen, who used to bus tables at her restaurant, and now owns the newest establishment in the neighborhood, China Live. Her son, Philip Chang, went on to co-open the fast casual Chinese American chain, P.F. Chang’s. In 2013, Chiang even won a James Beard Foundation Award for lifetime achievement. Cecilia Chang has truly become the mother of Chinese American Cuisine in America, which can still be seen today in San Francisco’s Chinatown’s restaurants.

Years of history is hidden behind Chinatown’s walls and unique flavors hidden in it’s countless dishes. This guide, designed by

local foodies, for those wanting an insider's look into one of San Francisco's most famous neighborhoods, is all you will need to explore the depths of the country's first ever Chinatown - through its people, its history and its cuisine.

As you explore Chinatown with open eyes and ears, you'll notice that Chinatown is continuing to evolve in new ways. For example, we look to two of the newest additions to Chinatown for the latest innovations - China Live and Mister Jiu's. Both of these eateries are bringing something new and innovative to the community that Chinatown hasn't seen before. Famous chefs like, Brandon Jew and George Chen, are diving into their heritage to showcase traditional dishes, but with a twist. Their menus change often, using the freshest, in season, local ingredients. This is only the beginning of a movement that will showcase Chinese American dishes in a different light, essentially interpreting flavors and ingredients that may scare some away. One could even call these new dishes Chinese-Californian cuisine.

Today we're going to tell the story of Chinatown from a locals perspective that will showcase innovation juxtaposed with regionality, and tradition.

CHINA LIVE (WELCOME DRINK)



-  **644 BROADWAY, SAN FRANCISCO**
-  **WHAT TO GET: CUP OF TEA AT OOLONG CAFE**
-  **HIGHLIGHTING: THE NEW AND INNOVATIVE**
-  **COST: \$5; ACCEPTS CASH AND CARD**
-  **OPEN: EVERYDAY 11:30AM-11PM**

Chinatown is a beautiful community with welcoming locals and delicious cuisine. Here at Avital Tours, we want to show you the backside - the locals perspective - that's why we're steering you away from the Dragon Gates, beginning your journey at the "back" of Chinatown.

China Live brings Chinatown something unique and innovative. Familiar with New York City's Eataly? That's the exact concept founder and world-renowned executive chef, George Chen, was going for. This project, which took about 3 years in the making and is still in progress to expand, is a one-of-a-kind food, drink, and retail emporium. China Live is an interactive culinary and cultural destination offering an in-depth exploration of Greater Chinese gastronomy. Here, Chen demystifies Chinese ingredients and recipes while educating guests on the rich history and influence. In describing his projected outcomes of this project, Chen states "I think this is the perfect place to kind of bridge the cultures across the oceans and the past to the present and future". The menu is hyper seasonal and changes daily - truly producing only the freshest dishes and capturing California cuisine.

Take a step inside and discover what this establishment has to offer. The first thing you will see is the beautifully tiled Oolong Cafe. We welcome you to grab a cup of tea here as a welcome drink before furthering your exploration.

Next, you will pass by Bar Central. If you get thirsty at the end of your journey through Chinatown, come back and enjoy a Shanghai Kelly's Bad Bad cocktail, a twist on the classic Pisco Punch, created by one of San Francisco's favorite bartenders, Duggan McDonnell. McDonnell continues the legacy of Pisco in San Francisco, and takes pride in calling it one of the city's preferred spirits since it was San Francisco's most popular spirits during the Gold Rush. This Chinese-California cocktail of Encanto Pisco with Plantain Pineapple Rum, Blue Curaçao & Gun Powder Green Tea, Fresh Lime & Pineapple, and Orange Bitters, is not to miss.

Next, you'll see the Market Restaurant. Look to the left, and take a peek inside the kitchen to see chef's preparing one of our favorite dishes on the menu - the peking duck with a kumquat glaze and traditional condiments served in a sesame pocket. If you're still feeling hungry after this self-guided tour, come back here to try this dish.

The other half of the first floor of China Live is a retail market. Here you can purchase a wide array of goods such

as spices and imported cookware. Since opening day, locals have been filling up the dining space for a one of a kind dinner experience. China Live showcases the beginning of modern day Chinatown - bringing locals from all over the city to discover the growth of this amazing neighborhood.

