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Hong Kong's restaurant landscape hasn't always been as cosmopolitan as it is today. Co-founder of the city's earliest Chinese-owned French restaurant, as well as the Maxim's Group, Dr James Wu traces the evolution of the local F&B industry and explains why professional training has been crucial to success. 今日香港餐飲界多彩繽紛，各國料理薈萃，但並非一直如此國際化。身為美心集團及香港首間華人開辦的法國餐廳聯合創辦人，伍沾德博士與我們回顧本地餐飲界的發展，闡釋專業廚藝訓練是成功關鍵。

By Carol Chow 周敏儀

Acquired tastes

洋味香港

Hong Kong is predominantly populated by Chinese people, and yet this culinary capital's vibrant F&B scene serves up flavours from across the globe, embracing cuisines ranging from Europe and the United States to Southeast Asia and ever-popular Japan. Dr James Wu, who co-founded Maxim's Group in the 1950s, has witnessed the Hong Kong boom in international dining over six decades, describing the phenomenon as "second to none".

Before a plethora of foreign influences was introduced to Hong Kong's dining scene, dishes here were categorised simply as Chinese or Western. "Back in the '50s and '60s, the Chinese knew only one generic type of Western food – there was no difference between French and Italian," says Wu, who was also interviewed for culinary history book *The Taste of Old Hong Kong*, published by the Chinese Culinary Institute.

Hong Kong had become a treaty port under British colonial rule in 1841, and Western food culture was gradually introduced into the city. According to Cheng Po-hung's *Early Hong Kong Eateries*, Zetland Hall – built in 1845 at the intersection of Queen's Road Central and Zetland Street – housed the first famous Western restaurant, and hotels built in the latter half of the 19th century, including Wah Yeung Hotel, Hong Kong Hotel and Stag Hotel, as well as the upscale Peninsula Hotel, Gloucester Hotel and Repulse Bay Hotel that opened in the 1920s and '30s, boasted Western eateries headed by Western chefs.

Back then, dining in such establishments was a privilege only the rich could afford. A Western dinner at a hotel might cost as much as HK\$10 per person, while the average citizen's meal would set you back just 10 to 20 cents.

In 1937, Tai Ping Koon Restaurant of Canton opened a branch in Sheung Wan's Tung Shan Hotel. The venue became renowned for its "soya sauce Western" cuisine – a Hong Kong-style interpretation of Occidental fare.

香港雖是一個以華人為主的城市，但時至今日，幾乎任何國際菜系都可以在此品嚐得到。無論是歐美各國的西洋美饌、東南亞一帶的南洋風味佳餚，抑或深受港人喜愛的東洋料理，皆發展得非常蓬勃，不讓中菜專美。美心集團創辦人之一伍沾德博士見證香港飲食業發展60年，讚揚香港的環球菜系餐飲業發展：「我相信全世界也沒有香港（發展得）這麼好。」

國際菜式引入香港之前，本地只籠統地分為中菜和西餐，伍博士指出：「在上世紀五、六十年代，中國人覺得西餐就是西餐，沒有法國菜和意大利菜之分。」中華廚藝學院出版的香港餐飲歷史著作《老港滋味》亦曾訪問過這位餐飲界前輩。

香港於1841年成為英國殖民地，在英國管治下成為自由貿易港，西方的飲食文化因而漸漸引入香港。鄭寶鴻於《香江知味：香港的早期飲食場所》一書指出，1845年建於皇后大道中與泄蘭街交界的雅仁會館（Zetland Hall）是香港最早的著名西餐廳。其後建成的酒店，如19世紀中後期的華洋酒店、香港大酒店及鹿角酒店等，以及1920、30年代開業的半島酒店、告羅士打酒店及淺水灣酒店等，都附設由西廚主理的西餐廳。

當時吃西餐是有錢人的專利，在酒店西餐廳享用一頓大餐的消費可達每人十元，對於當時一、兩毫子已可解決一餐的升斗市民來說，實屬天價。

1937年，位於上環的東山酒店開設了由廣州進駐的省港太平館，亦即太平館餐廳在港開設的第一間店。當時省港太平館供應結合中式醬油及西式烹調手法的豉油西餐，價錢較一般西餐廳大眾化，讓負擔不起傳統西餐的普羅市民亦可一嚐西餐滋味。



☞ Back in the '50s and '60s, the Chinese knew only one generic type of Western food. There was no difference between French or Italian 在上世紀五、六十年代，中國人覺得西餐就是西餐，沒有法國菜和意大利菜之分 ☞



Clockwise from top: Dr James Wu; Maxim's Boulevard in 1966; a view of the Hilton hotel (far right) in 1980
Opposite: The Captain's Bar at Mandarin Oriental, Hong Kong, in 1963

最上圖起順時針：伍沾德博士；1966年的美心咖啡室Maxim's Boulevard；1980年的希爾頓酒店（圖右側）
對頁：1963年的香港文華東方酒店船長吧



The city's first Tai Ping Koon Restaurant was more affordable than typical Western eateries, and more accessible to the masses.

