

FROM CHOP SUEY TO MANDARIN CUISINE:
FINE DINING AND THE REFASHIONING OF CHINESE ETHNICITY DURING THE
COLD WAR ERA

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At Johnny Kan's restaurant in Chinatown, Mayor H. Roe Bartle of Kansas ordered chop suey, to the annoyance of Kan. "Chop suey," he pointed out, "is an imitation of Chinese food, we wouldn't insult our customers by serving it."¹

Herb Caen

With the 1953 founding of his eponymous Grant Avenue restaurant in the heart of San Francisco's Chinatown, Johnny Kan (1906-1972) established new standards for elegance and authenticity in Chinese dining. Unlike the dingy chop suey joints of pre-World War II years with their bastardized dishes and rude waiters, Kan's Restaurant featured white tablecloths and Chinese art upon the walls, trained waiters who offered gracious service, a convivial and informed host, and the "centuries old" cuisine of China's emperors prepared in modern stainless steel kitchens displayed to the world from behind plate glass windows.² Drawing upon decades of experience as an entrepreneur, Kan began redefining Chinese ethnicity to appeal successfully to a broadening and increasingly affluent swathe of American consumers. The decades-long success of Kan's Restaurant, and the market transitions it helped to engender, reflect the shift from racialization to ethnicization of Chinese Americans during the Cold War years. Together with the even more upscale Mandarin restaurant, founded in 1961 by the elegant former foreign service wife, Madame Cecilia Chiang (b. 1919), Kan's Restaurant popularized Chinese-style fine

dining in San Francisco. Their success demonstrates the continuing salience of ethnicity in Chinese American lives even as Cold War ideologies proclaimed their integration into the American mainstream. In the face of such contradictions, these two highly acculturated and ambitious entrepreneurs refashioned representations of Chinese cuisine and ethnicity to enhance the desirability, and thus the consumption and profitability, of Chinese foods and restaurants for a general American public.

Chinese started gaining greater acceptance in the United States only in the late 1930s after decades of open hostility that produced America's earliest race-based immigration restrictions and a raft of other forms of institutionalized discrimination. According to Karen Leong and Colleen Lye, changing American foreign policy goals in Asia, and the developing alliance with China's Nationalist Party, the Kuomintang (KMT), stimulated ideological shifts that accelerated with the anti-Japanese partnership of World War II and extended through the Cold War era.³ In what Lye refers to as "processes of naturalization," Chinese evolved from the unassimilable aliens of the Chinese exclusion era (1882-1943) to the model minorities of the late twentieth century.⁴ Even as they morphed from the yellow peril to model American citizens, however, race and ethnicity remained essential components of Chinese American experiences. The upgrading of Chinese restaurants and Chinese cuisine reveals how the content of Chinese ethnicity shifted and gained desirability during the Cold War years. Rather than attempting to blend into the mainstream by erasing their racial and ethnic distinctiveness, Chinese American entrepreneurs such as Kan and Chiang became increasingly skilled at selectively marketing versions of Chineseness so that the ethnic restaurant industry could become an extremely profitable niche rather than a dead-end career path imposed by discrimination. By the time America's Cold War with China ended in 1972 with a flurried exchange of ping-pong players

and panda bears, Kan and Chiang had already helped to engineer some of the domestic shifts in racial ideology that made this new friendship more feasible.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the salience of Chinese ethnicity did not diminish despite the Civil Rights Movement and the anticipated fruition of an American melting pot protected from significant immigration flows by the most severe legal restrictions in the nation's history.⁵

In Cold War Orientalism, Christina Klein argues that

In the 1930s and 1940s the racial formation of people of color within the U.S. began to change, as racialization gave way to ethnicization. With ethnicization, the socially and culturally defined category of ethnicity replaced the biological category of race as the preferred way to explain differences among populations. During World War II, official and unofficial propagandists celebrated America as a racially, religiously, and culturally diverse nation, and in the process they transformed the ethnic immigrant from a marginal figure into the prototypical American.⁶

America was supposed to integrate under such conditions. In reality, it was difficult to eradicate the connection between racial differences and inequality despite the ideological implications of Supreme Court decisions such as the 1954 case Brown v. Board of Education.

For Chinese Americans particularly, this new agenda of racial inclusiveness paralleled the war on communism. Klein juxtaposes the two ideologies as the global imaginary of containment against the global imaginary of integration. She notes that the former "imagined the Cold War as a crusade against communism . . . Much of the energy it generated, however, was directed inward and aimed at ferreting out enemies and subversives within the nation itself."⁷ The latter, however,

represented the Cold War as an opportunity to forge intellectual and emotional bonds with the people of Asia and Africa. Only by creating such bonds . . . could the economic, political, and military integration of the “free world” be achieved and sustained. When it did turn inward, the global imaginary of integration generated an inclusive rather than a policing energy.⁸

As minorities whose ethnicity could now serve to bolster American democracy, Chinese Americans gained social and cultural acceptance even as they faced the considerable risk of racialization as enemy agents working on behalf of communist China. This confluence of opportunity and danger shaped the choices made by Chinese American entrepreneurs who developed strategies for marketing their ethnicity in ways that affirmed America’s democratic and capitalistic ideals.

The examples of Kan’s Restaurant and the Mandarin illustrate that domestically palatable representations of Chinese Americanness could also generate tremendous profits. These consumer-oriented approaches toward packaging Chinese American ethnicity were rooted in ideological and generational shifts dating back to the 1930s.

An Enterprising Generation

Johnny Kan was one of a new breed of American-born Chinese, a generation that came of age during the 1930s and 1940s determined to transcend the economic and social constraints imposed by racism. They sought alternatives to the economic ghetto that had confined so many of their immigrant parents and grandparents in the service industries of laundries, Chinatown stores, domestic service, and cheap chop suey restaurants. Highly acculturated Chinese Americans such as Charlie Low and Jade Snow Wong managed to acquire wealth and fame by

packaging “Chinese” culture in ways that appealed to mainstream consumers. As American conceptions of democracy became inclusive of its minority components, Chinese Americans learned to turn their ethnicity into profits.

Charlie Low established the Chinese American nightclub, Forbidden City, in 1939 with a small fortune inherited from his mother. He had dreamed of creating a Chinese American version of the nightclubs then dominating the nightlife of big cities like New York. Low was ambitious and the Forbidden City featured a floorshow, a restaurant seating more than three hundred diners, a kitchen equipped to prepare both American and Chinese menus, a reception area ornamented with arches and temple awnings, a separate bar that could hold ranks of patrons four to five deep, and a long hallway displaying photos of himself shaking hands with celebrity visitors.

