



SUSTAINABLE RECIPES

for a **Healthier Planet**

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FOREWORD

Food is a universal language—one of the most beautiful ways to communicate across borders, nourishing both body and soul. Like Chinese culture, Chinese cuisine embodies a legacy of wisdom shaped over millennia. It has seamlessly integrated philosophies of **Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism**, promoting concepts such as harmony with nature, balance between yin and yang, the unity of body and earth, eating in tune with the seasons, and the belief in food as medicine. Over time, it has cultivated a unique food philosophy and rich culinary wisdom.

In the latest update of *The Chinese Dietary Guidelines* in 2022, the concept of the "Eastern Approach to Sustainable and Healthy Diet" was introduced. We believe this reflects a fusion of the traditional essence of Chinese cuisine and modern sustainable development principles.

At the 2024 World Food Forum organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, the Good Food Fund will launch the "*Sustainable Recipes for a Healthier*

Planet" Book based on the "Eastern Approach to Sustainable and Healthy Diet" This book draws on China's traditional dietary wisdom and integrates modern concepts such as balanced nutrition, circular sustainability, and planetary health, aiming to contribute to the sustainable transformation of the global food system. Through this event, the **Good Food Fund** hopes to share China's dietary philosophy and sustainable healthy eating practices with the world, echoing the theme of the World Food Forum: **Good Food for All for Today and Tomorrow**, supporting the achievement of the United Nations' 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

As one of China's first organizations committed to sustainable food systems, the Good Food Fund seized the opportunity to bring this concept to the World Food Forum. In partnership with local chefs and farms across China, we created *Sustainable Recipes for a Healthier Planet*, inspired by the 24 Solar Terms, plant-forward principles, local ingredients, nutritional health, and a deep respect

for cultural heritage and aesthetic appreciation. Our goal is to foster mutual understanding through food, enhance appreciation through taste, and build future cross-cultural collaboration through shared values.

For this recipe collection, we carefully selected contributors to reflect a diversity of regions, cultural backgrounds, ingredients, and culinary philosophies. We invited six renowned chefs, each bringing a unique perspective across six dimensions:

Honoring Ancient Wisdom | **Creating a Poetic Space** | **Respecting Nature's Rhythm** | **Nourishing Body and Mind** | **Celebrating the Intrinsic Essence** | **Discovering Joy and Beauty**

Among them are :

- **Cao Huangping**, head chef at a high-end boutique hotel nestled in the scenic Jingmai Mountain in Yunnan's ethnic Blang region;
- **Chef Zhang Yi**, champion of the San Pellegrino Young Chef China competition, known for weaving Chinese culture into refined culinary creations;
- **Li Yan**, a restaurateur dedicated to reviving local flavors and promoting sustainability;
- **Zi Xuan**, who champions Chinese table aesthetics and family-centered, healthy eating;
- **AJun**, a celebrated chef and long-time advocate for plant-forward and farm-to-table practices;
- **Ruizi**, a mother devoted to creating plant-based meals that bring love to every child's plate.

Additionally, we partnered with the globally renowned plant-based oat milk brand Oatly, integrating cross-cultural elements into the dishes. Together, we infused each plate with principles of sustainability and low carbon, highlighting the Eastern Approach to Sustainable and Healthy Diet's commitment to planetary health.

Notably, this series of recipes includes staple dishes, sides, snacks, beverages, and soups. Through this cookbook, we aim to introduce people from various countries and regions to the health benefits, richness, modernity, and inclusivity of the "Eastern Approach to Sustainable and Healthy Diet." We hope to inspire more people to reflect on their own cultural heritage, dietary philosophies, and local food practices. By learning from ancient wisdom and tradition, while innovating for the needs of modern life, we can enrich global diets, fostering resilience and creativity. Ultimately, we aspire to connect with one another through healthy eating and create positive change in the world.





Honoring Ancient Wisdom

Chinese cuisine has long been celebrated for its diverse cooking techniques and rich flavors, with 108 methods commonly in use today. Yet, beyond these myriad techniques, many ancient cooking methods have gradually faded from everyday life. Fortunately, in regions like Sichuan, Yunnan, and Guizhou—where mountains and rivers abound, the climate is complex, and transportation is difficult—many ethnic groups have preserved these ancient culinary practices.

These ancient methods do more than connect us spiritually with our ancestors, paying homage to their wisdom. They also retain the original flavors

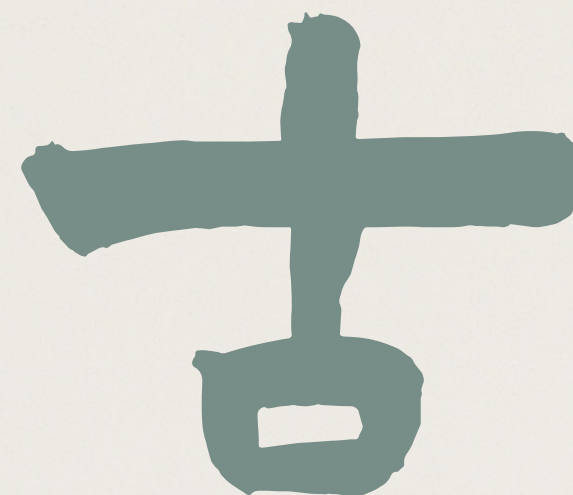
and pure nutritional value of the ingredients, offering sustainability that we, accustomed to modern conveniences, can only admire. Take "wrapped grilling" (包烧) for instance—an ancient cooking method that requires no cookware. Ingredients seasoned with natural flavors are wrapped tightly in banana leaves, loquat leaves, or lotus leaves, and then placed directly into hot coals to cook. This method not only preserves the moisture and nutrients of the food but also enhances its freshness and authentic taste, with the added fragrance of the leaves infusing the dish.

In terms of sustainability, using natural materials a

cooking vessels takes away the need for washing, conserving water, and reducing chemical pollution to the environment. From a health perspective, most ancient methods like “wrapped grilling” or “bamboo roasting” (筒灸) rely on the natural taste of ingredients, using minimal salt for seasoning and no added oils or flavorings, reducing the burden on the body.

Beyond these ancient cooking techniques, traditional Chinese medicinal preparation methods are also being rediscovered and applied in modern food production. For example, the "Nine Steaming and Nine Sun-drying" (九蒸九晒) method—each round of steaming extracts the deep essence of the ingredients, releasing their rich, pure aromas, while each sun-drying allows the ingredients to dance with sunlight and wind, endowing them with a unique texture and a taste of sunshine.

Now, let’s step into the thousand-year-old tea fields of Jingmai Mountain, where the local Bulang people will guide us in experiencing how they cook with nature's bounty with ancient methods, expressing their reverence for both nature and their ancestors.



Cao Huangping

Chef

Return to origins, embracing the ancient wisdom of Blang ethnic group

Interview

In the mystical and beautiful **Jingmai Mountain in Yunnan, China**, lives the ancient Blang ethnic group. Known as one of the world's first people to domesticate wild tea trees, the Blang have a sacred inheritance from their ancestor Pa Ailong, who entrusted them with a deep command:

"Care for the tea trees as you would your own eyes, passing this reverence from generation to generation, never letting it fade."

Since then, tea has become a profound symbol of faith for the Blang people, intertwining their fate with that of the tea trees in a shared, centuries-old legend.

The aged tea trees in Jingmai's rainforest produce a unique Pu'er tea. Through a distinctive post-fermentation process, its complex and aged flavors have captivated tea lovers worldwide. In every Blang household, a hearth is indispensable, and tea roasting—an intimate and ritualistic tradition—is inseparable from the hearth. Gathered around it, family members discuss marriage, ceremonies and production, as well as recall ancestral memories, unveiling a vivid tableau of the Blang people's lives among ancient tea forests over thousands of years.

On September 17, 2023, the **"The Cultural Landscape of Old Tea Forests of the Jingmai Mountain in Pu'er"** was officially recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, becoming the world's first tea-related cultural heritage.

In the heart of Jingmai Mountain's ancient tea groves lies a boutique retreat called VipaXana

Ethnic Culture Center. From the very beginning, VipaXana observed that the Blang people's centuries-old dietary traditions align remarkably well with today's principles of sustainable development.

Their food is often served in natural vessels like leaves and husks, such as banana leaves or hollowed pumpkins, embodying a wisdom of natural biodegradability. Used tea leaves are never wasted; they're creatively incorporated into dishes, adding unique flavors. The Blang also practice mindful harvesting, gathering wild ingredients seasonally to both savor nature's bounty and protect their precious ecosystem.



Drawing inspiration from the local people, VipaXana embraces and shares their culture, ingredients, and philosophy with the world beyond the mountains. Through the boutique's creative take on traditional and local flavors, VipaXana offers visitors a taste of the region's natural bounty and heartfelt blessings for health and well-being, bringing the essence of Jingmai's pristine flavors to guests from around the globe.

