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SHANGHAI

Xiao Jin Ling Yan Shui Ya Dian

Cured duck is one of the best snacks in the city.

By CHRISTOPHER ST. CAVISH

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Location

55 Yunnan Nan Lu near Ninghai Lu, Huangpu District 云南南路 55 号宁海东路
Shanghai, China

What to order

Nanjing salted duck (盐水鸭, yan shui ya)

This grimy corner store is Shanghai's go-to place for Nanjing snacks: old-duck-and-vermicelli soup, Nanjing soup dumplings, and cured duck. The first is nice if you like duck blood, gizzards, cilantro, and chewy fried tofu puffs in your duck soup. The second, don't bother. You're in Shanghai, eat Shanghai soup dumplings. The third is the best thing on the menu.

In the nineties, some American places probably would have called this "duck ham." In China, it's called "salt water" duck. The ducks are cleaned, salted, spiced (usually with Sichuan peppercorns), and then blanched in *lu shui*, which is a fragrant Chinese stock that develops flavor over time as it gets used and reused, like a compound stock. There are stocks in China that are supposedly many decades old.

The result is a blanched, chilled duck with a lightly cured taste. The skin is as pale as a cadaver—not the varnished wood of Peking duck, but, when done right, the salty skin snaps and gives way to creamy fat underneath.

CHINA, DUCK, SHANGHAI
