

TRADER JOEY'S TRIBUNE

YOUR ONE-STOP SHOP FOR NEWS FROM OUR NORTH BEACH STORE

If you care to fill your plate, meet us at the Dragon's Gate

Translations by: Brenton Yuen., 袁耀恆



Take a stroll through Chinatown any given morning and let your senses guide you. A briny sea breeze carries wafts of fresh seafood on ice and a few haunting notes from an *èrhú* (二胡, Chinese spike fiddle) in Washington Square Park. Stockton Street is choked with morning traffic, and crowds mill through stocked produce aisles angling for the freshest picks.

Where you're standing is part of a district that spans about 30 city blocks and makes up the oldest, largest Chinatown in the United States.

Some of the Chinese-American crew here at Trader Joe's North Beach say the Chinatown they grew up frequenting has certainly changed; but community, culture (and food) endure.

Crew member Brenton Yuen (袁耀恆), who moved here from Hong Kong when he was 12, says food is his favorite thing about Chinese culture.

He loves rice — "It's a must," — with corn and ham or chicken. Yeung chow fried rice is

his number one pick.

Crew member William Zhen (甄溢朗) treasures his culture's food offerings as well. He usually goes for *siu mai* (steamed pork dumplings), *har gao* (shrimp dumplings) or *dan taht* (egg tart) when he's out for dim sum in Chinatown or South City, where many of the bigger Chinese restaurants have migrated over time.

Zhen grew up in San Francisco's Bayview neighborhood and said he spent a lot of time in a very crowded Chinatown as a child.

"Everyone was packed in the streets like sardines," Zhen said. My grandma would just hold me by the hand and pull me through."

Though he never liked crowds much, Zhen is about to start a job working them. The environmental science graduate — bilingual in English and Cantonese — is doing neighborhood outreach in Chinatown to educate people about sustainability programs the city has to offer.

"I'm glad I get to apply what I know into the field and help my community," Zhen said.

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Savoring San Francisco: A Chinese-American foodie's search for the flavors of home

This issue's crew member feature introduces: Tommy Liao, 廖德豪



Tommy Liao's life is a smorgasbord of tasty things. The 28-year-old's palate is primed for novel flavors and nostalgia about the *tián* (甜, sweet) and *xián* (咸, salty) essence of his Chinese-American upbringing.

He grew up about five blocks from Trader Joe's North Beach. Every Sunday, his family would go *yum cha*, venturing to a local Chinese restaurant for *dim sum* (little, shareable dishes) and tea.

"In Chinese culture, we always share food family-style," Liao said. "Everyone gets a little bit of everything."

Before he was born, Liao's parents immigrated from Kaiping in China's Guangdong Province, a city lining a western section of the Pearl River Delta. He says locals call his parents' hometown 'water mouth,' and it's known for manufacturing faucets. Though he used to visit every summer when he was younger, he said he hasn't been back to China for seven years. He plans to return once airfare is more affordable.

Liao says his early years in San Francisco were not rich, but they were flavorful.

His family didn't have a lot of money, his parents worked late most days and he missed his grandma's home-cooked *rou bing* (肉餅, Chinese pork pie with oyster and soy sauce served over rice) and *zhengdan* (steamed eggs).

So, between regular school and Chinese school — where he learned how to read and write in his native tongue — he watched Youtube cooking tutorials. Liao said his first dish was scrambled eggs with shells in it.

When he started earning his own paycheck, Liao began collecting culinary experiences like stamps on a passport.

"Food just makes me happy, and there's so much variety out there," he said. "It's a great hobby to have, I think. It's a lot of money, but it's worth it."

He'd start his afternoons with cherries plucked from the trees he climbed with his friends at Huntington Park, then round out his meal with a \$1 box of chicken wings and *chow mein* from Chinatown.

Liao isn't shy about trying an array of cultural foods, but he tends to gravitate toward Chinese and Korean fare.

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Meet a Mate
Introducing: Tony D.



Q: How long have you been with Trader Joe's?

A: Going on 10 years now.

Q: Where are you from originally?

A: I was born in Yingde, China, but I grew up in San Francisco.

Q: How would you describe a mate's job?

A: Just leading my team. You know, doing what I can to help make the crew's job easier.

Q: What did you want to be when you grew up?

A: A policeman or a firefighter.

Q: What are your hobbies?

A: I love bowling, actually.

Q: How has SF's Chinatown changed since you moved here?

