



## CHOPSTICKS REQUIRED: “YEE SANG” DISH ENCOURAGES FOOD-PLAY

*Caution to First-Timers: Try to Avoid Spillage*

**NEW YORK, NY – December XX, 2005** – Visitors to Chinatown during the 2006 Lunar New Year (January 27 – February 14, 2005) will have an opportunity to sample a unique dish called “yee sang” which translated literally means raw fish salad. As for the adage “to not play with your food”, it certainly does not apply here as a key element of the “yee sang” involves tossing the ingredients as high as possible and mixing it all vigorously.

“Yee sang” is a widely popular contemporary Lunar New Year dish created several decades ago, first believed to have originated from Malaysia and Singapore and spreading to other Asian countries such as Hong Kong, Thailand and New York City’s Chinatown. Only available at restaurants during Lunar New Year, “yee sang” consists primarily of thin slices of raw fish (usually salmon), shredded vegetables (carrot, pickled radish, ginger) and topped off with deep-fried crispy strips of flour, pounded ground nuts and sesame seeds. The ingredients are neatly arranged on a round platter like an unmixed salad dish and are accompanied by separate bowls of raw fish, dressing, plus five-spice powder and pepper which are stored in two “hong baos” or red packets.

The spices from the red packets are then mixed in with all the ingredients epitomizing a blessing for a rich and fruitful New Year. Usually the red packets are marked by random numbers and according to popular belief the numbers are considered lucky and can be used to purchase lottery tickets!

Next comes the dressing (plum sauce and oil) which is poured over the dish followed by squeezing lime juice over the slivers of raw fish and mixing it together. Finally the fun begins; the ingredients are mixed together vigorously with chopsticks by everyone at the table. While all this “food play” is taking place, people are also obliged to shout out “lo hei,” with the word “lo” meaning mix and “hei” being “to rise.” This is a very auspicious act as it portends to financial and personal success where future ventures will hopefully “rise and reach high levels”. Moreover, everyone involved in the mixing will have a hand in future success!

“Yee sang” is usually offered at restaurants a few days prior to the first day of Lunar New Year and is available in three different sized dishes with each size varying in price. For a good time try some delicious “yee sang” at the following restaurants:

- **Jaya Malaysian Restaurant**, 90 Baxter Street (at Walker Street), Tel: 212-219-3331
- **New Malaysia Restaurant**, 46-48 Bowery (between Canal & Bayard Streets), Tel: 212-964-0284
- **Nyonya**, 194 Grand Street (between Mulberry & Mott Streets), Tel: 212-334-3669
- **Penang Restaurant**, 41 Elizabeth Street (between Canal & Hester Streets), Tel: 212-431-8722
- **Singapore Café**, 69 Mott Street (at Canal Street), Tel: 212-964-0003

In addition to “yee sang,” restaurants, bakeries and supermarkets will also be unveiling other Lunar New Year specialities ranging from whole fish dishes symbolizing abundant prosperity to sweet desserts such as “xiu hou joes” or “crunchy smiley faces” which symbolize long-lasting happiness.

#### **About Chinatown New York City**

Chinatown New York City, combines Asian-American culture with the energy and influence of the most exciting city in the world. With over 200 restaurants, numerous Asian bakeries and tea houses, jewelry shops, arts and antique stores, an active nightlife and dozens of cultural attractions and landmarks, Chinatown stands as a world within a city. Whether dining, shopping, or strolling down the charming, narrow streets, visitors to Chinatown New York City, will find virtually limitless opportunities for new experiences and added insight.

Located on the east side of Lower Manhattan, Chinatown New York City is the largest in the United States. The neighborhood has been growing steadily since the mid-1800s, and today stands as a vibrant community offering the opportunity to enjoy and explore Asian-American culture. Chinatown New York City is easily accessible via many New York City MTA subways and buses, as well as several convenient area parking garages. For more information, visit [www.ExploreChinatown.com](http://www.ExploreChinatown.com).

Note to editors: NYC & Company, the city's official tourism marketing organization, is a private, membership-based non-profit dedicated to building New York City's economy and positive image through tourism and convention development, major events and the marketing of the city on a worldwide basis.

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