As the head chef at VipaXana, Chef Cao has continuously engaged with local Blang friends

Chef Cao Huangping brings a unique dual perspective to his cooking. A native of Pu'er, he has honed his skills in major international hotel kitchens, such as LUX* Resorts & Hotels, while deeply valuing the ingredients and flavors of his homeland. His experience outside and his local roots offer him a rare blend of insights. Drawn to Jingmai Mountain by its wealth of wild

herbs, mountain vegetables, and distinctive culinary traditions, he ultimately chose to return and celebrate the ancient wisdom. Through his dishes, he expresses the natural essence of local ingredients, honoring both indigenous and nature-inspired approaches to food.



since his return, learning from their culinary traditions. He often visits residents’ homes to sample dishes and inquire about the ingredients and cooking methods used in the recipes.

In crafting his menu, Chef Cao discovered that tea leaves and tea flowers are frequently used as ingredients in Jingmai Mountain’s cuisine. For example, Sticky rice wrapped in lemongrass is infused with fresh tea leaves, while even brewed tea leaves find new life as ingredients in many other dishes. Many foods also carry special meanings, such as **Blessing Vegetable Wraps**, a dish traditionally shared to convey well-wishes during local festivals and gatherings. Every household brings some home, and it is a custom to offer Blessing Wraps to guests as a symbol of good fortune.

For this recipe collection, Chef Cao designed his dishes to highlight the natural flavors of local ingredient, seamlessly blending traditional cooking techniques with modern culinary methods. Here, Chef Cao shares the inspiration and cooking techniques behind a few of these creations.

One signature dish is **Steamed Water Taro Stems with Baby Tomatoes and Local Herbs**.

The dish features local ingredients such as water arum stems, baby tomatoes, and an assortment of herbs and spices like large coriander, local coriander and gold mustard leaf. To prepare, the outer membrane of the stems is peeled and cut into sections, then steamed to preserve the purity of flavor. Meanwhile, baby tomatoes, garlic, and small chili peppers are slow-roasted over charcoal until tender, then mashed with a sprinkle of salt to create a tangy, spicy sauce. Drizzle the steamed stems with this sauce. Then slow roasting by the side of the fire—a traditional Jingmai technique—ensures the tomatoes cook evenly, allowing their smoky flavor to infuse without burning. This dish uses virtually no oil; its vibrant flavors come from the infusion of roasted baby tomatoes and chili peppers, resulting in a refreshing and tangy-spicy taste.

Another featured dish is **Fire-roasted sweet bamboo shoot wrapped in bamboo leaves**. Sweet bamboo shoots are a seasonal delicacy, with August’s harvest offering peak sweetness and flavor. The dish begins with a sauce made

from local “rainbow peanuts.” First, crisp the peanuts in a pan, remove their skins, and then grind them together with chopped radish root and large coriander, adding a little water and salt for a lightly sweet sauce. The bamboo shoots are then washed, peeled, and cut before being wrapped in banana leaves and roasted over charcoal. No additional seasonings are added to the bamboo shoots, allowing their natural, delicate sweetness to shine. Once unwrapped, the bamboo shoots are served with the peanut sauce, creating a dish that celebrates the fresh, unadulterated flavors of seasonal ingredients.

Another dish is **Blessing Vegetable Wrap**, crafted almost entirely from local ingredients. The first step is to toast fragrant rice over low heat until it releases its aroma, then crush it into coarse bits. Next, finely chop a mix of fresh herbs and greens: fragrant toon leaves, fennel, large coriander, a type of local broad-leaf chive, water coriander, water taro stems, fragrant willow, wild yam leaves, and banana blossoms. These chopped herbs are then combined with the toasted rice, lightly stir-fried, and seasoned with salt. The mixture is wrapped in dongye leaves, tied with bamboo strips, and steamed until tender. The resulting dish is aromatic and packed with local flavors, a perfect expression of blessing and tradition.

Another dish, Sticky Rice Wrapped in Lemongrass incorporates tea leaves as a key ingredient. Traditional sticky rice is often paired with honey with a hint of sweetness, but here we infuse it with tea leaves and pangxiejiao (a rare plant that parasitizes tea trees, making it a prized find). The sticky rice is steamed in pangxiejiao-infused water, then mixed with tea leaves and local baby potatoes. Wrapped in lemongrass, the bundle is lightly grilled to create a crisp, aromatic exterior, while the inside remains warm and soft, releasing the subtle fragrance of tea. Fresh tea leaves work best, but even steeped leaves can be used, adding a mild, lingering tea aroma to this dish.

In **Jingmai mountain**, everything—from the architecture and language to ingredients and traditional clothing—preserves the long cultural traditions of the Blang people. When it comes to culinary approach, the Blang, with roots akin to a nomadic way of life, have passed down many ancestral cooking methods like bao shao, a style that draws from local resources and embodies an outdoors, back-to-nature simplicity. VipaXana aims to capture the distinct value of this heritage and seeks to bring this unique dining experience to life, offering guests a sense of authenticity and return to origins—truly “ethnic” in its purest sense.



Steamed Water Taro Stems with Baby Tomatoes and Local Herbs

- stems of water Taro 150g
- local baby tomato(Xishuangbanna) 80g
- Vietnamese coriander(hot mint)16g
- local coriander 10g, garlic 10g
- Jinjie(a kind of basil) 5g
- bird' s eye chili 6g
- salt 8g

COOKING STEPS

1. Wash stems of water arum, peel them and cut them in sections.
2. Pestle cooked garlic, bird' s eye chili and tomato and add salt, local coriander, Jinjie and Vietnamese coriander as the sauce.
3. Wrap stems and put them in the charcoal fire till they are ripe.
4. Take them out, plate and pour the sauce.

Fire-Roasted Sweet Bamboo Shoot Wrapped in Bamboo Leaves

- 1 local sweet bamboo shoot(Xishuangbanna),
- local colorful peanuts 100g,
- local coriander 10g,
- local chive root 10g,
- salt 8g

COOKING STEPS

1. Wash the chive root and coriander and cut them up.
2. Fry the peanuts(no oil).
3. Pestle the peanuts, chive root, coriander, salt and water as the sauce.
4. Wash and peel the bamboo shoot and slice it up. Wrap them in bamboo leaves and grill the packet on the charcoal fire till it is ripe.
5. Plate it on some new leaves and pour the sauce.



Creating a Poetic Space

Chinese culinary culture is deeply intertwined with the country's rich history and philosophies. The theories of Yin-Yang emphasize balance and the interplay of flavors; the Legalists advocate for simplicity and frugality in dining; Confucianism encourages the appreciation of exquisite preparation and fine detail; Daoism values a return to nature and authenticity; and Buddhism promotes vegetarianism and the avoidance of killing. These philosophical concepts have profoundly influenced the development of Chinese cuisine and culinary practices.

Moreover, many Chinese dish names carry rich

cultural connotations that invite contemplation. For example, some names use metaphors to convey auspicious meanings, such as Stir-Fried Bamboo Shoots with Pork, aptly named Step by Step Rising (步步高升). Others are steeped in historical events, like the classical dish "霸王别姬" (Farewell My Concubine), created to commemorate the heroic figure Xiang Yu and his devoted concubine Yu Ji, who played pivotal roles in the downfall of the Qin Dynasty. A menu is as rich as a narrative of China's millennia-long history.

Within this profound culinary heritage, the aesthetics and traditions of Chinese culture

are equally significant. Renowned chefs excel at incorporating the expressive techniques of Chinese painting and the artistic beauty found in poetry into their dishes, creating culinary works that are visually appealing, aromatic, flavorful, and meaningful—an art that can be appreciated, savored, and contemplated.

For instance, Da Dong's "Artistic Cuisine" utilizes dishes as a medium, skillfully blending the expressiveness of Chinese painting and the arrangement techniques of bonsai to enhance the conceptual depth of innovative Chinese dishes, achieving the idea that

"each dish embodies a unique artistic vision."

This approach emphasizes the beauty of classical Chinese literature, presenting a harmonious blend of emotion and scenery, as well as a poetic space. The classic dish "Dong's Braised Sea Cucumber" evokes imagery reminiscent of the poetry

"With brows furrowed, the mountains hold ancient snow; as laughter echoes, the winds sweep across the long sky,"

profoundly evocative.

Increasingly, Chinese chefs are dedicated to integrating their cultural and aesthetic traditions into their creative endeavors, creating a poetic space filled with imagination. Zhang Yi is one such young chef with a distinct personal vision, and now let us step into her culinary world.



Zhang Yi, **the 2022-23 champion of the San Pellegrino World Young Chef Competition**, is a trailblazer as the first woman from China to win both the Grand Prize and the Sustainability Award in the competition's history. Her culinary journey began unexpectedly with a “chocolate course” that sparked her transition from a background in industrial design to the culinary arts.

She honed her skills under Michelin-starred chef Toyomitsu Nakayama, gaining invaluable experience across Paris and Tokyo. In Paris, she immersed herself in the city's vibrant food culture and artistic philosophy, while in Tokyo, she embraced the Japanese pursuit of meticulousness and perfection. After years of training abroad, Zhang returned to China this April, debuting her personal fine dining menu, *A Midsummer Night's*

Dream, at Langpan Pavilion on the summer solstice.

Drawing from her international experiences, Zhang has developed a unique culinary style that fuses Chinese, French, and Japanese traditions. For her, true culinary artistry lies not only in pleasing the palate but also in nourishing the spirit. By blending art and craftsmanship, she aims to convey profound meanings in her dishes, crafting a poetic space that evokes deep emotions in diners.