Throughout the early 20th century, Western restaurants also sprang up along Des Voeux Road Central and Queen's Road Central on Hong Kong Island, and along Nathan Road in Kowloon. Understandably, their clientele mainly consisted of foreigners – predominantly taipans from trading companies and bankers. It was an era not short on discrimination, however, and the handful of Chinese patrons, mainly Shanghainese who had moved south, did not enjoy equal treatment, despite having the wealth to dine at such eateries.

In advance of opening his own restaurant in 1956, Wu and his elder brother, S.T. Wu, worked as assistant manager and manager at Queen's Theatre, and they often treated foreign stars and producers at the most celebrated Western hotspots in town. Wu, now 93, recalls how restaurant managers believed Chinese customers couldn't afford the prices, and so they were seated next to the washroom.

Feeling mistreated, Wu and his brother decided to open their own Western dining venue, and their French restaurant-cum-nightclub, located in the old Lane Crawford Building in Central, quickly became a must-visit venue for entrepreneurs, bankers and taipans keen to impress their clients. In the 1950s, French cuisine, hailed for its meticulous cooking techniques and elaborate presentation, was gaining ground on the global gourmet scene. Julia Child's classic cookbook *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, published in 1961, further reinforced the international supremacy of French gastronomy.

Not only was it bold and risky to open such a restaurant when Western dining was still a niche market in Hong Kong, but it was also difficult to recruit experienced chefs and service professionals, with talent generally hired from abroad or headhunted from hotels. With war underway in Vietnam at the time, and many culinary professionals leaving that country for Hong Kong, Wu's restaurant hired a French chef and a French band to supply the music. The influx of Shanghainese immigrants was another source of manpower. "Chefs from several of Shanghai's top hotels moved to Hong Kong," says Wu, who to further impress guests lured staff trained in etiquette and service from Hong Kong Hotel and the Peninsula Hotel.

The exclusivity of Western restaurants in the middle of the 20th century was comparable to that of five-star hotels today and directly correlated to social status. They were reserved only for the elite. Not only did restaurant staff have to pay strict attention to their personal presentation, but patrons did, too, and it was expected that diners always be formally dressed.

Consequently, Wu sought out a Hollywood tailor to make more than two-dozen suits in various sizes for loaning to customers in need. Such attention



到了20世紀初，酒店以外的西餐館大多開在港島的德輔道中、皇后大道中，以及九龍的彌敦道一帶。光顧西餐廳的顧客以外籍人士為主，不是洋行大班，就是銀行家，華人僅屬少數，而當中又以移居香港的上海人居多，不過即使消費得起，華人得到的待遇卻不平等。

伍博士於1956年自行創業開設餐廳，在此之前，他的兄長伍舜德先生與他任職皇后戲院的正、副司理，經常招待外國明星及製片等前往當時最著名的西餐廳吃飯。現年93歲的伍博士憶述，由於當時的餐廳經理認為中國人消費不起，所以每次都安排華人坐在廁所側的位置。

由於深覺華人受到的待遇太不合理，促使伍博士與兄長萌生開設西餐廳的念頭，於是兩人攜手在中環的連卡佛大廈，開設旗下首間法國餐廳兼夜總會，成為商家、銀行家及洋行大班交際應酬的重要地點。當時法國菜在世界飲食潮流中開始成為時尚，以其繁複的烹調手藝及華麗的擺盤裝飾而備受推崇。名廚Julia Child在1961年推出《Mastering the Art of French Cooking》，進一步奠定法國菜在飲食界的顯赫地位。

當時西餐在香港並不普及，開西餐廳不但冒險，招聘有經驗的廚師及侍應更不容易，經常要靠外國人才，或招聘酒店員工。伍博士的餐廳不但聘請法國廚師，還有在夜總會駐場的法國樂隊，皆因當時越南打仗，很多西餐廳的專才來了香港；由昔日十里洋場移居香港的上海人，亦成為飲食業的生力軍。伍博士指：「當時上海有幾間大酒店的廚師亦來了香港。」為了聘請高質素的侍應，他更特意在香港大酒店及半島酒店挖角，並加以培訓，教導禮貌及服務細節等待客之道，務求以細心服務贏來口碑。

OPPOSITE, BOTTOM LEFT: ION TICHY; THIS PAGE: MANDARIN ORIENTAL, HONG KONG

to detail extended to washrooms, which were fitted with top-quality Italian fixtures, while the ladies’ room boasted a small lounge with a telephone. Washroom attendants were paid as much as HK\$200 a month, compared to the prevailing average for wait staff of HK\$160 a month.

