

Gift From the Heaven: Great Fishes—Special River Food From the Upper Reach of the Yangtze River in Modern Times

LIU Jing^{[a],*}

^[a]Institute of History and Geography, Southwest University, Chongqing, China.

*Corresponding author.

Received 6 November 2014; accepted 2 February 2015
Published online 26 March 2015

Abstract

The main kinds of fishes exploited, utilized enjoyed by the people in Yunnan province and Guizhou province in modern times were as the following: sinocyclocheilus, channa argus, noodles sausage fish, shrimps, giant salamander and so on. The main kinds of special fishes from river exploited, utilized, and enjoyed by the people in Sichuan Province were as the following: pelteobagrus fulvidraco, Anguilla Japonica, Leiocassis longirostris and so on. The special river food dishes in Sichuan province mainly included following dishes: Silurus asotus roasted with garlic, fish parched with minced meat, procyprisrabaudi parched with soup, Leiocassis longirostris steamed, fish with five shredded ingredients, fragrantly fermented fishes. The special river food dishes in Yunnan and Guizhou provinces mainly include the following dishes: Sinocyclocheilus, fish balls cooked with bamboo shoots, eight treasure and Salamander, spicy fermented tender skinned fish. The people in the provinces of basin of Yangtze River's the upper reach, have accumulated some experience in utilizing fishes.

Key words: The upper reach of the Yangtze River; River food; In modern times; Eating

Liu, J. (2015). Gift From the Heaven-Great Fishes—Special River Food From the Upper Reach of the Yangtze River in Modern Times. *Canadian Social Science*, 11(3), 189-196. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/css/article/view/6596>
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/6596>

INTRODUCTION

The kinds of the fishes exploited and utilized by the people who lived in the basin of the upper reach of the Yangtze

River was relatively larger. The cooking methods were diverse. The fishes exploited, utilized, and enjoyed by the people of Sichuan were very different from those of the people in Yunnan and Guizhou provinces, because of the environmental difference of the rivers, and lake in the two different regions. The cooking methods applied to cook the special river food, pay attention not only to the essence of the local dish, but also to the features of the river food themselves. With the development of economy, especially the population inward move inward during the Anti-Japanese War, the special river food of the Yangtze River upper reach was exploited and spread well. A large group of classical dishes were invented at that time.

1. THE EXAMPLES OF THE SPECIAL RIVER FOOD IN THE UPPER REACH OF THE YANGTZE RIVER

1.1 Yunnan and Guizhou District

The natural waters in Yunnan and Guizhou province are not large. We were going to mainly talk about the special river food within the waters of the Dianchi Lake. The kinds of river food utilized and enjoyed within the waters of the Dianchi Lake were relatively limited. Because the water environment of Dianchi Lake basin is suitable for the growing of margarya melanoide and shrimps. The utilization of the river food is relatively enough and widely¹. The special river food in Guizhou Province is much less, the most famous among which is the giant salamander.

¹The giant salamander, now has been listed in Wild Animal protected by law in China. To eat giant salamander is forbidden by law. During the time discussed in this paper, the giant had not been prevented from being eaten by law. The giant salamander doesn't belong to fish, it belongs to amphibian. Because in the past people thought it was a kind of fish, it was discussed in this paper.

1.1.1 Sinocyclocheilus

Sinocyclocheilus was a kind of special fish growing only in Dianchi Lake Basin, which tasted delicious, and could only be harvested seasonally. So people competed against each other to eat it. During the republic of China, Sinocyclocheilus was recommended as classic dish in the Guidance of Travel. The cooking methods of Sinocyclocheilus were as the following: boiling in spring water, cooking with pepper and salt, cooking with sugar and vinegar, steaming, cooking with fermented soya beans.

“To cook Sinocyclocheilus with spring water, no oil needed, sinocyclocheilus can spill oil itself, and the taste of the soup can be extraordinarily delicate”. “Cooking with spring water, there was oil floating on the surface of the soup, the taste of the soup can be extraordinarily delicate, no matter how the big or small sinocyclocheilus is, the fish should be worth 15 grams of silver (Yang, 2001). “There were two ways of cooking sinocyclocheilus. The first, pepper and salted sinocyclocheilus, that was to fry sinocyclocheilus with oil until it turns yellow, and the flavor of the fish with pepper and salt” (Travel Guide in Yunnan, 1938, p.56). The taste of the dish can be delicate. The second, sugar and vinegar cooked sinocyclocheilus, fry sinocyclocheilus until it turned yellow, then add a small amount of sugar, vinegar, and pea powder. The flavor can be extremely tasty. Besides this, there was steaming, cooking with fermented soya beans. During the republic of China, sinocyclocheilus steamed with fermented soya beans, the taste could be more special (Kunming Municipality Annuals, 2007, p.96).

