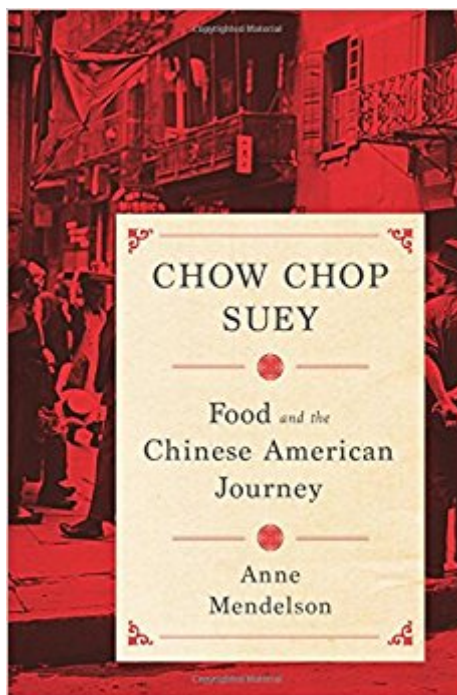


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# Chow Chop Suey: Food And The Chinese American Journey (Arts And Traditions Of The Table: Perspectives On Culinary History)



## Synopsis

Chinese food first became popular in America under the shadow of violence against Chinese aliens, a despised racial minority ineligible for United States citizenship. The founding of late-nineteenth-century "chop suey" restaurants that pitched an altered version of Cantonese cuisine to white patrons despite a virulently anti-Chinese climate is one of several pivotal events in Anne Mendelson's thoughtful history of American Chinese food. Chow Chop Suey uses cooking to trace different stages of the Chinese community's footing in the larger white society. Mendelson begins with the arrival of men from the poorest district of Canton Province during the Gold Rush. She describes the formation of American Chinatowns and examines the curious racial dynamic underlying the purposeful invention of hybridized Chinese American food, historically prepared by Cantonese-descended cooks for whites incapable of grasping Chinese culinary principles. Mendelson then follows the eventual abolition of anti-Chinese immigration laws and the many demographic changes that transformed the face of Chinese cooking in America during and after the Cold War. Mendelson concludes with the post-1965 arrival of Chinese immigrants from Taiwan, Southeast Asia, and many regions of mainland China. As she shows, they have immeasurably enriched Chinese cooking in America but tend to form comparatively self-sufficient enclaves in which they, unlike their predecessors, are not dependent on cooking for a white clientele.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Chow Chop Suey is an eye-opener, a book that will give everyone a deep appreciation of the exquisite skill required to produce authentic Chinese food and the sweep of history that brought Chinese cooking to America. Anne Mendelson's prodigious research has given us a highly respectful, insightful, refreshing, wonderfully written, and utterly compelling account of the role and plight of Chinese restaurant workers in this country. I learned something new on every page. (Marion Nestle, professor of nutrition, food studies, and public health at New York University and author of *Soda Politics*) Well-written and impeccably researched, *Chow Chop Suey* is a beautiful ode both to the history of Chinese Americans and the intriguing ways in which China's rich food culture continues to take root here and flourish. Anne Mendelson's section on Chinese American cookbook writers is nothing less than a classic, for she brings sense and order to a long overlooked field with her customary clear perspective and dry wit. Mendelson is one of my favorite food writers and I'd expect nothing less, but this time she's outdone herself. (Carolyn Phillips, author of *All Under Heaven: Recipes from the 35 Cuisines of China* and *The Dim Sum Field Guide*) There are other accounts of the American enthusiasm for Chinese food and the simultaneous persecution of Chinese immigrants. What makes Anne Mendelson's *Chow Chop Suey* unique is how it integrates cooking styles with American and Chinese cultural contrasts. Mendelson never loses sight of the food and how Chinese restaurants and American "experts" of various sorts shaped a cuisine that was both exotic and irresistible. No one has discussed in such a fascinating and authoritative way the American misunderstanding of basic Chinese culinary principles, the importance of a few key cookbooks and restaurants, and the gradual awakening of American palates to something resembling actual Chinese food in the postwar decades. Fun to read, judicious, and above all authoritative. (Paul Freedman, author of *Out of the East: Spices and the Medieval Imagination*) *Chow Chop Suey* is a well-written and insightful guide to the Chinese food scene in America. In a field full of myths, Anne Mendelson's book is accurate and detailed. A delightful read! (Eugene N. Anderson, author of *Food and Environment in Early and Medieval China*) Anne Mendelson brings together political and culinary history, showing that it was by inventing quasi-Chinese dishes that titillated American palates that Cantonese immigrants found a way to survive anti-Asia persecution. Gripping, authoritative, and timely. (Rachel Laudan, author of *Cuisine and Empire: Cooking in World History*) A deeply researched look at the history of Chinese food in the U.S. I'll be dipping into it for years. (Wall Street Journal) A timely and nuanced reminder that Chinese-American identity has long been conflated with Chinese food. (Peter Ho Davies *Times Literary Supplement*) Anne Mendelson writes like the engaged scholar she is, with dry wit and easy, uncompromising erudition.... [*Chow Chop Suey*] is full of wonder. (New York Times) A solid choice

for readers interested in Chinese immigration and U.S.-China history, as well as those curious about American foodways and culinary culture. (Library Journal)

Anne Mendelson is a culinary historian and freelance writer specializing in food-related subjects. She has worked as editorial consultant and collaborator on several cookbooks and has contributed entries to the Oxford Encyclopedia of Food and Drink in America (2005). She is the author of *Milk* (2008) and *Stand Facing the Stove* (1996).

Fun to read. Very entertaining

Excellent condition

*Chow Chop Suey: Food and the Chinese American Journey* by Anne Mendelson is a free NetGalley ebook that I read in early November. Really picking up speed after Chapter 3, this book examines every facet of the United States' fascination with Chinese food; from its history, preparations, and adaptability, to its recipe-making, unfounded discrimination, and rebirth in the forms of both food court and fine dining flavors.

If you are like most Americans, you will have visited a Chinese restaurant at least one time in your life. You might have hated it (I wanted a hamburger, but then I was 3 at the time), enjoyed it, or just ate there because you needed sustenance. *Chow Chop Suey* attempts to tell how those restaurants came to be and why they serve the food they do. Anne Mendelson provides a blended history in *Chow Chop Suey*, a history of the Chinese coming to America (or as it was called in 1800's China - Gold Mountain), their reception, and their coping which included opening food joints and laundries. She discusses what was likely served then, where and how cooking supplies arrived, who did the cooking, and why. Later chapters delve into early recipe collections, various cookbooks through the years, how the reception of Chinese immigrants changed over time and why which also includes the changes in Chinese restaurant menus and locations. If you are looking for inspiring dishes, or a history of your favorite Chinese takeout meal, you will need to keep looking. However, if you want to learn about little-known American history and an important food-way in that history, do read *Chow Chop Suey*!

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