

Talking about Chinese Food

Chinese takeaways, Chinese buffets, upmarket Chinese [restaurants](#)...so many different variations, yet so many seem to provide the same dishes year in year out. With new businesses closing, and young anxious entrepreneurs trying to make it big, it's hard to know where to look, where to eat, whom to believe! It doesn't help that so many share similar names, such as the stock keywords "Beijing", "Garden", "Dragon", "Wok", and neither do the claims of being "The best Chinese food in town" or that they provide "the finest Chinese delicacies around". But, enough of the moaning – I decided to test out a number of very different Chinese eating establishments in the Croydon area in the hope of gaining some insight into what's really hot, and what's a little bit too past its sell by date.

Not far from the centre of Croydon, Southeast London, is a very understated takeaway called Aroma Express. This has been my local Chinese for many years, and despite its modest appearance, it really does serve some great quality dishes. The chef has had a lot of experience, so customers often choose this takeaway over others simply because they can have their requirements tailored to their own palette. Service is fast, but never rushed or compromised, and the selection of meats are of good quality, prime cuts, tender and flavoursome. The menu, I agree, does not exude great originality, however the beauty lies within the dishes themselves. The Black Bean Sauce dishes are superior, so too are the Sweet and Sour selections, and the Special Fried Rice or House Special Noodles are a must have for complimenting these excellent specialities.

As a stark contrast to Aroma Express, and slightly further West, brings us to the Jade Dragon of Wallington. Modern appearance, yes. New lick of paint, yes again. Tasty food? No sir. I thought I'd see for myself whether the myths about this place were true, so I ordered a selection of dishes; King Prawn Balls, Chicken with Green Pepper and Black Bean Sauce and Satay Beef. First off, the Prawns were very bland, rubbery and unseasoned, encased in greasy batter. The Chicken was acceptable, but came with an overpowering and very salty bean sauce, and the cuts of Beef drowned in Satay Sauce were crude, with gristle and much fat. Overall, I was not impressed by this establishment's food, and would avoid it all costs! This, for me, characterises the negative side of Chinese takeaway food that can so easily damage its reputation.

My last two recommendations have got to be Xu Sheng along Stafford Road, Croydon and China Kitchen in Penge. With a bright orange front, Xu Sheng can't be missed. The buffet meal comes with an excellent selection of house specialities, all freshly prepared and flowing with piquancy and gusto. If you prefer a solo dish, such as Crispy Fragrant Aromatic Lamb, you won't go away disappointed. Other Chinese classics are of great value, not only in price, but will keep your taste buds well and truly active. China Kitchen, a takeway situated on Maple Road, off Penge High Street shares Sheng's relish and vim; dishes such as the Pork with Cashewnuts in Yellow Bean Sauce or the Fillet Steak with Black Pepper Sauce are delightful and in generous portions too. What's more, service is always very reliable and friendly.

In conclusion and much to my delight, there are a good range of highly innovative and talented chefs in the [trade](#) who are simply que'd up when it comes to serving high quality Chinese food. Although my findings are limited to a specific area, I am almost certain that there are other great Chinese restaurants out there right across the UK. The diamond does not always lie within beautiful, palatial surroundings, so don't be fooled by these post modern-looking joints with fancy drapings and expensive interior designs - often well-established restaurants with a matured sensibility can have that golden touch.

About the Author

Dawson is a guest writer and key contributor of articles to many local magazines and newspapers in the south London region. He is a [restaurants](#) fan, who also actively writes about pretty much everything else in [classifieds](#) magazines.

Source: <http://www.articletrader.com>