

Have You Eaten Yet? Stories from Chinese Restaurants around the World

Cheuk Kwan

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The Chinese diaspora meets culinary ingenuity in *Have You Eaten Yet?*, Cheuk Kwan's robust food travelogue and social history of Chinese restaurants.

Kwan, whose documentary *Chinese Restaurants* spanned five continents, revisits the "cultural outposts of brave sojourners." Accompanied by his cinematographer and others, he gathers poignant sketches of individuals whose stories are tied by emigration and hope. Kwan's background as an Asian man in Canada contributes to his keen reflections on the ubiquity of Chinese culture, assimilation, and eateries—as well as on the humble savvy of those who run such restaurants.

The book begins in a Saskatchewan café in a town whose history lessons often gloss over the contributions of Chinese railway workers. Later, at a Haifa restaurant, considerations about refugees converge with the reality that, for many older generations, Chinese roots make it easier to claim multiple nationalities. In Trinidad, Kwan raves about the dishes in a Great Wall restaurant and at a carnival, unfurling the story of a family business. Other entries examine hybrid cuisines, as with an entrepreneurial Hakka woman's rendition of fish in Mauritius; the use of Chinese restaurants as community centers; and, in subtler ways, the losses invoked by people's sacrifices and grueling restaurant work, undertaken for their children's sake.

Flavorful descriptions of foods mix with adventuresome travel mishaps. Less-remembered history surrounding the Ming dynasty's venturing into Africa, and how Chinese people fared under apartheid, enrich the book, while sprinklings of film references are hip, atmospheric flourishes. Here, traveling encompasses word-of-mouth scouting for film locations from the Amazon to Norway, but also lessons in ethnography. The stories of women in particular are resounding, encompassing both vulnerability and stalwart resolve.

Have You Eaten Yet? is a fascinating, inquisitive global search for Chinese tastes that evoke home in any corner of the world.

KAREN RIGBY (January / February 2023)

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