As suggested by its name, the Forbidden City catered willingly to the Orientalist fantasies of mainly white audiences. The all-“Chinese” revue included singers, dancers, magicians, comedians, and strippers wearing embroidered silk robes and using fans and gongs.⁹ These entertainers performed as the “Chinese Frank Sinatra” or the “Chinese Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers.” Even though they confounded audience expectations when they spoke, sang, and joked in perfect English, and displayed a sense of rhythm when they danced, they also reinforced stereotypes of Chinese as exotic and foreign. The highlight of Low’s show pandered to the basest of Euro American curiosity in the form of the Chinese American bubble girl, stripper Noel Toy. Although local Chinatown residents spurned the nightclub, Low and his performers profited handsomely for almost a decade from the thousands of Euro Americans who flocked to enjoy the illicit pleasures of the Forbidden City.¹⁰

The writer and ceramicist Jade Snow Wong chose a far less scandalous approach in her representations of Chinese American life. Wong is most famous for her autobiography, Fifth

Chinese Daughter, which remains in print to this day. It offered the archetypical tale of an unappreciated Chinese daughter who defied tradition to find a balance between her Chinese and American selves. Wong overcame her parents' lack of support by working her way through college. After receiving her B.A. and a brief stint working as a secretary in a shipyard, Wong forged a lucrative career path in marketing her Chinese Americanness for non Chinese, first as a writer, a ceramicist, and then travel agent specializing in trips to Asia.

As a potter, Wong selectively promoted desirable aspects of Chinese culture by producing an elite art form for American consumers. In this phase of her career, Wong continued to emphasize her uniquely Chinese American melding of tradition and defiance by choosing a very public storefront near Clay Street as her studio. In full view of Chinatown tourists, she practiced this renowned Chinese craft to make her living as an artist, a rare career choice for Chinese Americans up to that time. As a travel agent and tour guide, Wong specialized in leading Euro American groups on trips to visit America's Asian allies of Taiwan, South Vietnam, and Cambodia. Although Fifth Chinese Daughter has been heavily criticized for its one-dimensional portrayals of Chinese American patriarchy, it helped to domesticate and familiarize Chinese American lives for mainstream readers. Authors such as Maxine Hong Kingston and Amy Tan acknowledge their debt to Wong in developing broader audiences for Chinese American writers.¹¹

Low and Wong's achievements occurred during the early stages of major ideological and institutional shifts in American attitudes regarding racial and ethnic minorities. In the wake of World War II, the federal government banned racial discrimination in the defense industries, electoral rights, the military, housing covenants, and public schools.¹² These legal and social shifts permitted the percentage of Chinese in the professional and technical occupations to

increase from 2.8 percent to 26.5 percent between 1940 and 1960.¹³ During these same years, Chinese Americans also began leaving Chinatown, a phenomenon reflected in the quadrupling of Bay area Chinese living in the suburbs.¹⁴

Even as they gained unprecedented access to the comforts of middle class life, however, many Chinese Americans understood that their greatest prospects for wealth rested not in the hope of integrating into the American melting pot but in enhancing the desirability of their ethnic heritage through the tourist and food service industries. The careers of George Hall and John C. Young of Wing Nien Foods suggest how this generation of Chinese Americans negotiated these contradictions.

Both Hall and Young were well educated and received their engineering degrees during the 1930s. During the 1940s, they knew that they could finally get jobs that reflected their educational attainments but that as Chinese Americans they would not advance in them.¹⁵ Nor would they get rich. Instead of security and respectability, they chose the creativity and potential profits of entrepreneurship and founded Wing Nien Foods to become the first domestic manufacturers of soy sauce. Although soy sauce did not make them wealthy, Hall and Young profitably invested in Kan's Restaurant.

As dedicated businessmen developing ethnic products for domestic consumption, Hall and Young fit well into the capitalist and integrationist agendas promoted by Cold War America. Unlike many other Chinese Americans, they were never suspects in the FBI's war on communism and did not face the surveillance and threatened loss of citizenship and deportation experienced by thousands of immigrant Chinese.¹⁶ Hall and Young were representative of Chinatown's emerging generation of entrepreneurs, who secured their place in America by

embracing the kinds of economic and racial opportunities available during the Cold War to forge new ways for Chinese Americans to succeed as ethnic Americans.

Hall and Young's generation of entrepreneurs boosted Chinese American businesses through the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, a new type of organization that developed the Chinese New Year's Parade and beauty pageant to attract tourists to Chinatown. In their campaigns to broaden mainstream consumption of Chinese American goods, Chinese American entrepreneurs focused their energies on promoting ethnically flavored festivals, young women, districts, and food.

Restaurants and the Continuing Salience of Chinese Ethnicity

The Cold War successes of entrepreneurs like Charlie Low, Jade Snow Wong, George Hall, and John C. Young demonstrate that being Chinese could be lucrative business, if marketed in the right way. As analyzed by Klein, domesticated Chineseness served to vindicate American claims of democracy. "Although they are not exclusively foreign, their partial foreignness makes them worth assimilating into American society, because it legitimates the nation's claim to be a 'nation of nations.'"¹⁷ Closer examination of the founding and marketing of Kan's Restaurant and the Mandarin highlights the usefulness of ethnic identity in Chinese American business efforts during the Cold War era. For American-born and elite émigrés alike, Chinese restaurants remained reliable and sometimes tremendously lucrative ways of making a living as they produced increasingly desirable representations of Chinese ethnicity for non-Chinese consumption.

Chinese have been making money by feeding non-Chinese since they first arrived in search of gold. At Chinese-run eating establishments, hordes of rough and tumble miners could

choose from both Chinese and American selections washed down with coffee and hot tea.¹⁸ Despite rumors of rats and dogs in the larder, Chinese restaurants continued to attract patrons through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In these early decades, Chinese dining was associated with dingy quarters and poor service offset by tasty food, low prices, and delivery services.

