

Of Authenticity and Assimilation: Names of American Chinese Restaurants

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This study examines the naming practices of 423 American Chinese restaurants (ACR) in Los Angeles County. The results reveal that through the incorporation of region names, family names, and transliterated *hanzi*, ACR names not only serve as markers of restaurant type, they also showcase the diversity within the Chinese culinary tradition. As creations of immigrants, ACR names simultaneously reflect an embracing of cultural assimilation, through the adoption of English given names, collocation with terms that exude modern European sensibility, and the borrowing of American fast food (“express”) takeout concept. The results of this study can contribute to studies on naming practices of ethnic restaurants and, in general, to the field of food onomastics.

KEYWORDS Restaurant names, American Chinese restaurants, transliterated *hanzi*, food onomastics.

Introduction

According to the National Restaurant Association’s “Global Palates, Ethnic Cuisines and Flavors in America” report, Mexican, Chinese, and Italian cuisines rank on top of the list in terms of “familiarity, trial and frequency of eating” (National Restaurant Association 2015). Notably, there are nearly 43,000 Chinese restaurants in the United States (Chinese Restaurant News 2008). This statistic is not surprising, as Chinese food is famous all over the world. Like other popular ethnic foods in the US, Chinese dishes have been altered to suit American tastes, and new recipes have even been created. As Krishnendu Ray, the author of *The Ethnic Restaurateur* explains, ethnic cuisines are authentic replicas of another culture (Ray 2016). Interest in how immigrants in the food industry have shaped the American culinary scene has also led to several informative monographs on the cultural history of particular ethnic cuisines in the United States (cf. Arellano 2013; Coe 2009; Lombardi and Chase 2012; Schiavelli 1998). To date, the few

onomastic studies in food-related naming practices include Nilsen (1995), who showed how personal names on food products and restaurants can help communicate a sense of trust, ethnicity, and formality. With respect to recipe naming, Westney (2007) offered a fascinating report on the origin of some European dishes created and named for women. This study aims to expand the onomastic literature by examining the naming practices of 423 American Chinese restaurants (ACR) in the Los Angeles County. The results reveal how ACR names not only help serve as markers of restaurant type, they also showcase the regional diversity within the Chinese culinary tradition. Simultaneously, ACR names paint a culinary portrait that assimilates elements of American-ness and modern European influence. The naming practices identified in this study are broadly applicable in the sense that they could be found among ACR in other American cities. The results of this study can contribute to studies on naming practices of ethnic restaurants and, in general, the field of food onomastics.

Background

The first Chinese restaurant in America—*Canton*—was opened in San Francisco in 1849. *Canton* was also the official former name of Guangzhou, the capital of the Guangdong Province, a region that included an area later known as Hong Kong. Historically, the first group of Chinese immigrants to arrive in America in the nineteenth century was from this region and their dream was to find gold in the western United States. Subsequently, thousands of Chinese workers came to build railroads and perform other types of hard industrial labor. To feed their compatriots, Cantonese Chinese immigrants opened simple restaurants known as “chow chows” (Lee 2009). During the early twentieth century, Chinese food in America (“American Chinese food”) had undergone several cycles of changes and localization, including the chop suey craze. The “to-go” food was sent out in distinctive white square containers which were used almost exclusively by the Chinese restaurant trade. Much of the food was Americanized though, altered to satisfy American tastes or to make the best use of the local ingredients. New recipes too, such as Walnut Prawn, Fried Crab Wonton, and General Tso’s Chicken, were invented in the process. Like fortune cookies, these “Chinese American recipes” are unheard of in China. With more immigrants moving to the US in the latter half of the twentieth century, they also brought their food traditions (e.g., Szechuan, Hunan, Shanghai). Though most Chinese restaurants in the United States today are individually or family owned, there are a number of restaurant chains offering Chinese food. Over the past few decades, the all-you-can-eat Chinese buffet has also become a popular concept, especially in Las Vegas.

