

# The Roast Duck of China

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This article examines Chinese roast duck, with particular emphasis on Cantonese roast duck. It traces the origin of roast duck to the Northern and Southern Dynasties and describes its development through various dynasties. Roast duck played an important role in military, court, and folk life, and left evidence in many ancient books. The article introduces the preparation methods of Beijing, Nanjing, and Cantonese roast ducks. It analyzes the significance of Cantonese roast duck in Cantonese culinary culture and distinguishes roast duck from roast goose. It argues that Chinese roast duck, particularly Cantonese roast duck, is a distinguished and historically significant element of Chinese culinary culture, whose development reflects the evolution of regional cooking techniques, social customs, and cultural values from ancient times to the present. By tracing the origins, historical development, and cultural significance of roast duck, the article highlights its role as both a culinary symbol and a vehicle for understanding broader patterns of Chinese food culture, thereby contributing to the appreciation and global recognition of Chinese cuisine.

*Keywords:* Roast duck, China, Beijing, Guangdong, Nanjing

## I. Introduction

Roast duck, regarded as a distinguished element of Chinese diet culture, is a renowned specialty worldwide. Over hundreds of years of inheritance and development, various schools of roast duck have emerged in different regions. Among these, Beijing roast duck, Nanjing roast duck, and Cantonese roast duck are the most famous, and they represent the classics of Chinese cuisine.

Its distinctive flavor results from skilled cooking techniques and careful selection of ingredients. For this reason, roast duck has received praise from Gourmet of the World for its qualities, which include a bright red color, tender meat, mellow taste, and richness without being greasy. It has attracted many Chinese and international diners, allowing the appeal of Chinese food culture to spread globally.

This article describes Cantonese-style roast duck, an important branch of Chinese roast duck, and examine its origin and value.



Figure 1. Nanjing roast duck (photographed by SU chang).

## II. The Origins of Roast Duck

(1). Roast duck has a long history, and the court theory about its origin is legendary. As early as the Northern and Southern Dynasties (420–589), the *Shizhenlu* (Record of Rare Foods) recorded roast duck (Tao, 2012), which is considered one of the earliest forms of roast duck. At that time, the method of preparing roast duck may have been relatively simple. Whether roasting the whole duck or cutting it into pieces, roast duck had already appeared in the imperial court and become a prominent delicacy.

From the Northern and Southern Dynasties to the Northern Song Dynasty (960–1127), production techniques for roast duck developed continuously. During this period, fried duck and Lotus Duck, which were roasted in the oven with fine ingredients, emerged. In the Southern Song Dynasty (1127–1279), roast duck became popular in food markets. Even the prominent poet Su Shi (1037–1101) regularly ate duck to nourish his body during autumn and winter.

(2). Roast duck has also established a unique and significant place in the history of Chinese military affairs. During the Northern and Southern Dynasties, when wars occurred continuously, frequent fighting caused severe food shortages in the army. At that time, people practiced duck farming along the Qinhuai River, so duck meat became an important food source for the people of Nanjing (Gao, 2024).

According to the *Qi Chunqiu*, a general of the Liang dynasty (502–557) named Chen Baxian (503–559) once led his army in a fierce confrontation against the Northern Qi (550–577) troops (Gao, 2024). At that time, grain transportation was blocked and could not enter the city. The urban population fled in all directions to avoid the war, and the army could not levy food. The soldiers were hungry and exhausted, and the situation was critical. In this situation, Chen Baxian levied some wheat from merchants, cooked it into meals, and distributed them to the soldiers. At that moment, Chen Baxian's nephew, Chen Qian (522–556), delivered 3,000 hu of rice and 1,000 ducks in time (Li, 1975). Chen Baxian immediately ordered the use of these ingredients to steam rice and cook ducks. After the soldiers enjoyed this hot and delicious meal, their morale increased and their combat effectiveness multiplied. Finally, Chen Baxian led his army to defeat the Northern Qi in one stroke, creating a legendary story about how food boosted morale and affected the outcome of war.