With the opening of the Hilton, Mandarin Oriental, Hyatt and other five-star hotels in the 1960s came a new Western dining experience: the steakhouse. Such venues offered live entertainment as well as food, and one prominent society couple – Mr and Mrs Chow Kai-pong – once opined that while every steakhouse had its signature dishes, the most remarkable experience was to be enjoyed at the Eagle’s Nest at the Hilton, which invited a famous Filipino band to perform for diners, allowing them to squeeze in a dance or two during an evening of wining and dining.

Diners were always immaculately dressed, with some coming along primarily for the entertainment. The addition of a live band and dancing led to great competition for the Maxim’s Western restaurant. “We had to change our business focus to operate as small Western-style diners, similar to the coffee shops of today,” Wu says. “From one big restaurant we grew to become many smaller-scale restaurants.” Later, students returning from abroad made Western dining more popular in Hong Kong.

The 1960s also kicked off an influx of Japanese business investments and department stores into Hong Kong. It was said that more than 100,000 people visited Japanese department store Daimaru on the day after its opening day in Causeway Bay in 1960. Following suit, Matsuzakaya and Mitsukoshi, both department stores from Japan, also opened branches in Causeway Bay in the 1970s and ’80s, respectively.

The district became known as “Little Ginza”, and at the same time Japanese food started becoming popular in the city. Early Japanese restaurants in the ’60s such as Yagyu in Central catered only to fine dining. During the ’70s and ’80s, Japan’s famous Kanetanaka and Nishimura restaurants arrived in Hong Kong, followed by the opening of locally owned Suishaya.

Toward the end of the ’80s, the introduction of the sushi train made Japanese cuisine more common. In the past two decades, all sorts of Japanese speciality restaurants have blossomed in Hong Kong, each catering to a specific style of cuisine such as ramen, sushi or teppanyaki.

A key factor influencing the development of food culture in the city has been the changing age of diners. Today, people dining out tend to be younger than before, and the industry has diversified to meet their demands. “Around 1985 and 1986, there were mainly just British, American and French restaurants,” Wu says. “Italian came much later, becoming popular around 1995, and is still much loved by Hong Kong people.”

I believe in recognising talent. That is how you grow your staff’s passion to serve your customers better, which in turn will lead to more returning customers and more business

我相信公司員工才是最重要的資產。因為員工做得好才有心機做出好菜給顧客品嚐，菜好吃才會有回頭客和更多生意



上世紀中期，香港頂級西餐廳的排場比現時的五星級酒店有過之而無不及，上西餐廳用膳代表社會地位與身分象徵，唯有站在頂端的社會精英才有資格享用。當時不僅餐廳員工穿著講究，客人更必須西裝革履，衣著光鮮得體才能入內用餐。伍博士專誠找來經常為荷里活影星做衣服的名裁縫張活海，向他訂做了24套不同尺碼的西裝，供沒穿西裝的客人借用。他留意一切細節，連洗手間的裝潢亦相當用心，選用最出名的意大利潔具，女廁既設小客廳，又安裝了電話，還請來專人負責看守。他表示，當時餐廳侍應一般的月薪約160港元，但負責看守洗手間的女工每月卻有200港元薪金。

1960年代，希爾頓酒店、文華酒店及凱悅酒店逐一落成，酒店內設有稱為「扒房」的西餐廳，更請來樂隊作現場表演。社交名人周啟邦夫婦曾於報章訪問中表示，幾間酒店扒房各有招牌菜式，不過最難忘希爾頓酒店鷹巢餐廳（Eagle’s Nest）的好氣氛。鷹巢餐廳晚上有著名菲律賓樂隊現場演奏，讓客人享用牛扒之際，還可以跳舞餘興。所有客人，不論男女皆悉心打扮赴會，不少人更是為了聽歌跳舞專程而去。另一邊廂，美心的餐廳在酒店扒房的激烈競爭下不得不變陣相迎。伍博士表示：「我們鬥不過就轉型，轉做小型而簡單的西餐廳，類似現在的咖啡廳，由一間大餐廳轉型為十幾間小餐館。」1960年代後期，負笈海外的香港留學生增加，完成學業後回港創業或就業，間接造就了西餐飲食文化漸趨普及。

Wu adds that popularity of Southeast Asian cuisines has grown significantly in the last decade.