Methodology

For this study, 423 names of Chinese restaurants in Los Angeles County were examined. The names were obtained from Yelp, an online consumer site that publishes reviews about dining establishments in addition to basic data about restaurant businesses. Here, chain restaurants were counted only once. For example, Panda Express is counted once even though it has over 50 branch locations throughout the county, each distinguished by a different city name (e.g., *Downtown Panda Express*). Also considered once is Pei Wei

(“food to go with mobile app”), an ACR chain that has multiple locations throughout LA County. In a few cases involving look-alike names, further investigation was necessary. For instance, a quick search on *Dragon Restaurant* and *Dragon The Restaurant* was needed to check that they are indeed two different distinct establishments. Since “Restaurant” or “Chinese Restaurant” appears in many of the ACR names, the designation is dropped in this paper for simplicity and space reasons. Also for simplicity reasons, a slash is used for shared collocated terms. For instance, *China Gate/House* is a linguistic reduction of two ACR names—*China Gate* and *China House*. Similarly, *Chef Wok* and *Express Wok* will be represented as *Chef/Express (-Wok)*.

Results

Place Names

Of the 423 ACR names, 35 (8%) incorporates the term *China*. Examples include *China Baskets/Beauty/Blossom/Chef/Depot/Gate/House/Seal/Station*, *Pottery China*, and *Taste of China*, as well as one in French (*Le Chine Wok*). Across the vast area of the mainland, there are several specifically named regions, each with their own unique cooking styles and dishes. This regional diversity of Chinese culinary tradition is well-represented in the onomastic samples. Names of major provinces, which were identified in 21 ACR names (5%), include “Guizhou” (*Taste Gui Zhou*), “Hebei” (*Hebei Renjia*), “Hunan” (*Hunan Café/Mao/Taste/Tasty/Spicy Taste*), “Shaanxi,” (*Shaanxi Garden/Gourmet*), “Szechuan” (*First Szechuan Wok, Szechuan Chef/Impression/Tasty Street, Hu’s Szechwan, Szechwan Kitchen/Palace*), and “Yunan” (*Yunnan, Yunnan Garden*).

The names of cities in mainland China appeared 42 times (10%). Names of cities include “Beijing” (*Beijing, Beijing Pie House, Flavor of Beijing, Shin Peking, Peking Kitchen/Tavern*), “Chengdu” (*Chengdu, Chengdu Taste, Old Chengdu*), “Chongqing” (*Chongqing, Taste of Chongqing*), “Guilin” (*Guilin Noodle*), “Hong Kong” (*Hong Kong, Hong Kong Café/Express/Kitchen/Noodle*), “Nanjing” (*Nanjing Kitchen*), “Shanghai” (*Shanghai, Old Shanghai Kitchen, Shanghai Grill/Rose/Noble Food*), “Shenyang” (*Shen Yang*), “Tianjin” (*Tian Jin Bistro*), and “Xian” (*Xi’an Kitchen*).

The region name *Canton*, with seven occurrences (2%), can refer to both the city and the province. The traditional Romanized form of what is today known as Guangzhou, the capital and largest city of the Guangdong (Canton) Province, can be found in *Canton, Canton City/Kitchen/Chef Express, Golden/K & A (-Canton)*, and *New Canton Bistro*.

The arrival of immigrants and overseas students from Taiwan, otherwise known as Republic of China or Chinese Taipei, also has an impact on the food scene in LA. The restaurants named *ROC Kitchen, Taipei Ning Gi Hot Pot*, and *Java Café Taiwanese* serve unmistakably Taiwanese-style cuisine.

As the data-set contains primarily names of Chinese restaurants in Los Angeles, “LA,” and by extension “California,” are natural choices. Examples include *LA, LA China Express/Wok Express, California Wok*, and its transposed form *Wok California*. Over time, various Chinatowns have sprung up in cities with large Chinese populations. Among ACR names, four contain this landmark designation: *Chinatown Express/Station/Fast Food/Monterey Park*. Names of ethnic enclaves found in major American urban cities can also come in the form of “Little X” (e.g., *Little Italy, Little Armenia*). ACR names that adopt this form are *Little Beijing, Little China, Little Shanghai*, and *Little Hong Kong Café*.

