

Food & Drink

Shanghai's best healthy hotpots

Overdose on Christmas cheer? A healthy hotpot is a winter warmer you can lighten the load with, says **Victoria Brownlee**



Top of the pots (Clockwise from main) Holy Cow, Qimin, Mahota Kitchen and (inset) Qimin.

Elixir Health Pot

Hailing from Taiwan, Hengshan Lu spot Elixir is perennially busy, and when the giant duo pot of medicinal broth arrives at your table, you'll start to understand why. The 'health pot' bases here are brimming with all kinds of spices, chilli, tofu and red dates – a real feast for the taste buds. You can get either the 'Wulao spicy aromatic pot' or the 'healthy creamy tofu pot' base for 98RMB per small table or 168RMB per large table, but we recommend getting a house special twin pot for an additional 30RMB.

To add to the already flavoursome broth, there's plenty of beef (98RMB for flat iron), lamb (58RMB) and pork (58RMB for shoulder). There's also an array of fresh seafood (from 16RMB scallops) and vegetables, plus numerous varieties of tofu (from 15RMB) including a tasty 'ice cream tofu' option. We recommend you skip the assorted dumplings (42RMB), which are light on taste and high on starch, and instead order the super tasty meatballs (78RMB for 10), as well as the mixed mushroom plate (58RMB). Although on the pricey side, we love Elixir Health Pot, and so does the rest of Shanghai, it appears – their windows aren't permanently fogged up for nothing.

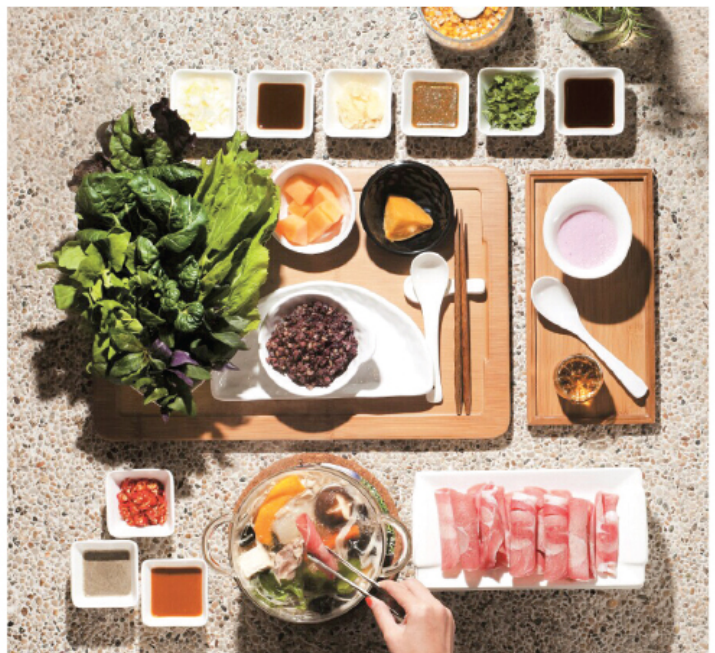
Average price per person 200RMB
Good for Intense and aromatic flavours, plentiful meat and seafood options and a tasty twin pot.

Elixir Health Pot 2 Hengshan Lu, near Dongping Lu, Xuhui district (5456 1489). Open 11am-4am daily. © Changshu Lu. 徐汇区衡山路2号, 近东平路

Gan Ye Zi Vegan Hotpot Restaurant

Gan Ye Zi is another Taiwanese-backed joint, and when it comes to a healthy hotpot, you can't do better than a vegan one. Although the actual eatery is currently under renovation, you can still try Gan Ye Zi's hotpot at excellent vegetarian spot Wu Guan Tang next door from the same owners (enter via number 349 and head upstairs and out the back). There's no menu here; instead all diners get a hotpot set for 88RMB per person. Included is a choice of tea, as well as an individual pot of mushroom stock and a small spice mix (including dried mushrooms and black beans) to add to your broth.

On the side you'll get a huge plate of veggies, tofu, and some 'meat' balls, that are made from tofu and veg; there's also a small sauce buffet with chili, peanut sauce and pickles to help spice things up. At



the end of your meal (if you've got any stomach space to spare) you'll be offered some green vegetable dumplings and dessert. We got as far as a couple of dumplings before we had to be rolled out the door.

Average price per person 88RMB
Good for A peaceful ambiance and good value produce.