1.1.2 Channa Argus

In the basin of the Dianchi Lake, people loved eating channa argus. It was not as dear as the Sinocyclocheilus, so it was more popular. “Channa argus, nice food, served in restaurant and banquet. The skin of the mullets was usually peeled, cut into slices, the slices were called mullet slice. It was a pity that the slices contain spinule.” As a member of traditional Yunnan dish, channa argus were cooked in various different ways including mullet slices stuck to the pan. That was to cut the mullet into thin slices which wrap hams, meat stuffing, then coat the slices with egg white, fry them in hot oil, top the slices with pepper and salt when serving the dish. The structure of the dish was clear; the color difference was obvious, tender and fragile, very fresh, extremely enjoyable food while you were drinking wine. There were channa argus slices stuck to the pan among the famous dishes sold in Big Restaurant near the Green Lake which provided banquet service during the reign of Guangxu Emperor. Channa argus slices were also very common in common people’s family and small restaurant (Liu, 1997, p.344). The channa argus slices stuck to the pan of east moon mansion on Huguo street, in Kunming has been mentioned by Wang Zhengqi as famous dish during the Anti-Japanese War.

The flavor of the channa argus soup was fresh and delicate. When Luo yang ru in the republic of China talked about the good taste of the soap served in the banquet provided by the old fashioned restaurants such as: Chang mei ju, Cai zheng yuan, Lin chun yuan, he pointed out that the good taste of the soup come from the channa argus. However, later some restaurants relish the soup only through relish. So the taste of soup was not pretty good (Luo, 1996, pp.86-87). Guoqiao rice noodles, one of the traditional famous snacks in Yunnan, included channa argus as its important garnish. The Channa argus could largely enhanced the freshness of the soup.

1.1.3 Noodle Intestines Fish

Actually it was crucian whose stomach has been nested by parasite. It was very common around the Zhaotong area. The so called Fish noodle intestines in the stomach of the fish were parasite in the fish’s stomach. Fish noodle intestines were produced in the stomach of crucian in the fields. The fish noodle intestines was white, long and flat shaped. The fish intestine noodles, taken out of the stomach of the fish, preserved for years, they will seem to creep when put into water. The taste of the fish noodle intestines was extremely tasty. Zhaotong County Annals in the republic of China recorded that fish noodle intestines, growing in the stomach of fish, as wide as noodles, fresh and fatty, were cherished near and far. Fish intestines noodles have been used as best dish to serve the distinguished guests by the Yi people in Zhaotong.

The way of eating the fish noodle intestines was to dry them with hot sunshine, then eat them: Every year around the harvest of the rice, the peasants collected tens of the fish noodle intestines, band them together, then dried them under the sun, sold them when they were dried. They were praised for its good taste, cherished far and near, when served in the banquet, the price could be very high! The newly edited Yunnan General Annuals said that noodle intestines fish, or called noodle intestines crucian, these ones dried with hot sunshine, were sold to different counties, also called noodle fish. Yaoan County Annuals pointed out the food safety problem caused by eating the noodle crucian, Noodle crucian, was the parasite lived in the stomach of fish, not its intensity, ate them after thoroughly cooking it, or it will be harmful, taking care was proper. The cooking method mentioned here was frying it with full, thick flames, then boiled it with thinner and small flames.

1.1.4 Hemiculter Leucisculus

Hemiculter leucisculus belongs to culterinae. Hemiculter leucisculus is small in size, but it was widely enjoyed. It was of relatively large economic values. People ate it in the Dianchi Lake basin, which was very common. They often used it for making “za” (Tan, 2004, p.82). Hemiculter leucisculus was very popular with the people among the Dianchi Lake basin. It has been valued as “the finest fish” (Long, 2007, p.68). About the cooking

method, “za” means “drying something with hot sunshine, and brewing it in the salt and rice. The common way of enjoying hemiculter leucisculus in modern times was as the following: coat hemiculter leucisculus with flour, then fry them in the oil. The texture of hemiculter leucisculus will be fragile and tasty, and can also be preserved for a relatively long period.

1.1.5 Shrimp and Snail

Dianchi Lake abounded in snails, shrimps. The habit of eating snail has been existed for a long time. “When they snails grew fat and big, they would travel almost everywhere to breed, so the lakeside was full of boats which was boated there to catch the snails. They took the meat of the snail out of its shell, then sold it in the market. The hotels, the restaurants would buy the meat, and with it they would cook nice dishes such as snail meat cooked in soy sauce, and stir-frying the snail meat. Only the shells of the snail could mount to a small hill. There shells of the snails were always been buried in the snail bay or the snail shoals (Tong, 2004, p.24). People harvested plenty of snails in Dianchi Lake. Boats full loaded with snails travelling to the side of the river could always be seen. The shells of the snails removed, the meat of the snails was washed very cleanly and then sold in the market. Every day the quantity of snail meat sold in the market was never small.

