



The Dong family in the living room of their one-bedroom apartment in Beijing, China, with a week's worth of food. Seated by the table are Dong Li, 39, and his mother, Zhang Liying, 58, who eats with them a few times a week. Behind them stand Li's wife, Guo Yongmei, 38, and their son, Dong Yan, 13. Cooking method: gas stove. Food preservation: refrigerator-freezer. Favorite food—Dong Yan: *yuxiang rousi*, fried shredded pork with sweet and sour sauce.

ONE WEEK'S FOOD IN JULY: 1,233.76 YUAN/\$155.06 USD

Grains and Other Starchy Foods: \$6.52

Xiaozhan rice (a type of rice grown in China), 11 lb
white bread, 2 loaves
French bread, 2 baguettes

Dairy: \$26.29

Bright yogurt, plain, 2.1 qt
Bright milk, whole, 1.1 qt
Häagen-Dazs ice cream, assorted flavors, 11.4 oz
butter, unsalted, 7.1 oz
Häagen-Dazs vanilla ice cream, 5.5 oz
Häagen-Dazs vanilla almond ice cream, 3 oz

Meat, Fish, and Eggs: \$26.97

flatfish, 3 lb
beef flank, 2.4 lb
pigs feet, 1.8 lb
beef shank, 1.3 lb
chicken wings, 1.3 lb
eggs, 9
beef, marinated in soy sauce, 1 lb
salmon, fresh, 9.8 oz
pig's elbows, 8.6 oz
sausage links, 7 oz
sirloin steak, 5.3 oz

Fruits, Vegetables, and Nuts: \$16.45

cantaloupe, 6 lb
oranges, 4.2 lb
firerake fruit (sweet-flavored cactus fruit), 2.3 lb
lemons, 1.5 lb
plums, 1.1 lb
tomatoes, 2.4 lb
cucumbers, 2.3 lb
cauliflower, 1 head
celery, 1.4 lb
carrots, 1 lb
taro, 13.8 oz
cherry tomatoes, 13.4 oz
long beans, 10.6 oz
white onions, 10.6 oz
shiitake mushrooms, dried, 8.8 oz
shiitake mushrooms, fresh, 5.6 oz
black fungus (agaric), 3.5 oz

Condiments: \$17.26

Luhua peanut oil, 1.1 qt
Hojiblanca olive oil, 16.9 fl oz
soy bean juice, 16.9 fl oz
orange jam, 12 oz
hot pepper sauce, 9.7 oz
salad dressing, 7.1 oz
white sugar, 7.1 oz
Maxwell House coffee creamer, 6.7 oz
sesame oil, 6.8 fl oz
BB sweet hot sauce, 5.6 oz
citron day lily, 5.3 oz, dried flower bud used for flavoring
honey, 5.3 oz
vinegar, 5.3 fl oz, eaten with boiled dumplings
pepper paste, 3.5 oz
sour cowpeas (black-eyed peas), preserved, 3.5 oz
seafood sauce, 3.4 fl oz
Knorr chicken-flavored MSG (monosodium glutamate, a flavor enhancer), 1.8 oz
MSG, 1.8 oz
salt, 1.8 oz
curry powder, 0.4 oz

Snacks and Desserts: \$17.70

snack chips, 7 bags
Ferrero Rocher chocolates, 14.1 oz
Xylitol gum, 1 bottle
Dove chocolate, 8.5 oz
Xylitol blueberry gum, 3 packs
Xylitol gum, 3 packs

Prepared Food: \$6.12

sushi rolls, packaged, 1.1 lb
eel strips, baked, 8.2 oz
Knorr chicken bouillon, 0.7 oz

Fast Food: \$9.17

KFC: 2 chicken hamburgers, 2 chicken burritos
4 Coca-Cola, medium
2 packages French fries

