

# Bring on the Duck

CHEF REN ZHENG BING'S MASTERFUL CULINARY SKILLS SHINE AT MR CHOW

WORDS BY VANESSA PASCALE

**M**outhwatering dark duck meat topped with crispy, golden skin expertly carved up and plated—these are what Beijing Duck dreams are made of and what MR CHOW does best. For 50 years now, the iconic restaurant chain—with locations in NYC, Miami, London, and Vegas, founded by Chinese American actor-restaurateur Michael Chow—has served loyal patrons authentic Beijing cuisine, including their prized Beijing Duck.

Considered the “crown jewel of Chinese cuisine,” the Beijing Duck was once reserved for the emperor. Today, MR CHOW's diners can enjoy the coveted 100-page, 700-year-old recipe that Chef Ren Zheng Bing has perfected and trained MR CHOW's global culinary team on preparing. First, Chef Ren cleans the duck, then carefully separates the skin from the meat while still intact. Then, the duck receives a bath to seal the pores and is hung to dry for 24 hours. The drier the



duck, the crispier the skin. Chef Ren then roasts the duck in the restaurant's specialized oven. It's a timely process that yields incredibly-delicious results.

The carving of the duck—done tableside—is a theatrical presentation not to be missed. The chef swiftly and meticulously slices the duck horizontally, then arranges the carved pieces of succulent duck and crispy skin on a large platter. Expert knife skills are essential to Chinese cooking since it's said that the knife directly affects the taste and character of a dish. "My knife is the heart and soul of my food," says Chef Ren, whose adept knife skills inspired the nickname, "Man of Steel."

The protégé of Chinese master chef Qian Yibin honed his craft working in Shanghai's renowned Gutai restaurant from 2004–2010. In 2010, Chef Ren joined MR CHOW, and presently works in their Beverly Hills restaurant. Over the years, Chef Ren has garnered a list of awards and honors, including the title of "Leader in the culinary industry in Jiangsu province" by the Culinary Association of Jiangsu province in 2009 and special Gold Award in the fourth World Culinary competition in China.

The celebrated chef graciously prepared a special menu for our dinner in Miami this past July, and every dish was exceptional. Once we are seated in MR CHOW's grand dining room, a champagne trolley rolls up to our table to present us with flutes of champagne. We toast to the night and sip our bubbly until the first course—Five Spice Tofu, Shanghai Little Dragon, and Vermicelli with Lobster—appears. The dishes are served family style and boast rich, layered flavors. The Second Course is comprised of tasty Green Prawns, delicious Fiery Beef, along with Four Color Cauliflower and Yangzhou Sautéed Rice. The Fiery Beef is the star of this course; we all go back for a second serving.

In between courses, our attentive servers ensure that we are well taken care of and have everything we need. The service at MR CHOW is as excellent as their food. And then the most anticipated course arrives: the Beijing Duck. I pull out my phone to capture the impressive, Insta-worthy carving of the duck. Entirely deserving of the label, Best Duck in the World, the meat and skin are perfect—the skin has a tasty crunch, while the moist duck meat melts in your mouth. As a self-proclaimed duck connoisseur, I make sure to savor every delectable bite. At this point, our palates are satiated and our stomachs are full, but there is always room for dessert. Without hesitation, we dive into the coconut cake, cheesecake, and lychees as soon as they are set down on the table. Definitely order the coconut cake—it's light, sweet, and the perfect ending to a flawless dining experience. ML

*MR CHOW is located in  
W South Beach at 2201 Collins Avenue,  
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