Currently, Zhang Yi is preparing to open her first restaurant, with the vision of becoming an ambassador for promoting Chinese culture and art through fine dining. Through her refined creations, she hopes to introduce global diners to China's distinctive ingredients and rich culinary tapestry.

Weaving Chinese culture and philosophy into culinary creations

When we interviewed Chef Zhang Yi, she had just returned to Langpan Pavilion in Guangzhou after completing her training with the **International Farm Animal Welfare Fellowship (IFAWA)**. Even over the screen, her short, sharp haircut and focused demeanor conveyed her deep dedication to food.

Zhang, who never imagined herself becoming a chef, journeyed from Luoyang to Paris. It was there, through a chocolate-making course in France, that she discovered fine dining —an entirely different realm of dining.

"I realized food could be this beautiful, this artistic, and could convey personal ideas and philosophies. I knew right then

—this is what I want to do!"

With unwavering determination, Zhang made the bold leap from industrial design to professional cooking. Her sincerity and tenacity quickly impressed renowned chefs. She apprenticed with Michelin-starred Chef Toyomitsu Nakayama, gaining profound culinary insights from both Paris and Tokyo. Immersed in Paris' s diverse culinary culture and artistic philosophies, she also adopted Japan' s relentless pursuit of perfection. After years of honing her skills abroad, Zhang returned to China six months ago, ready to open her own restaurant.

During the interview, Zhang remained humble, barely mentioning her major victory at the 2022-23 San Pellegrino World Young Chef Competition—one of the culinary world' s most prestigious awards. It wasn' t until we touched upon her

Interview

decision to feature plant-based dishes on her menu that she spoke of her award-winning dish, ***A Trip to Guangxi***, a creation inspired by the beauty of China' s landscapes.

"I hadn' t explored plant-based main courses or sustainability until I returned home after working in France," she recalled. **"In France, we would make rich consommés, but all the ingredients used in the broth were discarded afterward. When my mom saw this during my practice sessions at home, she was astonished by the waste. That' s when I realized that as chefs, we need to think beyond flavor and consider food waste and sustainability."**

With this new perspective, Zhang crafted ***A Trip to Guangxi***, her first plant-based main course. The dish was inspired by a road trip to Guangxi, where she was captivated by misty bamboo forests and the ancient technique of charcoal cooking. Frequent rains added an air of mystery, reminding her of the primal connection between humans and nature. Upon returning, she channeled these impressions into a dish that evokes a **traditional Chinese ink painting of bamboo forests**.

"When we first received the recipe, its complexity made us think it was for four distinct dishes. In fact, it' s a single creation composed of four intertwined elements: **Grilled Black Rice Balls, Old Friend Soup, Rice Chip painted with Bamboo motifs**, and **Eggplant with Tofu Skin and Asparagus**. Zhang crafted the rice balls to resemble the dark green moss found in Guangxi' s mountains, flavored with cilantro and leek powder. Their smoky aroma, achieved by grilling the rice over charcoal, evokes the misty, humid air of the

bamboo forests. The soup pays homage to the local street food, Old Friend Noodle, using homemade fermented bamboo shoots and Taiwanese preserved pineapple, along with fermented Sichuan bean paste to create a harmonious blend of subtle acidity and spiciness.

"The highlight for me was the rice chips painted with bamboo forests," Zhang shared. **"I experimented with several techniques before settling on spinach juice mixed with bamboo charcoal powder. I used a brush to paint bamboo on baked rice paper. When I represented China in Italy, I made a large sheet with a bamboo forest painted on it, which I broke into pieces to share with the audience. I think it genuinely moved people."**

For Zhang, the aim is not only to introduce China's unique ingredients and culinary techniques to the world but also to bring Chinese culture and philosophy into the realm of fine dining. **"Fine dining allows me to weave creativity into every dish, turning each into a work of art. But more importantly, it's a channel for expressing philosophical and cultural ideas."**

Zhang's artistic expression through food is consistently driven by her personal experiences and emotions. She constantly thinks about how to channel her journeys and insights into her culinary creations, allowing diners to become fully immersed in the stories behind each dish.

When asked why she decided to return to China six months ago, Zhang credited her mentor Toyomitsu, who advised her that "the time is right." She also highlighted China's untapped treasure trove of ingredients, noting that many regions have yet to fully explore their diverse produce, some of which exhibit vastly different flavors and characteristics depending on geography and season.

During a recent trip to Sichuan, Zhang encountered a wild vegetable known as Deer Ear Chives, which reminded her of Bear's Garlic, a high-end ingredient she had worked with in Paris. "It's amusing because this has always existed in Sichuan. Sichuan is like China's Peru—it has every kind of geographical environment except the desert."

Zhang believes countless Chinese ingredients are waiting to be introduced to the world. **"Take tofu, for example—most people abroad know about it, but China has so many tofu products that haven't been shared globally, like oil tofu skin, tofu puffs, or fermented Jianshui tofu. Chinese soy products are far more diverse than those in Japan, and there are also fermented black beans, which I believe deserve global recognition. These ingredients aren't just unique in flavor; they're deeply rooted in our history and culture."**

Zhang's unique perspective also emphasizes the equality of all ingredients. **"I don't believe expensive ingredients like rare mushrooms are inherently superior. I prefer using humble ingredients like tomatoes, tofu skin, or pumpkin. All ingredients are equal; caviar isn't necessarily better than potatoes, and bird's nest isn't inherently more valuable than radishes."**

Driven by curiosity, passion, and an egalitarian approach to ingredients, Zhang's favorite hobby in Guangzhou is visiting markets to see what fresh, local produce is available. **"I believe every place and every season has its standout ingredients. Being a chef means you can constantly explore and taste different ingredients. For example, the loofah in Guangzhou is absolutely delicious. I was so moved by it that I wanted to write a poem on the spot!"**

This same sense of wonder inspired one of the standout dishes from Zhang's summer solstice menu, Lotus Seed and Lily. This creation departs from traditional preparations, being both visually stunning and exceptionally delightful to the palate. The idea struck her while watching raindrops glide off large green lotus leaves, forming bubbles reminiscent of fresh lotus seeds. **"Lotus seeds are so uniquely Chinese. I had only eaten dried ones before, but in Guangzhou, I tasted fresh ones for the first time, and they were incredibly delicious. I just knew I had to create a dish with them."**

Using 12 hours of hand-extracted tomato water blended with green tea as the base, Zhang crafted mozzarella cheese from local buffalo milk and lemon juice. The lotus seeds and lilies were served raw, so fresh that cooking was unnecessary. A few drops of fresh basil oil completed the dish, evoking the tranquility of a summer night by a lotus pond—calming even the most oppressive heat.

For Zhang, creativity is a means of communicating the essence of Chinese aesthetics, profoundly influenced by **Confucian and Daoist philosophy**. She strives to express these ideas through her dishes, employing techniques such as the concept of **"negative space"** from Chinese landscape painting and the understated beauty that reflects Chinese culture. She believes these elements can be understood and appreciated by people around the world through the design of her culinary creations.

Zhang is currently preparing to open her own restaurant, where she will fully realize her vision. Sustainability will be a key element—not just regarding ingredients but also in safeguarding the well-being of her staff. **"In China, many restaurant workers are overworked. That's not sustainable. We need to care about the**

welfare of our employees as well as animal welfare."

At the end of the interview, when asked to describe herself in three words, Zhang responded without hesitation:

"Innocent, earnest, and truth-seeking."

"I don't pursue many things for money, nor do I chase fame or popularity. If you're truly dedicated to your craft, you won't have time for self-promotion or socializing. I suppose that's where my innocence comes from. I'm always searching for the truth. I don't know what the truth is, and maybe I'll never find it. But I believe that the search itself is what life is about."

Zhang Yi embodies the belief that a great chef can provide not only exquisite culinary delights but also transform food into a vessel for ideas and artistic expression. We believe her creations will carry Chinese culture and art to audiences around the world.

A trip to Guangxi



Part I: Rice Chip painted with Bamboo motifs



- charcoal powder
- Spinach puree
- Rice 30g
- Water 200g
- AP Flour 60g
- Milk 30g

1. Preheat oven to 120C, boil rice with water till rice is soft enough to blend, about 20mins.
2. Add milk to cooked rice to bring down the temperature then use a ban mixer to blend evenly.
3. When the rice porridge is cool enough, mix with flour then filter the mixture through a fine mesh sieve.
4. Spread the mixture on a silicone sheet using a mold, bake for 15 mins until it's crispy.
5. Mix charcoal powder and spinach puree with a little bit water. Use a Chinese calligraphy brush pen to draw bamboo forests on the rice chips.

Part II: Grilled Black Rice Balls

1. Wash Nanzhu leaves and rice.
2. Blend Nanzhu leaves with water evenly, filter to extract Nanzhu juice.
3. Soak rice in Nanzhu juice for 30mins. Then cook the rice with Nanzhu juice. Keep warm
4. Chop the used mushrooms from stock, sauté with chili and sugar.
5. Mix half of the rice with sautéed mushrooms, and the rest half remains nature flavor. Then make onigiri.
6. Before serving, brush the onigiri with some oil, grill a little bit.
7. Dust with coriander and chive powder, like moss.