Beverages: \$27.95

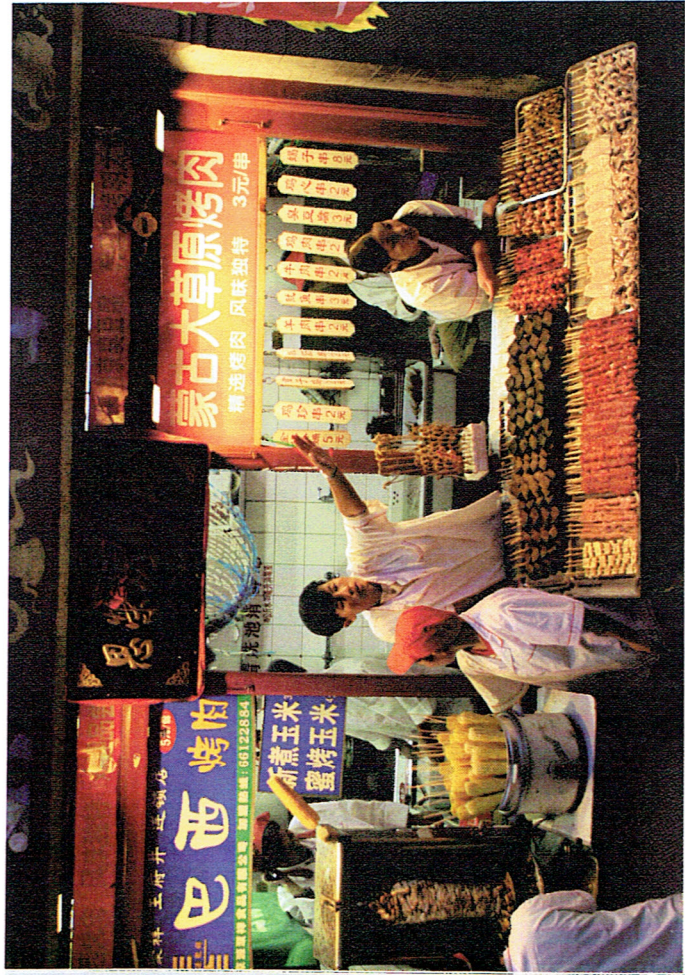
grapefruit juice, 2.1 gal
Asahi beer, 6 12-fl-oz cans
Bright orange juice, 2.1 qt
Tongyi orange juice drink, 2.1 qt
Coca-Cola, 3 12-fl-oz cans
Great Wall dry red wine, 25.4 fl oz
diet Coca-Cola, 12 fl oz
Jinliufu rice wine, 8.5 fl oz
Nescafe instant coffee, 3.5 oz
tap water, boiled for drinking and cooking

Miscellaneous: \$0.63

Zhongnanhai cigarettes, 1 pack



More than a hundred KFC outlets operate in Beijing alone.



PHOTOGRAPHER'S FIELD NOTE

Beijing food vendors offer an incredible variety of food: sea horses, snakes, and live scorpions on skewers; deep-fried silkworm pupae, crickets, and scorpions; clam's feet, frog's legs, and several kinds of squid; goat-head and goat-organ soup (both smelled delicious). We opted for deep-fried starfish on a stick. Should we eat all of it? We wondered. In the end we copied the way everyone else was eating the six-inch creatures: the whole thing, from star tips to center, with a splash of hot sauce. It was crunchy and tasteless—I could get down only two limbs and a bit of the body. On our last night in Beijing, Mr. Dong told us about his childhood visits to the coast in the summer, where he roamed the beaches. "Did you eat starfish?" I asked. "Of course," he replied. "But the only edible part is the center underside. You scoop it out—the rest is terrible!"

Chinese street food stands sell an extraordinary variety of treats. Under the salesman's outstretched hand is a rack of skewered scorpions.

Dong Li and his wife, Guo Yongmei, are part of the new breed of Beijinger, moving into China's developing middle class. Rather than live a life dictated by centuries of culture and tradition, Chinese like the Dongs want to mold their own lives. Although the central Communist government still keeps an eye on the people, its grip on their daily lives has loosened.