In terms of compass points, “East/Eastern” (*East Buffet, Jade East, Feast from the East, Eastern Express Café, Eastern Spice*) is far more frequent than “West” (*Qin West, Mandarin West*) or “Northern” (*Northern Café, Northern Cuisine*). One “Northeast” was identified: *Dong Bei Hometown*. Meaning literally “East North,” *Dong Bei* describes a style of cuisine that is similar to the Northern Chinese cooking tradition, one that utilizes wheat products to create assortments of dumplings and noodles.

An archaic name for China was uncovered: *Cathay Palisades*. *Cathay* is the Anglicized rendering of *Catai*, the name applied to northern China in medieval Europe and used in Marco Polo’s book on his travels in China (Britannica 2016). Another early term for the Far East is “Orient.” The ACR name *Orient Express* alludes to the famous long-distance passenger train service in Europe in the late 1800s. On a related note, the adjectival “oriental” invites no controversy when applied to things (e.g., oriental rugs, oriental pillows). However, when used today to describe individuals of Asian descent, the same term is considered offensive to some. Whether that is the case for *Oriental House, Lim’s Oriental Kitchen, and Oriental Express Café* and can be debated.

Ambiance

With the right kind of atmosphere, restaurateurs can help their patrons feel comfortable and enjoy the dining experience. By their associated concepts, certain words related to “ambiance” can evoke a positive mood. For example, “garden” conveys a sense of tranquility and leisurely refinement. In fact, the traditional Chinese garden of 3000 years ago was a vast garden of emperors and aristocrats that could stretch as long as 10 kilometers and hold large banquets for luminaries (Fang 2010). Such gardens usually included at least one pavilion, which is a type of covered structure. While only two ACR names contain the term “pavilion” (*China Pavilion, Empress Pavilion*), 23 ACR names (5%) include the term “garden.” Some examples are *Garden* and *Ding’s/LYL/Mandarin/New/Tasty/Hong Kong (-Garden)*. The image of imperial-style fine dining is also evoked by the word “palace,” which appears 14 times (3%), as in *China/Rowland/Silver/Hong Kong (-Palace)* and *The Palace*.

For those who prefer home-cooked meals in a more casual setting, ACR in the form of a “house,” “home,” “kitchen,” or “dining room” can be considered. Of the four, “house” and “kitchen” are equally popular, each appearing 33 times. Examples of the former are *House of Benny/Joy/Louie* and *China/Friends/Moon/Old/Pine/Romantic/Yan’s (-House)*. Examples of the latter include *New RJ Chinese Kitchen, Tao Chinese Kitchen, and China/Chinese/Mama’s/Mandarin (-Kitchen)*. Finally, “home” and “dining room” both appear once, in *Spicy Home* and *Yang’s Dining Room*, respectively.

Words can also evoke images of a simpler life or country living. These include “hut” (*Boba Tea Hut*), “village” (*Green/Hunan/M & T Seafood (-Village)*), “inn” (*Bamboo/Wok/Plum Tree/Sun Hai (-Inn)*). On the other hand, “café,” (*Banana Café, Café Fusion, Cozy Café, Jazz Cat Café*), “bistro,” (*Madame Wu’s Asian Bistro, New Canton Bistro*), and “boutique” (*Phoenix Food Boutique*) exude a modern, European sensibility.