- Rice 150g
- Nanzhu Leaves 50g
- Water 200g
- Coriander and chive powder
- Mushroom from stock



Part III: Eggplant with Tofu Skin and Asparagus

1. Fire up the grill. Clean the asparagus.
2. Cut the eggplant, make eggplant tempura, keep warm
3. Fry the tofu skin at 170C, then sock in Laoyou soup to absorb the flavor then remove the extra oil.
4. Grill the asparagus
5. Before serving, cover each eggplant with tofu skin.

- Asparagus 500g
- Tofu skin
- Tempura batter (flour 40g water 80g baking powder 3g)
- Eggplant 400g

Part IV: Old Friend Soup

- Shallot 17g
- Garlic 20g
- Ginger 9g
- Fermented bamboo root 25g
- Fermented soya beans 4g
- Fermented pineapple(Yinfengli) 20g
- Fermented chili paste 8g
- Tender ginger juice 25g
- Mushroom stock* 300g
- Soja 5g
- Salade oil 20g
- Sugar 5g
- Salt 0 ~ 5g
- Mushroom Stock
- Dried matsutake 10g
- Dried morel 10g
- Dried bamboo root 3g
- Water 1kg

1. Finely chop shallot, garlic, ginger and fermented bamboo roots separately.
2. Chop Pixian and soya beans a little bit.
3. Heat the empty pan and then add oil, fry garlic and ginger until golden, add soya beans and then add bamboo roots and pepper. Stir until fragrant.
4. Add Laozao, juice and Mushroom stock. Boil.
5. Season with sugar and salt. Filter through a sieve. Keep warm.



食時

The Chinese people uphold the principle of "eating according to the seasons," placing great importance on the seasonality of ingredients. Seasonal foods not only have higher nutritional value and greater health benefits but also harmoniously coexist with the natural environment. Therefore, one's diet should follow the natural rhythm and change with the seasons, echoing Confucius's saying, "Eat not out of season."

In China, seasonality refers not only to the four seasons of spring, summer, autumn, and winter but also encompasses the Twenty-Four Solar

Terms (jie qi) and Seventy-Two Micro-Seasons (hou), where five days make a "hou" and three "hou" make a "jie qi." Traditional Chinese chefs pay meticulous attention to ingredients, capable of distinguishing the flavor differences of the same ingredient across different micro-seasons, down to specific period of the month and even the time of day when harvested.

For example, the "Mingqian tea," harvested before Qingming (before April 4), is prized for its fresh green color and tight leaves, while the "Minghou tea," picked after Qingming and before Guyu (after April 4 and before April 20), appears looser and is of

inferior quality. The same principle applies to the timely harvesting of all ingredients.

Choosing ingredients that follow the rhythms of nature also promotes more localized harvesting. This not only reduces the carbon footprint associated with food transportation but also supports the livelihoods of local small farmers. Moreover, the concept of "seasonal and local" aligns with the Chinese cultural concept of "the body and soil as one," connecting people with the land and promoting sustainable development.

Li Yan is a chef who strictly adheres to the principles of "seasonal, local, and sustainable." His restaurant, Xiaolou, located in Dali, Yunnan, allows him to create unique dishes using the abundant natural resources of the region.

Li Yan

Chef

At just 19, Chef Li Yan embarked on a journey across Europe, working as head chef at a variety of restaurants. After winning the "National Good Food Designer Competition" in 2020, Li opened his first restaurant, Xiaolou, in Dali, Yunnan—a restaurant fully dedicated to the Good Food Pledges. In June 2023, he was invited to represent Chinese chefs at the Chef Culinary Conference hosted by the University of Massachusetts, joining the Good Food Fund team to showcase China's innovations in sustainable and health-conscious dining, with a spotlight on its diverse cultural and regional characteristics.

Over the past 20 years, Li has grown from a chef into an advocate for sustainable, health-focused eating, making an impact worldwide. His

commitment to the eight principles of the Good Food Pledges—plant-forward, animal welfare, healthy diets, seasonal and local ingredients, circular sustainability, biodiversity, waste reduction, and food education—has not only deepened his understanding of the food system but has also expanded the horizons of sustainable cuisine. Through this philosophy, he offers a fresh, insightful perspective on what sustainability can mean for the future of food.

Celebrating the Pure Flavors of seasonal and local Ingredients

In Chef Li Yan's kitchen, ingredients are more than the foundation of his dishes; they are the medium through which he conveys his worldview and philosophy of nature. Absent are luxurious ingredients—replaced instead with seasonal vegetables, vibrant fruits, and wholesome grains, humble offerings from the earth brought to life under his skillful hands. As he explains,

"I don't chase after complex cooking techniques or rare ingredients. My goal is to let the natural flavors of the ingredients shine through in the simplest way."

Li is dedicated to a strict **"seasonal, local, and sustainable"** sourcing principle. His restaurant, **Xiaolou**, is located in **Dali, Yunnan**, where the region's natural bounty serves as an endless source of inspiration. Like a treasure hunter, he roams Dali's markets and fields in search of ingredients that capture each season's essence. Whether it's the tender garlic shoots of early spring, the fragrant basil of summer, or the earthy richness of

Interview



autumn's wild mushrooms, Li has a gift for seizing nature's gifts at their peak. By prioritizing local farmers and their produce, he not only minimizes his restaurant's carbon footprint but also supports small-scale agriculture.

Li's meticulous approach extends to the handling of each ingredient. Take the humble potato: he doesn't automatically peel it but adjusts his approach based on the cooking method. Even broccoli stems, often discarded in other kitchens, are repurposed in Li's, transformed into flavorful elements of his dishes. This deep respect for ingredients informs not only his culinary practices but also his philosophy of life.

Celebrating the Pure Flavors of Ingredients

Chef Li has shifted away from intricate techniques and elaborate presentations, favoring a simpler approach. He believes that true cuisine should let diners experience the natural flavors and regional character of ingredients, free from excessive seasonings or decorative plating. Take his dish **Raw Double Lotus** for example. Fresh lotus root is sliced, lotus seeds are carefully halved to remove the green core, and wedges of lemon are added. Everything is then mixed with organic soy sauce and a hint of wasabi before being arranged on a bed of crushed ice. The result is a refreshing dish with a crisp and subtly tangy flavor!

Each dish begins with careful research into what is in season and locally available. Li engages closely with local farmers and vendors, learning from their food traditions and ingredient-handling techniques to inspire his creations.

Li's cooking is defined by precision—whether in **controlling heat** or **balancing seasoning**. His expertise lies in using natural ingredients and techniques to highlight each element's true flavor and texture. For example, when preparing vegetables, he stir-fries them lightly with minimal oil to preserve their crispness and vibrant color. He's also well-versed in traditional methods like fermentation and pickling, adding layers of flavor and texture to his dishes.

Throughout his creative journey, Li often combines traditional Chinese ingredients with Western techniques and seasoning, crafting unique, exciting tasting experiences. For example, in one of his experiments, he fuses familiar Chinese condiments like soy sauce and sesame paste with the preparation style of Western beef tartare to create

Golden Ear Mushroom Tartar - a completely vegan take on tartare. This fresh, plant-based rendition showcases Chinese flavors in a modern Western presentation, breathing new life into a classic form.

Another example of Li's inventive approach is his **Garlic Shoot Cream Sauce**, made from the



freshest garlic shoots harvested in Dali in late spring and early summer. Li carefully preserves the shoots' vibrant, onion-like aroma while blending in the rich nuttiness of tree nuts and the smoothness of plant oils to create a velvety, creamy sauce. The result is a dish that maintains the fresh fragrance of garlic shoots while adding a complex, layered flavor that elevates the dish beyond its humble ingredients.

Rediscovering and reviving Local Flavors

Dali, Yunnan—a region celebrated for its biodiversity and rich ethnic tapestry—provides Chef Li with an abundance of ingredients and cultural inspiration. Each morning, Li and his partner, Ah Niu, stroll through the ancient city's morning market, seeking out the freshest seasonal produce grown by local Bai women. By choosing small farmers as his suppliers, Li not only sources top-quality ingredients but also encourages these local growers to recognize the demand for truly sustainable ingredients.

The people of Yunnan have long mastered the art of cooking with seasonal produce, allowing Li to draw inspiration from local culinary traditions. For example, during his interactions with the Bai community, he encountered a distinctive fermented radish leaf paste—a traditional condiment often overlooked. By incorporating it into his dishes, he adds a unique layer of tanginess and aroma, inviting diners to experience the wisdom and creativity of the Bai people. Additionally, Chef Li has tapped into the rich potential of local Yunnan ingredients such as **wild mushrooms, tofu, and litsea oil**, transforming them into standout features of his dishes.

Li's menu often includes dishes deeply rooted in Yunnan's rich cultural heritage, like the refreshing Scallion and Sichuan Pepper King Oyster Mushrooms. To prepare this dish, Li carefully cleans and slices the mushrooms, blanches them in lightly salted boiling water for one to two minutes, and plunges them into ice water to cool before draining. Garlic is fried until aromatic, then blended with scallions and Sichuan pepper, and finished with hot oil to create a smooth paste. He seasons this paste with salt, oyster sauce, soy sauce, black



pepper, litsea oil, and sesame oil. Once cooled, the sauce is tossed with the mushrooms, lending the dish a crisp texture and a perfect harmony between the spicy aroma of Sichuan pepper and the fresh, sharp bite of scallions. Li's fondness for litsea oil enriches the dish with a deeply layered aroma.