Dong Li, who works for the Beijing municipal government, and Guo Yongmei, who is a bookkeeper, live in Beijing's Chaoyang District. Their only child, Dong Yan, thirteen, is a quiet, studious boy. As an only child—China has long enforced a one-child-per-family policy—he gets the undivided attention of his parents and grandpar-

FACTS ABOUT CHINA

Population of Metro Beijing: 15,380,000
 Total annual health care expenditure per person in US\$: \$70
 Population, age 20 and older, with diabetes: 2.4%
 Consumption of sugar and sweeteners per person per year: 15 pounds
 Number of KFC restaurants in 2007: 1,800
 Population living on less than \$2 a day: 47%
 Number of days of curing after which a "thousand-year-old egg" is most delectable: 100

retired ten years ago from an electronics factory, has cared for her only grandson since he was a baby. When she stops by for a visit, we ask her what she thinks about her son's modern apartment. "It's not really to my taste," she says. "There is nothing here that is familiar." But she smiles as she says this.

Like most urban Chinese, the Dongs enjoy a combination of traditional Chinese food, Western fast food, and international cuisine. They don't shop much at the smaller markets anymore, instead choosing chain hypermarkets that stock the international brands that are now flowing into the country. A foreign visitor will notice immediately that the multinational hypermarkets have tailored their stores to Chinese tastes. The seafood counter turns out to be an aquarium-like fish and seafood emporium much like those found in the outdoor markets in many Chinese cities. There are swimming fish, shellfish, slithery eels, fish on ice, cases of live crabs, and frozen fish pieces. Guo Yongmei and Dong Li make their choices together. "Thirty years ago," says Dong Li, there was very little food. "Now there is a lot, and it tastes better." He and Guo Yongmei eat at res-

restaurants. Dong Yan is more apt to want Western fast food. “There is a McDonald’s near my school,” he says. “I go with my friends.” He eats there a couple of times a week—more often if he can. His favorite fast food, though, is KFC. Does he eat different foods than his parents do? “I like more sweet foods that my parents don’t really like.” “He’s growing up differently than I did,” says his father. And it’s clear from his voice that Dong Li’s happy about it. He’s hoping that his son grows up to be a linguist, so that he can travel and study in different countries. But at thirteen, Dong Yan is not inclined to commit to his future.

FAMILY RECIPE

Dong Family’s Pigskin Jelly

- 1 pound fresh pigskin, hair scraped off
- 1 scallion, cut into 6 or 7 pieces
- 1-ounce piece ginger, peeled, cut into 3 or 4 pieces
- 4 cloves garlic, whole
- 1/2 ounce Sichuan peppercorns (Asian prickly ash), whole
- 1 whole star anise, broken into 4 or 5 pieces
- 2 teaspoons Chinese cooking wine
- Salt
- Soy sauce
- 1 teaspoon vinegar

Put the pigskin into a pot with water to cover and bring to a boil for a short time to soften. Remove the pigskin and cut into 1- to 2-inch strips to facilitate handling.

Combine the pigskin, scallion, ginger, 2 cloves of the garlic, the peppercorns, star anise, and wine. Add water to cover and bring to a medium boil.

When the water boils, add salt and soy sauce to taste. Continue to boil until the pigskin is extremely tender.

Remove all the condiments and spices with chopsticks, but leave the pigskin in the liquid. Remove from the heat; when cool, store in the refrigerator.

To serve, crush the remaining 2 cloves of garlic. Take the cooled pigskin strips from the liquid and cut them into bite-size pieces. Mix with the crushed garlic, the vinegar, and salt and soy sauce to taste.



In many restaurants and markets in China, much of the seafood is sold live (below) as a guarantee of freshness. In other ways, the supermarket hews closely to Western models, right down to the workers offering samples (above).