Chop suey became the much maligned but most recognizable symbol of Chinese adaptations to American tastes. The term chop suey derives from the Chinese phrase, zasui, which refers to a miscellany of chicken livers, gizzards, fungi, bamboo shoots, pig tripe, and bean sprouts in a brown sauce. Chinese cooks later adapted these ingredients for American tastes by replacing internal organs with the more familiar chicken, pork or shrimp.¹⁹ To explain the pervasiveness of chop suey, Renqiu Yu argues that Chinese American businessmen capitalized on the publicity accompanying Chinese minister Li Hongzhang's 1896 visit to popularize the dish as the Mandarin official's favorite.²⁰ Although Yu convincingly demonstrates that this tale is apocryphal and that Li never encountered chop suey during his trip, Chinese restaurants and chop suey became staples in the American dining experience.²¹

Sociologist Ivan Light argues that the growing popularity of Chinese restaurants was part of the rise of the Chinatown tourist industry as a whole. Beginning in the 1890s, Chinatown merchant leaders attempted to attract more customers by simultaneously sanitizing and exoticizing their communities. They embarked on a decades-long struggle to quell the secret societies whose public violence and criminal activities fed the image of Chinatowns as dangerous places.²² They lighted and swept the streets and ornamented buildings to produce an Oriental quarters that was enticingly foreign but safe and clean. The rebuilding of San Francisco's Chinatown after the 1906 earthquake, with pagoda roofs, bedragoned lamp posts,

and temple-cum-telephone exchange, exemplifies this shift toward wooing the curiosity and tastes of non-Chinese. Such strategies were successful as observed by George Hsiong of New York in 1939, "Approximately eight thousand to ten thousand people come to Chinatown every weekend for the purpose of getting Chinese food."²³

The rising popularity of Chinese restaurants promoted growth in the Chinatown tourist industry. Between 1903 and 1923, the Los Angeles city directory listings of Chinese restaurants rose from only five to twenty-eight even though the local Chinese population fell during those same years. According to the 1870 U.S. Census of Population, nationally only 164 Chinese worked as restaurant keepers or employees. By 1920, these numbers had increased to 11,438.²⁴ Although restaurants employed fewer Chinese than laundries, the former industry generated more growth by channeling business toward "grocery stores, butcher shops, and fish markets from which the restaurants procured samples." In Chinatown, "[i]mport outlets, bric-a-brac and curio stores also prospered . . . in response to the increased traffic of white tourists."²⁵

In pre-World War II America, chop suey restaurants provided steady incomes for thousands of Chinese denied employment in other occupations. Newspaperman Leong Gor Yun observed that "[g]enerally a Chinese restaurant with good management and a decent chef can easily be successful, thanks to American fondness for chop suey and chow mein."²⁶ However, restaurants also served as bitter reminders that even American-born, college-educated Chinese had few other options. "Before World War II, native-born Chinese youths who wanted to stay in this country had little choice. They were confined to restaurant work."²⁷ Those with more ambition, however, began to contemplate the potential of restaurants to become something more than a dead-end means of making a living.²⁸ To make Chinese restaurants more profitable and prestigious, ambitious entrepreneurs and self-taught experts in Chinese cuisine such as Johnny

Kan and Cecilia Chiang had to liberate Chinese food and the reputation of Chinese restaurants from the disreputable shadow of greasy chop suey joints and the grimy Chinatown ghetto.

From Chop Suey to Fine Dining

As suggested by the anecdote that begins this article, Johnny Kan was on a mission to combat the bastardization of Chinese cuisine and culture represented by chop suey. Legendary San Francisco raconteur, Herb Caen, recalled in his eulogy for Kan: “To tourists (and natives) who would innocently order chop suey, Johnny would purr, ‘I’m sorry, we serve only Chinese food here.’” Caen credited Johnny Kan with being the first to educate non-Chinese about “the wondrous subtleties and intricacies of true Oriental cuisine” at a time when “Chinatown . . . was still a mysterious world to most whites” characterized by small restaurants, tables with bare marble tops, and rude waiters that served the working-class foods of chop suey and “beetle juice.”²⁹

Kan was a fervent advocate of Chinese cuisine among non Chinese. His friend and tour book author, Jack Sheldon, celebrated Kan as something akin to a prophet of Chinese fine dining.

There is one man who surely deserves the credit for making San Franciscans as well as visitors to our city anxious to dine in Chinatown. He was Chinatown’s Mr. Ambassador to the world. Not only did he bring Chinese restaurants out of the alleys and proudly onto Grant Avenue and either side of it, but he never turned down an opportunity to spread the word extolling the delights of Cantonese cookery. He traveled, he wrote, he spoke, he greeted, he welcomed. And through it all, he kept his own restaurant highly distinguished among Chinatown’s most famed. He, Johnny Kan, gave this awakening to us.³⁰

The man who accomplished such transformations in the minds and palates of white Americans was unusual both for his level of acculturation and for the scope of his vision and ambition of what could be accomplished in America by an entrepreneur who was enthusiastically Chinese. When interviewed by Victor and Brett de Bary Nee in 1963, he seemed strikingly different from the beaten-down working-class “bachelors” who also worked in San Francisco’s Chinatown. “We are surprised at how tall he is when he walks into the room. In a dark formal suit, Johnny seats us and orders drinks for everyone. Although we know he is fifty-seven years old, in dress, manner, and speech he is completely different from the old men with who we have spent the last few weeks learning about the history of Chinatown.”³¹ Kan stood tall, not only as an American, but also as a self-confident visionary who sought ways to profit by improving mainstream impressions of Chinese people and their food.

From his first job as a clerk in a peanut-roasting firm, Kan sought to improve and expand business by attracting non Chinese customers. Over his employers’ objections, Kan advertised in the mainstream magazine, Variety. A buyer from Barnum and Bailey’s Circus noticed the exceptionally good prices and proceeded to buy their entire stock, thereby paving the way for a lucrative new business relationship.³² As manager of the Fong Fong soda fountain and bakery, Kan initiated another innovation in 1935 by manufacturing and serving Chinese-flavored ice creams such as lichee, kumquat, and ginger. Fong Fong became the popular gathering place for Chinatown’s youthful elites.³³

By the late 1930s, Kan had developed his vision for instilling elegance into the experience of Chinese dining to attracting non Chinese customers, as he recounted to the Nees:

I realized that the reason there were no first-class restaurants in Chinatown was because no one ever bothered to study, and to teach their employees, how to run a really fine

place. And nobody had tried to educate Caucasians to an appreciation of Chinese food. There were over fifty restaurants in Chinatown—papa-mama, medium-sized, juke and soup joints, tenderloin joints, and others—where waiters just slammed the dishes on the table and cared less about the customer or what he wanted to eat. So we decided to launch the first efficiently operated and most elaborate Chinese restaurant since the collapse of the old Mandarin. Our concept was to have a Ming or Tang dynasty theme for décor, a fine crew of master chefs, and a well-organized dining room crew headed by a courteous maitre d', host, hostesses, and so on. And we topped it off with a glass-enclosed kitchen. This would serve many purposes. The customers could actually see Chinese food being prepared, and it would encourage everybody to keep the kitchen clean.³⁴

High-class Chinese restaurants had flourished during the 1920s in the Chinatowns of New York and San Francisco but had closed during the Great Depression. Kan sought to emulate their scale and refinement but packaged his restaurant to attract more non Chinese diners.

