

# The impact of Tiaoyuan Li on the Evolution of Contemporary Sichuan Cuisine Culture

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## Abstract

**When discussing Sichuan cuisine, numerous impressions and associations inevitably arise. As a beloved and integral part of Chinese culinary tradition, Sichuan cuisine has evolved into a distinct cultural phenomenon in modern times. This paper focuses on Tiaoyuan Li, a notable figure from the Qing Dynasty, who made indelible contributions to the development of contemporary Sichuan cuisine culture. Residing in the fertile land of Shu, Tiaoyuan Li was an avid gourmet with a passion for innovation and a pursuit of culinary excellence. As a representative of the scholarly class with rich life experiences, his influence on the evolution of Sichuan cuisine culture is significant. In this article, we will delve into an analysis of his impact.**

## Keywords

**Continuous innovation, development, diversity and richness.**

## 1. Text

Sichuan cuisine, in essence, has experienced a long development process. As we all know, Sichuan has been called the "Land of abundance" since ancient times, and the climate in Sichuan is humid. At the same time, the complexity of geographical environment has made the rich products of Shu land. This provides a unique condition for Sichuan's food culture. However, Sichuan cuisine as a faction was really well known in the Song Dynasty, and it was in a place far from the Shu land -- Bianliang (present Kaifeng, Henan Province), the capital city of the Northern Song Dynasty. In his "Tokyo Menghua Record", Meng Yuanyuan mentioned "Chuanguan", which is the earliest official record of "Sichuan cuisine". Whether it is a restaurant run by Sichuan people or a restaurant selling Sichuan cuisine, it shows that Sichuan cuisine as a cuisine has begun to have a place on the stage of Chinese cuisine. However, the first time Sichuan cuisine stepped on the historical stage, there is still a big gap between its maturity and systematic development. The wheels of The Times are rolling forward, and today, Sichuan cuisine has developed to a very good stage and become an important part of Chinese cuisine culture.

When it comes to Sichuan cuisine, many classic names come to mind. Sichuan cuisine, as an indispensable member of the big family of Chinese food culture, has been increasingly sought after by most people. But if it comes to Sichuan cuisine culture, in fact, there are many worthy of our attention. Since it is a culture, it must not get around the proposition of development. Focusing on the contemporary, Sichuan cuisine culture has experienced a long period of development. Looking back at the development history of Sichuan cuisine. Li Tiaoyuan, as an important figure in the development of Sichuan cuisine culture in Ming and Qing dynasties, what influence will he have on the development of contemporary Sichuan cuisine culture? This paper will discuss Li Tiaoyuan's influence on the development of contemporary Sichuan cuisine culture from different angles. If there are shortcomings, I hope to criticize and correct.

### **1.1. The important influence on the development of contemporary Sichuan cuisine culture and traditional Chinese culture.**

First, mention Li Tiaoyuan. I have to talk about his time and his personal background. Born in Dasha Village, Baolin Town, Anzhou District, Mianyang City, he is a native of Sichuan. At the end of Yuan and the beginning of Ming and the end of Ming and the beginning of Qing, Sichuan experienced war, resulting in a sharp decrease in population. Therefore, from the central government to the local government at all levels, a series of measures were taken to attract foreign immigrants, among which Huguang province had the largest population, and Hakka immigrants were the second largest immigrant group after Huguang people, Huguang immigrants and Hakka immigrants accounted for 40% and 33% of the total population of Sichuan at that time. [Hakka into Sichuan - 2020 "Tianfu Guangji" No. 12]. This is known in history as "Huguang filling Sichuan". It is undeniable that this far-reaching immigration event in history has had a huge impact on the cultural development of Sichuan. Sichuan cuisine culture is also inevitably affected. Of course, Li Tiaoyuan, as a Sichuan native in this era, will also be affected by this to a certain extent. Secondly, I have to say his personal background, he is a Sichuan, his father became an official. Therefore, he can be said to have received a good education, and he showed a lot of talent and knowledge when he was young, which laid a great foundation for his future research on Sichuan cuisine. Li Tiaoyuan, Zhang Wentao (Zhang Chuanshan) and Peng Duanshu were called "three talents of Shu in Qing Dynasty". Li Tiaoyuan, Zhang Wentao from Suining (Zhang Chuanshan) and Peng Duanshu from Meishan were called the three great talents of Sichuan in Qing Dynasty. His achievements in literature also made him a member of the middle class at that time - the scholar-official class. This class has made a great contribution to the development of Sichuan cuisine. Their economic foundation and the refined taste of the literati themselves encouraged them to turn around and enter the field of food research. If you look at the rich variety of Sichuan cuisine today, it is not difficult to find. Today's Sichuan cuisine is not only focused on how to make people eat well, it is also concerned about how to pass it on as a culture, which contains profound traditional Chinese culture. The contribution of the scholarian-bureaucrat class represented by Li Tiaoyuan cannot be ignored. Take Li Tiaoyuan as an example, thanks to the influence of family education and literati taste and knowledge accumulation. For example, the "lotus root and lotus seed (lotus rice) and green rice" mentioned in his book "Poetry of Tongshan" are important parts of Chinese health culture, but also an important part of Sichuan cuisine culture. Lotus root soup is mentioned in a Dream of Red Mansions, a famous ancient Chinese novel from the Ming and Qing dynasties. These ingredients are also common ingredients in many ancient Chinese food cultures, and they are also important members of traditional Chinese medicine culture. It can be seen that Li Tiaoyuan, as a member of the scholar-official class, has an important influence on the development of contemporary Sichuan cuisine culture and traditional Chinese culture.