Specialty

Some restaurants are known for certain food or dishes. For example, fishball is the “house specialty” at Hong Kong Fishball House, while tofu is the main focus at Tofu House. Of

the total sample, 83 ACR names (20%) contain information on the restaurant specialty. At ACR named *Duck House*, *Duck Queen*, *Tasty Duck*, and *Happy Duck House*, one can find an assortment of duck dishes. The ACR named *Chicken on Fire*, *Mr. Lamb*, *Little Fat Sheep*, *Sam's Chinese BBQ*, and *Sam Woo BBQ* may also appeal to meat lovers. On the other hand, names suggestive of seafood-heavy menus include *Seafood Village* and *NBC/Newport/Full House/Mandarin Bay/New Capital (-Seafood)*. Albeit lengthy, the ACR names *Hopwoo BBQ & Seafood* and *The Palace Seafood & Dim Sum* aim to appeal to a larger customer base.

Rice and noodles are considered staple foods in Chinese meals. Of the total, 15 ACR names (4%) contain the word “noodle,” several of which collocate with the word “house.” Examples are *Noodle House*, *Chengdu/Mandarin/Tasty/Yun (-Noodle House)*, and *O' Heavy Noodles*. The ACR name *Mian* means “noodle” in Chinese. Less mentioned is “rice,” which occurs in only four instances: *Rice*, *Rice Wok*, *Chubby Rice*, and *Fried Rice Express*. Congee, a type of rice porridge and gruel popular in many Asian countries, is referenced once, in *The Congee*.

The Chinese hot pot, consisting of a simmering metal pot of broth and stock at the center of the dining table, is particularly popular in the cold winter time. This unique dining style wherein a pot is the centerpiece is referenced 13 times (3%), including *Little Sheep Mongolian Hot Pot*, *Red Wine Hot Pot & Grill*, *World Hotpot*, and the reduplicative *Hot Pot Hot Pot*. Examples with only the term “pot” are *Duo-Pot*, *China Pot King*, and *HJH Sauce Simmer Pot*.

Dim sum, as in *Dim Sum Express*, is Cantonese and refers to the small bite-sized portions of food that are prepared and served in small steamer baskets or on small plates. The synonymous term *yum cha* (lit. “drink tea”) appears in the ACR name *Yum Cha Café*. For specific appetizer-style bites, one finds “dumpling” (*Luscious Dumplings*, *Peking Dumpling*, *Fatty/Shanghai/MaMa Lu's (-Dumpling House)*), *bao* “bun” (*Tasty Bao*), and “egg roll” (*Egg Roll King*).

Chinese Islamic cuisine (*China Islamic*), arising from the large Muslim population in China, is heavily influenced by Beijing cuisine but differs primarily in the absence of pork due to religious restrictions. For vegetarians, the words “veggie” (*Happy Veggie Garden*), “vegetarian” (*Fine Garden Vegetarian*, *Garden Fresh Vegetarian Food*), and *Buddha* (*Buddha's Feast*) are keywords to look for.

Tea drinking is popular among the Chinese and is even regarded as a daily necessity. Five ACR names containing the word “tea” are *Tea Station*, *Boba Tea Hut*, *Green Tea House*, *Ten Ren's Tea Time*, and *Lollicup Fresh Tea Café*. Boba tea (also in *Boba Time* and *I Heart Boba*), originating from Taiwan, is a tea-based drink containing a tea base mixed with milk and chewy tapioca balls. Both *Tea Station* and *Ten Ren's Tea Time* are names created by the same parent company, Ten Ren Tea Company.

For patrons who prefer a bit of everything, a Chinese buffet restaurant may be the best choice. The five ACR names designating all-you-can-eat establishments are *Palace Garden Buffet* and *East/Grand/China Great/New Panda (-Buffet)*.

