

# Chinese Dumpling Delicacies Have Astrological Flavor

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CHICAGO, IL, US, October 7, 2013 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Forget about pot stickers. At the Defachang restaurant in China's Xi'an city dumpling master chef Ma Shunli serves up 318 different varieties of dumplings in all sizes and shapes with every imaginable filling - a world record by some accounts.

National Public Radio correspondent [Anthony Kuhn](#) reports that Defachang's flagship restaurant is located at the center of old Xi'an city. Here Ma creates her dumpling delicacies with an eye on the Chinese calendar and the 24-solar-terms divisions first identified by astrologers in ancient China.

In this system there are twice as many astrological "signs" than found in western astrology and, therefore, half the number of degrees in every sign. In the west, each of the 12 astrological signs has 30 degrees compared with 15 degrees per solar term in the Chinese system.

At the Defachang restaurant, Ma serves up a new menu of cosmically coordinated dumplings every 15 days. During each solar term certain vegetables are at their freshest and most nutritious, she explains.

The Defachang restaurant's first floor serves northwestern China-style dumplings and noodles to customers looking for a quick, simple meal. The second floor hosts dumpling banquets in a large room usually filled by four groups, and the third floor has private rooms for the "power dumpling" business crowd, Kuhn reports.

On the wall are lists of seasonal menus that are planned to coincide with the changing solar terms. There are 15 all dumpling banquets, the most expensive costing \$1,000 for a table of 10 people.

Kuhn says one of the restaurant's most famous products is a dumpling called the Lotus Seedpod Rising Above the Water, which is stuffed with pork and lotus root. Like the seedpod it has 13 holes punched on the top to symbolize the 13 imperial dynasties that made Xi'an their capital.

Traditionally, dumplings in China have been reserved for the most special, festive occasions - like weddings or ringing in Chinese New Year. But too many urban dwelling Chinese dumplings are no longer special, Kuhn observes.

"They're just another choice at mealtime, along with hamburgers, pizza and sushi. You can grab a bag of frozen ones out of the freezer and cook them up in minutes," he says.

But don't get the idea that urban Chinese are blasé about traditional knowledge systems that have survived the test of time. Suppressed for decades, astrology is making a comeback in China and not just in upscale dumpling restaurants.

American astrologer David Railey has traveled and lectured extensively in China. He says interest in traditional [Chinese astrology](#) is on the rise in the country but can't begin to match the urban population's enthusiasm for western astrology.

“Young people in China today found western astrology on the Internet and love it,” he says. For example, Railey says the western astrology channel for the Sina.com online newspaper in China pulls about 250,000 unique visitors a day, or more than 90 million a year. And other web portals for popular sun sign astrology have large followings as well.

“Western astrologers receive a warm reception in China today. Serious astrology students wait in line for hours at book signing events and lectures are well attended.

“If there are 60 chairs in the lecture hall they will all be filled and another 90 people will be standing,” he said.

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