



ASIA

SPECIALISTS

SHANGHAI

Xibei Oat Noodle Village

This restaurant specializes in handmade oat noodles.

By CHRISTOPHER ST. CAVISH

Art by CHRISTOPHER ST. CAVISH

Location

6/F, Cloud Nine Shopping Center, 1018 Changning Lu near Kaixuan Lu,
Changning District 长宁路1018号 龙之梦购物中心 6楼近凯旋路
Shanghai, China

What to order

Roasted lamb chop; "yuyu" 莜面鱼鱼 in mushroom broth; oat rolls with tomato sauce; Grandpa Zhang's handmade fermented fine noodles; Xibei-style...

Xibei Oat Noodle Village took the rustic food of northwestern China and made it into a national chain with IPO dreams. But what's cool about Xibei Oat Noodle Village is that it is a chain that champions handmade food.

When the documentary television show *A Bite of China* came out in 2012, it made traditional food cool again. Since then the restaurant has been buying up recipes and rights to foods featured in it. When the second season of *A Bite of China* came out, they paid about a million US dollars to buy up all of the handmade fermented noodles from "[Grandpa Zhang](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vosr9bf37hU)" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vosr9bf37hU>)" for the next three years.

What they stake their reputation on these days, though, is a noodle made from oats, made by smushing out dough with your palm, rolling it into a tube, and crowding it into a steamer. The end result looks like a bamboo

basket of rigatoni. Once cooked, the noodles stick to each other—and to eat them, you tear them apart and swipe them through a spiced tomato sauce.

The rest of the menu changes once a year, though a few staples seem to hang on: *you mian yu yu*, a tapered “fish” noodle made by rolling a small tube of dough between your palms; lots of roasted lamb parts (shanks, ribs, etc); made-to-order tofu; and a sour and spicy dish of cold, slippery noodles and spongy wheat gluten that tastes a lot better than it sounds.

CHINA, NOODLES, SHANGHAI, XINJIANG