(3). *The Proper and Essential Things for Diet*, written by Husihui (1260–1350), the imperial physician of the Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368), is regarded as a valuable work in the classic literature of Chinese food culture. In the chapter titled “Collection of Rare and Delicious Dishes,” Husihui provides a detailed record of the special cooking method for roast duck during the Yuan Dynasty. The process begins by plucking the duck and cutting open its belly. The internal organs are then carefully cleaned and washed. Next, green onions, coriander, salt, and other seasonings are placed inside the duck’s belly. The duck is then tightly wrapped with a clean sheep’s stomach and slowly roasted over a charcoal fire. When the sheep’s stomach becomes golden and crisp from the charcoal fire, peeling it open reveals the shiny and fragrant roast duck inside (Husihui, 2014). This cooking method differs significantly from that of modern roast duck. However, it serves as a valuable prototype of early roast duck dishes. It vividly demonstrates the unique features of food culture and the refined cooking skills of the Yuan Dynasty, and it provides important historical evidence for later generations to study the development of Chinese food.

### III. The Route of the Spread of Roast Duck

The origin of Chinese roast duck can be traced to Jiankang, which is located in present-day Nanjing, Jiangsu Province, China, during the Northern and Southern Dynasties. In the early Ming dynasty (1368–1644), Zhu Yuanzhang (1328–1398), who established his capital at Nanjing, enjoyed eating ducks. Imperial chefs roasted the fat local lake ducks over a charcoal fire to produce roast ducks. According to historical accounts, he ate one roast duck per day.

When Emperor Zhu Di (1360–1424) of the Ming Dynasty relocated the capital to Beijing (Gu, 2015), he also brought the techniques for roasting ducks from Nanjing, as well as the imperial chefs who specialized in preparing roast ducks, to the north. The braised roast duck technique then developed in Beijing. In 1416, the first roast duck restaurant in Beijing, named Pianyifang, was established. In 1552, Yang Jisheng (1516–1555), who served as an assistant minister of the Ministry of War, inscribed the name Pianyifang after tasting the roast duck there during a period of frustration because he had impeached the powerful minister Yan Song (1480–1567). This event made the restaurant famous. In 1864, Yang Quanren (1822–1890) founded Quanjude and invited Master Sun, who had worked in the imperial kitchen, to improve roast duck using the hanging oven technique for roasting suckling pigs that was used in the palace. This innovative hanging oven roast duck further enhanced the craftsmanship of Beijing roast duck.

As Beijing roast duck gained fame, the braised technique spread south to Lingnan. After it blended with the local food culture, it gradually developed into Cantonese-style roast duck during the late Qing Dynasty (1644–1911) and the early Republic of China (1912–1949). This dish became a classic in Cantonese cuisine.



Figure 2. Peking roast duck (photographed by SU chang).

#### IV. Roast Duck in Ancient Chinese Literature

(1). As early as the Song Dynasty (960–1279), roast duck had already established a distinct presence in Chinese food culture. Meng Yuanlao (?–?), a scholar of the Song Dynasty, wrote *The Eastern Capital: A Dream of Splendor*, which depicts the vibrant life of Bianjing (present-day Kaifeng), the capital of the Northern Song Dynasty, with detailed descriptions. This work serves as a valuable resource for understanding ancient urban life. In *Volume I, Chapter Yinshi Guozhi (Food and Fruits)*, when describing the side dishes sold by street vendors in Kaifeng during the Northern Song Dynasty, the author specifically mentions Luya (Yang, 2020), which some scholars believe refers to boiled duck. The text presents an animated scene of roast duck as a street food moving through neighborhoods, which demonstrates the richness and prosperity of roast duck culture in China thousands of years ago.

(2). Roast duck was already a popular dish among neighbors during the Yuan Dynasty. During the Tianli period of the Yuan Dynasty, Hu Sihui, an imperial doctor, described the cooking method of roast duck in his book *The Proper and Essential Things for Diet* (Husihui, 2014). This dish is considered the ancestor of present-day roast duck and demonstrates the transmission of cooking skills.