### **1.2. The important influence on the richness and spicy taste of contemporary Sichuan cuisine.**

Secondly, Li Tiaoyuan has also had an important influence on the richness and spicy taste of contemporary Sichuan cuisine. At the beginning of the formation of Sichuan cuisine in the Song Dynasty and his era, although it went through the integration of northern and southern flavors under the influence of immigration and other factors, it still did not form its own system. At that time, most of the Sichuan cuisine only existed some prototypes or some attempts, but there was no systematic integration. It was completely different from the Sichuan cuisine we know today, and in his time, people were not as enthusiastic about Sichuan cuisine as we are today. At that time, he was fond of food, he dared to pursue fashion, in his many books, he often visited the famous mountains and rivers in Sichuan on the basis of understanding some of the characteristics of the local products, and actively applied it to their own food research and

development. "Diet is not trivial", this is his high generalization of food culture, he thinks that diet is very important. It is under the influence of this thought and personal character that he began his own path of food research. For example, we are familiar with the representative of Sichuan cuisine today - hot pot, "Yu Village Poetry" volume six: "Warm pot, the common name of hot pot, so the most convenient dinner, cold home must use." More than 60 years, bitter cold, every food must." The earliest records of Sichuan people eating hot pot are found here. It can be seen that his contribution to contemporary Sichuan cuisine culture is huge. His research on food materials is also huge, for example, many of the important components of Sichuan cuisine we know today: tofu, douhua, beef, pork loin, cowpea, etc., all of which can be found in his works. From this perspective, the rich and colorful contemporary Sichuan cuisine culture cannot be separated from its contribution. The precise classification and bold attempts of these ingredients have also become a lot of delicious dishes that we enjoy talking about today, such as "Mapo tofu", "meat and bean flowers", "steamed beef with powder", "stir-fried pork kidney" and so on. It can be seen that he has contributed greatly to the diversity of contemporary Sichuan cuisine culture. When it comes to cuisines, its unique taste is self-evident. For example, we are familiar with Guangdong food is light, Jiangsu and Zhejiang food is sour and sweet, Sichuan food is hot and spicy. When it comes to spicy, you have to talk about chili. Pepper, as a foreign vegetable, but when it came to the land of China, its popularity never dropped. When it comes to chilies, Sichuan cuisine is as close to chilies as family. Hemp, is the unique taste of rattan pepper; Spicy, naturally, the contribution of sea pepper. Li Tiaoyuan had already described the pepper used in today's Sichuan cuisine at that time: "Ju Shui Guan", volume 28 of Tongshan Poetry: "At that time, a dangerous pass was built. A river flow fluid, Wanhu arch Minshan. Official charcoal yellow money vendors, pepper white grass pretty. Car book this first-class, desolate castle between the garrison building." It can be seen that the sea pepper, an indispensable seasoning in Sichuan cuisine that we are familiar with today, was also his contribution to the development of contemporary Sichuan cuisine culture at that time.