It would take Kan more than a decade to realize this dream because he lacked capital.³⁵ Only after serving in World War II and managing other restaurants would Kan gain the financial backing of Hall and Young and establish Kan's Restaurant in 1953.

With a flurry of flyers and personal letters, Kan publicized the opening of his restaurant and distinguished it from its lesser competitors by proclaiming the authenticity of its dishes, their links to China's imperial past, and his strong commitment to service. At Kan's Restaurant "patience, careful thought, and finest ingredients together offer you a new adventure in time-honored recipes of Old China." Even the most discriminating of Euro American consumers could enjoy "all that is genuine and worthwhile in Chinese cooking" knowing that they could view through large plate glass windows the modern metal kitchen presided over by five Chinese cooks

tending their woks while wearing chef's whites and hats.³⁶ They could experience a foreign adventure that was safe, clean, and exotic all at the same time.

Kan's Restaurant introduced many innovations to the Chinese restaurant industry. It offered early "exotic" dishes such as crab a la Kan, bird's nest soup, Peking duck, and asparagus beef.³⁷ Kan's Restaurant was also the first to feature the much-imitated round lazy susan and steaming perfumed towels after meals.³⁸ The combination of elegant foods, setting, and service brought many accolades and Kan's Restaurant made frequent appearances on national lists of the ten best places to eat in San Francisco and received an impressive fourteen consecutive Holiday magazine awards for excellence in hospitality.³⁹ Such fame attracted celebrity diners and Johnny Kan hobnobbed with the likes of Danny Kaye, Cary Grant, Joan Sutherland, Nancy Kwan, Lily Valentine, Dong Kingman, Joe DiMaggio and Marilyn Monroe.⁴⁰ As depicted in an advertising postcard from 1959, Kan's was the place to go for a "Luxurious Adventure in Chinese Food." Chinese and western diners, although apparently never sitting at the same table, enjoyed "the charm, the elegance of Kan's, most colorful of Chinese restaurants. Here, hospitality is a way of life . . . reflecting a tradition . . . serving extraordinary native Chinese dishes of unsurpassed quality."⁴¹

Kan took seriously the goal of educating Americanized Chinese and non-Chinese alike to understand and respect the rich culture and long history of Chinese people and their food. Kan's Restaurant featured the Gum Shan [Golden Hills] Room, a private dining salon decorated with "watercolors depicting the history of the Chinese in the United States."⁴² The restaurant's famously thick menu described the rich and extensive history of Chinese food and culture. In the cookbook that he published in 1963, Kan claimed the slogan of "tell the truth" when stressing the imperial roots of Chinese cuisine and criticizing the inauthentic offerings of chop suey joints.

"Chinese cooking, with a recorded history of 47 centuries, is one of the world's oldest and is the essence of the highest art of cuisine. To misrepresent it constitutes an unforgivable sin." In contrast, Kan's Restaurant offered real Chinese food from "within the heart of San Francisco's Chinatown--the recognized mecca for the best Cantonese food in the world, outside of Hong Kong—[which] authenticates further the recipes selected from an unfathomable range of the best in Chinese food offerings."⁴³ To eat at Kan's was to consume authentic Chinese cuisine that reflected the best of Chinese culture.

Kan's educational campaign also had its practical agenda. Even as he complained about the "comparatively small number of Americans [that] actually know what real Chinese cuisine is," he also described the "average of 35 million dollars per year [that] is spent on America's supermarkets for frozen and canned American-packed Oriental products."⁴⁴ Unfortunately from Kan's perspective, much of this market in canned chop suey and chow mein was dominated by the likes of the Chun-King brand which had been founded in 1947 by the Italian American entrepreneur, Jenò Paulucci.⁴⁵ If Kan could teach Euro Americans to appreciate real Chinese food, more of these dollars might flow into Chinese American hands.

Kan became rich as he paved the way for other Chinese restaurants to attract a higher class of clientele. Some other notable successes include the Empress of China and the Imperial Palace. Unfortunately, Kan passed away in December 1972, just as the Chinese restaurant industry was on the cusp of its greatest popularity in the aftermath of Nixon's visit to China.⁴⁶ Herb Caen acknowledged the improvements that Kan had spearheaded in American appreciation of Chinese food:

After Johnny, Chinatown cooking was never the same. Chop suey has all but disappeared and you seldom hear anyone calling for beetle juice. In his wake came restaurateurs who

tried to emulate him, and patrons who know the infinite variety that stretches beyond chow mein . . . In Canton and Peking, they should be aware that there lived in San Francisco a man who raised their cuisine to the highest level.⁴⁷

The rise in respectability of Chinese cuisine made it possible for other restaurateurs to flourish and gain even greater celebrity and wealth.⁴⁸

Mandarin Cuisine

Cecilia Chiang founded her restaurant, the Mandarin, after Kan's Restaurant had been in operation almost a decade. The door had been opened for Chiang to introduce yet more innovations to the business for by the early 1960s, China and Chinese people had become more interesting to many Americans. Travel to Asia had increased and growing affluence in the post-World War II decades encouraged consumers to actively seek out cosmopolitan tastes and experiences. Although an immigrant, Chiang was born of a wealthy family and enjoyed the advantage of being part of the privileged KMT-connected émigré elite. As such, she occupied an even more strategic position from which to channel elegance and good taste into the experience of dining Chinese.

