Appetizers

Since the feast, rather than the cocktail party, is the principal social function in China, the Chinese have little need for cocktail *hors d'oeuvres* as Westerners know them. However, they do make savory bits of “small chow” called *deem sum*, which Western hostesses have discovered go well with drinks and add an exotic touch to any cocktail party.

The words “*deem sum*” mean “touch the heart,” and the snacks coming under this designation are eaten between meals at odd times during the day, and even through the night, when a tasty morsel is craved and therefore most appreciated. They have become so popular for Chinese tea (from eleven in the morning to three in the afternoon) that some restaurants in the Orient serve only *deem sum* at midday.

*Deem sum* may consist of anything from raw seafood marinated in soy sauce and vinegar to steamed sweet pastry. Another kind of snack consists of dried and salted or spiced melon seeds, which are as popular in China as salted peanuts are in America. They are sold in shops and by peddlers on the streets and wherever people congregate, such as railway stations, public parks, theatres, and other places of amusement.

*Deem sum* may be either sweet, sour, or salty. The sweet ones go best with afternoon tea or at the end of the meal, and have been included in the section on Desserts. Those given here serve best as appetizers or cocktail fare.
ABALONE CUBES

1 can abalone (16 ounces) 2 tablespoons sherry
1 cup soy sauce

Cook abalone according to either method described on page 54. Cut into ½-inch cubes, insert a toothpick in each, and arrange on plate. Serve with dip sauce made by combining the soy sauce and sherry.

CANTONESE SAUSAGES

½ pound Cantonese sausages

Wipe sausages thoroughly with a damp cloth and steam 30 minutes. Slice diagonally and arrange on plate or cut crosswise into thicker pieces and serve on toothpicks.

The sausages may be steamed in the usual way (page 125) or they may be buried in rice which is being steamed. The advantages of the latter are obvious—economy of time and fuel and the delightful flavor that the sausages give the rice.

CELERY AND SHRIMP EGGS

1 pound celery stalks 1 tablespoon vinegar
1 teaspoon sugar ½ teaspoon sesame oil
2 tablespoons soy sauce 1 tablespoon dried shrimp eggs

Cut celery stalks crosswise into 1-inch lengths and arrange on plate. Mix sugar, soy sauce, vinegar, and oil. Pour over celery, sprinkle with shrimp eggs, and serve.

Dried shredded shrimps may be used instead of shrimp eggs.

CRISP KAU TZE

½ pound shrimps, minced 2 teaspoons soy sauce
8 water chestnuts ½ teaspoon gourmet powder
1 teaspoon fresh ginger juice Few grains pepper
¼ cup green onions, cut fine 30 wun tun doilies (see Crisp Wun Tun recipe, page 31)
1 teaspoon salt

Peel water chestnuts and mince. Combine shrimps, water chestnuts, ginger juice, and green onions, and mix well. Add salt, soy sauce, gourmet powder, and pepper. Spread doilies out on table and place a portion of filling in each doily. Moisten the edges with water. Fold over and press edges together. Deep fry until crisp.
CRISP WUN TUN

Wun tun “skins” or “doilies” are thin 2½-inch squares of dough made with flour and eggs. They may be made at home or bought at a Chinese grocery store or restaurant. They are not expensive and unless you have unlimited time you will probably prefer to buy them. Filled with the following mixture and fried crisp in deep fat they may be served either as an appetizer or with the meal. The following recipe calls for 60 doilies.

FILLING

- 1/2 pound ground pork
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 8 water chestnuts
- 2 teaspoons soy sauce
- 1 teaspoon fresh ginger juice
- 1/2 teaspoon gourmet powder
- 1/4 cup green onions, cut fine
- Few grains pepper

Peel water chestnuts and mince. Combine pork, water chestnuts, ginger juice, and green onions, and mix well. Add salt, soy sauce, gourmet powder, and pepper. Spread doilies out on table and place a portion of filling in the center of each doily. Fold as shown below. Deep fry until crisp.
**FRIED DUCK LIVERS**

4 duck livers
2 tablespoons soy sauce
1 tablespoon sherry
2½ cups oil
½ teaspoon salt-and-pepper mixture

Mix: ½ cup flour
Pinch of baking powder
½ cup water

Cut each liver into 8 pieces and marinate in soy sauce and sherry 15 minutes. Add paste made of flour, baking powder, and water, and mix well. Heat oil and deep fry livers until light brown. Arrange on plate and sprinkle with salt-and-pepper mixture.

