

# CHINA MENU DECODER

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BudgetTravel

## GENERAL TERMS

吃 **chī** to eat  
喝 **hē** to drink  
早饭 **zǎofàn** breakfast  
午饭 **wǔfàn** lunch  
晚饭 **wǎnfàn** dinner  
筷子 **kuàizi** chopsticks  
叉子 **chāzi** fork  
刀 **dāo** knife  
勺子 **sháozi** spoon  
盘子 **pánzi** plate  
杯子 **bēizi** glass, cup  
餐巾纸 **cānjīnzhǐ** napkin  
饮料 **yǐnliào** beverage

凉菜 **liáng cài** appetizer  
(literally “cold dish”)  
热菜 **rè cài** main dish  
(literally “hot dish”)  
饭碗 **fànwǎn** rice bowl (also a  
metaphor meaning “a job”)  
菜单 **càidān** menu  
套餐 **tàocān** set menu  
买单 **mǎidān** check, please  
营业 **yíngyè** open for business  
关门 **guānmén** closed  
服务员 **fúwùyuán** waiter

## OTHER FOOD TERMS

热/温/凉) **rè/wēn/liáng**  
hot/warm/cool  
素食 **sùshí** vegetarian  
小吃 **xiǎochī** snack  
干杯 **gānbēi** cheers  
火锅 **hǔoguō** hot pot;  
Chinese-style fondue  
非吸烟区 **fēi xīyān qū**  
nonsmoking area  
盐 **yán** salt  
胡椒 **hújiāo** pepper  
咸 **xián** salty  
甜 **tián** sweet

酸 **suān** sour  
辣 **là** spicy  
我不吃辣 **wǒ bù chī là** I don't  
eat spicy  
锅 **guō** wok, pot, pan  
串 **chuàn** skewer used for  
grilling  
烤炉 **kǎolú** oven  
葱爆 **cōngbào** quick stir-fry  
under high heat with scallions  
过油 **guòyóu** flash fry in hot oil  
刀工 **dāo gōng** knife skills; an  
important way to judge a chef

## STAPLES

米饭 **mǐfàn** rice  
面条 **miàntiáo** noodles  
饺子 **jiǎozi** dumplings  
锅贴 **guōtiē** pot stickers  
包子 **bāozi** steamed bun

辣椒 **làjiāo** chili  
鱼 **yú** fish  
肉 **ròu** meat  
鸡肉 **jīròu** chicken  
牛肉 **niúròu** beef

猪肉 **zhūròu** pork  
豆腐 **dòufu** tofu  
虾 **xiā** shrimp  
蔬菜 **shūcài** vegetables  
汤 **tāng** soup

酱油 **jiàngyóu** soy sauce  
醋 **cù** vinegar  
大蒜 **dàsuàn** garlic  
姜 **jiāng** ginger  
花椒 **huājiāo** Sichuan pepper

## DRINKS AND DESSERTS

水 **shuǐ** water  
矿泉水 **kuàngquánshuǐ**  
bottled water  
开水 **rèkāishuǐ**  
hot water, safe and pre-boiled  
茶 **chá** tea  
茉莉花茶 **mòlihuā chá**  
jasmine tea  
乌龙茶 **wūlóng chá**  
oolong tea

绿茶 **lǜ chá** green tea  
牛奶 **niúǎi** milk  
酸奶 **suānnǎi** yogurt  
咖啡 **kāfēi** coffee  
果汁 **guǒzhī** juice  
啤酒 **píjiǔ** beer  
红葡萄酒 **hóng pútáojiǔ**  
red wine  
白葡萄酒 **bái pútáojiǔ**  
white wine

白酒 **báijiǔ** a strong, Chinese  
grain alcohol  
米酒 **mǐjiǔ** rice wine  
驴打滚儿 **lú dǎ gun'er**  
literally “donkeys rolling in dirt”—  
a glutinous rice dessert with  
red-bean paste  
拔丝苹果 **básī píngguǒ**  
candied apples

芒果布丁 **mángguǒ bùdīng**  
mango pudding  
冰糖葫芦 **bīngtáng húlu**  
candied hawthorns, usually sold  
from street vendors  
月饼 **yuèbǐng** literally “moon  
cake”—a pastry with a sweet or  
savory filling  
冰淇淋 **bīngqílín** ice cream

## POPULAR DISHES

### NORTHERN CUISINE

拍黄瓜 **pāi huángguā**  
cucumber salad with garlic  
香辣炸土豆丝  
**xiānglà zhá tǔdòusī** spicy fried  
shoestring potatoes  
北京烤鸭 **Běijīng kǎoyā**  
Peking duck  
拉面 **lāmian** hand-pulled  
noodles  
煎饼 **jiānbǐng** savory crepe  
served from street vendors  
西红柿鸡蛋  
**xīhóngshì chǎo jīdàn**  
scrambled eggs with tomato  
炸酱面 **zhájiàng miàn** yellow  
bean paste with noodles

### SICHUANESE CUISINE

口水鸡 **kǒushuǐ jī** spicy cold  
chicken  
宫爆鸡丁 **gōngbào jīdīng** spicy  
chicken stir-fried with peanuts,  
a.k.a. kungpao chicken  
麻婆豆腐 **mápo dòufu** numbing,  
spicy tofu with ground beef,  
a.k.a. mapo tofu  
担担面 **dàndàn miàn** spicy  
noodles with chili oil, ground  
pork, and preserved vegetables  
回锅肉 **huíguō ròu**  
twice-cooked pork belly  
辣子鸡 **làzǐ jī** spicy, deep-fried  
chicken with red chilies  
干煸四季豆 **gānbīan sìjìdòu**  
string beans stir-fried with  
ground pork and preserved  
vegetables

### CANTONESE CUISINE

点心 **diǎn xīn** small Cantonese  
snacks, a.k.a. dim sum  
烧鹅 **shāo é** roast goose  
古老肉 **gǔlǎo ròu** sweet-and-  
sour pork  
牛柳炒河粉 **niú liǔ chǎo héfěn**  
beef stir-fried with rice noodles  
白灼芥蓝 **báizhuó jièlán**  
Chinese kale blanched and  
served with soy or oyster sauce  
鱼翅 **yúchì** shark's fin  
鲍鱼 **bàoyú** abalone

### SHANGHAI/YANGTZE RIVER DELTA CUISINE

烤麸 **kǎofū** spongy wheat gluten  
with soy sauce  
醉鸡 **zuìjī** drunken chicken  
小笼包 **xiǎolóng bāo** Shanghai  
soup dumplings  
红烧肉 **hóngshāo ròu**  
red-braised pork  
水晶虾 **shuǐjīng xiā** crystal  
shrimp, lightly stir-fried  
狮子头 **shīzītóu** literally “lion's  
head”—meatballs with pork and  
often crabmeat