Cultural Association

Ethnic cuisine type can also be identified through references that are associated with a particular culture, region, or myth. An example is the giant panda, a native animal

of China. Nine ACR names (2%) call forth this endearing animal ambassador from China, including *Panda Cave/Dumpling/Express/King/Station/Wok* and *Panda Garden Chinese Café*. Names of three mythical creatures of Chinese mythology were identified—“dragon,” “phoenix,” and “kirin.” Of the three, “dragon” is the most frequently occurring symbolic figure, appearing 15 times (3%). The dragon is a symbol of power, strength, and good luck. Some examples are *Dragon*, *Dragon 21*, *Dragon Express*, and *Century/Golden/Little/Red/Seal/Twin (-Dragon)*. The phoenix is another highly revered creature in Chinese mythology; its appearance is said to indicate some great impending event. The term cropped up three times: *Phoenix Kitchen/Inn/Food Boutique*. Finally, *Kirin’s House* evokes the fantastic supernatural creature that came to represent protection, prosperity, and longevity.

Other objects associated with China or Chinese culture are bamboo, red lantern, jade, joss, lantern, lotus, and plum blossom. Bamboo is the staple food for pandas and a material for all sorts of handicrafts. ACR names including the word “bamboo” are *Bamboo*, *Bamboo Express/Garden/Inn*, and *Bamboo Chinese Cuisine*. While red lanterns (*Red Lantern*, *Red Lantern Cuisine*) symbolize good fortune, the jade (*Jade BBQ/East/House/Wok*) symbolizes beauty, nobility, and perfection in Chinese culture. A joss (*Joss Cuisine*) is a religious statue or idol. In *Golden Lotus*, *Lotus Garden*, and *Plum Tree Inn*, two significant flowers in the Chinese culture are noted. The lotus symbolizes the holy seat of Buddha, while the plum blossom (“friend of winter”) represents endurance. Silk, a precious material traded in the Far East, is referenced in *Silk Road Garden*. The famed Silk Road was a network of trade routes linking regions of the ancient commerce world. Finally, the ACR name *Red Chamber* alludes to the famous classic Chinese novel *The Dream of Red Chamber*.

Names of essential Chinese cooking and dining wares were also uncovered, specifically “wok,” “bowl,” and “chopstick.” The word “chopstick” was found in *Chopstick Kitchen* and *Imperial Chopsticks*, while “bowl” appeared six times, in *Dragon/Tasty/Chinese Food/Hong Kong (-Bowl)*, *China Bowl Express*, and *Tasty China Bowl Express*. References to the wok, however, were found an astounding 35 times (8%). Examples include *China Wok Fresh*, *Magic Wok Express*, *Wok on Fire*, *Wok Avenue/Experience/Master*, and *Chef/First/Flaming/New/Onsolid/Rolling/Wacky (-Wok)*.

Finally, the proper noun “Mandarin” is used commonly to refer to the standard literary and official form of the Chinese language. The adjectival “Mandarin” can be found in *Mandarin* and *Mandarin Deli/Dish/Express/House/Shanghai*.

Personal Names

With respect to personal names in ACR names, surnames abound, appearing a total of 37 times (9%). These surnames may or may not be that of the owner. Surnames with a possessive identified were: *Chang’s/Ding’s/Lu’s/Tam’s (-Garden)*, *Mao’s/Qing’s/Wu’s (-Kitchen)*, *Fu’s (Palace)*, *Hoy’s (Wok)*, *Hu’s (Szechwan)*, *Lee’s (Garden, Kitchen)*, *Lim’s (Oriental Kitchen)*, *Lin’s (Chinese Cuisine, Fast Food)*, *Wong’s (Wok)*, *Yang’s (Dining Room, Restaurant)*, *Ying’s (Chinese Food)*, and *Zheng’s (Fusion)*. Surnames without possessives are (*China*) *Lee*, (*House of*) *Louie*, (*Hunan*) *Mao*, and *Qin (West)*. Surnames combined with a form of address or courtesy title are found in *Mr Chow*, *Chef Ming’s Kitchen*, *Madame Wu’s Asian Bistro*, *MaMa Lu’s Dumpling House*, and *Miss Tong’s*

Private Kitchen. While *P.F. Chang's China Bistro* includes a surname plus initial, full name could be found in *Sam Woo BBQ*. Nicknames in the form of vocative *Ah-X* include *Ahgoo's Kitchen* and *Ah-Lien Hot Pot*. The *Ah-X* form is used for family members and close acquaintances. Finally, *Qi Dynasty* is a historically misleading name. *Qi* is a surname that originated during the Zhou dynasty in ancient China.