After you enjoy your cup of tea from China Live, head outside and take a left towards Stockton Street. Step away from Grant Avenue filled with materialist goods and souvenirs, and step into the local side of Chinatown. Even from afar you will notice the street bustling with overcrowded buses, locals running around grocery shopping, and quirky stores. Keep an eye out for your first course: Good Mong Kok.

GOOD MONG KOK (COURSE 1)



-  **1039 STOCKTON ST, SAN FRANCISCO**
-  **WHAT TO EAT: FUNG GOW (PORK AND PEANUT DUMPLINGS) AND HAR GOW (SHRIMP AND BAMBOO SHOOT DUMPLINGS)**
-  **HIGHLIGHTING: A FAVORITE CHINESE-AMERICAN GRAB-N-GO SNACK**
-  **COST: \$2.10 EACH; ACCEPTS CASH ONLY**
-  **OPEN: EVERYDAY 7AM-6PM**

As you stumble down Stockton Street past the produce outlets, past the fish markets, and past the spice shops, you'll notice this quaint, but bustling, no frills eatery. Here you can grab the best cheap dim sum in the neighborhood, which makes Good Mong Kok a local's favorite. Be prepared

to wait in line, but don't worry, it moves fast and it's definitely worth it.

Dim sum is a style of Chinese cuisine, particularly Cantonese, prepared as small bite-sized portions of food served in small steamer baskets or on small plates. Most of the Chinese who immigrated to San Francisco were from Guangdong Province, a Cantonese region, and thus brought their regional dishes with them to San Francisco. Freshly made and served on carts that went around the restaurant for customers to choose from, this style of dining became a tourist attraction. Americans soon grew fond of the little hors d'oeuvres, eating them in restaurants and eventually grabbing some as a snack on-the-go.

Chef Bo Cina from District Oakland restaurant recommends "the pork and vegetable Cha Siu Bao (though the bbq pork version is also great), the perfectly seasoned shrimp Har Gow (Xia Jiao) with bamboo shoots, and don't forget the soy and Hunan chili paste". We love the perfectly balanced peanut and pork dumplings (Fung Gow) too! You just might have to come back later to try the shu mai and steamed pork buns as well!

The staff are used to many tourists and locals, so don't be afraid to ask questions if you don't know what something is. If anything, just point to choose what you want, we guarantee you'll find just about everything to be delicious. We're unsure if it's just the tasty sesame balls or because you can feed yourself under \$5 here, but Good Mong Kok is not a spot to miss.

Next, you will discover the history of Ross Alley and learn the story of the fortune cookie. Take a left out of the restaurant and follow the map to your next destination.

ROSS ALLEY

As you remember, the Chinese retreated to their neighborhood due to vast amounts of outside discrimination. Imagine how bored Chinatown residents must have become confined to a few square blocks. Thus, to entertain themselves, notorious pastimes, such as gambling, prostitution and drug use emerged.

Fun fact: Ross Alley is the oldest alley in Chinatown, dating back to the times of the Gold Rush. Between the 1860's up until 1906, small alleys like this were notorious for slave

auctions, brothels, opium dens, and gambling halls. This was probably not the place you would have hung out at the time (or maybe you would have....)

During the late 1800's, Chinatown consisted mostly of bachelors; there was actually only a very small population of women. To fulfill needs of intimacy, most women at the time were actually brought overseas by "gangs" to be sold in slave auctions that took place in small alleys like this or taken into custody at brothels.

Another commodity at the time was Opium, a very popular drug in China, enjoyed for leisure by all levels of society. The first shipment of Chinese opium arrived in San Francisco in 1861. A few years later, 1864, became known as "the Year of Opium" in San Francisco, as huge shipments were arriving regularly. Though it was illegal, laws were not strictly enforced except when the police needed to scheme for money. Secret opium "dens" were created to hide from cops. A typical opium den might have been a Chinese-run laundry that had a basement, back room, or upstairs room that was tightly sealed to keep drafts from making the opium lamps flicker or allowing the opium fumes to escape - always hidden in small side alleys like this. However, during the 1906 earthquake and fire, all of these dens were wiped out and were never rebuilt.

Gambling was yet another bustle to pass the time. Throughout alleys, windows would be boarded shut, but you could still hear the echo of Mahjong, a tile-based game that originated in China. The sounds of tile pieces and coins being tossed around constantly rang throughout the neighborhood. This too was an illegal pastime that often caused tension between "gangs".