The fresh shrimps growing in the Dianchi Lake were extremely rich in nutrition, especially in protein, were first class shrimps. There were two ways of enjoying the small shrimps caught in the Dianchi Lake: first drying it with hot sunshine, second making shrimp sauce with the shrimps. Songming County Annuals in the republic of China recorded that among the shrimps, the small shrimp had the largest quantity, and the local people used the small shrimp for making shrimp sauce. The flavor was very good. Kunming City Annuals recorded that the quantity of the shrimps got was never large. Most of the shrimps were dried with hot sunshine and sold in the market. The rest of the shrimps were enjoyed while they were fresh. The crabs were rather small. People did not feed on crab. Besides this, the shrimps flesh was also enjoyed. Dianchi Lake shrimp flesh was a famous traditional dish, pink and white color, crispy outside, fragile and tender inside, fresh and delicious.

1.1.6 Eel

The people in Yunnan had a very special and smart way of enjoying the eel. Eel, got rid of the head and the bone of the eel (Did not wash away the blood of the eel, because without the blood of the eel, the flavor of the eel will not be fresh enough), half kilograms of pure eel meat, stir-fried with oil, added 100 grams of rice, 100 grams of Zhaotong soy bean, monosodium glutamate, fried all the above ingredients together, fried the dry the skin of the meat until it turns yellow, 250 grams of leeks cut into 3.3 cm each piece. Then put more than 500 grams of eel flesh and the pork skin into the gammon soup, and cooking for half an hour, and added a handful of leeks, the soup would

be delicious and nourishing. The dish was sold in many restaurants in city of Kunming. The Yuxi restaurant sold the best eel flesh rice noodles (Yunnan Travel Guidance, 1956, p.56). During the Anti-Japanese War, Wang Zhenqi mentioned that the rice noodles he ate in Kunming were always including eel flesh. Eel flesh rice noodles were a kind of traditional food.

1.2 Sichuan District

Sichuan was a province which has many rivers, rich aquatic resources. The number of kinds of the river food utilized in modern times was relatively larger. And generally speaking, the river food used was of high quality, good taste. Among the numerous river food, there was ordinary *Pelteobagrus fulvidraco*, *Beaufortia*, and precious longsnout catfish, *Anguilla japonica*.

1.2.1 *Pelteobagrus Fulvidraco*

Pelteobagrus fulvidraco was widely scattered in the upper reach of the Yangtze River. Although the *Pelteobagrus fulvidraco* belonged to Lower class fish, it was very popular in house of common people. There were many different ways of cooking the *pelteobagrus fulvidraco*. The Ways of cooking the *pelteobagrus fulvidraco* included the following: “za zu”, “frying and baking”, “cooking in soup”. *Pelteobagrus fulvidraco* was famous in whole China. *Pelteobagrus fulvidraco* can be used for “za zu”. The taste of fried and baked *pelteobagrus fulvidraco* was pretty nice. Shi Ming in Dong Han dynasty explained that “za” means brewing the food with salt and rice, when it was mature, ate it.” Today the Miao people still preserve fish in this way.

Along the upper reach of the Yangtze River, *pelteobagrus fulvidraco* was mainly used for cooking soup. Jiangjin County Annuals said that there was a small fish, usually called “Huang gu ding”, color yellow, with thorn on its neck side which can hurt people. Changning County Annuals said that nearby the city, there was a lot of *pelteobagrus fulvidraco* which only be used for cooking soup. Xuanhan County Annuals said that the soup made of the *pelteobagrus fulvidraco* was fresh and delicate and it also had very good lactagogue effect. Now we still stew the *pelteobagrus fulvidraco*. Considering its good lactagogue effect, lying-in women often drank the *pelteobagrus fulvidraco* soup.

1.2.2 *Beaufortia*

Beaufortia was regarded as a local specialty, about 3.3 centimeters long, the stomach of the *beaufortia* was flat, very close to the rock in the water, the fishers moved away the rock, then put the a bamboo basket where the rocks were, the fish would swim into it, the fresh fish was very crisp and fragile (Bazhong County Annuals).

The fish mentioned here ought to be *beaufortia*. “*Beaufortia* was small and flat in shape, moving along the rocks in water.” (Dingyuan Ting Annuals) The cooking method here may be frying or something similar, so the dish could be crispy and fragile.

1.2.3 *Anguilla Japonica*

“Green eel, Maybe one kind of eel, its color was green, as though it looks like snake, without scales, very different from the yellow eel, with fin on its back, and green eel steamed, tasting very good.”(Xinfan County Annuals) Green white eel was super nutritious, regarded as first class fish. “White eel, tastes thick and delicious, rich in nutriment, good for health, treasured by the people of the county. (Xuan Han County Annuals).The white eel was regarded as first class fish whose the nourishing effect was widely recognized.

1.2.4 *Leiocassis Longirostris*

Leiocassis longirostris, has a reputation of jia ling delicacy. The price of the *leiocassis longirostris* in market was high. “The selling price of the *leiocassis longirostris* was the highest among the catfishes. Ba County Annuals recorded that *leiocassis longirostris*, usually called “fei tuo”, also called “jiang tuan”, the creature called fat tuo, has large mouth and stomach, yellow back and white belly, no scales, *leiocassis longirostris* steamed, the taste of which can be superb. It was the first class river fish. Steamed *leiocassis longirostris* was a classical dish in Sichuan Cuisine. Light flavor and freshness are very important for this dish which highlights the original flavor of the *leiocassis longirostris*. Steaming *leiocassis longirostris* with the meat broth can fully release its freshness.