Through his mastery of fusion cooking techniques and thoughtful combinations, Li intricately weaves Yunnan's native flavors with Mediterranean, French, and traditional Chinese culinary traditions, crafting a sophisticated interplay of tastes and textures that takes his diners on a global journey.

For Li, culinary innovation is not simply about combining different elements; it's about deeply understanding the cultural roots of each ingredient and finding the connections between them.

“I believe a great dish is like a work of art—it transcends language and cultural barriers to reach your soul,”

he says. Through his cuisine, he hopes to guide diners back to a simpler, more grounded way of life.

Weaving sustainability into the very fabric of all details

As a visionary chef, Li Yan recognizes the critical importance of sustainability for the future of our planet. He has made sustainability a core pillar of his culinary philosophy and works tirelessly to integrate these values into the restaurant industry. Li believes that truly great cuisine must be rooted in a deep respect for nature. When selecting ingredients, he strictly adheres to the principles of local and seasonal sourcing. By prioritizing locally grown produce, he reduces the carbon footprint associated with food transportation while ensuring his dishes feature the freshest and most natural flavors.

At Li's restaurant, reducing waste and promoting reuse and recycling are non-negotiable principles. He encourages his kitchen team to use their creativity and imagination to ensure that every part of an ingredient is put to good use. Whether roasting pineapple peels into chewy snacks or stir-frying broccoli stems into crisp side dishes, these small but inventive practices reflect Li's unwavering commitment to sustainability.

Li is also an advocate for eco-friendly cooking practices. He promotes the use of biodegradable or reusable utensils and packaging, actively reducing reliance on single-use plastics. Furthermore, he is dedicated to integrating green energy solutions and implementing energy-saving measures in his restaurant operations, contributing his part to the sustainable development of our planet.

In 2020, Li took on the role of head chef for the **Good Food Mama Kitchen project**, which was recognized as one of the "Top Visionaries" and awarded the prestigious **Food System Vision Prize** by the Rockefeller Foundation in 2021. Remarkably,

it was the only project from East Asia to receive this honor, alongside the renowned Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture. Through the coordination of the **Good Food Fund**, Li and his team visited Stone Barns, where he stepped into the kitchen of his culinary idol, Dan Barber, at B·lue Hill at Stone Barns. There, Li experienced Barber's philosophy firsthand: food preparation begins with a single seed.

"By nurturing the land and all the life it supports, we ensure that the finest ingredients make their way into our kitchens," Li explains.

"Only then can we provide safe, delicious food to our diners. Any neglect along this chain not only jeopardizes the quality and safety of our food but also harms the land and the ecosystems that sustain all life."



Golden Ear Tartar

- Golden Wood ears
- Red Tea fungus
- Willow Melon
- Sterile Egg
- Mustard
- Onion
- Coriander
- Potato

1. Fry the potatoes into slices
2. Cut up golden wooders and red tea fungus
3. Cut up willow melon, onions and coriander
4. Mix up salt, black pepper, musturd , and olive oil
5. Mix everything from steps 2-4 and put potatoes chips on the side
6. Put the Sterile egg on top

食養

In Chinese philosophy, food is not only a source of enjoyment for the palate but also a means to strengthen the body, elevate the spirit, and even act as potent medicine. As the saying goes, "The foundation of well-being lies in nourishment of food." According to traditional Chinese medicine, foods carry not only the flavors of sour, bitter, pungent, salty, and sweet but also possess specific properties such as warm, hot, cold, cool, and neutral. Each flavor has a unique therapeutic function— "pungent disperses, sour contracts, sweet soothes, bitter strengthens, and salty softens" —forming the basis of the principle that "medicine and food share the same source."

Furthermore, "eating according to the season" is an essential part of Chinese culinary culture. Ancient Chinese believed in the unity of humanity and nature, viewing them as a harmonious whole. The shifts in the 24 solar terms throughout the year influence human physiology. Therefore, a person's diet and approach to wellness must also align with these seasonal changes to achieve health and joy.

Over thousands of years, seasonal dietary practices based on the 24 solar terms have become refined and profound. In summary, they can be encapsulated in eight words: "spring birth, summer growth, autumn harvest, winter storage." Thus, one should cultivate yang energy in spring, nourish yin in summer, replenish yin in autumn, and supplement yang in winter. Each solar term has a corresponding approach to nourishment and diet.

For example, Lichun (the beginning of spring), the first solar term, marks the arrival of warm breezes and the growth of all things. Dietary practices should focus on "cultivating and supplementing" by eating green, liver-nourishing foods such as Chinese toon, bean sprouts, and chives.

To better illustrate the wisdom of seasonal eating based on the 24 solar terms, we have invited Zi Xuan, a dedicated advocate of plant-based seasonal nourishment and an inheritor of Eastern culinary aesthetics. Let us gather at her beautifully curated table and experience the wellness philosophy of the 24 solar terms.

Zi Xuan

Zi Xuan is the founder of Ruosu Culture, the initiator of Well-being Zen, an advocate for Eastern aesthetics, and a champion and inheritor of season-aligned nourishing diets. She is also the producer of the book *Seasonal Kitchen*. Since 2017, Zi Xuan has been dedicated to sharing the food and nutrition practices associated with China's 24 solar terms, integrating traditional Chinese culture into modern life.

Over the past seven years, Ruosu has expanded from online to offline, sharing the practices of season-based nourishing foods and Eastern aesthetics of life with people across China. The "Seasonal Nourishment Program" was launched to help people understand how nourishment needs change with the seasons, offering recipes for dishes, soups, snacks, and beverages made with simple, locally-sourced ingredients. This approach

enables even those less skilled in cooking to prepare nourishing foods for their families.

In 2020, Ruosu published *Four Seasons and Sceneries*, a book that conveys a slow-living philosophy that embraces "clothing of cotton and linen, drinks from plants, meals of grains and vegetables, and a dwelling among mountains and waters." The book intricately blends the elegance of Eastern aesthetics with daily life. Zi Xuan not only introduces seasonal nourishing foods in detail but also infuses each section with rich cultural heritage, beginning each section with a poem — 24 solar terms, 24 poems—allowing the food's charm to unfold through the rhythm of nature.

Zi Xuan says that Ruosu is a path to nature, one that will continue to grow with time, and perhaps the next destination lies by the mountains and waters.

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一个传递幸福的地方

东方生活美学的分享
致力推广二十四节气食养蔬食

Walking through the seasons to the table of well-being

"As sunlight warms the earth, life awakens and flourishes."

"Embark on a journey where spring's essence dances across your taste buds."

The Philosophy of the 24 Solar Terms:

As you delve into Zi Xuan's illustrated recipes, a sense of elegance and freshness immediately envelops you, drawing you into a world of ancient simplicity and natural harmony. Her recipes follow the rhythms of traditional Chinese life—**celebrating the blossoming of flowers, savoring the sound of rain**—while showcasing fruits and vegetables through the seasonal lens. With rustic, uncomplicated cooking methods, Zi Xuan preserves the natural flavors of her plant-based dishes.

Since 2017, Zi Xuan has dedicated herself to sharing seasonal plant-based diets rooted in the **24 solar terms**, integrating traditional Chinese culture with modern life. She has become a steward of Eastern culinary aesthetics and season-aligned nourishing diet.

The 24 solar terms stem from ancient Chinese agrarian civilization, a knowledge system developed to align everyday life with

Interview

"Savor peas in three delightful ways, each bite a gentle breeze of spring upon your lips."

"And when sweet, sticky yam cakes grace the table, the twilight of autumn feels richer than the dawn of spring."



From Nature, Back to Nature:

Zi Xuan's culinary roots are deeply grounded in her childhood, shaped by the influence of her grandfather, a master chef specializing in Shandong cuisine—one of China's eight great culinary traditions. Every day after school, she was greeted by the comforting aroma of his cooking and the joy of sitting down to a warm meal. These memories lingered, and as Zi Xuan grew older, she began experimenting with Shandong recipes at home, seeking to recreate the cherished flavors of her past.

The menu she presents today is thoughtfully selected from her book, **Four Seasons and Sceneries: The 24 Solar Terms and the Food Menu**. Zi Xuan advocates for organic, locally-sourced seasonal ingredients and simple cooking methods that highlight the inherent flavors of each ingredient. For her, whether for health or nutrition, the key to every meal lies in honoring each ingredient with respect—clean, simple, and unadorned by excessive seasoning. One of the drinks on Zi Xuan's menu features American ginseng, Schisandra chinensis, and Ophiopogon japonicus. This tea boasts a lovely rose color, appealing to the growing trend among young people for visually stunning beverages. Beyond its visual allure, the drink nourishes both body and mind, making it a treat for the senses.

Another dish, **Four Herbs Soup**, is a classic from the Jiangnan region, celebrated for its complexion-brightening and dampness-dispelling properties. Simple to prepare, it combines lotus seeds and coix seeds soaked overnight, then cooked with fresh fox nut barley. After an hour of simmering, the soup is sweetened with organic rock sugar, resulting in a wholesome, refreshing, and nourishing dish.