In *Watching Money Slave*, written by Zheng Tingyu (?–?), the narrative presents a vivid scene involving Jia Yuanwai and roast duck, which reconstructs the urban food culture of that period. The miserly Jia Yuanwai, upon seeing roast ducks hanging in a roadside shop, could not resist his desire for the food, but he was unwilling to spend money. He secretly rubbed duck fat from the roast duck when the shopkeeper was not watching, then returned home and licked the stolen fat from his fingers while eating rice (Chen, 2023). This humorous portrayal of the miser's greed also indirectly confirms that folk roast duck shops were common in the Central Plains area at that time. Roast duck had already become a popular dish favored by the public, and it conveyed the appealing atmosphere of everyday life in ordinary lanes and alleys.

(3). During the Wanli era of the Ming dynasty, Liu Ruoyu (1584–?), a eunuch of the Si Li Jian (Palace Secretariat), described the food preferences of the imperial court with detailed language in his work *The Food of the Ming Imperial Court on Favourite Foods*. In this text, the brief mention of local roasted geese, chickens, and ducks (Liu, 2018) reveals important aspects of food culture. The roast duck referenced in the work served as the prototype for the later well-known Beijing Roast Duck. At that time, specially marinated and roasted ducks had crispy skin with an amber appearance, and oil released during high-temperature roasting created a distinctive

caramelized aroma. This dish appeared frequently at imperial banquets as a rare delicacy for emperors and nobles, and it also gradually entered Beijing's restaurants, developing into a unique Beijing-style specialty. The transition from the secret methods of the imperial kitchen to the adaptation and refinement by local cooks demonstrates that roast duck during the Wanli era already possessed cross-class culinary appeal. This development established an important foundation for its significance in the history of Chinese cuisine.

(4). Roast duck is mentioned in *Miscellaneous Notes on Zhuye Pavilion*, which indicates its significance in the diet culture of the Qing dynasty. The text states that on the birthday of relatives, roast duck must be sent (Yao, 2012). This reference implies that during the Qing dynasty, roast duck served as an indispensable gift among nobles and was commonly present at important events, such as birthdays. These observations suggest that roast duck was a relatively valuable and popular food at that time, and it possessed specific social values and ritual functions.

At the same time, the imperial kitchen of the Qing Dynasty included the Bao Ha Bureau, which was specifically responsible for preparing roasted pork and roast duck for the emperor and the empress. Roast duck frequently appeared on the daily menu of the Qianlong Emperor. According to the *Wutai Normal Meal Records* (Department of Ming and Qing Archives, The Palace Museum, 1978), from the fifth to the seventeenth day of the third month in the twenty-sixth year of the Qianlong era, he ate roast duck eight times. This frequency shows that roast duck was also very popular in the imperial court of the Qing Dynasty. The record of roast duck as a gift in *Zhuyeting Zaji* further reflects the effect of imperial food culture on the general population, showing the popularity of roast duck spreading from the court to the common people during the Qing Dynasty.

## V. Roast Duck in Modern Chinese Literature

(1). In the early days of the Republic of China, *Records of Spring Dreams in Peking* unfolds as a gradually revealing depiction of urban life, presenting the vibrant activity of old Beijing with careful detail. In this book, the author explores the streets of the capital and focuses on local delicacies, including the braised oven roast duck from Panyifang (Chen, 1925).

Beginning with the enjoyment of food and drink and concluding with leisurely entertainment, the book revives both the bustling food markets and taverns frequented by food enthusiasts, as well as the gathering places of literati and gentlemen. The narrative moves from the aroma of roast duck coming from deep within the streets to the sounds of laughter in theaters and teahouses. It presents the grandeur and elegance of the capital during that period in a comprehensive and multi-dimensional manner. This approach enables readers to feel as if they are immersed in that enchanting Peking era and to appreciate the enduring appeal of old Beijing throughout history.

(2). In Liang Shiqiu's (1903–1987) essay *Roast Duck*, a special section focuses on Peking roast duck (Cai, Wang, & Liang, 2024). The essay introduces the techniques of duck raising and selection, including the breeding environment for ducklings, the preparation of feed, the luster of the feathers, and the firmness of the meat in mature ducks. In addition, it presents the specific methods for preparing Peking roast duck, such as the initial processing of the duck, the techniques for marinating and flavoring, and the control of heat and time when roasting in a hanging oven or braised oven. The essay also describes the precision required when slicing the duck after it comes out of the oven. The description is clear and specific, allowing readers to appreciate the delicacy and rigor of the craftsmanship involved in preparing Peking roast duck.