1.2.5 Other Aquatic Products

Changshou County Annuals recorded that *coreius heterokon* was round body, tiny scales, white color, tender flesh suitable for steaming, just too many thorns, and has a nick name “Chu shui lan”(means easily rotten out of water). Besides *coreius heterokon* steamed, there was also roasted *coreius heterokon*. *Coreius heterokon*, whose fat fish was tender and delicious, was rich in fat.

Chengdu residents also liked eating shrimps. The shrimps were eaten in a very special way. Everyone attended the banquet and ate the shrimps in Chengdu. The fresh and vigorous shrimps were immersed in the mixture of wine, shallot, and vinegar, then covered it with a bowl, then took away the bowl, the shrimps jumped out of the container, all the guest tried to catch and enjoyed the shrimps.

2. THE SPECIAL RIVER FOOD DISHES IN BASIN OF YANGTZE RIVER UPPER REACHES

2.1 Sichuan District

2.1.1 Catfish Roasted With Garlic

The catfish roasted with garlic was a classical dish in the Sichuan Cuisine. The catfish roasted with garlic of the Daijiang cao tang Restaurant in west suburban of Chengdu, was the most famous. In the twenty-sixth year of the Republic of China, the owner of the restaurant: Zhou

ling rui opened a small thatched cottage restaurant there. Later, the business gradually became booming. The stream passing the three holed bridge to the Huan hua stream was rich in catfish. Zhou caught the catfish in the river, cooked it, then sold to customers. The catfish roasted with garlic served by Zhou, was tender and smooth, salty and a little spicy, a bit sour and sweet, tasty and fresh. As early as the 1940s, this dish was praised as the famous delicacy of Sichuan (Zhang, 2007, p.52). Daijiang cottage serves many kinds of catfish, catfish roasted with garlic, Huan hua catfish, cream catfish, asparagus lettuce catfish, all these catfishes served were all very crispy and tender, tasty and fresh, classified as the first class dish of Chengdu catfish dishes. People even called them “Zhou catfish”.

The catfish roasted with garlic has some connection with Xipu Catfish in Xipu town. At that time, many restaurants in Chengdu served this dish. The name of the dish was directly written as Xipu catfish. The Zhou’s catfish was roasted in a soft way, a little sweet, this was their difference.

2.1.2 Fish Parched With Minced Meat

Fish parched with Minced meat of Zhenjiang mansion was the most famous. Zhenjiang mansion founded in the early years of the republic of China, was located in the Northwest of Old Nan door Bridge. It was two-story building structured with wood and mud. Because its location was near the river, so the building was named Zhenjiang lou. It was the most famous restaurant in Chengdu during the Republic of China period. The founder of the restaurant was not clear. At the beginning it just was an ordinary restaurant, but has its special advantages in cooking fish and shrimp. So many customers were attracted there. (At that time there were a lot of people selling fish and shrimp below the bridge.) The river food served in the restaurant was very special, especially famous for the fish parched with minced meat. This dish was characterized in crispy and fragrant, white and fresh fish, proper salty and light flavor. It was awesome to enjoy this dish with Shao xing wine.

2.1.3 *Procypris Rabaudi* Parched

Procypris rabaudi parched was the specialty of famous restaurant in East of Sichuan. It was also a relatively spicy dish in the river food cuisine of Sichuan. The *procypris rabaudi* parched served in the Yi zhi Shi restaurant of Chengdu, had tender fish, fresh and light spicy flavor, shiny color. Yi zhi shi was an original famous canteen in Chengdu, founded in 1920 years. The name of the restaurant means “To nourish body, to lengthen the life span” specialized in banquet dishes. In 1949, the restaurant moved to Chongqing, hired some of the chefs who once worked for white rose canteen, Chang mei xuan canteen. The *procypris rabaudi* parched with minced meat, steamed fat fish head, Xipu catfish, all these were its specialties. Steamed fat fish head was very fresh and tender when enjoyed with Mao jiang vinegar. To cook *procypris rabaudi* parched, we needed fresh soup, and

gammon dice. The so called parching here, actually it is to boil the rock carp in soup. The key point is to let the fish absorb the soup naturally when cooking with this method. When the rock carp fish well cooked, the oil and juice can be seen but no soup, thick fresh and little spicy taste, tender and smooth fish (Du, 1982, p.129).