Chiang's personal background offered tantalizing glimpses not only into the privileged lives of China's wealthiest classes but also a Horatio Algeresque tale of a striving and self-made immigrant entrepreneur. Chiang grew up in the courtyards of her affluent family's mansion surrounded by a dozen siblings and even more servants. She famously claimed that until coming to the United States, she had never had to cook for herself.⁴⁹ The Japanese invasion ended these happy times and under the threat of occupation, Chiang and her fifth sister decided to escape to KMT-controlled territories in western China. The two young women traveled 2,500 miles by

train and by foot to reach the Chinese wartime capital of Chongqing. Six months after they had set out, they arrived covered with dust and fleas and still disguised as peasants. Chiang survived the Sino-Japanese War and married the diplomat husband with whom she would flee the Communist takeover in 1949. They moved with his career to Tokyo where Chiang started the first of her successful restaurant ventures.

Without training in cooking or running a business but nostalgic for the foods of her childhood, she opened a restaurant called the Forbidden City.⁵⁰ It soon attracted the wealthier members of both the Chinese and American expatriate communities although local Japanese could not afford the high prices. At the Forbidden City, Chiang became practiced at recalling the foods of her childhood and hiring talented kitchen staff to translate her memories into consistently reproducible restaurant cuisine.

Chiang possessed considerable entrepreneurial experience when she came to the United States in 1958 although her original intent was to comfort a recently widowed sister.⁵¹ After deciding to remain, however, she agreed to help a group of friends open a restaurant and even invested \$10,000 as a deposit for the site on Polk Street that they had selected.⁵² Chiang later recalled: "Afterward they backed out, leaving me committed, as I had already put up the money. It was about a year after I had arrived in the States and there was still much that was new and unfamiliar to me."⁵³ Chiang forged on alone, in part because she was reluctant to lose her money but also because she looked down upon the poor fare offered in Chinatown. "Egg drop soup everywhere . . . soup that tasted like the water that's left after you wash your wok. If people can make money with chop suey and egg foo yong, then I can do better with the real dishes from my homeland." On her own, Chiang applied for a business license only to learn from the city clerk that seven businesses had folded at that location during the past six years.⁵⁴ Despite this

inauspicious beginning, Chiang persevered. "I named the restaurant the Mandarin, and selected dishes for the menu from northern China, Peking, Hunan and Szechwan: real Chinese food, with a conspicuous absence of chop suey and egg foo young."⁵⁵

The Mandarin opened in 1961 but struggled initially. Its location outside Chinatown and the novelty of its offerings confounded expectations of where and what Chinese food should be. "In those days of the early sixties, the restaurants in San Francisco served Cantonese food exclusively, and the unfamiliarity of the hot and spicy cuisines of the northern provinces of China puzzled our first guests. Many of them were even defeated by the pronunciation of Szechwan."⁵⁶ Chiang recalls of that time: "I had to do everything: welcome guests, wash dishes, shop for provisions and rack my brains for what I had eaten in China and what I had learned from my mother. I worked sixteen hours a day, and became thin from my incessant activities."⁵⁷

After a year and a half of losses, Chiang's efforts began paying off. She hired skilled and reliable staff. "I had found a couple from northern China to cook, and was luckily joined by Mr. Linsan Chien, the former Chinese consul in San Francisco. He had elected to stay on in the States at the conclusion of his term of office, and consented to become my manager."⁵⁸ More importantly, perhaps, she gained the support of established restaurateurs such as Alexis Merab and Johnny Kan who in turn brought the local writers Herb Caen and Marion Conrad. A rave review by Caen piqued the curiosity of local San Franciscans and the very next day, a hundred telephone callers demanded reservations.⁵⁹

Within a few years, business had become so successful that Chiang expanded her operation. She chose another site outside Chinatown that offered the advantages of spectacular harbor views and enough space for a truly grand presentation of Chinese culture and cuisine. In 1968, The Mandarin grew from 65 seats to 300 in a well-financed and architecturally-planned

setting which incorporated “the brick walls and long wooden rafters” of the original Ghiradelli chocolate factory and ornamented them with a “virtual gallery of oriental arts and crafts” including a painting by Chang Dai-chen and “forbidden stitch” embroideries reputed to have once hung in “the palace in Peking.” The centerpiece was a Mongolian open barbeque, “adapted from the outdoor firepits in China.”⁶⁰ This transformation garnered Chiang her first Holiday award in 1969.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the Mandarin remained one of the premier Chinese restaurants in San Francisco. As a pioneer in offering Mandarin cuisine, it spawned many imitations. "As the fame of my restaurant grew, northern dishes started to appear on the menus of many Chinese restaurants in San Francisco for the first time, and a number of cooks who had originally worked in my kitchen branched out to start their own establishments, where they featured dishes prepared in the northern style."⁶¹ The continuing popularity of dishes such as potstickers, sizzling rice soup, and Chinese chicken salad first began with the Mandarin’s innovations. Chiang continued to expand her business by opening branches in other locations and by 1986 presided over a four-restaurant chain that employed some three hundred people.⁶²

Chiang’s success was due in part to timing and in part to her personal appeal as a purveyor of Chinese culture and food. By the 1960s, Chinese faced less hostility because America’s Cold War friendship with the KMT had enhanced the appeal of people and things Chinese. Chinese Americans also gained status as their middle class ranks grew with the ascendance of the American-born generations and with the arrival of a new class of better educated, KMT-affiliated, and often affluent, Chinese immigrant.

During the 1970s, growing interests in the conjunction of food and tourism contributed to the rising stardom of restaurateurs, chefs, and food writers. In a way that Johnny Kan could not,

Cecilia Chiang became a public celebrity through friendships with influential restaurant critics and the appealing representation of China that she embodied for them.

Chiang became famous not only as an authority on Chinese food but also as a symbol of the long-gone splendor and luxury of China's imperial past. In her 1998 memoir, Tender at the Bone, former New York Times food critic Ruth Reichl recalled the first time she met Chiang: "Cecilia Chiang stood in the doorway of The Mandarin restaurant, dressed entirely in green silk. She had shiny black hair pulled into a severe chignon that emphasized the small oval of her skull. Her smooth, beautiful face was a mask offering no clue to her age. When she waved her manicured hands, gold and diamonds flashed in the sun."⁶³ Chiang herself described her privileged childhood in the courtyards of her family's mansion as a "way of life [that] no longer exists. The last ten years have completed its destruction: yet . . . my family background and the path of my life have given me unusual opportunities of knowing both the manner of living of the Mandarin classes and of the Chinese people at large in the first half of this century."⁶⁴ Non-Chinese food writers were fascinated by the hints of excessive wealth and luxury that Chiang suggested. Cookbook author, Marion Cunningham, introduced Chiang to Reichl with the comment, "Did you know that Cecilia walked out of China with gold sewn into the hem of her dress?"⁶⁵