## VI. The Practices of Roast Duck in Various Factions (Pan, 2015; Pan, 2017)

### Peking Roast Duck

#### *Preparation of Ingredients*

Duck: Choose a 2–2.5 kg Peking duck or Cherry Valley duck.

Seasonings: Maltose, white vinegar, honey, cooking wine, dark soy sauce, light soy sauce, five-spice powder, sugar, salt, ginger slices, green onions, and so on.

Duck Cleaning: Wash the whole duck, dry it, and clean the abdominal cavity. Use chopsticks to gently separate the skin from the meat at the neck. Then, use a hair dryer on low heat to blow air between the skin and the meat from the neck. Finally, sew the back of the duck with thread.

Marinate the Duck: Marinate the duck by combining 50 ml cooking wine, 15 ml dark soy sauce, 30 ml light soy sauce, 10 g five-spice powder, 20 g sugar, 10 g salt, 5 slices of ginger, and 2 segments of green onions. Rub this mixture inside the duck cavity, then place the remaining ginger and green onions into the belly. Lay the duck in the refrigerator with the cavity facing upward and marinate it overnight.

Making Brush Syrup: Combine 100 g maltose, 20 ml white vinegar, 30 g honey, and 50 ml hot water. Heat over low heat until completely melted.

#### *Intermediate Processing*

Blanching the Skin: Blanch the skin by boiling a pot of water, then hold the duck and pour the hot water over the body two or three times to tighten the skin.

Coloring: Lift the blanched duck above a basin containing syrup. Pour the mixed syrup over the duck's body three or four times and then drain the water from the cavity.

Air-Drying the Carcass: Hang the colored duck carcass in a cool, ventilated area to air-dry. In spring or autumn, air-dry for approximately 24 hours. In summer, air-dry for 4–6 hours. In winter, extend the drying time as needed until the skin becomes dry.

Oven Roasting: Preheat the oven to 180 °C. Insert a heatproof rack into the duck's cavity. Pour some water into the bottom of the baking tray. Place the duck in the center of the oven and roast for 15 minutes. Remove the duck and spread another layer of syrup. Lower the temperature to 200 °C and roast for another 25 minutes. Then, increase the temperature to 220 °C for the final 5 minutes.

Hanging Oven Roasting: For hanging oven roasting, use fruit wood such as jujube wood as fuel. Clean the oven in advance and heat it to above 200 °C. Plug the duck's anus, pour boiling water into the neck incision, and then place the duck in the oven. Control the oven temperature at 250–300 °C, adjust the heat, and rotate the duck according to the coloring. A 1,500–2,000 g duck carcass will be completely roasted after 35–40 minutes.

#### *Plating and Serving*

Slicing: After removing the duck from the oven, quickly slice the skin and meat into thin pieces using a sharp knife.

Serving with Accompaniments: Prepare thin pancakes, sweet bean sauce, shredded green onions, cucumber strips, and other items. To serve, take a pancake and spread sweet bean sauce on it. Add shredded green onions and cucumber strips, then place duck meat and crispy skin on top. Roll up the pancake before eating.



Figure 3. Pecking roast duck (Chen, 2025).

## Nanjing Roast Duck

### *Preparation of Ingredients*

**Duck:** Choose a lean lake duck weighing 2–2.5 kg, with firm meat, uniform fat distribution, and better taste.

**Seasonings:** Coarse salt, Chinese prickly ash, high-proof Baijiu, light soy sauce, ginger slices, scallion segments, star anise, cinnamon, bay leaves, maltose, white vinegar, oyster sauce, rock sugar, cooking wine, cloves, tangerine peel, grass fruit, and fennel.