2.1.4 Steamed Leiocassis Longirostris

During the Anti-Japanese War, the roasted leiocassis longirostris, the steamed leiocassis longirostris, the roasted leiocassis longirostris, leiocassis longirostris cooked with pring bamboo shoot, leiocassis longirostris with silver stomach which were cooked by the famous cooks: Zheng zhu hua, Zhang shi jie who worked in the Yunliu canteen located near the Jialing River were famous near and far. Besides the fantastic cooking craft of the cooks, the super quality of the leiocassis longirostris growing there also contributes a lot to the good taste. The Zhong ba shoal of Beibei is located in the lower reaches of the Jialing River. This section of the Jialing River has many shoals, many little bays, and there were deep waters and long gorges. All these provide very superior conditions for the fishes to go through cold winter, seek food and breed. It is also a very important place for the leiocassis longirostris to lay eggs (Beibei District Annuals,1989, p.48).

Besides the main river food dishes mentioned above, there were also many other kinds of dishes recorded in the Chengdu Overall View. Chengdu banquet dishes included crispy skinned fresh fish, spicy vinegar fish, sugar and vinegar fish, fish slices, steamed catfish, steamed bass, steamed fat turtle, fish dumplings, fried fish slices, fried big fish, fragrant fermented fish, catfish roasted with garlic, fat soft shelled turtle roasted with fish stomach, first class fish ball and so on. The dishes made from fish served all year around were crucian brewed, fish dried, fish and mutton cooked together, turnip radish stewed fish, fermented fish slices. The home cooking made fish dishes included fish fried, fish dried, fish barbecued and crispy fish (Fu,1987, pp.273-274).

2.2 Yunnan and Guizhou District

2.2.1 Sinocyclocheilus

The Sinocyclocheilus sold in the famous restaurant in the city of Kunming was superb. The Sinocyclocheilus was one of its special dishes. Yunnan travel record that Special restaurant Gong he chun, located on the Justice Road, special dish sinocyclocheilus, each plate priced twenty or thirty cents. Sinocyclocheilus was Yunnan's special food, it was more delicious than any other kind of fish. There were different ways to cook the fish, for example, Sinocyclocheilus steamed, spicy and salty Sinocyclocheilus I, sugar and vinegar Sinocyclocheilus.

2.2.2 Bamboo Shoot Fish Ball

Bamboo shoot fish ball was a traditional soup. Fish ball was made of the Mugil cephalus (others thought it was

made from Snakeheaded Fish), the fish was elastic, good taste, then cook the fish ball with bamboo shoots in chicken soup. The bamboo shoot was crispy and fragrant. Fish ball tastes tender. The soup was very delicious.

2.2.3 Eight Treasure Wawa Fish

At the end of the Qing dynasty, eight treasure Wawa fish cooked by Wang ren zai who lived in Guiyang was very famous in the Guizhou Cuisine. It earned itself a nickname "Wang Gou fish". During the Anti-Japanese War, Guiyang was a very populous city. The time honored Guiyang cuisine Restaurant "Welcome guests Mansion" was very famous for the Eight Treasure Wawa fishes it served. Wawa fish was very abundant anywhere in Guizhou Province. There was a long story of eating it. Below was the way of cooking the eight treasure Wawa fish (Zai,1990, p.397). They often needed to kill and cut up the Wawa fish first, next stir and fry the Wawa fish with the eight ingredients such as ham, bamboo shoots in oil, then steam the Wawa fish until it was rape. This dish with eight treasures laid, petal-shaped, very fragrant, was very rich in nutrition. Giant salamander was now rare animal protected by law. Now People were forbidden to eat this dish.

2.2.4 Hot Pepper Fermented Crispy Skined Fish

The relish used for cooking this dish was the hot pepper fermented produced in Huaxi Guiyang. The main raw material was carp and grass carp. The dish was very fragrant and tender, with very special flavor. Hot pepper fermented was the ordinary relish used in the Guizhou Cuisine. Hot pepper fermented was fragrant and tender, the flavor was salty and fresh, the flavor can last a long time. The hot pepper fermented was its special local flavor which can stimulate appetite. Hot pepper fermented skined fish was crispy and outside, and tender inside, a little sour, sweet, salty and a little spicy. It was good dishes to be enjoyed with wine, and rice. The dishes mentioned above were popular and special dishes in restaurant at that time. Besides those, Wuliu fish, Baizhao fish, Sugar vinegar crispy fish, were also very popular dishes. The Sichuan people also like eating thick broad-bean sauced thick broad-bean sauce. In Guizhou, national minority people like eating the sour soup fish.

3. THE EXPERIENCES OF EATING RIVER FOOD IN THE BASIN ALONG THE UPPER REACH OF THE YANGTZE RIVER

The people who live in the basin of the upper reach of the Yangtze River has accumulated certain amount of experience in eating the river food including ways of keeping river food, which parts to eat, the timing for eating the fish, and cooking methods.

