



A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO PROVIDING SERVICE TO CHINESE VISITORS TO TASMANIA

FOOD AND BEVERAGE



Greeting, Seating, and Taking Orders

It is important to show guests they are welcome and you want them to have a good time. You do not need to understand Chinese customs, guests will appreciate any attempt to welcome them and make them feel comfortable. Making small talk is friendly, you could ask where visitors where they are from and where they have been in Tasmania.

- Acknowledge guests as soon as you see them, 'welcome to our restaurant.'
- If the guest has to wait for seating say 'welcome, please wait a moment.'
- Give seats with a view or facing out into the restaurant, not staring at a wall. If you have free tables offer them the choice of where they would like to sit.
- Get a menu to guests quickly and if possible give them a drink and hand towels.
- Something to nibble or drink immediately will make guests feel welcome and buy some time.
- Say you will come back to help them soon.
- Be ready to make recommendations from the menu.



Make guests welcome

Menus, and Making Recommendations

Chinese visitors usually want to have a Tasmanian adventure and there is no need to replicate a Chinese dining experience here.

However, you should make sure there are some dishes on your menu that suit Chinese tastes and some familiar foods will be welcome, particularly at breakfast time.

- Hot food dishes are preferred. Salads are not popular.



Recommend dishes

- Fried food is popular, fish and chips are usually welcome.
- Stir fried vegetables are usually served with meals.
- Soup is popular but is served as one of the shared main dishes, not as a starter.
- Tasmanian fish is a treat. White fish is usually cooked whole, shell fish much the same as here.
- Iconic foods such as beef steak, kangaroo, and rabbit present a local experience.
- Curry is not used much by Chinese cooks.
- Cheese is rare in China and often disliked at first try.
- A shared bulker dish such as rice, dumplings or noodles is a good idea.
- Deserts are not really important, a fruit platter at the end of the meal is better.
- Usual sauces with just about any food are; red Chili, malt vinegar, and soy.
- In China dishes are always shared. It is a good idea to offer the option of sharing dishes. If dishes are shared, serve each one as it is ready, you will end up with a lot of dishes on the table at the same time, that is OK.

- Chinese guests may want to use Western cutlery or may prefer chopsticks, so, set the table with both Western cutlery and chopsticks, that is easy to do and removes any difficulty around asking.
- A spare plate or bowl for unwanted scraps will avoid them being placed on the table.
- Dinner is often eaten early and visitors to leave as soon as they have finished.

Breakfast is important, familiar breakfast foods and suitable Western foods are welcomed, some suggestions are:

- Hot starchy dishes such as dumplings, congee or noodles.
- A full English breakfast with bacon, eggs, sausages and hash browns is a good option but a cold continental breakfast is not.
- Savory omelets work well for breakfast but avoid adding cheese.

SAUCES IN CHINA

Red chilli, malt vinegar and soy sauces are usually available with all meals, including breakfast.

- Hot pancakes with honey or maple syrup are likely to be enjoyed.
- Stir fried vegetables are often eaten for breakfast in China.
- Boiled eggs should be hard not soft.
- Yogurt and sliced watermelon or cantaloupe and whole bananas.
- Drinks are hot water, green tea, milk, fruit juice and occasionally coffee.



Menu Translation

Chinese people will be reluctant to order something they do not understand. They will probably want to try local food but they need to know what it is. Menus are one of the hardest things for people to understand because the names of dishes often do not indicate the ingredients. The Chinese version of your menu should name ingredients and indicate how they are cooked. Chinese names for food are less complicated than English. Chinese say 'cow meat' rather than beef and 'young cow meat' rather than veal. If you are describing a dish to Chinese guests specify the animal it came from and how it is cooked. 'fish fried', 'duck legs grilled'; will be understood. If you are going to get your menus translated into Chinese make sure they are done by a Chinese person who has recently lived in mainland China and ask them to make the translations a simple description of ingredients and cooking methods.

TRANSLATED MENUS IN CHINA

In China menus are often translated into English but the translations are usually not very helpful because they are literally translations of dish names. To avoid making similar mistakes here simply describe the ingredients and cooking methods.



Drinks



Tasmanian Pinot Noir is a safe wine recommendation

The most common drinks in Chinese restaurants are green tea, hot water, soft drinks such as Coca Cola and Sprite, beer, and red wine. Red wine is now very popular. Chinese reds are usually fairly light in style, you could safely recommend a Tasmanian Pinot Noir to drink with lunch or dinner. White wine is seldom drunk. Tasmanian lagers or ales are suitable beers to suggest.

It is common for green tea to be complimentary and for cups to be poured as soon as guests are seated so they drink while they are discussing the menu. Waiters are attentive about refilling cups. If people are drinking beer or wine they will drink tea or hot water as well, at the same time.

In China diners sometimes drink a very alcoholic white spirit but they will not expect to find that here. If they ask to try spirits or cocktails explain what you have offer but it is not wise to suggest them otherwise.

Service and Interaction

- The main thing to remember is to be friendly to Chinese guests and show them you want to help.
- Do not be nervous about acknowledging that a guest is Chinese, it will be fine with them.
- Make small talk about where guests are from, about their visit to Tasmania and so on.
- Just like here, avoid politics, religion and sex as conversation topics.
- To get body language right:
 - ◇ Stand still and let the guest stand at the distance he or she is comfortable
 - ◇ If they express friendship by touching your arm or shoulder, copy what they do.
 - ◇ You should not initiate touching but if you do not reciprocate they will think you have rebuffed their friendly gesture.
- Make sure no-smoking signs are prominently displayed. If guests do light up explain that smoking in restaurants is not allowed under Australian law. Tell guests where they can smoke. Thank them for their co-operation.



Ask whether they need help

ABOUT CHINA AND CHINESE PEOPLE

- Smoking at the table whilst eating is normal, we must prevent this as discussed above.
- In large groups Chinese guests can be noisy diners, many people will talk loudly at once, there will be lots of laughter, toasting and back slapping. Try to arrange your seating to minimize any issues with local diners.
- Even if they speak some English, Chinese people will talk to each other in Chinese. They can communicate so much better in Chinese. Do not take offence they probably are not talking about you.
- 'Please' and 'thank you' are used much less in China than in Australia, saying them too much is actually seen as being rather unfriendly because it is treating the other person too formally. The closer friends are the less polite they are to each other.
- It is common for bones and other waste to be left on the table, if scrap plates are provided they will be used.
- Chinese people stand much closer to each other than Australians do, it can feel overwhelming.
- Chinese diners almost never tip restaurant staff. Do not be offended.