GOLDEN GATE FORTUNE COOKIE FACTORY

 **56 ROSS ALLEY**

 **COST: FREE**

 **TREATS TO TAKE HOME: BAG OF FLAT COIN FORTUNE COOKIE (\$5); ACCEPTS CASH ONLY**

 **OPEN: EVERYDAY 8AM-16PM**

Tucked away in this tiny alley is the last standing handmade fortune cookie factory in America. Follow the scent of freshly made sweets and you'll know you're in the right spot. The ironic part about the fortune cookies served in Chinese restaurants after meals, is that their origin actually lays with the Japanese. Here's the inside scoop!

The fortune cookie was invented by a Japanese immigrant named Makoto Hagiwara. In 1895, he came to design, manage, and live at the Japanese Tea Garden in the city's Golden Gate Park. As a way to entice customers, and show his gratitude for their visit, he gave out Japanese fortune tea cookies with "thank you" notes inside. Their shape is supposed to evoke that of the bells at temples where people prayed for health and good fortune, and to also resemble the look of a bow. The fortunes on the other hand, just acted as souvenirs for travelers. Though a baker, Hagiwara outsourced the production to Benkyodo, a small Japanese bakery in San Francisco's Japantown. Chinese restaurants then began to use these cookies as "thank you" gifts to their diners as well. This became very popular and soon many Chinese restaurants made this a staple at the end of each meal. Due to the 1942 Japanese internment, Benkyodo was taken over by enterprising Chinese businessmen who saw this a growing business amongst their culture.

Modern day Ross Alley is now known as the site of the The Golden Gate Fortune Cookie Factory, which is now owned by Franklin Yee and opened in 1962. Even from down the street, you can smell the sweet scent of freshly made, warm, heavenly, cookies. Today, about 20,000 cookies are handmade a day by two women manning what you will see to be a very large piece of machinery. Once you walk in, take a bite into one of the complimentary reject cookies and you'll get a fresh taste of a buttery-sesame mixture. It's free admission to walk in, watch, and have a sample, but if you want to take a picture, remember it costs 50 cents.

While we love the story of the Fortune Cookie being invented in San Francisco, some historians claim that they were invented in Los Angeles. So, in 1983, San Francisco's pseudo-legal Court of Historical Review held a mock trial to determine the origins of the fortune cookie. To no one's surprise, the judge (a real-life federal judge from San Francisco) ruled in favor of San Francisco. Included among the evidence was a fortune cookie whose message read: "S.F. Judge who rules for L.A. Not Very Smart Cookie."

You will now head towards the second course of your experience to get a feel for one of China's seven regional cuisine styles. Head back towards Jackson St. and walk over one block to the next restaurant.

Z&Y RESTAURANT (COURSE 2)



 **655 JACKSON ST, SAN FRANCISCO**

 **WHAT TO EAT: WONTONS WITH SPICY PEANUT SAUCE AND/OR HOUSE COLD NOODLES**

 **HIGHLIGHTING: REGIONALITY**

 **COST: \$8.95 EACH; ACCEPTS CASH AND CARD**

 **OPEN: EVERYDAY 11AM-9:30PM**

Z&Y restaurant is our restaurant of choice for authentic Szechuan style cuisine. Though Cantonese dishes are prominent in San Francisco's Chinatown, it's important to note that there are actually 7 regional cuisines in China. Szechuan cuisine, originating from the Sichuan province in southwestern China has particular pungency and spicy bold flavours resulting from the use of garlic and chili peppers, as well as the unique flavor of the Sichuan pepper. Be careful, this place takes spice to a whole new tingling-numbing level. Owner and chef, Han Lijuan and his wife opened up this restaurant 9 years ago to showcase great Szechuan cuisines to a Cantonese filled neighborhood. Bringing the heat with his Northern Chinese dishes infused with Szechuan flavors, Chef Han has lovingly opened a restaurant that locals from all over the bay flock to in order to get their fix of hot and

cold dishes infused with spicy peppercorn chili, served family style. Not only has Chef Han served prestigious guests, such as presidents and prime ministers of the People's Republic of China, but his restaurant has actually made the list for the top 100 restaurants in San Francisco and is even a Michelin 2017 Bib Gourmand restaurant.

