



| New York |

CHINATOWN

Tutte le Chinatown del mondo hanno un fascino particolare: la vita caotica della città pare fermarsi e si entra in un dedalo di vie strette, con decorazioni, odori caratteristici e souvenir a non finire. Abbiamo visitato la Chinatown di Manhattan, che conta 90.000 abitanti.

BY LORENZA CERBINI | **B1** LOWER INTERMEDIATE

It's very easy to tell you're in Chinatown. Just look for the signs in Chinese, the stalls¹ selling fruit and fish, and, of course, all those restaurants. Chinatown is located in south-east Manhattan, between Tribeca and Little Italy. It's one of New York's oldest neighbourhoods². It began life in the 19th century, when several thousand Cantonese immigrants first arrived in New York. Today it is a citadel within the city, with some³ 90,000 residents, many of whom work in either the food or souvenir business.

EAST AND WEST

Chinatown is one of the largest Chinese communities on the East Coast. In actual fact it is only a little bit smaller than the Chinatown in San Francisco, which

boasts⁴ a population of 100,000. New York's Chinatown also includes Vietnamese and Malaysian communities, and this means that it has a great range⁵ of restaurants, all of which are reasonably priced. The best place to look for them is Pell Street. This is only about 100 metres long, but here, among all the acupuncture and foot massage parlours⁶, you will find the internationally renowned⁷ Joe's Shanghai restaurant, where you can share a large circular table with strangers⁸. It is full from mid-morning onwards⁹.

BUDDHA

There are plenty of "tours" of Chinatown, but it's best to explore the neighbourhood on foot. You should visit the Muse-

Chinatown in Manhattan has been home to a Chinese community for over a century. It is a colourful neighbourhood during the day and an increasingly trendy area at night.

GLOSSARY

- 1 stalls:** bancarelle
- 2 neighbourhoods:** quartieri
- 3 some:** qualcosa come
- 4 boasts:** vanta, conta
- 5 range:** varietà
- 6 parlours:** saloni
- 7 renowned:** famoso
- 8 strangers:** estranei
- 9 onwards:** in avanti



Shopping for souvenirs is a fun activity for tourists to Chinatown, as is eating at its reasonably priced restaurants. Right: a "wanton." Below: a hairdressing salon.



All photos © Lorenza Cerbini

um of Chinese in America, as well as the various Buddhist temples, such as the Eastern States Buddhist Temple (64 Mott Street), and the famous Mahayana Buddhist temple (133 Canal Street). February is Chinatown's busiest month, thanks to the Chinese New Year celebrations.

NIGHT LIFE

Chinatown is also becoming a fun place to go at night. The Apotheker bar, for example, is famous for its fruit and herbal cocktails. It's at 9 Doyers Street, but it doesn't have a sign outside. The bar opened for business a few years ago and it has helped transform a neighbourhood which, at night at least, used to be considered dark and even dirty.

Other bars have followed suit¹⁰. A few months ago Le Baron opened at 32 Mulberry Street. Its hours of business are from 11 p.m. until 4 a.m. This club on three floors is modelled on the Vietnamese city of Saigon in the '70s, with dancers and oriental lighting¹¹. These days Chinatown is generally considered a cool New York neighbourhood.

Above: Chinese writing. Below: a Chinese restaurant. The food is wonderful, although, as Michael Tong says (see interview overleaf) it is "Chinese-American, not Chinese food."

IF YOU GO...

MUSEUMS

Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA)
215 Centre Street
www.mocanyc.org

RESTAURANTS

Wo Hop
17 Mott St
wohopnyc.com

Hop Shing Tea House
9 Chatham Square #1
hopshingnyc.com

Joe's Shanghai Restaurant
9 Pell Street
www.joeshanghairestaurants.com

Vanessa's Dumpling House
118 Eldridge St
vanessadumplinghouse.com

BARS

Apotheke Cocktail Bar
www.apothekenyc.com

Le Baron
www.lebaronchinatown.com

GLOSSARY

- 10 have followed suit:**
hanno fatto lo stesso
- 11 lighting:**
illuminazione





INTERVIEW STEREOTYPES

Michael Tong was born in Shanghai, but moved to Brooklyn as a teenager in the early 1980s. Today he is a successful artist and designer. He talked to Speak Up about the Chinese American community. We began by asking him about the typical Chinese attitude towards the Americans:

Michael Tong

(Mild Chinese American accent)

I think the stereotype is that the Americans are not very sophisticated, they are very casual¹ people, not very formal, and also they like to drink beer!



And what is the typical American attitude towards the Chinese?

Michael Tong

Well, I think right now there is a lot of animosity towards the Chinese sort of taking over² a lot of American jobs. On the other hand, that is largely because in the United States we are in a(n) economic recession, so there's not a lot of jobs available for people, and so they consider the Chinese are taking over their jobs.

But is that true?

Michael Tong

Partially, it's true. I think American manufacturing jobs are being shipped over³ to China, but it is not the Chinese that are taking away the jobs, mostly, I think the American corporate CEOs⁴ that are making the decision to ship those jobs over sea(s), and, as we are in a global economy, this is what people do.

And what about the main Chinese lan-



guage, Mandarin? Will it replace English as the world's second language of choice?

Michael Tong

I don't think so. I think English is a far easier language to learn for foreigners than Chinese.

In conclusion we asked Michael Tong about New York's Chinatown, specifically its restaurants:

Michael Tong

I think there are some authentic places you really have to look for. I usually go to eat whenever there is a trusted member⁵ that would take me there, or I've been referred to some places⁶, so I only go when there's someone with knowledge who would take me there. The Chinese food that you find all over the United States is actually not Chinese food, it's Chinese-American food; for example, the fortune cookie⁷ that they serve in those restaurants is not Chinese at all. I've (I'd) never heard of a fortune cookie until I came to the United States; in fact the fortune cookie was invented by a Japanese American person. ☒

Michael Tong (pictured left) and (above) with one of his works of art. He was born in Shanghai but moved to the New York Borough of Brooklyn when he was a teenager.



GLOSSARY

- casual:** informali, alla buona
- sort of taking over:** come dire, per il fatto che portano via
- shipped over:** spostati
- corporate CEOs:** i dirigenti delle aziende
- a trusted member:** un membro affidabile (della comunità)
- I've been referred to some places:** (se) mi è stato raccomandato qualche posto
- fortune cookie:** biscotto della fortuna (v. Speak Up explains)

Fortune cookie.

Il biscotto della fortuna, quel dolcetto curioso (con un messaggio all'interno sul destino di chi lo mangia) che viene servito nei ristoranti cinesi. Si dice che *cookie* derivi dalla parola olandese *koekje* (l'equivalente dell'inglese *cake*, torta). Se vi sembra strana come spiegazione ricordatevi che New York una volta si chiamava New Amsterdam. Gli inglesi invece preferiscono la parola francese *biscuit*. Si usa *cookie* anche nell'informatica: un *HTTP cookie*, come un *fortune cookie*, contiene informazioni importanti.

Speak Up
EXPLAINS