English given names were found in eight instances (2%). Examples include *Bebe Fusion*, *Cindy's Kitchen*, *Paul's Kitchen*, *House of Benny*, *Patty's Chinese Express*, *Pauline's Chinese Kitchen*, and *Sam's Chinese BBQ*.

Superlatives and Other Positive Modifiers

Every restaurant wants to be the best, or attempts to promote its food as the best. This self-promotion is evident in ACR names that incorporate a superlative like “best” (*Best Chinese Food*, *China Best Express*), “great” (*China Great Buffet*), “perfect” (*Perfect 1 Dollar Chinese Food*), “elite” (*Elite*), “legendary” (*The Legendary*), or “No 1” (*Fortune No 1*, *No 1 Noodle House*). Modifiers denoting superb taste include “delicious” (*Delicious Food Corner*), “tasty” (*Thousand Tasty*, *Tasty Goody/Station/Wok Cuisine*), “yummy” (*Yummy Café/House*, *Yummi Chinese Fast Food*), “luscious” (*Luscious Dumplings*), and “gourmet” (*Chinese Gourmet Express*, *Fortune Gourmet Kitchen*).

“Gold/Golden” is another favorite descriptor among restaurateurs, appearing 13 times (3%). ACR names with the golden touch are *Gold Medal Chinese Food*, *Golden China/City/Fortune/Star/Valley/Wall/Wok*, *New Golden City*, and *Golden Star Chinese Deli*. Other precious metal and stone referenced are “silver” (*Silver Dragon/Palace*) and “diamond” (*Shanghai Diamond Garden*). In the case of *New Lucky Seafood* and *Lucky Chinese Fast Food*, restaurateurs hope that the chosen name will bring the establishment good luck. The same rationale applies to *888 Fast Food*, as “8” is considered an auspicious number in Chinese culture.

Other words that elicit positive expectations about the restaurant are “happy” (*Happy Family/Harbor/Wok/Duck House*), “joy” (*House of Joy*, *Joy Wok Express*), “sunny” (*Sunny*), “pleasure” (*Pleasure Ocean*), and “nice time” (*Nice Time Café*). ACR names that exude opulence are *Grand Buffet*, *Feast from the East*, and *Jumbo Chinese Fast Food*. Royalty is implied 14 times (3%), through words such as “king” (*China King*, *King Fu*, *King's Palace*, *Chinese Combo King*, *Kingchops*), “empress” (*Empress Pavilion*), “regent” (*Regent China Inn*), “royal” (*Royal Spring*), and “VIP” (*VIP*). On the other hand, two establishments have no problem with being perceived as just average—OK Chinese Food and OK Chinese Restaurant.

Express Takeout

The typical Chinese takeout in the image of white square boxes is a concept that is distinctly American. Often served as combo meals, Chinese express takeout caters to budget- and time-conscious customers. Of the total sample, “express” is the most frequently occurring term, appearing 31 times (7%). Some examples are *Express Wok* and *Chinese/Hongkong/101 Noodle/AA China/Chinese Food/Tasty Chinese Bowl (-Express)*. One ACR name that emphasizes super-fast service is *Super Express*. Names of “fast

food” restaurants appear 15 times (4%). Examples are *99 Cents Chinese Fast Food* and *China/China Wok/Chinese Taste/TM Chinese/ABC Chinese/ Hong Kong (-Fast Food)*. Finally, while the ACR name *Quickly* is short and to the point, *Food to Go* is generically plain.

Apparently, Chinese food and take out donuts are a great combination. Five ACR names that also appeal to donut lovers are *ABC Chinese Food & Donuts*, *Jimmy’s Donuts & Chinese Food*, *King Donut and Chinese Food*, *Pacific Donut & Chinese Food*, and *Town Donuts & Chinese Food*.