From the kitchen to the table: the aesthetic of dining experience

For Zi Xuan, the kitchen is a space of warmth and joy, while the dining table serves as a gathering place for family connection and cultural exchange. Her meals are more than just food; they are a visual and sensory experience, incorporating elements of Eastern aesthetics like color harmony and thoughtfully chosen utensils. Each meal is an extension of the beauty Zi Xuan encounters in nature, seamlessly translated onto the plate.

Take, for example, her autumn menu featuring **pumpkin porridge** and **passion fruit cherry tomatoes**. The warm yellows of these ingredients are beautifully paired with Song dynasty-style porcelain, with a small persimmon as a finishing touch. Served in glass bowls, the entire meal radiates warmth and romance, perfect for a chilly autumn evening.

Zi Xuan’s culinary philosophy is especially aimed at homemakers, whom she regards as central figures in fostering personal growth, women’s empowerment, and family happiness. In today’s

fast-paced society, many people are too busy to nurture themselves or their loved ones. A home, no matter how luxuriously decorated, can feel cold without the warmth of food and love. The dining table serves as the bond that binds the family, and delicious, beautifully presented food fills the home with joy. Zi Xuan believes that food can transform a house into a space of love, connection, and shared happiness.

By highlighting the everyday beauty of simple, nourishing food, Zi Xuan helps people reconnect with their roots—in both nature and family. Through her dishes, she fosters a deeper appreciation for life’s rhythms and the wisdom of ancient traditions, while always presenting them with a modern touch.



Beginning of Spring Buddha Jumps Over the Wall

- fragrant mushrooms 30 g
- chestnuts 30 g
- taro 50 g
- vegetarian pork rib crispy 50 g
- red dates 6 g
- ginkgoes 6 g
- bamboo shoots crispy 20 g
- ginger slices 3 g
- soy sauce brewed by five grains 2 tsp
- bamboo salt 3 g
- sugar 1 g
- white pepper powder 1 g
- organic brown rice vinegar 1 tsp
- vegetarian broth 500 g



1. Wash the fragrant mushrooms, soak until soft and drain.
2. Soak chestnuts until soft and peel them.
3. Peel the taro, wash it, and cut it into pieces.
4. Soak white fruits and crispy bamboo shoots for 2 hours and blanch them in water.
5. Fry the fragrant mushrooms, chestnuts, and taro lightly and remove them.
6. Put ginger slices into the pot and stir fry until fragrant.
7. Add soy sauce brewed by five grains, bamboo salt, sugar, white pepper powder, and organic brown rice vinegar.
8. Add the vegetarian broth and simmer to make a soup base.
9. Put all the main ingredients and soup base into the container.
10. Cover with three-layer heat-resistant cling film and steam for 90 minutes.



食

無為而行，
無為而行，
無味而嘗，
無味而嘗，

In Chinese culinary culture, many regional cuisines emphasize “**pure flavor**” —the natural taste and texture inherent in ingredients. Through simple cooking techniques, these cuisines aim to highlight the true nature of the ingredients. Huaiyang cuisine, one of China's four major culinary traditions, is renowned for its lightness and emphasis on freshness and purity. The hallmark of Huaiyang cuisine is to be “**mild but not bland, fresh yet refined.**” Dishes like Wensi Tofu, with its finely cut tofu threads simmered in a clear broth, embody this approach, preserving the tofu’s natural aroma and tender texture.

Cantonese cuisine, likewise, places great importance on the freshness and intrinsic taste of ingredients, adhering to the philosophy of “**original flavor.**” This cuisine favors steaming,

braising, and baking at low temperatures to retain the delicate sweetness of the ingredients. For instance, Steamed Grouper is prepared simply with ginger, scallions, and a touch of soy sauce, maximizing the fish’s fresh, sweet flavor. For this collection, we have invited eco-chef A Jun, an advocate of “**Light Cooking.**” A Jun believes that the simplest cooking techniques reveal the most pristine and rich flavors of ingredients. He presents a selection of organic and vibrant recipes inspired by Jiangnan cuisine, honoring the intrinsic taste of each ingredient.

Eco-Chef Ajun's Organic Fresh Menu

The pursuit of subtle and original flavor has been a revered ideal in ancient Chinese culinary tradition. As Laozi famously expressed in his philosophy of “**doing without doing, acting without effort, tasting without flavor,**” this inclination toward the essence of simplicity and purity extends to taste itself.

This ideal of flavor not only aligns with the traditional Chinese philosophy of harmony with

nature but is also beneficial for health. In the Ming dynasty, Yuan Huang noted in Three Essentials for Wellbeing: “**Plain grains and light flavors best sustain vital energy.**” This principle is widely embraced, as seen in the careful appreciation of the rich, thick layer of broth that forms on the top of simmering rice—a prized essence thought to replenish vitality and energy.

真



A Jun

Eco-Chef

Chef A Jun is the founder of Light Vegetarian Cuisine in China, a certified national public nutritionist, a national senior culinary chef, and the Vice President of the Chinese Vegetarian Association. He was awarded the Gold Medal Dish at the **2010 World Expo** and, in 2017, was honored as one of the Top 10 Global Chinese Vegetarians and as a Young Artist of Eastern Cuisine.

A Jun hails from Bagong Mountain in Huainan, Anhui—the birthplace of tofu. At 12, he began cooking to support his parents and care for his younger siblings. By 16, he had embarked on his culinary journey. Throughout his career, A Jun has mastered Cantonese, Sichuan, Shandong, Hunan, and Huaiyang cuisines, while also drawing inspiration from Japanese, Thai, French, and Italian culinary traditions.

In 2019, A Jun joined six other Good Food chefs on a trip to the United States, where they collaborated with universities and institutions like Yale, Harvard, the Culinary Institute of America, and Google to create a Chinese New Year banquet. This event introduced the U.S. to the principles of healthy

Chinese cuisine, fostering international dialogue and exchange on sustainable diets.

After returning to China, A Jun combined what he had learned with his 30 years of culinary expertise and partnered with “**Good Food Meatless Monday**” to launch the “**A Jun Light Veggie 30th Anniversary**” National Tour. The tour visited 10 cities across the country, spreading the concept of vegetarian cuisine, reaching a wide audience. Currently, A Jun oversees the Kitchen at Wander Farm in Kunshan.

Eco-Chef A Jun's Organic Fresh Menu

Interview

Entering Wander Farm and its Ecological Kitchen

Wander Farm is located near the ancient water towns of Zhouzhuang and Jinxi in China's Jiangnan region. Focused on ecological sustainability, the farm aims to integrate healthy, organic agricultural practices with modern lifestyles. In collaboration with small and medium-sized producers committed to ecological farming methods, the farm grows and provides natural, additive-free products, delivering a true **"farm-to-table"** experience.

The selection of ingredients varies with the seasons and origins, as do their preparation methods, inspiring A Jun's culinary creations. Using seasonal lotus seeds as an example, A Jun explains the approach in Wander's kitchen. Freshly harvested lotus seeds are best enjoyed raw to retain their natural freshness and high nutritional value. When there is an abundance, the seeds can be dried and preserved for winter, perfect for desserts, porridge, soups, or stews. Dried lotus seeds can also be ground into a fine powder to make lotus seed porridge or lotus powder.



Ingredients are prepared in diverse ways depending on seasonal availability and storage needs. Even scraps or less flavorful parts are fermented with brown sugar and returned to the soil as fertilizer, alongside weeds, reducing kitchen waste and supporting Wander Farm's commitment to ecological sustainability.

When asked about his approach to creating healthy recipes, A Jun points to the **"Nine Principles of the**

Ecological Kitchen," displayed at the kitchen entrance:

one seed | organic freshness | fermentation, low-smoke cooking | the 24 solar terms | table aesthetics | plant-forward | food education | living in harmony with nature

Drawing from his experience in vegetarian cooking since 2006, A Jun also shares a simple five-word formula for a balanced daily diet—"Vegetables, Fruits, Beans, Grains, Algae"—and advocates for "light cooking" methods that preserve the ingredients' natural flavors.

By replacing animal proteins with high-quality plant proteins and pairing them with nutrient-rich fruits, vegetables, and grains, A Jun promotes a more balanced dietary approach. While the importance of consuming a variety of vegetables and fruits is well-known, A Jun emphasizes the value of seed-based beans and grains, particularly those capable of sprouting, such as germ-retaining rice and millet. He also highlights the benefits of algae as a source of active nutrients and trace elements to supplement the diet.

"Light cooking" utilizes tools such as steamers, ovens, blenders, and slow cookers to minimize smoke and oil, preserving the ingredients' nutrients and freshness while reducing exposure to harmful gases. This approach fosters a simple, natural, and

healthy lifestyle. A Jun mentions that spending two hours in a high-smoke kitchen can be more harmful than smoking a pack of cigarettes, which is one reason many cooks lose their appetite after preparing a meal. Wander's kitchen uses induction cooktops that heat quickly and eliminate open flames, providing a more comfortable working environment for chefs.

Creating vegetarian recipes inspired by seasonal, organic ecological farms is not only a way of honoring nature and the seasons but also a reflection of a mindful lifestyle. Even through a virtual visit, stepping into Wander's farm and kitchen feels like tasting the essence of nature and the land in each bite.