3.1 The Ways of Preservation

Aquatic products processing preservation ways were as

the following: Dry processing, preserving in salt drying it under the sun, using it for making sauce, fermenting it, preserving it with wine, preserving it with sugar. The method of preserving with sugar has a long history. Shan Jia Qing Gong in Song dynasty recorded that peeled and steamed the barracuda, the same as bamboo shoot, then boiling the barracuda in honey, and immersed the barracuda in vinegar. Processed in this way, the barracuda can be transported over 500kilometers away, without going bad. They were usually used as offerings to the gods by the Sichuan people. “Carp, immersed in bananas, buried together in jars, the longer the carps sealed in the jars, and the fresher the taste of them will be.” (Yao, 2009, p.94)

Qingbo fish, growing within the county, the place where the lower reach of Min River and Pengshan county and Renshou county join together, boating against the flow of the water, moving upwards, in the dry winter, the fishers catch the Qingbo fish with net, the people in the county pickle the Qingbo fish. Then it can be good raw material for precious dishes.

Spinibarbus sinensis was also called “Qingbo fish” in Sichuan. The “qingbo” fish, and “bai jia” fish both of which have thick meat, pickled with salt, could be preserved for a relatively long time in winter.

Easier methods to preserve it were drying by wind and smoking. The tiao yu pool, the fishers there caught several dozen kilos of fishes every day. The fish was just about one cun (almost 3.3 cm), all the fishes just cut it open and dry it by wind, the flavor of which could be extremely delicious. This easy method was to enjoy the natural flavor of the fish.

Xiangtuzhi of Jiangjin recorded that silver carp was the biggest one of which can weigh several hundred kilograms. And the meat on its belly was very thick, very crispy. Dry the meat with hot sunshine. Then the belly meat dried was suitable for being made into both small ball and ointment. The silver carp smoked by smoke and fire can also be preserved for a long time. “In Lugu lake, all the fishes caught, cut open, smoked by smoking and fire, brought to Kangding and Xichang, sold there”.

In the basin of Dianchi Lake, when too many fishes were caught, the fishers had to preserve the fish. They always pickled and fermented the fishes. The detailed steps were as following: cut up the fresh crucians and carps, mix the fish slices, with salt, hot pepper, Chinese red pepper, leave it for one or two days, the immerse the mixture in wine in a jar. Enjoy the fish after sealing it in the jar for half a year, the taste will be delicious. The Miao people in minority nation district of Guizhou were accustomed to eat fermented fishes.

3.2 The Eatable Parts of the Fish

A series of experience has been gained during feeding on fishes by the people in the basin of the upper reach of Yangtze River. Certain parts of some fishes were poisonous and uneatable. For example, “ma fish” to be

eaten, its eggs must be removed. Especially the eggs in spawning season were the most poisonous. That is an accommodation which is developed by the Ma fish to prevent its eggs being eaten by other animals. The people in the basin of Dianchi Lake recognized that the ma fish’s egg was poisonous very early. “It was no doubt that there were plenty of fishes in the river. Although the fishes were quite many, obviously not all the fishes were eatable.”

Different fishes, different parts, the taste can be different. So we need to pay attention to them when we eat them. “Big headed carps was silver carp shaped, black colored, with big head, and its most delicious part was its head, usually called fat head. However the most delicious part of the silver carp was its belly meat.” Big headed carps, usually were called “Da tou yu”, “Hua lian”, the head of which was the most delicious. There was a folk saying: “the most eatable part of the big headed carps was its head, the most eatable part of Qing fish was its tail”. Big headed carps, also called “Hua nian”, the head of which was most delicious, silver carps, whose belly was delicious too. Besides these, “Fei tuo” that was longsnout catfish, the skin of which was delicious, “little chicken, young catfish, could not be compared with the skin on the lips of the longsnout.

3.3 Timing of Eating Fish

In different seasons, we can choose different fishes to eat. There was a Sichuan saying “it was appropriate to eat carps in the first month of traditional Chinese calendar, it was appropriate to eat longsnout catfish when it was neither cold nor hot (Chinese Proverb Collection Sichuan Volume, 2004).

During the time near the dragon boating festival, the eel was fat and round, its meat was tender, fresh and delicious, rich in nourishment, with both good taste and nourishing effect. Chengdu Overall View recorded the customs of dragon boating festival such as “boiling salty eggs, buying eels to eat.” Folk saying was that the crucians in the winter were the best, the silver carps in the summer were best. The crucians was best to be eaten in winter, because of not only its fat meat, many eggs, but also its high nourishing effect. There was also a Neijiang saying “Carps is suitable to eat in the spring, catfishes in the summer, qingbo fishes in the Autumn, the crucians in the winter”.

When eating fish, freshness comes first. In Qing dynasty, Li yu concluded his experience of eating fish that when eating fish, freshness comes first, then fatness. If freshness and fatness both available, the fish dish can be round and perfect. Some fish only appear during a very short span of time. So it can only be caught during a special fixed period. The fresh fishes boiled with fresh water, can be more delicate. This was especially true of those fishes which were difficult to be preserved out of water. In the past, it was very popular to cook the fish immediately after its being caught to ensure the delicacy.

“Seeing the fisher catching fish, remove the thorns and scales, then cook it immediately” (Xu, 2004, p.245). According to Xiong tian shou inferring, the fish should belong to *Pseudolaubuca sinensis*.