Chiang's persona also included the satisfying narrative arc of the successful, immigrant businesswoman. Chiang's flight from the Japanese invasion and the many obstacles she overcame as a northern Chinese, an immigrant, and a woman in the United States, became well-known components of her story.⁶⁶ Long after she had become successful and hobnobbed with the cream of America's restaurant elite, Chiang recalled with pride her early experiences scrubbing the floors of her restaurant late at night. She emphasized the independence that she had gained in

coming to America and building her own business. "I feel sorry for the women I grew up with who did not have a chance to discover that they could take care of themselves."⁶⁷ She explicitly preferred American modernity to the leisurely life of affluence of the now vanished Chinese society in which she had grown up. "Admittedly, it was a very different kind of home from those I had known in China . . . In seeing first-hand the push-button efficiency and economy of the American way of living, I realized there would be no room in the United States for the formal, diffuse layout of a Chinese house as I had known it."⁶⁸ By coming to America, however, Chiang had realized more of herself through hard work and as a self-made success.

Chiang claimed ultimate authority in her knowledge of Chinese food and described herself as "knowing how": "I have confidence . . . I love people, I love food, and about Chinese food, I think I know better than all the people I know."⁶⁹ Non-Chinese, however, viewed Chiang not only as an incomparable expert regarding Chinese cuisine but also one that provided access into the heart of what it meant to be Chinese. As recalled by Chinese food specialist Barbara Tropp, "Cecilia became an institution. You felt, as you entered her restaurants, that you were in the weave of Chinese culture."⁷⁰

Chiang's achievements resonated with the ideological agendas of Cold War America. As a successful entrepreneur, she was a model capitalist. And by embracing the kinds of opportunities available to her as an immigrant Chinese woman, and in turn helping Americans to understand and consume Chinese cuisine, she affirmed that America was truly a multi-racial, diverse democracy. Chiang grew rich because she was also an exemplary ethnic minority.⁷¹

Concluding Remarks

Johnny Kan and Cecilia Chiang helped to engineer a shift in consciousness whereby American people learned to value authentic and well-prepared Chinese cuisine rooted in China's rich imperial past. After decades of the disreputable but cheaply tasty satisfactions of chop suey, Americans came to associate Chinese dining with elegantly appointed settings and refined tastes in food. Some Americans even grew to believe that Chinese food in America was better than that available in Asia. In 1965, Holiday's food critic Silas Spitzer observed that "My firm opinion is that for every first-rate Chinese restaurant in Hong Kong there are at least ten in New York or San Francisco as good or better . . . My feeling is that the poetic and imaginative Chinese cuisine today available is today at its best in the United States."⁷² In this critic's opinion, Americans no longer had to leave home to consume the best of Chinese cuisine.

The successes of Kan and Chiang suggest how marketable ethnicity can be in the lives of racial minorities and how the values attached to ethnic cultures may change. Rather than seeking to erase their Chineseness, Kan and Chiang strategically promoted aspects of Chinese culture and cuisine to attract more mainstream consumers to their restaurants. Their triumph was not that they disappeared into the American melting pot so celebrated by Robert Park and his Chinese American disciple, Rose Hum Lee, but that they domesticated "authentic" versions of Chineseness so appealingly for American consumption.

Throughout the Cold War and up to the present, Chinese restaurants remain a reliable form of employment, even for Chinese Americans with more prestigious options. The sociologist Betty Lee Sung observed in 1967 that "[s]urprisingly, many young men and women who hold good positions in commercial and professional capacities elsewhere go back to restaurants on week ends to supplement their income . . . Offhand, I can name an architect, a vice-president of a

finance company, a welder in an aircraft factory, a medical student, and a dental student who work regularly over the week ends as waiters or headwaiters in various Chinese restaurants.”⁷³

Chinese restaurants increased dramatically in both numbers and popularity during the early 1970s. Nixon received much of the credit for starting the trend. "When we opened,' said Susan Sih, co-owner of Chicago's Dragon Inn, 'I couldn't give away a Peking Duck. And then President Nixon went to China. He's been the greatest salesman for Peking Duck.'" In 1972, the Chinese-American Restaurant Association estimated that one restaurant had opened each week during the previous year and that there were twelve hundred Chinese restaurants in New York and Long Island with another five to six hundred in New Jersey and Connecticut.⁷⁴

The Hall family of Wing Nien Foods suggests the continuing appeal of entrepreneurship and the economic potential of ethnic food services for Chinese Americans. Wing Nien Foods is now in its third generation of family management. George Hall's son and grandson, David and Gregory Hall, earned their college degrees and pursued white collar employment in pharmaceuticals and engineering before returning to run the family business because it offered greater opportunities for creativity, independence, and profit.⁷⁵

Many Chinese Americans continue to run Chinese restaurants because they generally provide reliable incomes in return for relatively low start-up costs. Even though the Chinese American community has grown in numbers, socioeconomic status, and educational attainments since the 1940s, running a restaurant remains for many the most preferable means of making a living in the United States. Most of these family-run establishments seek to do little more than satisfy their customers with the now standard favorites of General's chicken and broccoli beef but at least they rarely serve chop suey.

The theorist Rey Chow has critiqued the implications of power and inequality bound up in the production of Chinese food for non-Chinese. She notes that “food transaction in this instance points up the need to rethink Orientalism not simply as an externally imposed system of ideological mystification and manipulation . . . but also as an elusive process of self-realization, a process that can be vital even when it is, as is often the case, demeaning.”⁷⁶ Chow highlights the tension between necessity and ethnic misrepresentation in this most typical of ethnic enterprises. How many Chinese American entrepreneurs can afford to choose authenticity over the economic rationality of giving their customers what they want and expect to eat?

Neither Johnny Kan nor Cecilia Chiang shirked at occasionally serving “Chinese” dishes such as crab Rangoon and Chinese chicken salad that suited the tastes of their non-Chinese customers. In calling her first restaurant Forbidden City and the second the Mandarin, Chiang clearly understood the importance of evoking the exotic to attract more customers. The very concept of Mandarin cuisine that she made so famous was an amalgamation of many different foodways, as Chiang explained in her cookbook.