Organic and Fresh Recipes Embodying Jiangnan Culinary Wisdom

A Jun told us the inspiration for this menu draws from the longevity and well-being of the people in Zhouzhuang and Jinxi. He attributes their health and long life to a tradition of eating fresh, seasonal ingredients and fermented foods. This Jiangnan culinary wisdom reflects a philosophy of harmonious coexistence with nature, emphasizing **"eating fresh."** In this region, ingredients are enjoyed in their peak season, enhanced by traditionally brewed condiments like soy sauce, vinegar, and rice wine, ensuring nutrients and flavors are fully realized.

In Jiangnan cuisine, **"freshness"** goes beyond seafood; it celebrates the natural flavors of all ingredients, especially when prepared simply without complex processing. Traditional Jiangnan dishes often feature raw ingredients—like freshly harvested lotus seeds and lotus roots—served with just a touch of traditionally brewed soy sauce.

This cooking style preserves the purity of the ingredients' natural flavors, aligning with A Jun's "light cooking" philosophy: **the simpler the preparation, the more the ingredients' intrinsic richness shines through.** Whether it's

lotus roots, lotus seeds, or Gorgon fruits (*Euryale ferox*), these straightforward preparations retain their nutritional value and are easy to make, welcoming people of all culinary backgrounds to enjoy them.

While honoring the tradition of raw and fresh eating, he has added subtle spicy notes, such as organic chili powder and chili flakes, to enhance the layers of flavor and enrich the dining experience.

A Jun also highlights the importance of Umami in condiments, a key element of Jiangnan culinary wisdom. Fermented condiments from the region, such as soy sauce, vinegar, bean paste, and fermented tofu, not only elevate the flavors of dishes but also introduce a distinct umami depth. Fermented ingredients like tempeh bring another type of Umami enriching the flavor complexity while providing health benefits. These fermented elements are essential in traditional Jiangnan cuisine.

In the recipes he shares, A Jun combines organic ingredients from Wander Ecological Farm with seasonal delicacy from Kunshan, crafting a menu infused with the flavors of Jiangnan. This menu not only highlights the "freshness" of seasonal ingredients but also incorporates the distinct umami depth of condiments and fermented foods, revealing the unique charm of Jiangnan cuisine.

The culinary wisdom of Jiangnan extends beyond the pursuit of freshness; it embraces simple cooking methods to enhance natural flavors and utilizes fermented condiments to add a distinctive layer of umami depth. It embodies a deep respect for food, nature, and life through. This wisdom, passed down for thousands of years, continues to evolve, while integrating modern concepts of sustainability and innovation.

It's worth noting that A Jun has also been influenced by **OATLY's** plant-based philosophy, which inspired him to develop a "**Light Veggie Cuisine**" that transcends borders. He frequently employs low-smoke cooking techniques, utilizing oat milk and organic oat cream, such as in the dish Gorgon Fruit with Oat milk. Oat milk is lactose-free, making it an excellent option for those who are lactose intolerant.



In addition, A Jun designed the menu with the diversity of global food cultures in mind, incorporating elements from Japanese, Mexican, Western, and Southeast Asian cuisines. He also draws inspiration from Mediterranean culinary techniques and plating styles, incorporating Chinese ingredients into dishes like Garden Salad. This global approach makes it easier for people from diverse cultural backgrounds to embrace these fusion dishes, sparking their interest and appetite.

Guizhou Red Sour Soup with Seasonal Vegetables

1. Sauté the red sour soup until fragrant, then add water and all the seasonings.
2. Add all the ingredients and cook until done.



- Shiitake mushrooms 20g
- Ash tree mushrooms 15g
- Tofu 30g
- Leafy greens 10g
- Guizhou red sour soup 20g
- Salt 3g
- MSG (Monosodium Glutamate) 4g
- Yellow rock sugar 4g
- Purified water 100g

Discovering Joy and Beauty

志趣

Chinese culture emphasizes that food is not just a physical necessity but also an expression of emotions. When parents prepare meals for their families, they often invest their deep love and care into the process. By thoughtfully selecting each ingredient and dedicating themselves to cooking each dish, parents can ensure that their children enjoy healthy meals while also feeling the warmth of family and the beauty of life.

Diet is not only related to physical health but also to psychological balance. The aesthetics of the dining experience elevate eating from a mere physical necessity to a heartfelt enjoyment. Through meticulous plating and thoughtful color combinations, each meal can become an artistic display, fostering children's appreciation for beauty and creativity.

Meanwhile, food education plays an indispensable role in a child's development. Involving children in the production and preparation of food, and allowing them to share in the joy of cooking and to learn the stories behind the ingredients, help them establish a profound connection with food. This education goes beyond teaching children how to eat healthily; it conveys the power of love and a passion for life.

As Ruizi said, "A child nourished by beautiful things from an early age will surely grow into an interesting person. When faced with any setbacks or gloomy moments, their appreciation for beauty will help them overcome troubles. At the very least, they can find solace in delightful food." Now, let's explore how Ruizi uses culinary art and aesthetics to let children experience a mother's love and the blessings of nature.

食

Rui Zi

Ruizi, mother to 12-year-old “Veggie Kid” Wan Xiaodou, is a passionate advocate of family dining culture. She is also the founder of the Four Seasons Food Education Studio and in charge of the WeChat Account Wan Doudou's Little Vegetarian Table.

With 14 years as a fashion and lifestyle magazine editor in Beijing, Ruizi has seen every kind of luxury and indulgence. Yet, these experiences prompted her to deeply reflect on “what truly makes a life healthy and meaningful, and what defines good food.”

In 2011, during her pregnancy at an advanced age, Ruizi became especially mindful of fetus’ s health, sourcing the safest and healthiest ingredients available in Beijing. When Wan Xiaodou was one year and seven months old, she left her career to become a full-time mother, dedicating herself to the kitchen. Despite being new to cooking, Ruizi was determined to use organic, ecological ingredients to prepare plant-based meals for her child, ensuring that each dish conveyed both her love and the blessings of nature.

In 2015, she launched the WeChat public account Wan Doudou's Little Vegetarian Table, sharing daily vegetarian breakfast ideas to inspire others in the kitchen and showcase the richness of plant-based ingredients. In 2017, her family moved to Dali, where they embraced a simpler, more beautiful life in search of the true essence of food and life.

Currently, Ruizi is also exploring the fields of Waldorf education and anthroposophy.



Children's Recipes filled with a Mother's Love

Interview

Creating Healthy, Plant-based food for Children

As Ruizi began experimenting with various ingredients, she gradually developed healthy, plant-based meals tailored to her child's needs. She adapted recipes from online sources to suit a one-year-old’ s palate, reducing sugar, oil, and salt to emphasize the natural flavors of the ingredients. Her experience as a fashion editor also enables her to create visually appealing dishes. She started sharing these meals on her social media platforms, where they received widespread appreciation. In 2015, she launched the WeChat account Wan Doudou's Little Vegetarian Table, where she shared daily vegetarian breakfast ideas, offering cooking inspiration and celebrating the diversity of plant-based ingredients.

In 2017, Ruizi and her family relocated to Dali, where the ecological and organic environment, along with the thriving vegetarian culture, created an ideal atmosphere for their lifestyle. They visited ecological farms to understand the food-growing process and selected their ingredients accordingly. The community of plant-based enthusiasts in Dali enriched her cooking journey. In this slow, simple life, she found a deeper connection to nature, food, and the land, allowing her to immerse her child in a natural environment.

Unlike professional chefs who showcase their culinary skills in restaurants, Ruizi’ s approach to cooking is deeply rooted in a mother’ s love. Her goal is simple: to ensure her child eats well, healthily, and happily. Her recipes emphasize ecological, organic ingredients, simplicity, and

ease of preparation for home cooking. As her child grows, she adjusts the recipes accordingly.

Ruizi also incorporates nutrition in her food practices, drawing insights from both Chinese medicine and Western dietary science. For example, traditional Chinese medicine emphasizes that children’ s digestive systems have limits, and consuming indigestible foods can lead to discomfort; Western nutritional science stresses that different foods require specific digestive enzymes, and offering too many types of food in one meal can overwhelm a young child’ s digestive system.

When introducing foods beyond breast milk, Ruizi follows a feedback-based feeding principle, introducing new foods one at a time and carefully observing for any allergic reactions or preferences. She adjusts the recipes accordingly, ensuring her child’ s digestive system adapts gradually.

She also prioritizes a balanced diet of fresh, seasonal grains and vegetables, within a plant-based framework. Drawing on traditional Chinese medicine practices, she experiments with rice-based meals, combining grains, nuts, and vegetables. For instance, for a one-year-old, she would incorporate a little walnut into millet paste or cashews into rice paste. For a two-and-a-half-year-old, she would add purple sweet potato and cashews to purple rice paste or sesame to black rice paste.

Enriching the Dining Experience for Children

Ruizi put considerable effort into making Dou’s meals visually appealing, wanting her child to be surrounded by beauty, even at the table. The elegance and charm of her lovingly prepared dishes not only nourished Dou but also delighted him, transforming him into a child who didn’t fuss over food.

She created visually attractive dishes, using shapes to engage her child. For example, when making dumplings, she would fold them into various shapes, surprising her child with their intricate pleats. When preparing vegetable pockets, she would shape them into simple, natural forms, such as the sun or moon, intentionally avoiding cartoon characters that might stifle creativity.