3.4 The Cooking Methods

The meat of different kinds of fish was very different, so the methods applied to cooking them can be very different. In Sichuan cuisine, the raw material used for cooking river food must be very fine. The methods used for cooking the fish were dependent on the features of the fish itself. Longsnout catfish is suitable for steaming, Rock carp is suitable for parching in soup, carp is suitable for crispy skin fish, crucian is suitable for cooking bean fish, catfish and cowfishes were suitable for roasting. The cooking methods applied have a great impact on the taste of the fish. Dianchi Lake was rich in grass. There were two kinds of wheat shaped fishes, white and black, the Yunnan people called it grass fish. Wheat shaped fish originally, it was lower class fish, fewer people ate it. But with the change of the cooking method applied, the taste could be fantastic. Then people began to enjoy white fish.

4. THE COMMENTS OF EATABLE FISH

Traditionally, people believed that fishes with scales were superior to fishes without scales. The fishes without scales were sold at low price such as eel, and snakeheaded fishes. But catfish is an exception of the fish without scales. Catfish was sold at a higher price than the fish with scales. Another exception was the white eel which was praised as the first class fish, and the most famous and precious fishes.

There were many kinds of fishes with scales. Beibei Animal Annuals said that big catfish and longsnout catfish were universally recognized as the top quality fishes. Rock carp, *Parabramis pekinensis*, *Spinibarbus sinensis* Bleeker, and were second class. There was a saying in the folk “*Parabramis pekinensis* first, Rock carp second, *Spinibarbus sinensis* third.” In the Neijiang district, there was a saying “*Onychostoma sima* fourth, carp fifth.” The price of the fish can reflect popularity of the fish. Generally speaking, the higher the price of the fish is, the more popular and rarer the fish is.

In Chengdu, the crucian was top quality items, more than one hundred cent per 500 grams. Carps dishes, silver carps dishes were sold at Huguang restaurants. Shrimps were sold very early in the Huguang restaurant. The prices varied from day to day. It depended on how the business was going that day. The price range was from 180 to 300 cents per 500 grams. Before the freshwater aquaculture widely developed, the prices of the fishes sold in the city, were relatively higher than ordinary meat. The Old Story of Chengdu recorded that the price of crucian was very close to the price of pork (Zhou, 1987, pp.33-44).

The negotiated prices of the different kinds of fishes on October 22, 1944 were as the following:

Fresh snakeheaded fish 300 yuan per 500 grams, eel 130 yuan, white eel 580 per. Among all the fishes listed, eel was the cheapest, snakeheaded fish was dearer, the white eel was the dearest White eel, highest grade food, usually its prices was twice as expensive as crucian. (Zhang, 1944)

The comments of a certain kind of fish varied from district to district. Take snakeheaded fish for example, it was thought to be lower class fish in many local records in Sichuan. But snakeheaded fish was treated as good items in Yunnan. The reason may be that the quality of the snakeheaded fish varies from district to district, so the taste of the fish can be different. Another reason may be that compared with Yunnan, the number of fishes was relatively larger in Sichuan. Tasty fishes were more. So the snakeheaded fish can only be classified as lower class fish. Snakeheaded fish becomes upper class fish in Basin of Dianchi Lake, because the fishes there were relatively fewer.

Compared with the basin of the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze River, its upper reach is not abundant in river food. So it is difficult to get products. So fish dish is rare for ordinary people’s home. Ordinary family only can enjoy fish at important occasions and during festivals. As Zhang hen shui wrote in “Ba shan ye yu” the scene of his having meal in a local squire house:

Mr Yuang’s treat was first class banquet in the town, as besides chicken, meat, there was fish at the banquet. Although Chongqing has two large rivers, the water was very rushing, few fishes can stay there. After the winter, all the farm fields reserve water which was left to be used for planting rice seeding in spring. There were 2 or 3 inches long little crucians in the field. In the summer, the fields were full of crops. Although the water was plenty, there were very few fishes. So it was very deferential polite and respectful of host to server fish to the guest in summer. (Zhang, 2007, p.321)

The customs of eating fish varies from district to district. The people in the Chinese districts like eating carps during the spring festival, which has implication as “surplus every year”, while in the Yunnan district the story was different. The people there like eating catfish and crucian. The newly edited Yunnan Overall recorded that because catfish was called “Nian fish” in Yunnan, during the spring festival, most people there liked to buy crucian and catfish, for its lucky meaning: happiness and good luck every year. Maybe the similar pronunciation led to it. The eating fish customs of the nation minority in upper reach is more amusing. Writer has described them in another article.

CONCLUSION

We can see that the cooking methods for fish in the basin along the upper reach of the Yangtze River include the following: frying, steaming, eating without cooking, stewing and so on. During the period of the republic of China, cooking methods began to diversify themselves.

Attention is paid not only to the taste and flavor of the dishes, but also the nourishing effect of the fish dishes. So we can draw the conclusion that the cooking of the river food in basin of the upper reach of Yangtze River, were mainly focused on the original flavor of the fishes. Matching food and matching material were not a lot. Great importance has been attached to the freshness and the tenderness of fish.