Transliterated Hanzi

Discounting those with Chinese family names, 37 ACR names (9%) include transliterated *hanzi*, i.e., names that include Romanized terms. Seven refer to restaurants with origins overseas or that capitalize on known brand names that are already well-established. For example, *Ding Tai Fung*, a Michelin star restaurant originating from Taiwan, has three locations with shared namesake in Los Angeles. *Bian Yi Fang* (lit. “budget kitchen”) is a restaurant famous for its Peking duck; its first branch is located in the historic Qianmen area in Beijing. *Malan Noodles* (*malan* a type of flower in northern China) is the number one domestic fast food chain in China. Other restaurants with flagship establishments in mainland China and whose popularity has spread to LA are *Chengdu Lao Zao Hotpot* (“old oil”), *Dong Po* (name of a poet), *Hai Di Lao Hot Pot* (“catch from the deep ocean”), and *Long Chao Shou* (“dragon wonton”). *Yi Mei Deli* and *Yung Ho* are names of a well-known cookie company and breakfast joint, respectively, in Taiwan. The two names, however, are unrelated to their inspired sources and are borrowed perhaps because they sound familiar to Taiwanese customers. The remaining 28 ACR names in this category (7%) do not have any kind of association with overseas establishments. For examples, the Chinese proper name in *Jiouding Hot Pot* means “the sovereign supreme.” The Chinese term in *Shufeng Garden* means “summit of the State of Shu.” Additional examples incorporating foreign terms are provided in Table 1.

Others

The ACR names in the “Other” category are derived by creative linguistic processes. The names *Lumasia* and *Noodology* involve blending, which produces a new name that consists of two or more clipped words. The blended coinage in *Shanghailander Palace* has a futuristic feel and is perhaps a pop culture reference to the American movie *Highlander*. In the case of *Chinese 4 You*, a word is substituted with a numeral, while in *Pick Up Stix* and *Q2 xPress Chinese Food*, a phonetic segment is substituted with a letter. Other names with inventive combinations are *Lafunz Hotpot* and *Wokcano*. Other ACR names that do not fit in any of the previous categories are *Earthen*, *Garage*, and *Greedy Cat*. Finally, one ACR name with a Spanish word was uncovered: *Amigo Chinese Food*.

Discussion

In his 768-page *The Nordic Cookbook* (Nilsson 2015), Chef Magnus Nilsson dispels the misconception of Scandinavian cuisine as one homogenous style and as much more than

TABLE 1
ACR NAMES WITH FOREIGN TERMS AND THEIR TRANSLATION

ACR Names	Foreign Term Translation
<i>Dong Ting Chun</i>	cave garden spring
<i>Haige</i> Star Boulevard	ocean brother
Hebei <i>Renjia</i>	people
<i>Ho-Ho</i> China; <i>Ho Ho</i> Kitchen	<i>redup.</i> good
<i>Ho Sai Kai</i>	good food street
<i>Hsin Hsin Shau May</i> Deli	<i>redup.</i> joy + little beauty
<i>Huolala</i>	fiery hot
<i>Jue Wei</i> Kitchen	supreme taste
<i>Kang Kang Shau May</i> Food Court	<i>redup.</i> health + little beauty
<i>Kim Chuy</i>	gold water
<i>Kung Pao</i> Fresh	palace guardian
<i>Laoxi</i> Noodle House	old west
<i>Linlin</i>	<i>redup.</i> surname
<i>Mei Long</i> Village	plum dragon
<i>Ocean Bo</i>	wave
<i>Q</i> Noodle House, Little <i>Q</i>	<i>slang,</i> chewy
<i>Qiwei</i> Kitchen	curious taste
<i>Sang Hing</i>	alive happy
Shanghai <i>Xiao Chu</i>	snacks
<i>Sun Hai</i> Inn	mountain sea
<i>Tai Pan</i> Chinese Food; <i>Taipan</i> Kitchen	<i>slang,</i> a powerful businessman
<i>Tung Sun</i>	east mountain
<i>Won Kok</i>	prosperous corner
<i>Yuan Shian</i>	original