Gan Ye Zi Vegan Hotpot Restaurant 359 Xinhua Lu, near Dingxi Lu, Changning district (5230 1558). Open 11am-2.30pm; 6-9.30pm daily. ☎ Jiaotong University. 长宁区新华路359号, 近定西路

Holy Cow

One of Shanghai's finest hotpot restaurants (voted readers' choice Best Chinese Restaurant in *Time Out*'s 2015 awards), Holy Cow is our go-to choice for a great value and exceptional-quality beef hotpot. Even better, they've just opened a new Changning district branch to go with the Xuhui original.

Using never-frozen beef from Dalian yellow cattle, there's a variety of cuts – 18 in total – from fatty filet mignon (68RMB) to rib-eye (58RMB), to shank (58RMB). There's also a variety of meat and fish balls (from 28RMB), as well as fresh vegetables (from 10RMB) and the unmissable *xiaolongbao* (16RMB). Given how fresh the produce is here, sauce isn't a requirement, but certainly justifies the indulgence. Mix your favourites together with confidence; we're yet to find a wrong combination. For the broth, we recommend a half-half pot

(58RMB) of spicy, and clear beef broth (MSG and additive free) or perhaps if you're after some added virility this January, you can try the 'medicinal root ox penis soup' (228RMB).

Average price per person 100RMB
Good for Beef fiends and those who like their vegetables absolutely bursting with flavour.

Holy Cow Second Floor, 608 Xiaomuqiao Lu, near Zhongshan Dong Er Lu, Xuhui district (3356 6100). Open 6pm-1am daily. ☎ Damuqiao Lu. 徐汇区小木桥路608号2楼, 近中山东二路 See our website for additional branch



Try the medicinal root ox penis soup at Holy Cow for added virility

Qimin Organic Hotpot

Walking through the organic grocer to Qimin's low-lit restaurant gets your mouth watering immediately. A rainbow of fruits and vegetables line the shelves, making you feel healthier just from looking at them.

You can choose from bases that include a soothing Matsutake mushroom chicken broth (38RMB) and a creamy pork bone broth (28RMB) to fill

your individual pot. Vegetable and meat options abound, and arrive at the table artfully presented on trays and crates and in bowls and baskets. The assorted organic basket (48RMB, large) offers a nice selection of seasonal vegetables; don't skip the self-harvest mushrooms (from 38RMB) that are delivered to the table attached to a hunk of wood, or in a pot of soil – produce doesn't get any fresher. There's also a wonderful selection of sauces to marry with all the goodness.

Average price per person 80-100RMB
Good for A healthy shopping mall indulgence and self-harvesting freshness.

Qimin Organic Hotpot Fourth Floor, Reel Mall, 1601 Nanjing Xi Lu, near Changde Lu, Jingan district (6258 8777). Open 11am-2pm, 5pm-9pm daily. ☎ Jingan Temple. 静安区南京西路1601号4楼, 近常德路

The Mahota Kitchen

With an organic farm supplying ingredients to this Changning-based hotpot hot spot, freshness is guaranteed. Similar to Gan Ye Zi and Qimin, you'll get your own individual hotpot – great when you don't want to share – for only 80RMB at lunch, and 98RMB at dinner. The set includes Mahota pork slices (grown without hormones or antibiotics), vegetarian meatballs (plus Mahota meatballs at dinner only), and more vegetables than some people would eat in a week. The requisite sauce buffet is plentiful and varied, and all sets come with an appetiser and small portion of fruit on the side.

Mahota Kitchen is one of our favourite lunch spots, especially given its casual atmosphere and the good value lunchtime set. It's also very family-friendly with kids of all ages getting involved in – and actually seeming to enjoy – eating their greens. There's the option to order a la carte too, with all menu items showing calories, protein and fat break-downs for those who have specific dietary goals.

Average price per person 80-98RMB
Good for Great, safe produce and an affordable set in a casual space.

The Mahota Kitchen Unit 10, First Floor, 1580 Kaixuan Lu, near Hongqiao Lu, Changning district (5267 9988). Open 10am-9pm Mon-Fri, 10am-10pm Sat-Sun. ☎ Hongqiao Lu. 长宁区凯旋路1580号10号楼1楼, 近虹桥路



For more tasty hotpots in Shanghai, see www.timeoutshanghai.com/hotpots