Our favorite dish is hands down the Wontons with Spicy Peanut Sauce. Also a favorite of Chef Joshua Skenes from Michelin 3-starred San Francisco restaurant, Saison, he jokingly says these dumplings are “spicy like (his) wife. They have a thin skin so they’re not dumplings in a traditional sense, but more like wontons. There’s a sauce made from chilies, soy sauce, and vinegar and its just sweet, salty, sour, and spicy.” For vegetarians, or if you have a larger group and want to order more food, the House Cold Noodles is a great addition to your progressive meal. This cold dish combines cucumber, beansprouts, and noodles of course, infused with chili oil.

Next, to get a feel of how everyday locals use their leisurely time, we will take you to Portsmouth Square. Follow the map to your next destination.

PORTSMOUTH SQUARE

Portsmouth Square also known as the “Heart of Chinatown” and “Chinatown’s Living Room” plays an important role in this neighborhood. Just walk in during the middle of the day and you will see the area bustling with Tai Chi and Falun Gong practitioners, and neighborhood locals playing Chinese checkers, cards, hanging out, sharing snacks, and socializing with one another. This square played an important part in history as well - it was the location where the discovery of gold was announced and also where the first public school in California for non-whites was built.

You must be wondering why Portsmouth Square is called a living room? Well, most of the apartments in this area are single rooms, with a history dating back to the 1850's. Back then, there was many young adults who migrated here that could not afford the Foreigner Tax, which was required before they could head up to the gold fields. Instead of heading back to China after such a long migration, they settled in Chinatown. Since they were single, young men, they did not need space to entertain guests or full kitchens, so most of the apartments were built with just one large room. The original studio apartment, so to speak.

So, Portsmouth Square became Chinatown's "living room", as a lot of young Chinese hung out there. Like we mentioned before, there was little to no entertainment in the area, so life here was boring and dull, and the highlight of any day was probably hanging out in Portsmouth Square. Today, many of the SRO's house newly immigrated Chinese and the older Chinese population as they are very affordable. To this day, you can see that the square still acts as an entertainment space for the older Chinese crowd.

In our mission to create community, we stumbled across a friendly looking older gentleman soaking in the sun. When we asked Mr. Alan Wong about his memories of the history of Chinese American food while growing up, he lit up and glared at his bag of french fries that he was holding. He told us of the time when the now closed Fong Fong Bakery & Soda Fountain used to be the go to spot. "When I was younger, my parents were extremely poor. Sometimes if they had enough money to get by for the week, they would give my brothers and I some spare change. This was our favorite place to go when we had money - it was a luxury for us." He told us he could purchase 3 orders of french fries and lychee ice cream for the same amount of the bag of fries he was currently holding in his hands. Though he has seen many Chinese American dishes come and go Mr. Wong claimed "I'm happy to see how things have changed for the better since I was younger". He even went on to mention that nowadays, some of his favorite places include New Lung Ting and Capital Restaurant!

For your third course, you will taste traditional Cantonese comfort food. You have the choice of a BBQ Pork Rice Noodle Roll at Sam Wo or Salt and Hot Pepper Fried Chicken Wings at Capital Restaurant. Once you have decided, follow the map to either restaurant of your choice.

SAM WO (COURSE 3)



-  **713 CLAY ST, SAN FRANCISCO**
-  **WHAT TO EAT: BARBEQUE PORK RICE NOODLE ROLL**
-  **HIGHLIGHTING: TRADITIONAL CANTONESE DISHES**
-  **COST: \$4.99 EACH; ACCEPTS CASH ONLY**
-  **OPEN: WED-MON 11AM-4PM
WED-THURS 6PM-12AM
FRI-SAT 6PM-3AM
CLOSED ON TUESDAY**

The infamous Sam Wo dates back to 1907. This restaurant has been the place to go for late meals after a night out for about 100 years now. Generations and generations of locals have flocked here to get their inexpensive fix of Barbeque Pork Rice Noodle Rolls and Jook. This is one of those famous, no-frills, late-night food fixes that has its “you-get-what-you-get service”.

Unfortunately in 2012, the original location was closed down after having its health permit suspended. With years of history behind them and the demand of loyal customers, Julie Ho, daughter of the owner, revived the restaurant at a new location. At this current location, the food is truly still the same home cooked style comfort food it has always been, however the decor takes on a more contemporary meets old school feel. The dishes served here are the definition of Chinese comfort food. The restaurant’s most popular dish, and quite frankly our favorite as well, is the

BBQ Pork Noodle Rice Roll. Ask for spicy mustard on the side, but be careful, a little bit goes a long way. For our vegetarian guests, we recommend the plain jook with a chinese doughnut on the side! This classic Chinese breakfast combo is the ultimate comfort meal.

