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## YUM CHA DIM SUM

Dim Sum at Yum Cha is one of the longest lasting Chinese culinary traditions and one embraced by literally million of Honkies. Dim Sum literally means to caresses the heart and can be a never ending series of 'Chinese Tapes'. These dishes can be steamed, stewed, deep-fried and baked. They can range from meat balls, steamed prawn and seafood quenelles to vegetarian seaweed rolls. There are as many different flavours as there are dishes. It is completely impossible to match each Dim Sum specifically. What is feasible and enjoyable is to pair the mostly delicate and flavour pure nature of these small dishes with similarly pure wines. The following Burgundy style chardonnays are versatile and delicious but for the purist Dim Sum lover indulge in Vintage champagne from recent cool vintages such as 1988, 1996.

## PERFECT WINES FOR DIM SUM

BY SIMON TAM



### CLOUDY BAY CHARDONNAY

MARLBOROUGH, NEW ZEALAND

Distributed by Goodtime distributor tel 2833 5581

It all started with Cloudy bay Sauvignon Blanc some 20years ago. But this staple mate Chardonnay is also worth some 'Wows' and 'Ahs'. This wine is super stylish and offers classy burgundy taste for humble Kiwi price. The Burundian techniques used read like a Latin dictionary but the taste is in the bottle. The wine is medium bodied with plenty of lightly 'seasoned' flavours. It is rich and stand up to the 'wine humiliating pureness of fresh seafood. The French oak nuttiness and creamy texture lend itself an excellent extension for much food texture. Lively and savory mouth watering acid and balanced alcohol is the necessary to carry egg white to black bean sauce. Serve it only cool to touch ok?!

### PULIGNY MONTRACHET 1<sup>ER</sup> CRU 'LES PERRIERES' 2004

(PLEASE CHECK VINTAGE)

Comte Lafond, Burgundy France  
Distributed by TH Fine Wines Limited  
tel 66800680

France is facing one on the greatest wine crisis in her modern history. Grape growers from hundreds of hectares of 'undesignated' southern French vineyards are going as far as violent protest and vandalism to solicit financial assistance from the French Government to pay for distillation of their monumental surplus stock. On the completely opposite end of the industry are the outrageously delicious wines of Comte Lafond. This single vineyard premier cru has lovely peaches and cream and plenty of hazelnut and green apple flavours. It also has satisfying texture and a long subtle finish. It is a perfect start to get the Yum Cha appetite aroused.

### DR LOOSEN 'L' RIESLING

MOSEL, GERMANY

Distributed by Summergate Fine Wines  
tel 2875 2566



This is one of the smartest and most affordable Rieslings around Macau today. Ernie Loosen is indeed one of the icons of not just the German wine industry but a name synonymous with top Rieslings. This 'L' Riesling is pure and fruity and deliciously semi-dry. There are plenty of refreshing citrus fruit and mineral character that is extremely rare in this affordable price range. It is idea for deep fried dim sums and even steamed chicken feet.



# Outrageous foods

During his trips around the world, **Simon Tam** tried many odd delicacies, but came to a universal conclusion: for a real gourmand, cultural acceptance is *de rigueur*.

ILLUSTRATION BY RUI RASQUINHO

OVER FOUR decades of eating, my palate has been blessed with some of the finest wines and most expensive food in the world. I've had gourmet 12-course meals and succulent treats dreamed up for just the single plate. While my travels have familiarized me with haute cuisine, I've also tasted food that many would term outrageous or downright weird.

But let's start at the beginning. Growing up, my life was linked to the quality of food thanks to parents who were authoritative about what they liked and what they didn't. My memories of childhood are filled with the aromas of the kitchen from steaming bowls of noodles and fresh vegetables to succulent abalone.

As a boy, I learnt both how to appreciate the humble beginnings of food and to use my imagination from my father. One of my fondest memories is of my father introducing me to fish balls in then Hong Kong's most famous Chiu Chow noodle shop when I was six years old. He told me they were so springy and delicious that if I dropped one on the ground, it would bounce back onto the table. I decided to challenge him and dropped the ball and hey presto! It did almost bounce back and was as delicious as he said it would be.

I remember my father bringing home a gai lan that was an inch thick in diameter. I asked him what on earth he was going to do with it

and he calmly replied that he would stir fry it in a bit of garlic or poach it so that we could really savour the fresh flavor. This honest home cooked fare gave me a lot to work with in my subsequent journeys of culinary discovery.

Fast forward 20 years later and I had no qualms about sampling the deep fried scorpions that were proffered on a skewer in the streets of Wangfujian in Beijing. Crunching down on those creepy crawlies did get me thinking about cultures where eating cats and dogs is common and about where we should draw the line. My view is that while there is a time and place for everything, cultures and necessity dictates what can and should be eaten.

In general, though, what we eat and enjoy is inextricably linked to our roots and culture and we must keep this in mind when judging whether a plate of food is wonderful or disgusting. While many in this part of the world might find the idea of eating snails revolting, in France escargot is a delicacy.

For me, a foodie is somebody who doesn't care whether he has a tablecloth or a napkin, someone who appreciates the soul of food eaten fresh and in season, who indulges himself without the pretence of being an expert, one who is open to learning.

People in the West are somewhat squeamish about tripe. But the best plate of tripe I've ever had was really in Rome, a local worker dining hall near the railway station. Another dish that elicits general distaste is brain. But in Australia where there are plenty of sheep, pan fried lambs brain with a variety of seasonings is pub food, the lowest common denominator. I have to say the brain, cooked Aussie pub-style, is one of my favourites.

In fact, country food in many European nations, be it France, Germany, Italy, Greece, Spain and Portugal, makes the most of the animal that they have and whether it's tortoise, snail or what I call NSDL – food that "never saw day light". These foods are the heart and soul of community. They provide nutrients as well as add flavor to the local diet. We must pay tribute to the humble beginnings of certain foods much before the arrival of haute cuisine and the Michelin guide. People often forget that the latter was originally written to help motorists find both a decent meal as well as supplies for their vehicles when on the road.

I've had a few shocks on the road myself. I remember my very first trip to Italy in the early 90's, eager as a beaver to get my hands on some porcini mushrooms. Having set aside time on my trip to do some cooking, I trundled down to the market and got

myself a kilo of the finest I could find. I planned to slice them up and toss them in a little garlic, olive oil and sea salt but when my knife went through the first fat mushroom I heard a clunk. I was dismayed to discover that the canny vendors had put lead tapes into the mushrooms, already worth their weight in gold, to up their price.

For me, more outrageous than certain kinds of food is people's reactions to them. I find it difficult to swallow when Chinese people turn up their noses at coagulated blood jelly—a national dish. I tell my Indian friends off for looking down their noses at South Indian curry because isn't seen as constructed enough. It shocks me when people have a problem with eating any part of the animal other than fillet mignon. It's a waste of the animal at a time when wastage is inexcusable.

I'd say my most outrageous food experience was in South Africa. A natural land of plenty, food here is simply not restricted to chicken, pork or beef but a whole gamut of beasts and creatures that roam the beautiful land. Scanning the restaurant menus in Cape Town my wife and I had to ask the server many times. "Sir, can you please tell me if this creature had in its past glory two legs, four legs, feathers, scales, wings or shell?"