



QIMIN ORGANIC HOTPOT BY APPLE MANDY

Sourcing organic products in Shanghai is a formidable task. Likewise, finding a restaurant that provides a full organic menu is extremely rare. But with the city's thriving economy and increasingly cosmopolitan outlook, Shanghai's diners are veering towards higher quality food — and healthier ones, too. The good news is: some inspired chefs and restaurateurs are happily heeding the call and serving up some wholesome, delicious creations.

One such restaurant that has made its mark on the local organic culinary trail is Qimin Organic Hotpot. Named after an ancient Chinese cooking and farming manual, *Qimin Yao Shu* (Essential Techniques for the Peasantry) first published in 544 AD, the two-month-old restaurant specialises in a creative brand of 'from farm to table'. The brainchild of Taiwan-based Stephanie Ho, CEO of YFY Biotech, a subsidiary of Yuen Foong Yu Group that pioneered organic food products in Taiwan, Qimin Organic Hotpot serves organically grown vegetables harvested from a 35 ha Kunshan farm in Jiangsu province, free-range chickens raised in Taihu, as well as Australian grass-fed meats free of hormones and antibiotics.

The restaurant is spread over two stories in a very modern concrete building, with interiors decked out in shades of red, grey and black, and manned by equally stylishly dressed staff in rose pink satin uniforms. Even the built-in stoves at the tables, the requisite for a hot pot restaurant, do not detract from the evidently stylish setting.

Organic Qimin Hotpot offers a fairly extensive à la carte menu, where you can choose your appetisers, broths and mains for the hot pot, as well as good-value set menus (from RMB 120), which include an appetiser platter, a choice of meat, vegetable, and broth and a complimentary organic drink. Choose from a selection of broths, including an organic vegetables and wild mushroom consommé (RMB 30), dried bonito and kumo soup (RMB 30) and the house signature chicken broth (RMB 30). The latter is prepared using two free-range chickens according to a Qimin recipe that uses a 1,500-year-old technique, where the chicken



OTHER ORGANIC EATS

Not organic restaurants per se, but these alternatives do serve up some organic dishes.

MOONSHA

L3, No. 5 On the Bund, Zhong Shan Dong Yi Lu
Tel: +(86) 21-6323-1117

This elegant restaurant offers teppanyaki specials as well as an organic set menu.

EL WILLY

20 Donghu Lu, by Huaihai Zhong Lu
Tel: +(86) 21-5404-5757

This serves a delicious modern Spanish menu, as well as organic chicken, goose and vegetables.

bones are smashed while the meat escapes unscratched. The chicken is simmered for six hours at 85°C to draw out the rich, wholesome flavours.

To complete your hot pot experience, choose from eight delicious dipping sauces including the very flavourful Qimin sauce that's made from a blend of 15 of ingredients including aniseed and sesame.

Kick off your meal with the fragrant mixed wild mushrooms (RMB 35) and the preserved organic vegetables (RMB 15), a beautiful medley of crunchy carrots, cucumber, radish and celery. Another interesting appetiser is the five-spiced deviled egg (RMB 35); if you are expecting the traditional combination of mayonnaise, Dijon mustard and paprika, you will be in for a surprise — these are tea eggs piped with smooth five-spice topping. The juicy boiled Sichuan chicken (RMB 35) is another traditional favourite served with a twist — without the tongue-numbing Sichuan peppercorns. Instead, the tender chicken slices are served with chopped peanuts, garlic, chilli and organic black bean soy sauce.

For mains, you can choose from beautifully marbled Matsusaka pork (RMB 80), free-range chicken (RMB 130), lamb (RMB 80) or boneless beef short rib (RMB 80). The raw meats arrive fresh and neatly sliced, accompanied by some greens. To enjoy, simply dip it into the simmering broth in the hot pot to cook to your preferred doneness, then dab on your sauce of choice.

End your meal with an organic sweet-and-sour vinegar drink (RMB 45) to aid digestion. Served in a shot glass, it is made from plum, natural acetic acid bacteria and rice vinegar. **a**

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