### *Preliminary Treatment*

**Duck Processing:** Clean the whole duck, remove the organs and feathers, and dry the surface moisture. Use an air pump to separate the skin from the meat through the opening at the duck's neck, inflating the space between the skin and the meat so that the skin swells. Suture the opening at the back of the duck to prevent air from leaking.

**Marinating the Duck:** To marinate the duck, stir-fry an appropriate amount of coarse salt and Chinese prickly ash over low heat to prepare prickly ash salt. After the mixture cools, rub it onto both the inside and outside of the duck. Apply high-proof Baijiu to the duck's skin and massage it thoroughly. Mix light soy sauce, ginger slices, scallion segments, star anise, cinnamon, and bay leaves. Place part of this mixture inside the duck cavity and rub the remainder over the entire duck. Refrigerate the duck with the belly facing upward for 8–12 hours.

**Making Epidermal Treatment Liquid:** Mix maltose, white vinegar, and oyster sauce in a specific proportion. Add an appropriate amount of hot water, then heat the mixture over low heat until it is completely melted. Stir the mixture evenly, and set it aside for later use.

### *Intermediate Treatment*

**Scalding the Skin:** Boil enough water in a pot. Hold the duck by the neck and pour the boiling water over the duck's body three to four times. This process causes the skin to tighten and the pores to close.

**Coloring:** Lift the scalded duck and evenly pour the prepared epidermal treatment liquid over the duck's body four or five times to ensure that all parts are coated with syrup. Then, drain the excess liquid from the duck cavity.

**Air-drying the duck:** Hang the colored duck in a well-ventilated, dry location. In spring and autumn, air-dry the duck for 12–18 hours. In summer, air-dry for 6–8 hours. In winter, extend the drying time as needed until the duck skin becomes dry and hard.

**Oven Roasting:** Preheat the oven to 180 °C. Add a small amount of water to the bottom of the baking pan to prevent splashing and smoking of the duck oil. Place the duck on the middle rack of the oven and roast for 20 minutes. Remove the duck and brush another layer of epidermal treatment liquid. Reduce the temperature to 200 °C and roast for an additional 30 minutes. During the final 5 minutes, increase the temperature to 225 °C to enhance the crispiness and coloration of the duck skin.

**Hanging Oven Roasting:** Clean the oven in advance and use fruit charcoal to heat the oven until the temperature exceeds 220 °C. Plug the duck's anus, pour boiling water into the neck opening, and then place the duck in the oven for roasting. During roasting, maintain the oven temperature between 230 °C and 280 °C. Adjust the heat as needed according to the coloring of the duck, and continuously rotate the duck body. A duck weighing 1,500–2,000 g can be fully cooked after roasting for 30–35 minutes.

#### *Plating and Serving*

**Cutting into Pieces:** After removing the duck from the oven, allow it to cool slightly. Then, use a sharp knife to cut the duck into uniform pieces.

**Serving with Accompaniments:** Prepare a special brine by boiling light soy sauce, water, rock sugar, cooking wine, star anise, cloves, bay leaves, tangerine peel, grass fruit, fennel, Chinese prickly ash, green onions, ginger, and other ingredients. Pour the brine over the cut duck pieces, and serve.



*Figure 4. Nanjing roast duck (Ma, 2017).*

### **Cantonese Roast Duck**

#### *Preparation of Ingredients*

**Duck:** Select a Guangdong-style water duck or a Cherry Valley duck, typically weighing 1.5–2 kg. Choose a duck with tender meat, an appropriate amount of fat, and no off-flavors to ensure better taste.

**Seasonings:** Coarse salt, Chinese prickly ash, five-spice powder, dark soy sauce, light soy sauce, oyster sauce, hoisin sauce, honey, maltose, white vinegar, scallions, ginger, garlic, star anise, cinnamon, cloves, cardamom, licorice, dried tangerine peel, and cooking wine.

#### *Preliminary Treatment*

**Duck Processing:** Clean the whole duck by removing the entrails, feathers, and any remaining hairs. Pat the exterior dry to remove moisture. Using a small knife, make an incision at the duck's neck. Insert an air pump into the incision to separate the skin from the meat by blowing air between them, which causes the skin to protrude. Stitch the back opening to seal in the air.