And let me say, as a last introductory comment, that there is no such thing as ‘Mandarin’ cuisine. The cuisine of the Mandarin classes was a combination of the cuisine of the capital, augmented by the specialities of every province: the finest produce, from the limitless resources of the whole of China, prepared by chefs whose skill had been handed down from time immemorial.⁷⁷

While acknowledging that she had creatively repackaged Chinese food for non Chinese consumers, Chiang managed to remind Americans of the fascinating traditions associated with China’s emperor, its varied and vast empire, ancient history, and richly diverse cultural heritage. Even as Kan and Chiang knowingly skirted the slippery boundaries of authenticity in some of

their offerings, both insisted that their restaurants convey pride and skill in the cuisine and culture served to their customers. By instilling class and prestige into American associations with consuming Chinese food, Kan and Chiang greatly enriched the content of Chinese ethnicity to help transform Chinese food from being merely a cheap and sometimes suspect convenience into an experience in culture that could at times attain the level of culinary art.

Endnotes

¹ Herb Caen, Only in San Francisco (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1960): 266.

² See Johnny Kan, "A 'Thank You' Message from Johnny Kan" (Letter dated September 10, 1953) and Johnny Kan with Charles L. Leong, Eight Immortal Flavors (Berkeley, California: Howell-North Books, 1963): 15-16.

³ Karen J. Leong, The China Mystique: Mayling Soong Chiang, Pearl S. Buck, and Anna May Wong in the American Imagination (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005) and Colleen Lye, America's Asia: Racial Form and American Literature, 1893-1945 (Princeton and New York: Princeton University Press, 2005).

⁴ Chinese are the only group to have been specified by race for exclusion from the United States. First passed in 1882, the Chinese exclusion laws prohibited Chinese from gaining citizenship by naturalization and restricted entry to six tightly defined categories: diplomats, merchants, merchant family members, students, tourists, and returning laborers.

⁵ Between 1924 and 1965, immigration was controlled by a highly discriminatory system of quotas based on national origins. Designed to preserve the ethnic and racial composition of the United States, the quotas were based on census data and gave Western and northern European nations high numbers of immigration slots compared to the rest of the world. Asian nations, if they received an allotment at all, received annual quotas of 200 or less during this era.

⁶ Cristina Klein, Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961 (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2003): 224.

⁷ Klein, Cold War Orientalism, 23.

⁸ Klein, Cold War Orientalism, 23.

⁹ Although not all the performers were ethnically Chinese, with some being Japanese, Filipino, or multiracial, they adopted Chinese names. For example, the Portuguese, Spanish, Filipino, and Chinese Caruso Lagrimas became Tony Wing.

¹⁰ The Forbidden City's performers were born and raised primarily outside of San Francisco Chinatown.

¹¹ See Jade Snow Wong, Fifth Chinese Daughter (New York: Harper, 1950): 241 and Klein, Cold War Orientalism, 242-243.

¹² Klein, Cold War Orientalism, 225.

¹³ Henry Shih-shan Tsai, The Chinese Experience in America (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986): 195.

¹⁴ S.Y. Yuan, Chinese-American Population (Hong Kong: UEA Press, Ltd., 1988): 61-62.

¹⁵ Young worked for Standard Oil during the 1940s and was told openly that he would never receive a promotion. Author's interview with Connie Young Yu, December 31, 2003.

¹⁶ In response to the Chinese exclusion laws, Chinese began claiming fraudulent names and family relationships in order to enter the United States. After 1950, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and the FBI feared that Chinese communist spies could use this well-

organized system to enter the United States. Between 1956 and 1965, the INS implemented the Chinese Confession Program to induce Chinese Americans to cooperate in revealing false names and identities. In exchange for confessing their fraudulent status, Chinese Americans could regain their real names and receive American citizenship. Less than ten percent of the Chinese American population of the time trusted the INS enough to participate in this program. Of those who confessed, only 11,336 did so willingly. Another 19,124 were implicated in the confessions of others. Most of these Chinese Americans benefited from the confession program but the INS used evidence of fraudulent entry to deport left-wing activists and strip other leftists of their U.S. citizenship. See Mae M. Ngai, Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004): 218-223.

¹⁷ Klein, Cold War Orientalism, 240-241.

¹⁸ Philip C. Choy, "The Chinese Food Experience in San Francisco." In "WOKing Through Time: The Chinese Food Experience in San Francisco" (San Francisco: Chinese Historical Society of America, 2003): 26.

¹⁹ Renqiu Yu, "Chop Suey: From Chinese Food to Chinese American Food" in Chinese America: History and Perspectives (1987): 89.

²⁰ Yu, "Chop Suey," 95-96.

²¹ Ivan Light, "From Vice District to Tourist Attraction: The Moral Career of American Chinatowns, 1880-1940" in Amerasia 43:3 (1974): 384-385.

²² Light, "From Vice District to Tourist Attraction," 376-377.

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- ²³ Cited in Light, "From Vice District to Tourist Attraction," 394.
- ²⁴ Light, "From Vice District to Tourist Attraction," 385.
- ²⁵ Light, "From Vice District to Tourist Attraction," 384-385.
- ²⁶ Gor Yun Leong, Chinatown Inside Out (New York: B. Mussey, 1936): 168.
- ²⁷ Betty Lee Sung, Mountain of Gold (New York: MacMillan, 1967): 208.
- ²⁸ Sung, Mountain of Gold, 207.
- ²⁹ Herb Caen, "Babble by the Bay" in San Francisco Chronicle (Dec. 11, 1972). "Beetle juice" was a derogatory term for soy sauce.
- ³⁰ Jack Sheldon was also a restaurant critic who authored the "Private Guide to Restaurants." He described Kan as "the man many called the Honorary Mayor of Chinatown." I thank the author, Connie Young Yu, for generously sharing her collection of documents regarding Johnny Kan and Wing Nien Foods.
- ³¹ Victor and Brett de Bary Nee, Longtime Californ': A Documentary Study of an American Chinatown (New York: Pantheon, 1973): 110.
- ³² Nee and Nee, Longtime Californ', 113.
- ³³ Nee and Nee, Longtime Californ', 114.
- ³⁴ Nee and Nee, Longtime Californ', 115.
- ³⁵ See Ken Wong, "A Death in the Family" in The Oriental Express (Dec. 20, 1972) and Caen "Babble by the Bay."
- ³⁶ See San Francisco Bulletin, advertisement appearing Feb. 2, 1960. Kan also helped to promote awareness of Chinese cooking as performance. His kitchen featured the leaping flames, flashing cleavers, and dramatic tossing associated with stir-frying in woks.