### **1.3. The important influence on the innovative development of Sichuan cuisine culture.**

Finally, his rich life experience and artisan spirit nurtured in the rare "food family" also promoted the innovative development of Sichuan cuisine culture. Li Tiaoyuan had been an official in Guangdong, Liangjiang and other places. Therefore, from his personal life experience, he has actually gone out of Sichuan, but also tasted the dishes of other places, and he loves the characteristics of food. Therefore, in other places different from Sichuan, he also continued to study the food, in this continuous and long-term process, he had the privilege of seeing different local specialties, and also learned some places that could not be found in Sichuan cuisine. His self-learning laid the foundation for the innovation and tolerance of Sichuan cuisine culture. It is undeniable that the history of multiple immigration and north-south integration will promote the integration and development of Sichuan cuisine with other cuisines to a certain extent. However, it should be noted that Li Tiaoyuan also played a great role in promoting this process. In his works, he often compares Sichuan cuisine with Wu cuisine and other cuisines to find out some similarities and differences. And learn from each other, learn from each other, only to cook more delicious food. In this process, Sichuan cuisine also had some exchanges and collisions with other cuisines, intentionally or unintentionally. It is because of this process that the tolerance and development of today's Sichuan cuisine culture has been achieved. Similarly, when it comes to the influence on the development of contemporary Sichuan cuisine culture, his father must be an important figure that we cannot ignore. It can be said that he grew up in the "food home", his father Li Huannan is also a love of food, and he has a similar experience, has been an official in Jiangsu and Zhejiang for many years, during the official period, he is also fond of food, in Jiangsu and Zhejiang gathered a lot of cooking information. But unfortunately,

he did not organize these materials into a book, but his son Li Tiaoyuan, eventually compiled the information collected by his father in the process of field travel in Jiangsu and Zhejiang areas into the "Waking Garden Record". When he compiled the book, he did not just show the cooking methods and ingredients in Jiangsu and Zhejiang. But on the basis of his father's existing information to innovate, he creatively put forward three points of view: first, "diet is not trivial", which is the importance of food culture. Small stories are small things. Food is no small thing. Food reflects politics and culture. Second, the etiquette rules of "home should be thrifty, while hospitality must be abundant" : that is, the cultural perspective says that "patience and hospitality", which is the traditional virtue of the Chinese people for many years, excellent folk customs. Everyone has the desire to eat and drink and lives in a certain social and cultural environment. How to deal with the relationship between people is the need of survival, but also the condition of cultural behavior. In the process of interpersonal communication, he offered the food he was reluctant to eat to the guests, so that the guests were happy and satisfied (this kind of hospitality still exists today). Li Tiaoyuan, as a scholar and official, raised this custom to the etiquette of treating people and doing things to promote, which can not but say that this is the valuable point of his food thought. Third, "self-food should be light, and things are not strong" filial piety connotation. If "home should be thrifty, and hospitality is not not abundant" is the folk rule of dealing with the relationship between members of society, then "food should be light, and things are not strong" is to talk about respecting the elderly and filial piety in the family. The Book of Filial Piety says that the filial piety of the common people, that is, "using the way of heaven, dividing the benefits of the land, saving money, and raising parents", that is, children should work hard to produce, prudently save money, and provide for their parents. "Lu's Spring and Autumn · Xiao Xing" said that there are five ways to support parents to raise their health, raise their eyes, raise their ears, raise their mouth and raise their aspirations, and the way to raise their mouth and raise their aspirations is the most basic filial piety for the common people (ordinary people), that is, "cooked grain, cooked six animals, and fried, raise their mouths; And color, say (Yue) words, respect advance and retreat, the way of raising aspirations." Is the most delicious and delicious food, to respectfully honor their parents, is called filial piety. Li Tiaoyuan put forward the dietary thought that "esophagus" and "filial piety" are connected here. To sum up, it can be seen that his thoughts also have important meaning for the traditional virtue culture of the Chinese nation and the core values of socialism that we advocate today. It can be seen that his influence on the development of contemporary Sichuan cuisine culture is in all aspects and details. Contemporary Sichuan cuisine culture is also an important part of Chinese excellent traditional culture and advanced socialist culture with Chinese characteristics. His contribution to the traditional excellent culture also promotes the development of contemporary Sichuan cuisine culture. There is no doubt about that.

## 2. Summary

To sum up, Li Tiaoyuan consciously made selective introduction, enrichment and dissemination according to the people's customs in Sichuan. He is a successor to the transformation of Bashu food culture. He inherited his father's long-cherished wish and had an extremely important influence on the development of Sichuan cuisine culture. Whether it is his love of food, or the fulfillment of his father's grand wishes. He can be called the mastermind and powerful promoter of the development of Sichuan cuisine culture. The unique Sichuan cuisine system in Qianjia period of Qing Dynasty had not yet been formed. However, he made a contribution to the creation of Sichuan cuisine that was possible in his time, that is, integrating the strengths of other local dishes and northern and southern food dishes according to local conditions, and promoting the formation of Sichuan cuisine suitable for Sichuan people to eat in the natural environment of Bashan Shu water. There is no denying that what he did in that era made an indelible contribution to the development of Sichuan cuisine today. Innovation is on its way,

but the fruits are not yet complete. The development of contemporary Sichuan cuisine culture will certainly continue to improve.

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