If you happen to drink one too many Chinese Mai Tai's tonight, circle back to Sam Wo for your late night indulgence. **TIP:** If you get the chance, stop by the original location at 713 Clay St to get a true feel of this restaurant's years of history.

NOTE: Sam Wo is closed on Tuesdays and sometimes closes between lunch and dinner hours. If this happens to be a time you're on your self guided experience, head over to Capital Restaurant instead for more Chinese comfort food. Or if you just simply rather eat Fried Chicken Wings instead of a BBQ Pork Rice Noodle Roll, we say head over there too. Remember this is your experience; Seize Ownership.

Next you will learn the meaning behind the architecture, temples, and many surnames you've seen throughout Chinatown thus far. Follow the map to your next destination, the picturesque Waverly Place.

CAPITAL RESTAURANT (COURSE 3)





839 CLAY ST, SAN FRANCISCO



WHAT TO EAT: SALT & HOT PEPPER FRIED CHICKEN WINGS



HIGHLIGHTING: TRADITIONAL CANTONESE DISHES



COST: \$9.95; ACCEPTS CASH ONLY



**OPEN: TUES-SUN 11AM-9PM
CLOSED ON MONDAY**

Capital Restaurant is your local no frills restaurant serving up traditional Cantonese and Chinese-American dishes. It may look like the interior hasn't been upgraded since the 1970's, with scotch tape covering up the degrading wooden table panelings, but that definitely doesn't take away from the pleasingly unpretentious food. The simple decor matches the simple yet delicious food that mom used to make when you were younger.

Owner Samantha Lo intentionally placed the restaurant's best selling dish, the Salt and Hot Pepper Chicken Wings, on the cover of the menu when she took over the restaurant from her mother-in-law in 2007. Definitely hard to miss when peer a the menu, but if you do, most of the time she's already halfway to the table with your wings before you can even order.

Chef Staffan Terje from Barbacco favors these wings as well and says they're "very tasty and versatile". For our vegetarian friends, we recommend ordering the Braised Tofu with Black Mushroom and Greens. Capital Restaurant isn't here to impress the ultra-foodies, but rather to satisfy your Wednesday night take-out needs.

NOTE: Capital Restaurant is closed on Mondays. If this happens to be the day you're on your self guided experience, head over to Sam Wo instead for more Chinese comfort food. Or if you just simply rather eat a BBQ Pork Rice Noodle Roll instead of Fried Chicken Wings, we say head over there too. Remember this is your experience; Seize Ownership.

Next you will learn the meaning behind the architecture, temples, and many surnames you've seen throughout Chinatown thus far. Follow the map to your next destination, the picturesque Waverly Place.

WAVERLY PLACE

A picturesque street full of sights and smells to overwhelm you, Waverly Place houses a multitude of restaurants and temples. Just look around and you will see a great deal of beautiful architecture. Many Tongs and Family Association gathering spaces, a piece of history very unique to the Chinese community, also line this street.

Look about and ponder "The Street of Painted Balconies". Away from the tourist front, this has to be one of the most beautiful, little local streets of Chinatown. Pops of green, yellow, red, and pink coat the beautifully crafted buildings. Peer at the many balconies, and notice how they unusually point upwards; these were especially designed this way to ward off spirits.

Located on the top floor of many of these picturesque buildings, are the meeting spaces of what Chinatown calls "Tongs". Tongs are associations that formed within Chinese immigrant communities around the 1800s. They were essentially assembled in Chinatown to help the community with legal, monetary, and protective services, because they weren't able to use "white" services. However, the Tongs slowly became known for criminal enterprises, trafficking in drugs, prostitution, gambling and even slavery. Soon, many Tongs formed affiliations with the gangs within Chinatown. Remember the leisurely activities bachelors took interest in the olden days on streets like Ross Alley? These were typically controlled and run by the gangs or Tongs. Today, there are still a handful of Tongs. However, activity is now much quieter and behind the scenes.

On the lighter side, you will also notice common Chinese surnames such as Wong, Fong, Chan or Louie, plastered on a few buildings. These house the whereabouts of Family Associations, societies formed around a family surname. Chinese descendants that hold the same surname are entitled to the services their specific Family Association offers. Earlier Family Associations attempted to discourage prostitution, encouraged the Chinese to live moral lives, and fought for higher wages for immigrants competing with

“whites” for labor. Today, they provide family descendants with community services, money in times of need, scholarships, share family history or news, and host family reunions. When we talked to Mr. Lee, he gloated that his family name is actually the largest in San Francisco’s Chinatown. He went on to mention “generations ago, our family association community helped my family settle in Chinatown. They offered assistance in finding cheap housing, helped some of my family learn English, and aided us in finding fair jobs. Before I entered college, I even got assistance with applying for scholarships, and am now able to contribute back to my family.”

