



Sweet and Sour: Life in Chinese Family Restaurants

John Jung

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"Sweet and Sour" examines the history of Chinese family restaurants in the U. S. and Canada. Why did many Chinese immigrants enter this business around the end of the 19th century? What conditions made it possible for Chinese to open and succeed in operating restaurants after they emigrated to North America? How did Chinese restaurants manage to attract non-Chinese customers, given that they had little or no acquaintance with the Chinese style of food preparation and many had vicious hostility toward Chinese immigrants? The goal of "Sweet and Sour" is to understand how the small Chinese family restaurants functioned. Narratives provided by 10 Chinese who grew up in their family restaurants in all parts of the North America provide valuable insights on the role that this ethnic business had on their lives. Is there any future for this type of immigrant enterprise in the modern world of franchised and corporate owned eateries or will it soon, like the Chinese laundry, be a relic of history?

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