During the Anti-Japanese War, a lot of people moved the West part of China. The west part of China was functioned as the great backing base for the Anti-Japanese war, which strengthened the development and spreading of the special river food. Take the steamed Jiang tuan and Rock carp parched in Chongqing, and the eight treasure Wawa fish in Guiyang for example, the spreading of which had something to with the political environment which Guizhou, and Chongqing were in.

The special river food was tasty and delicious thanked for not only the cooking methods, but also the higher quality of the fish used. Because the exploitation of the fish resource has been strengthened, the resource of the fish is declining sharply. The fish resources need protecting, especially for some first class fishes.

Nowadays the fish dishes sold in the market are far behind those before in quality. The way to win mainly dependent on cooking methods, such as Qiuxi catfish, Dazhu youting fish, Bishan lai feng fish, Sanxi kou tou fu fish and so on. We know that if the fish is of high quality, we should mainly enjoy its original flavor and taste. However if the quality of fish is relatively poor, we should try to make up by cooking methods. The first class fish which we can enjoy has been decreasing day by day. It will be hard for us to enjoy the first class fishes before the artificial breeding technology of first class fish development. The fish dishes which were popular can only be made of from the ordinary fishes raised by human. The change in the quality of the fish brings great change to people's eating habits and cooking methods.

REFERENCES

- Du, X. F., & Guo, Y. H. (1982). *Chinese famous restaurant* (p.129). China Travel Agency Publishing House.
- Fang, G. Y. (2001). *Dian annuals* (p.112). Collected in the Sixth Rolls of Yunnan Historical Materials Series of Books. China: Yunnan University Publishing House.
- Fu, C. J. (1987). *Chengdu overall view* (pp.96-97, 273-274, 279). China: Bashu Publishing House.
- Li, Y. (2005). *Xian qing ou ji* (p.160). Chinese Society Publishing House.
- Liu, J. Q. (1997). *Old Kunming*. Yunnan People's Publishing House.
- Luo, Y. R. (1996). *The story of Yunnan*. China: Yunnan National Publishing House.

- Long, Y., & Lu, H. (2007). *Newly edited Yunnan general annuals*. China: Yunnan People's Publishing House.
- Neijiang Agriculture of the People's Government Office. (1995). *Agricultural annuals of Neijiang district* (p.254). China: Chengdu Technology University Publishing House.
- Xiangtuzhi of Shuangliu*. (2013, p.21). Collected in the Twenty-Ninth Volume of Rare Local Annals Collection in Chongqing Library. China: National Library Publishing House.
- Tan, C. (2004). *Dian hai yu heng zhi* (p.63). In the fifth roll of Southwest China folk costumes literature., Collected in Series of Books of Southwest China. China: Lanzhou University Publishing House.
- The Committee of Beibei District of Chongqing. (1989). *Beibei district annuals* (p.48). Science and Technology Materials Publishing House.
- The National Editing Committee of the Chinese Folk Literature Collection. (2004). *Chinese Proverb Collection Sichuan Volume* (pp.812-817).
- The Liberal and Historical Materials Committee of Sichuan Province. (1996). *Brief history of Sichuan cuisine of the third volume economic and commercial edition in Sichuan liberal and history materials essence* (p.450). China: Sichuan People's Publishing House.
- The Local Office of Executive Branch of Zhaotong District. (1993). *The collections of local and famous products in Zhaotong* (p.187). Chengdu Science and Technology Publishing House.
- Tong, Z. Z. (2004). *The notes of traveling to Dianchi Lake, the thirty-two roll collected in series of books of Southwest China* (p.24). Lanzhou University Publishing House.
- Xu, J. (2004). *The notes of traveling to Yunnan* (p.245). Collected in Series of Books of Southwest China. China: Lanzhou University Publishing House.
- Yao, L. Y. (2009). *Xiangtuzhi of Jiangjing* (p.94). The Fourth Roll of Collections of Sichuan University Library Sichuan Rare Local Annuals: Bashu Publishing House.
- Yunnan News Agency. (1938). *Yunnan travel guidance* (p.56). Yunling Book Store.
- Zai, Y. T., & Shu, L. Z. (1990). *Guizhou province commerce annuals*. Guizhou People's Publishing House.
- Zhang, H. S. (2007). *Ba shan ye yu*. The Unity Publishing House.
- Zhang, C. L., & Shi, H. R. (1944). Research on the fishes in the lower reach of the Jialing River in Sichuan province. *China Western Science Institute Biography Research Center Series Journals*, (1).
- Zhang, S. P., & Zhang, Z. J. (2007). *China time-honored brands* (Vol.4, p.52). China Commerce Publishing House.
- Zhou, R. C. (2004). *Record of what seen and heard in Linglang county* (p.157). The sixteenth Roll of Southwest China Folk Costumes Literature. Collected in Series of Books of Southwest China. China: Lanzhou University Publishing House.
- Zhou, X. (1987). *The old story of Chengdu* (pp.33-44). China: Sichuan People's Publishing House.