This show went on the road in 1972, so to speak, when Johnny Kan helped to organize an exhibition of Chinese chefs and their woks at the Sixth Western National Restaurant Convention for an audience of 750 industry insiders. Charles Petit, "Master Chefs at Work on the Wok." San Francisco Chronicle (August 28, 1972).

³⁷ Caen "Babble by the Bay."

³⁸ Engineer George Hall developed the round lazy susan as well as the process for perfuming the hot towels.

³⁹ Wong, "A Death in the Family."

⁴⁰ See Caen, "Babble by the Bay" in San Francisco Chronicle (Sept. 12, 1953) and Wong, "A Death in the Family." Caen reported his sighting of the baseball star and his luminous wife in the following way: "On the off-chance that you're still interested in what Joe Di Maggio and Mmonroe are up to, we can tell you that they were at Johnny Kan's last Sat. night, seated at the bar. After they left, all the men at the bar lined up and sat, one after the other, in the seat she'd vacated. (Mr. Freud must have a whole chapter on this)."

⁴¹ San Francisco News, advertisement appearing Feb. 12, 1959.

⁴² Doris Muscatine, A Cook's Tour of San Francisco: The Best Restaurants and Their Recipes (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963): 103. The paintings were commissioned from Jake Lee, a Chinese American artist who devoted a year to historical research for the job. According to Muscatine, "His paintings show the first immigrants disembarking in 1849, Chinese miners in the gold fields, lantern-making in San Francisco, railroad workers laboring on the first

transcontinental track, and the once-famous China Camp Shrimp fishery. They also depict some less well-known aspects of Chinese-American cultural history: Chinese shoemakers in Massachusetts in the 1870s, vineyard workers in Sonoma county, San Francisco cigar-making, on 1862 view of the Chinese Opera House, and the champion Chinese firehose team of Deadwood, South Dakota, 1888." See 103.

⁴³ Kan and Leong, Eight Immortal Flavors, 12.

⁴⁴ Kan and Leong, Eight Immortal Flavors, 11.

⁴⁵ Donna Gabaccia, We Are What We Eat: Ethnic Food and the Making of Americans (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998): 167-168.

⁴⁶ J.A.G. Roberts, China to Chinatown: Chinese Food in the West (London: Reaktion Books, 2002): 166-167.

⁴⁷ Herb Caen, One Man's San Francisco (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1976): 111.

⁴⁸ Kan's Restaurant is still located on Grant Avenue but operates under different management. Since Kan's death, its reputation has declined considerably.

⁴⁹ Cecilia Chiang with Allan Carr, The Mandarin Way (San Francisco: California Living Books, 1980): 263.

⁵⁰ This Forbidden City is different from Charlie Low's nightclub.

⁵¹ The oft-told tale of Chiang's life story has been published with slightly different details. Sometimes her date of arrival is listed as 1961 and the numbers of her siblings varies between twelve and thirteen.

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- ⁵² Emerald Yeh, "Cecilia Sun Yun Chiang," http://www.asianpacificfund.org/awards/bio_chiang.shtml, 15 June, 2005.
- ⁵³ Chiang, The Mandarin Way, 265.
- ⁵⁴ Yeh, "Cecilia Sun Yun Chiang."
- ⁵⁵ Chiang, The Mandarin Way, 266.
- ⁵⁶ Susan Edmiston, "The Year of the Woman Immigrant: Self-Selected for Success" in Working Woman (July 1986): 56.
- ⁵⁷ Chiang, 266.
- ⁵⁸ Chiang, The Mandarin Way, 267.
- ⁵⁹ Yeh, "Cecilia Sun Yun Chiang."
- ⁶⁰ Doris Muscatine, A Cook's Tour of San Francisco: The Best Restuarants and Their Recipes, rev. ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969): 147.
- ⁶¹ Chiang, The Mandarin Way, 267.
- ⁶² Edmiston, "The Year of the Woman Immigrant," 56.
- ⁶³ Ruth Reichl, Tender At the Bone: Growing Up At Table (New York: Random House, 1998): 277.
- ⁶⁴ Chiang, The Mandarin Way, vii.
- ⁶⁵ Reichl, Tender At the Bone, 278-279. Another anecdote conveys Chiang's fascinating persona. Cunningham, Chiang, and California cuisine guru Alice Waters had visited China together. Throughout their three week trip, the two Euro American women obsessed about what Chiang carried in her twelve suitcases. Baffled by their interest in her luggage, Chiang offhandedly described the contents as cloth to

have clothes tailor-made in Hong Kong and the then scarce ingredients of shark's fin and hair vegetable for her restaurants.

⁶⁶ Edmiston, "The Year of the Woman Immigrant," 56.

⁶⁷ Reichl, Tender At the Bone, 280.

⁶⁸ Chiang, The Mandarin Way, 259.

⁶⁹ Edmiston, "The Year of the Woman Immigrant," 56.

⁷⁰ Peggy Knickerbocker, "Empress of San Francisco" in Saveur (May/June 2000)

<http://saveur.com/article.jsp;jsessionid=3927F5D27A54324E851A755FA2AA5?ID=15171&typeID=100>, June 15, 2005.

⁷¹ Chiang retired in 1991 but continues to consult for new restaurants. The Mandarin remains in Ghiradelli Square but has recently changed ownership. Chiang's son Phillip was one of the founding partners of the Chinese restaurant chain, P.F. Chang's.

⁷² Silas Spitzer, "Dining in the Far East" in Holiday 38:6 (December 1965): 107.

⁷³ Sung, Mountain of Gold, 208. Sung also described the importance of the restaurant business even for the relatively privileged groups of refugees and graduate students immigrating to the U.S. during the 1950s and 1960s. "Another group of Chinese revised their attitude toward the restaurant business too. These are the intellectual and political refugees who once held high office in China. . . At first, these émigrés disassociated themselves from the 'overseas Chinese,' whom they looked down upon as laundrymen and restaurateurs. When they began to look around for means of earning a livelihood or investing

their capital, they found that restaurants can yield a good living and handsome returns." See 209.

⁷⁴ Ralph Blumenthal, "The Chinese Restaurant Boom" in San Francisco Chronicle (September 6, 1972).

⁷⁵ Connie Young Yu, December 31, 2003.

⁷⁶ Rey Chow, "Have You Eaten?: Inspired by an Exhibit" in Amerasia 31:1 (2005): 20-21.

⁷⁷ Chiang, The Mandarin Way, xi.