



The Betty Letters

My Dear Grandchild,

At last, we can have some real Shanghainese food in Hongkong! I suppose you don't know, yet, but I have had a talk with one of the owners of Wang Jia Sha, Mr Chan Hoi Po, who is in charge of one of the most-famous restaurants in Shanghai, and, today, I am happy to report that Wang Jia Sha has opened two outlets in my territory. Grandpa loves Shanghainese food, as you know, so it was a welcome relief for him to be able to drive down to The City and get a decent meal. Wang Jia Sha, officially, is the brainchild of Ms Ophelia Tsang, the Acting Director-General of Investment Promotion at Invest Hongkong, however, I thought that you should know who and what is really behind the move of Wang Jia Sha. As soon as Mr Chan Hoi Po learned that I and Grandpa would be patronising the restaurant, he promised a six million dollar investment in Hongkong. Wang Jai Sha is the biggest chain of Chinese restaurants in Shanghai, you know, with six outlets. Now, it has two outlets in Hongkong, giving it eight outlets, internationally. I have suggested to Mr Chan Hoi Po that he might like to consider, going public on the Main Board of The Stock Exchange of Hongkong Ltd. I mean to say, if Hon Po Group (Lobster King) Ltd (Code: 228, Main Board, The Stock Exchange of Hongkong Ltd) can get a listing, and, then, run into financial trouble, necessitating it closing down most of its outlets, for what reason should not Wang Jia Sha follow suit? In the case of Wang Jia Sha, of course, with the patronage of me and Grandpa and all of our friends, as well as our suggestions to Government servants, and we have plenty of them, to eat there, it is bound to be a success in Hongkong. Where else could one get a decent and authentic Shanghainese meal? I don't think that you are able to appreciate the problems in the best restaurants in Hongkong, today, but nearly all of the former, five-star outlets in the best hotels have had to cut back on the quality of their raw produce. Since the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), hotels and restaurants in Hongkong have suffered, miserably, and so they had to do something, and that something had to be executed in a very surreptitious manner. Cutting back on the quality of imported produce, or substituting local produce for the imported variety and calling it French, German, Japanese, and etc, was the only way for many managements of eateries to pacify the real owners. It was either that ... or go bust. The good thing about Wang Jia Sha is that its management can say with pride that it is using produce from China. No more foreign muck! Having another thought: I think that I ought to ration Grandpa to no more than three Shanghainese meals in this restaurant per week. He is getting terribly fat these days. He looks more and more like a fat little frog, waddling in his little pond.

Do you know that French cuisine is terribly overrated? All that the French do is to boil their raw produce and then smother it with this sauce or that sauce in order to camouflage the taste of the produce, which has not been cooked, properly in the first place. The Germans, also, are hopeless cooks, using copious quantities of oils and lard in their cooking so that one is not quite certain what one is eating. As for the British, it is well known that most of the elderly Brits are gouty due to their poor eating habits. After all, who would want to eat dishes with names, such as: Bangers-and-mash; toad-in-the-hole; roast beef and Yorkshire Pudding, etc? And Italians, well, it is said that in every Italian, there lurks a croaky Enrico Caruso. Talk about singing for one's supper! Italians, it is true, have a history of music, but not a history of good food. Anyway, spaghetti was invented in Shanghai: Mien. The Japanese, because they are such a primitive people, only know how to eat their food raw – because it

was not until China invented fire that the Japanese learned to cook hot food. I have been told that the reason that the Japanese, until the end of World War II, were so small in stature was due to their eating raw fish, which stunted their growth, physically and mentally. That, I suppose, is one of the reasons that Japanese ladies were forced to wear long gowns in days of yore. Kimonos, long, wide-sleeved Japanese robe-like dresses, worn with an obi and often elaborately decorated, covered up their fat and bandy legs. You know, my dear, God does move in mysterious ways because, had it not been for the United States, dropping a couple of atom bombs on Japan, it never would have become the second-largest economy in the world and the Japanese would never have learned how to cook tempura, which was introduced to Japan by General Douglas MacArthur when he was appointed temporary Emperor of The Land of the Rising Sun.

All of this talk is making me hungry.

Talk to you, later,

The Chief Lady of Hongkong

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