**Marinating the Duck:** First, dry-fry coarse salt, Chinese prickly ash, and five-spice powder over low heat until aromatic to prepare a spice salt. After the spice salt cools, rub it thoroughly over both the interior and exterior of the duck. Then, brush a mixture of dark soy sauce, light soy sauce, oyster sauce, and hoisin sauce onto the surface and inside the cavity of the duck. Fill the cavity with a combination of scallions, ginger, garlic, star anise, cinnamon, cloves, cardamom, licorice, and dried tangerine peel. Refrigerate the duck, with the cavity facing upward, for 6–8 hours.

**Making Epidermal Treatment Liquid:** Mix honey or maltose, white vinegar, and a little water in a ratio of about 1 : 2 : 3. Heat the mixture over low heat until the honey or maltose is completely melted and stir well for later use.

#### *Intermediate Treatment*

**Scalding the Skin:** Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Hold the duck by its neck and pour the boiling water over the duck's body three to four times. This step tightens the skin and closes the pores, which helps the duck skin become crispy during roasting.

**Coloring:** Lift the scalded duck and evenly pour the prepared epidermal treatment liquid over the duck's body four to five times, ensuring that the liquid coats every part of the duck. Then, allow the excess liquid to drain from the duck cavity.

**Air-Drying the Duck:** Hang the colored duck in a well-ventilated, dry location. In spring and autumn, air-dry the duck for 12–18 hours. In summer, air-dry for 6–8 hours. In winter, extend the drying time as needed until the duck skin becomes dry and hard.

**Oven Roasting:** Preheat the oven to 180 °C. Place a baking tray with water at the bottom of the oven to prevent splashing and smoking of the duck oil. Position the duck on the middle rack and roast for 20 minutes. Remove the duck and brush an additional layer of the epidermal treatment liquid. Increase the oven temperature to 200 °C and roast for another 30 minutes. During the final 5–10 minutes, raise the temperature to 220–230 °C to crisp the duck skin and achieve a golden-brown color.

**Hanging Oven Roasting:** Clean the hanging oven thoroughly. Use fruit charcoal to heat the oven to above 230 °C. Plug the duck's anus, pour boiling water into the neck opening, and then place the duck in the oven for roasting. During roasting, maintain the oven temperature at 250–300 °C. Adjust the heat according to the coloring of the duck, and rotate the duck body continuously. A duck weighing 1,500–2,000 g can be roasted for 30–40 minutes to achieve full doneness.

#### *Plating and Serving*

**Cutting into Pieces:** After removing the duck from the oven, allow it to cool slightly. Then, use a sharp knife to cut the duck into evenly sized pieces.

**Serving with Accompaniments:** Prepare plum sauce or a special sweet-and-sour sauce for dipping. You can also serve the sliced duck with steamed buns, scallions, and cucumber strips. This allows diners to wrap the duck pieces with the buns and vegetables, and dip them in the sauce to enjoy.

Roast ducks from different culinary traditions each have distinct characteristics. Beijing Roast Duck is renowned for its use of the hanging oven and braised oven techniques, which produce crisp skin and tender meat. This dish acquires a unique flavor when served with thin pancakes and sauces. Nanjing roast duck emphasizes the preparation of brine, resulting in a savory and delicious taste. Cantonese roast duck reflects the culinary practices of Lingnan, using spice marination and precise temperature control during roasting. This method produces crisp skin and aromatic meat.



*Figure 5. Cantonese Roast Duck (Zeng, 2009).*

## **VII. The Significance of Roast Duck in Cantonese Culinary Culture**

As an integral part of Guangdong cuisine culture, roast duck in Cantonese cuisine has long served as an essential component of every Cantonese person's life. Roast meat shops appear throughout both urban and rural areas of Guangdong, and roast duck remains one of the signature dishes in these shops. For example, office workers may choose roast duck rice, students may eat it as a daily meal, and families may include it as an extra dish at the dining table. Roast duck frequently appears in these contexts, clearly reflecting the Cantonese gastronomic philosophy of simplicity and refinement.

