

WHAT CHINESE LIKE TO EAT.

Vast Variety of Food Enjoyed by the Different Classes.

Special correspondence of The Florida Star. SAN FRANCISCO, Sept. 12.—If it be true, as the German philosopher Feuerbach said, that "man is what he eats," some explanation of the peculiar ways of John Chinaman may be found in his diet. His is so complex and many sided a personality that the natural expectation is that his food will reveal the same characteristics, and this expectation is not disappointed upon investigation. Although the Chinese do not eat rats and mice, as they are commonly supposed to do, except under the stress of dire necessity, they do eat other things in comparison with which



A CHINESE RESTAURANT IN PEKING.

a juicy broiled rat would not suffer. Roast dog and eggs of very ancient vintage are highly esteemed delicacies among the richer classes of Chinese, while live young crabs, dipped in vinegar, formed the piece de resistance at a recent Chinatown dinner.

To this list of curious foods may be added the celebrated birds' nest soup, sharks' fins, sea slugs, raw pigs' kidneys and crabs' tails. These are, however, very high in price and never reach the tables of the mass of the Chinese people. They seem fantastic and repulsive to American taste, and yet the gusto with which the wealthy Chinaman enjoys them is very amusing. Corresponding to their hearty enjoyment is the very evident delight with which a Chinaman of the poorer class will pick up a small fish, somewhat like our sardine, and swallow it raw.

The Chinese, for the most part, are good trenchermen and enjoy their meals, and they take no pains to conceal their pleasure. At a recent large dinner in Washington one of the guests was a Chinese attaché, who had just arrived from his native country. After the last course, in accordance with the polite Chinese custom of showing his approval of the good things enjoyed, he leaned back on his chair, crossed his hands over his stomach and emitted a resounding grunt. The other diners, among whom were the president and his wife, were naturally taken by surprise. But the hostess saved the day and possibly the feelings of the other Chinamen present by immediately imitating him. Her example was followed by the rest of the dinner party. Never before had a Washington dining room sounded so much like a pigsty. The cultured Chinese minister later explained the action of his assistant as a common Chinese way of expressing approval of a good dinner.

Contrary to general belief, the food grain most generally used throughout China is not rice, but wheat. This statement, however, must be made qualifiedly and the vastness of China and its variety of climate must be taken into consideration. In the south, rice is, of course, most generally used. Next to wheat, millet is a most important food grain in the north. Boiled or prepared in other ways, one of these grains forms the principal dish of the Chinese bill of fare, with rich and poor alike. The difference lies in the side dishes or relishes, and herein there is great variety. With the laboring classes a vegetable or two give the necessary variation, with sometimes a bit of pork, while on feast days or on the occasion of the birth of a son or at other uncommon times fish and meat are added.

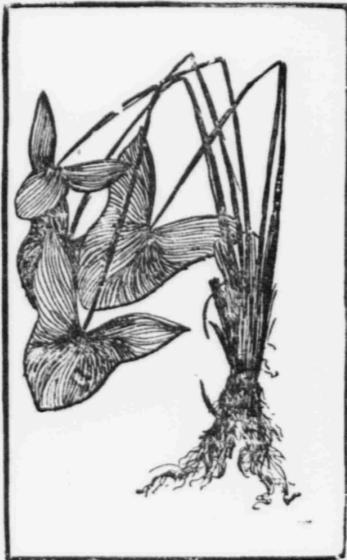
The principal meat of China is pork. The pig is seen everywhere, hobnobbing with the family in the living rooms and in all other places. Chinese butchers know nothing of our system of division of meat by joints, and they cut off chunks of varying size and weight with no regard to articular divisions. Pork is not the principal dish of the meal, when it is had; it is used rather to give a flavor to the boiled rice or other grain. The food is all boiled together in a mass, and when the family is assembled around the paternal board each fills his bowl with the mixture from the center bowl, every one putting his chopsticks into it.

Fish is highly esteemed all over the empire, and every part of the fish is devoured. No fish is considered small enough to be cast aside, and none is too large to be divided. The Chinese are expert fishermen, and everything literally is fish that comes to their net. As in everything else, the inconceivable economy of the Chinaman crops out in his food arrangements. The sea yields to him not only the kinds of fish enjoyed by civilized peoples, but also some things that cause disgust to foreigners. Imagine eating cuttlefish or sharks or sea anemones or seaweed! Chinese dried oysters, however, are an

exceedingly interesting and toothsome proposition, proving that in some things John is not so far behind us. In passing, it may be noted that in drying, preserving or pickling the Chinese need acknowledge no masters in the world. The dried oysters are prepared by spreading them in the sun for several weeks. How they are preserved from decomposition is a trade secret well guarded by the inscrutable manner of the Chinese. The result, however, is delicious when prepared by the Chinese in the proper manner. Large quantities of these dried oysters and other preserved sea food are sold in the Chinatowns of New York and San Francisco. When one buys fish in Chinese markets or, in fact, anything else, it is well to be on one's guard against deception. "Things are not what they seem" is nowhere more true than in China. For instance, while red and fresh looking gills are a sign of freshness in fish, too often has the redness been put on by hand by ingenious John.