“In the past, diners were mainly the elderly and families because in the ’50s and ’60s young people did not earn much, so they rarely went out to eat,” Wu says. “A waiter was only getting about HK\$160 a month and had a family to support. Today, wages are much higher so young people can afford to dine out more often. Just take a look at Hollywood Road now; there are all sorts of restaurants. The hospitality industry in Hong Kong has really diversified.”

In order to maintain variety in Hong Kong’s restaurants, professional training is crucial, and Wu stresses that “good training is good management”, along with the importance of understanding marketing. Talent, he believes, is a restaurant’s greatest asset. “Some restaurants think accumulating customers is the most important thing,” Wu says, “but I believe in



recognising talent. This is more important because that is how you grow your staff’s passion to serve customers better, which in turn leads to more returning customers and more business.”

The range of culinary courses offered in Hong Kong will also play an important role in the continuing development of the hospitality industry. For example, the International Culinary Institute, which is under the Vocational Training Council, provides a variety of courses specialising in assorted cuisines as well as comprehensive training facilities. “Not only do you teach students how to cook but also about marketing and accounting, which are very important to the business,” Wu says, also advising young people hoping to enter the industry to have true passion for hospitality – and to recognise the joy of working over making money.🥰

GETTY IMAGES

This page: Diners in the 1960s enjoyed dressing up and live entertainment
Opposite: Dr Wu says talent is a restaurant’s best asset

本頁：1960年代的婦女盛裝出席餐會及娛樂場所
對頁：伍博士認為員工是餐廳的最重要資產

隨著日資百貨公司落戶香港，日本飲食文化亦開始影響香港。日資百貨的鼻祖大丸於1960年在銅鑼灣開幕，據說開業翌日吸引了近十萬人次前往。其後松坂屋及三越兩大日資百貨亦相繼在1970及80年代開幕。

當時的銅鑼灣有「小銀座」之稱，日本飲食文化亦開始逐漸引入香港。1960年代最早在港開設的日本料理，如中環的柳生，均屬收費昂貴的高級食府。70至80年代，日本著名食肆，如金田中及西村料理等陸續進駐，更出現了港人開設的日本餐廳水車屋。

1980年代末，迴轉壽司引進香港，帶動日本料理平民化，並漸趨普及。在這十多二十年來，日本料理由最初包羅萬有，轉變為供應單一料理的專門店，例如拉麵店、壽司店及鐵板燒店等。

影響香港餐飲界發展的其中一個主要原因，是客層年齡的改變。現在的客人漸趨年輕化，為了滿足他們的口味與需求，業界必須發展不同菜系，為客人提供更多元化的選擇。伍博士表示：「1985年到1986年之間，主要是英國、美國及法國菜的餐廳，意大利菜發展得比較遲，要到1995年後才開始流行，到現在依然大受香港人歡迎。」至於東南亞菜，則是近十年才出現並盛行。

這位香港餐飲界的前輩一直很關心香港餐飲界近幾十年來的變化，他繼續說明在這方面的觀察心得：「以前外出用膳的客人多是家庭聚餐，其中以老人家居多。上世紀五、六十年代，年輕人的薪金一般都不高，所以很少出外用膳。那時餐廳的侍應一個月人工只有160港元，還要養家；現時的薪金水平比以前高，所以年輕人負擔得起上餐館吃飯。你看現在的荷里活道，什麼類型的食肆都有，香港飲食業非常靈活變通。」

為了維持多元化的國際餐廳在香港持續發展，伍博士特別強調人才培訓的重要性，他說：「良好的培訓就是良好的管理。」除了訓練員工，經營者也必須懂得市場營運的技巧。他認為員工是公司的重要資產：「有些公司會覺得顧客最重要，但我相信公司員工才是最重要的資產。因為員工做得好才有心機做出好菜給顧客品嚐，菜好吃才會有回頭客和更多生意。」

伍博士非常看好香港的國際菜系培訓課程，例如職業訓練局旗下的國際廚藝學院，提供多國菜系的專業培訓，並設有完善的配套設備。他認為這些課程有助促進香港飲食業發展，「要教曉學員不只懂得烹調，還要懂市場營運、會計，這些都很重要。」他寄語有意投身飲食業的年輕人，確定自己真心喜歡飲食這一行，最重要是做得開心，薪資反而是其次。🥰