Cantonese speakers use the phrase “zhan liao jia song” to refer to buying cured meat to supplement a meal, and roast duck is one of the options for zhan liao. After work, people often stop at a roast meat shop to purchase half a roast duck to quickly enrich the dinner table. This action suggests care for the family and serves as a warm symbol in everyday life.

As a well-known Cantonese dish, a platter of roasted meat that includes roast duck, roasted goose, and suckling pig always appears as an appetizer at Cantonese family banquets during occasions such as the Spring Festival, Dragon Boat Festival, and Mid-Autumn Festival. This dish matches the festive mood of family feasts and the lively atmosphere of these celebrations.

Roast duck also represents Cantonese roasted meat craftsmanship. It reflects the culinary wisdom of the Cantonese people and the balanced philosophy of Cantonese seasoning. This dish aligns with the concept of

“yin-yang harmony” in Cantonese cuisine and fully demonstrates the refined qualities of Cantonese roasted meats.



*Figure 7.* Cantonese roast duck (photographed by SU chang).

More importantly, when discussing Cantonese food, roast duck serves as an essential symbol. It is not only a part of the daily diet for local people, but also an important way for outsiders to understand Cantonese roast meat cuisine. Roast duck has become a cultural representation of food in both Guangzhou and Guangdong. For Cantonese people living abroad or outside Guangdong, the flavor of roast duck often evokes nostalgia for their hometown and acts as an emotional connection that maintains their regional identity.

### **VIII. Roast Duck Differs from Roast Goose**

Roasted goose and roast duck are two well-known Guangdong delicacies that have often confused many people. Recently, a university canteen in Wuhan claimed that the dish commonly known as roasted goose rice in Guangdong is actually prepared with roast duck. This report caused widespread anger among people from Guangdong. In fact, as two signature dishes of Guangdong, roasted goose and roast duck are quite different and not difficult to distinguish.



Figure 8. Roast goose (Zeng, 2009).

Roast goose is one of the representative delicacies in Cantonese cuisine. Its origin dates back to ancient times. Although roast goose differs from roast duck, its origin is also closely related to the southward dissemination of Central Plains cooking techniques and the evolution of dietary culture in the Lingnan area. Records of eating goose meat in China exist from the Pre-Qin period. *The Book of Rites* notes that geese served as important ingredients for sacrifice and banquets. Later, because of the southward migration of northern people, Central Plains cooking techniques, such as roasting and braising, were introduced into Lingnan. The warm climate and dense water network in Lingnan, which were suitable for goose breeding, provided a foundation for the emergence of roast goose. In the Tang and Song Dynasties, as the economy and culture in Lingnan developed, literature from that time recorded roasted goose prepared in a manner that already resembled the modern method. In the Ming and Qing Dynasties, the roasted meat industry in Guangdong prospered, and the craftsmanship of making roast goose was further improved, gradually forming a mature system. Since then, roast goose has become a classic delicacy in Guangdong. Roast duck and roast goose have distinct origins, and considering roast duck as equivalent to roast goose is both absurd and unreasonable.

In summary, roast duck represents a significant element of Chinese food culture and possesses a long and profound historical background. The earliest form of roast duck appeared in the Shizhenlu during the Northern and Southern Dynasties. Cooking techniques gradually developed during the Song and Yuan Dynasties. With the relocation of the capital in the Ming and Qing Dynasties, different styles such as Beijing-style and Suzhou-style emerged. Roast duck has continuously evolved throughout history. It has become integrated into various contexts, including military and court life, and has left a significant mark in literature, for example, in *Record of The Eastern Capital: A Dream of Splendor* and *The Proper and Essential Things for Diet*. Thus, roast duck has become a dietary symbol that spans social classes.



Figure 9. Roast goose (photographed by SU chang).

## IX. Conclusion

In general, the development process of roast duck represents not only a history of inherited cooking techniques, but also reflects the integration of food cultures from various regions of China and their regional characteristics. Its historical value, cultural connotation, and practical value continue to display unique appeal in both Chinese and international culinary communities, and it has become an important representative of Chinese food culture as it expands globally.

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