

Created by: Debra C. Argen

Dragon Palace

The Dragon Palace at the [Kempinski Hotel Beijing Lufthansa Center](#) in Beijing, China features a stunning ambience to complement the masterful cuisine.



Elegance and tradition are the words that immediately came to mind when Edward F. Nesta and I entered the Dragon Palace to have dinner in October 2006. This gorgeous restaurant features multiple dining rooms, some have cream and red walls trimmed with gold, red columns and bamboo plants, and the room that we ate in had beautiful polished burl wood walls adorned with Chinese paintings, elaborate chandeliers, and a red floral pattern carpet. Ornate mahogany chairs graced butter cream linen draped tables accessorized with sky blue napkins rolled into cornflower blue Chinese knot napkin holders, and set on striking cobalt plates with a dragon design. Cobalt glasses, gold footed dragon bowls with white porcelain bowls set on gold plates, gold spoons set on gold spoon rests, a double dragon etched on a glass lazy Susan, and a yellow lily in a round glass pebble filled bowl set on a carved wooden stand added interest to the room. Low Chinese music played in the background completing the gracious ambience.

When it comes to gastronomy, there are three major styles of cuisine in the world: Chinese, French, and Turkish, which all combine expert technique and mastery of ingredients. One of the most famous recipes of Chinese cuisine is Roasted Beijing (or Peking) Duck that demonstrates expert preparation, cooking skills, as well as mastery of technique. After the duck is roasted until it has a rich, deep amber glaze with a perfectly crisp crust, the chef cuts it with the precision of a surgeon into thin slices.



Edward loves roast duck, and since a trip to Beijing would not be complete without experiencing this famous delicacy, he selected the Roast Beijing Duck, and eagerly anticipated its arrival. When the duck arrived, there should have almost been a drum roll, as our server, Sally Liu (Lou Li Fang), beautifully attired in traditional red silk and black clothing and Chef Zhang, dressed in his chef coat and toque, rolled the duck out on a carving table to begin the presentation. Chef Zhang brought the duck tableside, and as he expertly sliced the duck, Sally Liu placed each slice of the duck on a thin pancake, added thinly sliced cucumber,

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onion, and Hoisin sauce, and then rolled the pancake into an edible present. When the Chef had sliced all of the duck, Sally Liu placed the plate of the pancake wrapped duck in front of Edward. I think I heard him sigh with his first bite, which he later confirmed as being fantastic.



I ordered Wok-Fried Prawns in Chili Oil with Broccoli, which were large succulent shrimp coated with a "just-right" level of spiciness sauce and surrounded with crispy tender broccoli. Although I did not eat any of the duck, I did take a few of the unfilled pancakes and filled them with the prawns, which were delicious.



One of the special rituals we experienced during dinner was the traditional tea ceremony. Tea is a very important part of Chinese culture, and while we were savoring our dinner, Zhu Yu Feng, the Tea Master, attired in blue silk and black clothing, would entertain and thrill us with the tea ceremony ritual of refilling our teacups from his long spouted teapot. This special teapot has a spout of approximately three feet long, and the Tea Master would arc the tea from a distance into our teacups, sometimes refilling the teacups by bending over backwards and pouring the tea over his head into our teacups, sometimes across his shoulder, over his arm, and sometimes by not even looking.



As soon as we drank a few sips of our tea, Zhu Yu Feng would return and refill our teacups. He was so quick and unobtrusive at refilling the teacups that sometimes we did not even notice that he had refilled them. We eventually lost count of the seemingly endless cups of tea that we drank just so that we could watch him in action.

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Dining at the Dragon Palace was a memorable culinary experience beginning with the ambience, continuing with excellent Chinese cuisine, and ending with the impeccable service.

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