A: There used to be a lot more late-night restaurants that were open until 4 a.m. or 5 a.m. There used to be a night life, basically.

Q: What is your favorite thing about Chinese culture?

A: Family takes care of each other.

Q: What is your favorite Chinese dish?

A: Roast duck.

One classic Chinese dish he constantly craves is beef *ho fun* (干炒牛河): tender sliced ribeye with springy, flat rice noodles and flavored with onion, soy sauce and bean sprouts.

Although he's graduated from broken-shell cooking, Liao says it's difficult to recreate authentic Chinese food at home because you need a *wok* and a large flame. These elements combined cook the food fast, caramelizing it and creating the cuisine's notable burnt flavor, known as 'dragon's breath.'

He used to struggle with spice, too, but he's trained his taste buds to appreciate heat from time to time.

"I grew up without peppers, until sixth grade when I tried Hot Cheetos and died," Liao said, adding that the fiery vegetables aren't a common cooking staple where his family is from. "I got a nosebleed."

There was a time when he wanted to go to culinary school, but Liao says now he's just interested in taking some Chinese cooking classes, honing his skills and ultimately learning how to cook with a wok.

"I want to elevate my culture's cuisine," he said. "I will always stay true to my childhood favorites, but that doesn't mean I can't make them better."



HO FUN (干炒牛河)

Recipe Roundup

Zhengdan (蒸蛋): "Steamed egg"

Recipe by: Tommy Liao

What you'll need: (Serves 1)

- One egg
- 1/3 cup water, plus extra for steaming
- Salt
- Soy Sauce
- Sesame oil
- Shrimp or clams (optional)
- Green onions (optional)

What you'll do:

1. Crack egg into a heat-safe dish and whisk to combine. Boil water in a pot and then let cool to room temperature.
2. Once water has cooled, pour into egg mixture with a pinch of salt. Mix and filter through a sieve to remove any clumps.
3. Place a steaming rack into a pot and add

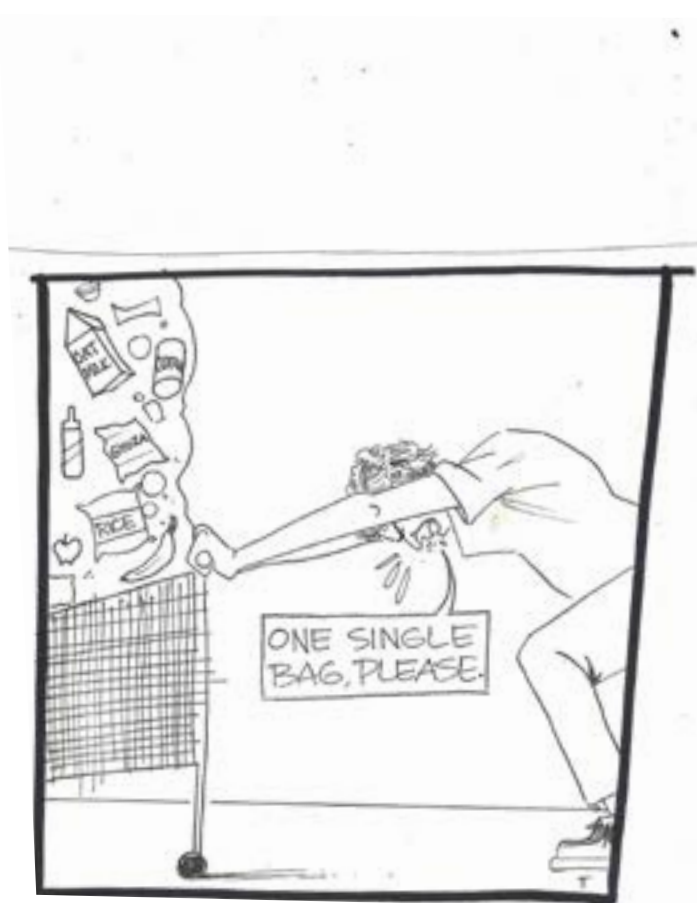
enough water to cover the bottom of the pan without touching the rack. Bring to a low boil.

4. Add seafood to egg mixture if using.
5. Get rid of any air bubbles using a lighter or cooking torch.
6. Carefully place egg bowl onto the steaming rack and cover with a concave lid.
7. Let steam for 10-12 minutes. Carefully remove bowl from steamer and let cool for 1-2 minutes.
8. Add 1/2 tablespoon soy sauce and 1 teaspoon of sesame oil. Finish with garnish.





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