Food Education: Cultivating Relationships with Food from a Young Age

Since Dou began attending a Waldorf kindergarten, Ruizi has immersed herself in studying Waldorf philosophy, biodynamic farming, and nutrition. This exploration has led her to develop a comprehensive understanding of the interconnectedness of land, people, education, and food. Allowing her child to experience nature firsthand, plant crops, and cook in the kitchen has naturally drawn Dou toward food. Her food education philosophy emphasizes protecting a child’s senses, nurturing willpower, and fostering a healthy relationship with both food and the land.

Ruizi encourages Dou to engage in food cultivation and preparation. The ideal vision for her is a family united in farming, preparing, and cooking together, ultimately sitting down to share a meal. From a young age, Dou has joined his mother in the kitchen and accompanied his father in exploring

Ruizi also curated a set of exquisite and tasteful tableware for Dou, sourced from her travels. The natural, handcrafted ceramics, full of vitality, allowed Dou to feel a connection to the earth while eating.

In addition to visual appeal, Ruizi emphasized creating a sense of rituals around meals. Before dining, a table mat was laid, and fresh flowers adorned the table. Dou’s personal setting was decorated with seasonal elements—a small seed, a leaf, or a flower—allowing the dining experience to reflect the nature’s rhythm.

natural farming. His vivid imagination often inspires delightful food stories, such as when he likened glutinous rice balls to circus characters or imagined them spinning on a carousel.

The vegetarian recipes shared here are suitable for children aged 3 to 7. While closely aligned with an adult’s diet, they are tailored to be low in salt, oil, and sugar, featuring light flavors. Many recipes adhere to the dietary principles of traditional Chinese medicine. The rice paste and rice milk recipes are simple yet nutritious, offering a balanced combination of grains, nuts, and vegetables. Starting from the family, from the mother, and from the dining table, Ruizi hopes to bring the joy of food education and the beauty of life to more children’s tables.

Spinach Spring Pancake Rolls with Three Vegetables



- Spinach
- Flour
- Carrots
- Potatoes
- Lettuce

1. Chop about 50 grams of spinach and put it into a food processor, add 30 grams of water, and blend it into a spinach juice.
2. Gradually add about 75 grams of boiling water to 150 grams of flour, while stirring with chopsticks to form a flaky texture.
3. Take another 150 grams of flour and gradually add the blended spinach juice, stirring with chopsticks to form a flaky texture.
4. Mix the white and green dough, knead into a smooth dough, cover with plastic wrap, and let it rest for 30 minutes.
5. Roll the rested dough into a long strip, divide it into portions slightly larger than normal dumplings, flatten them with hands, and roll into round pancakes. Brush a layer of oil on the surface, then stack about 5-8 pancakes and continue to roll them thinner and larger.
6. Steam the rolled pancakes in a steamer over high heat for 10 minutes. After cooling, separate them layer by layer.
7. Wash the carrots and cut them into shreds. Wash the potatoes, and also peel and shred them, then rinse. Peel the lettuce and cut into shreds, and mince the ginger.
8. In a hot pan with cold oil, stir-fry the ginger and carrot shreds until the color of the carrots changes. Then add the potato and lettuce shreds, pour in an appropriate amount of vinegar, and stir-fry until the potato shreds are slightly translucent, season with salt and serve.
9. Roll the stir-fried three shreds in the spring pancake to enjoy.

Postscript

The 2024 World Food Forum will take place at the United Nations FAO headquarters in Rome, under the theme: “Good Food for All, Today and Tomorrow.” At Good Food Fund, we see this as a critical platform to showcase our commitment to youth empowerment and sustainable food systems transformation. It’s a unique opportunity to leverage the energy and leadership of the young changemakers we’ve nurtured over the past eight years.

In April and May of 2024, Good Food Fund partnered with global organizations such as YPARD (Young Professionals for Agricultural Development), the Act4Food Global Youth Movement, and the Plant-Based Treaty to apply for a side event at the forum. Our theme: advocating for the “Eastern Approach to Sustainable and Healthy Diet.”

China’s food culture is vast and diverse, yet rooted in timeless principles of harmony with nature and health. With this in mind, we conceived the Sustainable Recipes for a Healthier Planet Book, which unites regional Chinese culinary traditions with innovative, chef-driven recipes. Our goal is to inspire global audiences to embrace healthy, sustainable, and creative cooking practices that reflect the World Food Forum’s theme of: Good Food for All for Today and Tomorrow.

When selecting the chefs for this project, we carefully considered their culinary philosophy, expertise, and influence. After detailed conversations, we invited Chef Jiang Fan to create a sample recipe, while designer Li Wanyu helped guide the book’s aesthetic direction. Formal invitations were extended to AJun, Li Yan, Zhang Yi, Ruizi, Zixuan, and Cao Huangping to contribute their creative talents to the book.

Each chef’s contribution forms its own chapter, introduced by a personal interview to offer insights into their unique culinary approach. To execute the book, we assembled a team of outstanding youth volunteers from our Good Food Youth Changemaker Program. After rigorous selection from nearly 50 applicants, 9 volunteers were chosen. They quickly dove into research, exploring each chef’s background through interviews, videos, and social media to uncover what makes their work truly special.

The first interview was with Ruizi, a former fashion magazine editor now living in Dali, Yunnan, who has been passionately researching balanced meals for children. Volunteer Wang Xiaohui, who focuses on nature-based solutions, reflected on the experience: “Joining this innovative team inspired me to rethink how I connect with food in my everyday life.” Translator Tian Langyue, deeply interested in sustainable food since her

university days, said, “This project has deepened my commitment to advocating for these issues.”

Chef AJun, co-founder of Wander Farm in Kunshan and a pioneer of healthy organic cuisine, contributed recipes filled with Jiangnan culinary wisdom. Volunteer Chen Zhiqian noted: “Every stage, from the interview to writing, expanded my understanding of ecological farming and inspired new ideas for my own cooking.” Translator Yan Jiaxin, a senior English major, added, “It was an honor to ensure each recipe accurately conveyed its essence, and I’m proud to help promote Chinese culinary culture.”

Following the launch of our recipe book initiative, Oatly China swiftly responded, offering recipes co-created by multiple chefs. These contributions expanded our understanding of oat milk—not just as a beverage, but as a versatile ingredient. Chef AJun highlighted how Oatly’s products enhance both flavor and nutrition in his dishes.

Chef Cao Huangping, from the Jingmai Mountain cultural heritage site in Yunnan, also contributed, sharing traditional Bulang recipes. His interview was conducted by journalist Qiang Fanyan, who observed the alignment between Bulang dietary traditions and modern sustainability values. Translator Gao Shenghan, a Yunnan University

student, reflected, “This project deepened my appreciation for Bulang culinary heritage.”

Chef Li Yan’s recipes reflect his deep connection to nature and his pursuit of zero-waste, sustainable practices. Volunteer Fu Chenyu, a nutrition major, said, “I believe that our collective efforts toward sustainable food will create a brighter future for the planet.”

Chef Zhang Yi, champion of the 2022-2023 San Pellegrino World Young Chef Competition China, shared her inspirations, discussing how she fuses Chinese cultural depth with artistic expression in her dishes. Zhang Yi also participated in the International Farm Animal Welfare Fellowship, believing that humane animal farming is key to sustainable cooking. She’s now an active advocate for Good Food Fund’s mission.

Zixuan, producer of Kitchen of Solar Terms, also contributed recipes rooted in the 24 solar terms. Volunteer Yu Rongdi shared, “Food is deeply connected to culture and history. Exploring its truths with Zixuan was a fascinating journey into Eastern dietary traditions.” Translator Liu Xuejie, who has worked on solar term posters, added, “Eating seasonally is both a respect for nature and a way to absorb traditional wisdom.”

The interviews and initial drafts created by our youth volunteers laid the foundation for the recipe book. Project coordinator Zhang Yue kept the team on track, while Executive Director Hou Bing meticulously reviewed each text, offering thoughtful feedback. Copy editor Li Yihong described the editing process as challenging but rewarding, with countless revisions leading to the final product. Throughout, Program Officer Zong Yuhua and writer Yin Wen also made significant contributions.

Chief Editor Zhang Ting refined each chapter, ensuring a consistent narrative and carefully curating the recipes. She emphasized expanding the possibilities for sustainable, healthy diets and promoting lesser-known Eastern culinary traditions. Her attention to detail in style, structure, and translation helped bring the book to life.

After nearly three months of hard work, this project feels like preparing a grand feast—inviting chefs, selecting the finest dishes, and sharing them with the world. We believe the Sustainable Recipes for a Healthier Planet Book, created for the World Food Forum, is only the beginning. We plan to share it with global initiatives like Meatless Monday and partner with other platforms to amplify its message.

Finally, we extend our deepest gratitude to all the chefs, volunteers, and partners who contributed to this project. Special thanks to Zhang Ting for her exceptional editorial expertise and leadership, and to everyone who conducted interviews and drafted the text. This project would not have been possible without the support of Kunshan Wander Farm, Dali Xiaolou Restaurant, VipaXana Hotel, China Light Industry Press, and Oatly.

Through the Sustainable Recipes for a Healthier Planet Book, we hope that food will serve as a bridge across cultures, fostering dialogue and collaboration for a brighter future.

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