Lastly, if you look closely at the some signs, you will notice that some of the buildings house temples. These are not elaborately labeled like other places of worship, as the importance of the structure lies in the prayers to the gods rather than the outdoor decor. If you’re up for it, we welcome you to #BreatheCuriosity and explore the Tin How Temple. This happens to be the oldest Taoist temple in Chinatown, which opened in 1852. The Tin How Temple was originally established in this neighborhood so those who traveled to America overseas could give thanks to goddesses for protecting their journey. Here locals pray to the goddess of the sea, burn incense, and have their fortunes read. The building is accessible to the public for free, but note you will have to take the stairs up a few floors.

DRAGON PAPA (DESSERT)



-  **752 GRANT AVE, SAN FRANCISCO**
-  **WHAT TO EAT: ORIGINAL FLAVOR DRAGON BEARD DESSERT**
-  **HIGHLIGHTING: BRINGING BACK AN OLD TIME DESSERT**
-  **COST: \$10; ACCEPTS CASH AND CARD**
-  **OPEN: EVERYDAY 12PM-8:30PM**

Your final stop on this experience concludes at Dragon Papa, a one of a kind dessert shop, show included. This little shop is the only one in San Francisco that makes the freshly pulled dragon beard dessert. In fact, there's only one other producer of this dessert on the West Coast, truly a nearly lost art. Once you walk in, you will be greeted by the store owner, Derek Tran, a seemingly young male too young to run a shop himself. We talked to Derek, who told us he's actually a fourth generation Dragon Beard maker, and carries on the tradition of his great grandfather - a chef in the Forbidden Palace in Beijing where he specialized in preparing Dragon Beard candy for the emperor's court. Derek's father originally made Dragon's Beard candy at the famous Koi Palace in Daly City, but the two have since ventured out on their own. Locals love this spot as it's a dessert from their homeland that they can't get anywhere else. Elder residents as well are even happy to find their favorite childhood treats.

You can enjoy watching the dessert creators from the storefront window twist and stretch a thick ring of malt syrup until it forms hundreds of thousands of silky white strands. The candy, that looks like a sort of cotton candy

floss, is coated around a mix of toasted peanuts, sesame seeds, and coconut. As each dessert is meticulously hand crafted, only 7 boxes per hour can be produced for a total of about per 60-65 boxes a day.

The name “Dragon Beard” derives from the mess you make when you eat it. Before delving in Derek told us “take a selfie after you eat it...white little strands hang from your mouth, making you look like you have a chinese folk lore dragon’s beard”. Here, they sell a few other Hong Kong treats, all made by hand, including ginger candy and warm mochi coated in seeds. The original flavor Dragon’s Beard dessert is definitely the dessert to order, but we also recommend trying the coffee flavor if you’re feeling adventurous. Derek is the most hospitable shop owner ever. He will be more than thrilled to tell you the history of the art, describe the candy making process, and describe all the flavors you will be tasting - so **#BreatheCuriosity** and ask!

OPTIONAL STOPS

Below are a few additional stops we recommend checking out if you want to enjoy more food, drinks, or simply have the time:

LI PO COCKTAIL LOUNGE

 **WHAT TO ORDER: CHINESE MAI TAI (\$11)**

 **OPEN: EVERYDAY 2PM-2AM**

 **ACCEPTS CASH ONLY**

Li Po Cocktail Lounge is that peculiar dive bar that you typically wouldn't enter. However, when Anthony Bourdain is a fan, why not give it a shot. We recommend ordering the highlight cocktail - a Chinese Mai Tai given that the original Mai Tai was invented in Oakland, across the bay. Chef Val Cantu from Michelin-starred restaurant, Californios, jokes that "the Mai Tai's here will get you there much faster." If it gets too busy at the main bar, there's a hidden seating area downstairs that also has another bar.