Chicken livers may be used instead of duck livers.

**JELLYFISH AND CUCUMBERS**

½ pound dried jellyfish
2 small cucumbers, shredded
5 tablespoons vinegar
1 tablespoon sugar
1 tablespoon sesame oil
1 tablespoon soy sauce

Wash jellyfish and scald with boiling water. Cut into strips 1 inch wide and slice each diagonally. Arrange jellyfish and cucumbers on plate. Mix vinegar, sugar, oil, and soy sauce. Pour over fish and cucumbers.

**PINEAPPLE AND ORANGE BITS**

2 slices pineapple
16 orange sections
1 cup oil
1 teaspoon sesame seed

Cut pineapple into bite-size wedges and arrange with orange sections on plate. Mix oil and sesame seed, pour over fruit, and serve.

**LOTUS ROOT CHIPS**

Your guests will think these are extra special potato chips and will ask all kinds of questions, such as how you make them taste so good and what kind of cutter you use to get the fancy design.

2 lotus roots
2 cups oil
Salt to taste

Peel lotus roots and slice crosswise into very thin slices. Heat oil and deep fry lotus slices to a rich, golden brown. Drain on paper towel, sprinkle with salt, and serve.
PRESERVED EGGS

Preserved eggs are the so-called ancient or thousand-year-old eggs sold in Chinese grocery stores. They are really only a few months old and have been preserved by a coating of lime, ashes, and other materials. They should be washed thoroughly and the shells removed.

4 preserved eggs (p’i-tan) 2 tablespoons crushed fresh ginger
4 tablespoons vinegar

Cut each egg into 6 pieces and arrange on plate. Mix vinegar and ginger and pour over eggs.

A favorite hors d’oeuvre at the American Embassy in Peking was a piece of p’i-tan and a piece of sweet pickle on a toothpick served with vinegar and ginger dip sauce.

SHRIMP CHIPS

1 pound fresh shrimps, minced 2 1/4 cups lotus flour
2 teaspoons salt 5 tablespoons water
1 teaspoon fish extract (Yu Loo) 2 cups oil
1 teaspoon gourmet powder

Add salt, fish extract, and gourmet powder to shrimps and mix well. Add flour and water alternately, a little at a time, until all is used. Knead well. Make into 4 rolls, each about 6 inches long and 1 inch in diameter. Put in a large bowl and steam 45 minutes. Let stand in a cool place overnight to dry out. Cut each roll crosswise into very thin slices, spread on cookie sheets, cover with cheesecloth, and dry in the sun 2 days. Store in airtight container.

As chips are needed, heat oil and deep fry the desired number. When they have puffed up twice their size but are still white remove with a sieve, drain, and serve.

SHRIMPS ON TOAST

1/2 pound fresh shrimps, minced 1/2 teaspoon salt
12 water chestnuts 1 teaspoon sherry
1 egg white 8 slices bread
1 tablespoon soy sauce 2 cups oil

Peel water chestnuts and mince. Combine shrimps and water chestnuts and add unbeaten egg white, soy sauce, salt, and sherry. Cut bread into 1-inch squares and spread with shrimp mixture. Heat oil and deep fry bread squares, face down, until light brown.
SLICED HAM

½ pound boiled ham  
1 teaspoon soy sauce  
1 tablespoon sesame oil

Have butcher slice ham very thin. Cut each slice into pieces 1 x 2 inches. Arrange on plate. Mix soy sauce and oil and pour over ham.

TAOFU AND SHRIMP EGGS

12 1-inch squares taofu  
1 teaspoon sesame oil  
2 tablespoons soy sauce  
2 teaspoons dried shrimp eggs

Pour boiling water over taofu. Drain and arrange on plate. Mix soy sauce and oil and pour over taofu. Sprinkle with shrimp eggs and serve.

Dried shredded shrimps may be used instead of shrimp eggs.