Theoretically, the Chinese have only two mealtimes, one in the middle of the forenoon and the other between 5 and 6 in the evening. Practically they do not hesitate to eat whenever they have an opportunity. The constant aim and chief pleasure of John Chinaman's existence are to obtain a feast at the expense of some one else. He will go to any pains to smuggle himself in at a wedding or other festivity where good things to eat are to be had, and his endeavors to prove relationship with the celebrating parties are often extremely amusing. To be eaten out of house and home is only a phrase with us; with the Chinese it is often a stern reality. As with Hindoos and Judaism, Confucianism enjoins on its followers certain dietary regulations, but these have long since fallen into disuse and are universally forgotten or disregarded.

The staples of Chinese food do not vary greatly from our own, save that the poorer Chinese have not nearly so large a variety of foods to choose from as we have. Save in the north, among the Mongols and Mantchoos, butter, milk and cheese are despised—justly in the case of the butter, which is a villainously rancid mixture of uncertain



A CHINESE TUBER.

composition. In the neighborhood of Amoy and Canton snakes, snails, grubs and other reptiles and insects are eaten by the poorer classes. Other curious things are seen and heard of, especially in the low class restaurants. The following are a few of the items from the bill of fare of one of these: Cats' flesh, black cats' flesh, black dogs' grease, black cats' eyes. Black cats and dogs are more highly esteemed than those of other colors, being supposed to give more strength to the eater. To an American, a stomach strong enough to enjoy Chinese fare hardly seems to need strengthening. The standard Chinese drink is tea or white wine, made from rice. In some parts of China they drink great quantities of hot water. The Chinese, rich and poor, are exceedingly fond of sweets, and no Chinese meal, among the richer folk, is complete without sweetmeats of some sort.

Celestial cookery is often very well done. It is not confined to women, for male cooks are common and quite as proficient as cooks of the other sex. The dishes, although sometimes grateful to the American palate, for the most part are too highly seasoned or too greasy to find ready acceptance. The Chinese have a vastly greater variety of spices than we have, some of them, in fact, being quite unknown to Americans. Among the richer Chinese masters of the culinary art are held in high esteem and command very high salaries. The other side of the picture, cooking among the poorer Chinese, is not so pleasant. They boil everything they eat in the same vessel and seem to have absolutely no regard for cleanliness. It is not well to watch Chinese cooking going on if one is to partake of the resulting meal.

In the matter of fruits and vegetables China has few if any equals. Nowhere else is a greater variety or better quality to be found, for they have all of our fruits and some of which we know nothing. Nuts of all kinds abound and are prepared in numerous ways, while Chinese preserved ginger

has become justly famous. Poultry is also one of the strong points of Chinese farming and cooking. The Peking ducks are celebrated throughout the empire for their size and delicacy, and the preparation of their flesh is one of the finest evidences of Chinese skill in cookery. If one of my American readers cares to try a duck a la Chinoise, here is the recipe:

"Take a fat duck. Open and clean. Take two mace of salt and rub over it both outside and in. Put into an earthen dish and take of fan spirits one cup and put the cup with the spirits inside the duck. Do not let the spirits fall on to the duck; only the vapor of the spirits is wanted. Steam over water till quite tender. Lift out the wine cup into the bowl. Done in this way there is no need of minor vegetables."

Among the poorer Chinese the meals consist generally of only one course, while the banquets of the rich sometimes have as many as 40.

CHARLES E. ROBINSON.



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Special Master's Sale.

Under and by virtue of a final decree issued out of the circuit court in and for Brevard county, Florida, wherein C. A. Robinson is complainant, and Amy R. Shaver, et al, are defendants, I will sell at public auction for cash at C. A. Robinson's, at Eden, in Brevard county, Florida, on the first Monday in October, A. D. 1900, to the highest and best bidder, all the following personal property belonging to said Amy R. Shaver, and in the possession of C. A. Robinson, to-wit:

Ten pieces of upholstered furniture; one piece of upholstered rocker; six rocking chairs; four center tables; one secretary and book case; seven upholstered dining room chairs; one sideboard; one extension dining table; one lot of dishes and waiter; one steel range; one kitchen table; one hall rack; one angle lamp; two large pitchers; two sets of andirons; five bedroom sets, three pieces each; three toilet sets; three rockers and three cane chairs; two sets portiers; three rugs and one lot of matting; one lot of carpets; two carpet sweepers; one lot of laundry utensils; one lot of window shades; or so much thereof as will be necessary to satisfy said decree and costs.

WM. F. RICHARDS, Special Master in Chancery. Titusville, Fla., Aug. 16th, 1900.

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Our grafts were all cut from bearing trees, and came out full of fruit first thing this spring, and we have saved several specimens of fruit for exhibition to our visiting customers.

We invite correspondence and careful inspection of our stock.

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