NEW LUN TING CAFE

 **WHAT TO ORDER: ROAST PORK RICE PLATE (\$8.65) OR MARINATED PORK CHOP RICE PLATE (\$9.95)**

 **OPEN: EVERYDAY 10:30AM-9:30PM**

 **ACCEPTS CASH ONLY**

New Lun Ting Cafe, also known as "The Porkchop House", is a Hong-Kong style eatery serving comfort food that was established in 1970. Their most popular dishes consist of an unusual but delicious concoction of Cantonese, British, and American influence. Look around and you'll mostly see plates of pork drenched in a classic burnt orange sauce served with a side of cabbage or corn. Some tend to even opt in for the classic spaghetti instead of the side of rice.

These days you'll see the place packed with local families and older couples, but back in the 1970's it was actually known as a "bachelor's cafe" due to its single style seating usually populated by unmarried men. In the late 1980's,

table furnishings went from single seating to a more traditional family style seating. Though there's still a table of single style seating that gets filled with loyal customers of bachelors, it's now a spot for all locals to enjoy traditional, homemade, Chinese-American diner dishes.

MISTER JIU'S



WHAT TO ORDER: HOT AND SOUR SOUP (\$18) AND/OR WONTONS (\$22)



OPEN: TUES-SAT 5:30PM-10:30PM



ACCEPTS CASH AND CARD

Mister Jiu's brings to chinatown innovative Chinese-California cuisine. This contemporary establishment twists Chinese traditions with artistry and organic/seasonal, local ingredients. Marcia from Tablehopper says that "Jew has learned the importance of knowing where [his] ingredients come from and isn't inspired to buy dried scallops from a jar in a shop where he doesn't know a thing about them or even how long they have been sitting around. It's about the integrity of everything used in the kitchen, so the kitchen's four dehydrators have been running full time." Though just about every dish is amazing, we highly recommend pairing your food with one of their specialty cocktails, from bartender Danny Louie, named after symbols of good fortune.

GOLDEN GATE BAKERY



WHAT TO ORDER: DAN TATS AND/OR LOTUS SEED PASTE CAKE (BOTH \$1.95 EACH)



OPEN: EVERYDAY 8AM-8PM



ACCEPTS CASH ONLY

Golden Gate Bakery is the place to go in the city for Dan Tats, also known as Egg Tarts. The perpetual line out the door should be a clue that some sort of wizardry is going on inside this bakery. One of San Francisco's iconic foods, the Egg Tarts here are amazingly fresh and warm, with flakey layers of dough, filled with an indescribable fluffy custard. Hold on before stuffing your face with this deliciousness!

These treats routinely come right out of the oven, so be sure not to burn your tongue.

NOTE: Though their hours of business are listed to be open everyday, they have recently been very sporadic. Check out <http://www.is-the-golden-gate-bakery-open-today.com/> for updates.

AA BAKERY



WHAT TO ORDER: PINEAPPLE BBQ PORK BUN (\$1.25)



OPEN: EVERYDAY 6AM-7PM



ACCEPTS CASH ONLY

AA Bakery hits 3 birds with one stone - delicious pastries, intricate cakes, and home cooked food. Many neighborhood locals flock here to meet their elaborate cake needs as well as cravings for Hong-Kong style homemade food and pastries. Owner Henry Chen came to the States when he was 20 and dabbled in the food industry as a server and cook before landing in the pastry scene, where he's been ever since. He enjoys making something out of nothing. "With baking, all you have is flour, sugar and eggs — you basically have nothing to start with, but can be very creative," says Chen. Note the strong community vibe here; regulars hang out and chat while they sip on Hong Kong-style Milk Tea and pastries.

CHINESE CULTURAL CENTER OF SAN FRANCISCO - VISUAL ART CENTER



OPEN: TUES- SAT 10AM-4PM



FREE ADMISSION

The mission of the CCC is dedicated to elevating underserved communities and giving voice to equality through education and contemporary art. Stop by to experience the beautiful rotating art exhibit.



CONCLUSION

Avital Tours wants to thank you for taking the the time to let us show you exactly why we love Chinatown. For years, this neighborhood has housed many great traditional Chinese-American restaurants, but it's now also showing San Francisco's culinary scene something new and innovative. We hope you enjoyed our recommendations and received a glimpse into how current day locals live in Chinatown. If you enjoyed this self-guided tour, we encourage you to tell your friends and family to try it out for themselves. Did you take any awesome photos? Post it to our facebook page @ AvitalTours! To show our gratitude, we invite you to join us in the Mission or North Beach for a communal social dining experience with other like-minded foodies.

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