salmon and meatballs. Likewise, the collective names of ACR in this study showcase the range and regional diversity within the Chinese culinary tradition. ACR names not only serve as markers of restaurant type (Chinese food), they manage to touch on every aspect of the experience involved—the ambiance, ingredients, cookware, and historical tradition, among others. Through names, people are introduced to many flavors and tastes originating from various regions. Moreover, Chinese family names and transliterated *hanzi* (“Chinese word”) may be incorporated to promote the authenticity of the food served. Terms linked to common motifs such as dragon, phoenix, bamboo, pavilion, joss, and lotus further accentuate the exoticness of this particular type of ethnic cuisine and the associated culture.

As creations of immigrants, ACR names simultaneously reflect an embrace of cultural assimilation. In particular, they reveal a readiness to integrate and incorporate outside influence. The adoption of American given names (e.g., *Cindy’s Kitchen*, *Paul’s Kitchen*, and *Patty’s Chinese Express*) may be evidence of onomastic acculturation. Borrowing the American fast food concept, many Chinese American restaurateurs open “express” or “fast food” restaurants, sometimes next to well-known chains such as In-N-Out Burger, Chick-N-Run, and Popeye’s, which also offer combo meals at value prices. Recognizing Americans’ love for donuts, a few ACR have integrated those tasty treats on to their menu and even given them shared lexical presence on the restaurant banner (cf. *Jimmy’s Donuts & Chinese Food*). Onomastic samples such as *Bebe Fusion*, *Café Fusion*, and *Zheng’s Fusion* are further instances of the “melting pot” in which the cross-cultural mixing of culinary traditions is embraced. On another note, a few ACR have welcomed

the rapidly changing technology, with Internet media-inspired names such as *WeChat Café* and *I Heart (♥) Boba*.

ACR names are also interesting from a linguistic point of view. Firstly, they reflect the dialectal variations within the Chinese language, in particular the different phonological realizations of Cantonese and Mandarin. For example, *Woo*, *Tam*, and *Louie* are the Cantonese equivalent of the Mandarin *Wu*, *Tan*, and *Lei*, respectively. One could guess that ACR names including the former are thus more likely to be a Cantonese-style restaurant. With respect to form, ACR names show the different ways in which Chinese words may be represented in English. Chinese characters may be strung together (*Laoxi Noodle House*), hyphenated (*Ho–Ho China*), separated (*Ho Ho Kitchen*), or abbreviated (*TM Chinese Food*). Moreover, city names are sometimes presented in orthographies different from the standard spellings presented on English-language media or print material (cf. *Hongkong Express*, *Shen Yang*, and *Tian Jin Bistro* deviate from the convention). These examples are reminiscent of Louie’s (2006) thesis regarding Chinese given names. As noted in Louie (2006), transcription of two-character Chinese names into English can be expressed in various styles: (1) as one word (e.g. *Shuilan Lee*); (2) as separate words (e.g. *Ng Poon Lee*); (3) as two words with a hyphen (e.g. *Yo-Yo Ma*); or (4) as initials (e.g. *I.M. Pei*). This seeming arbitrariness in transcription practice extends to ACR names. Interestingly, ACR names may have inadvertently added to the confusion over whether the two-character forms are considered one word or two words, as the restaurateurs themselves are inconsistent when it comes to the English spelling of Chinese names.

In some way, ACR names even help validate the demographic figure of the earlier wave of Chinese immigration to America. The combined 18 instances of *Hong Kong* and *Canton* in ACR names, in addition to the occurrences of Cantonese-style surname spellings, is evidence of the notable influence that southern Chinese cuisine has on the development of American Chinese food. In fact, the introduction of Cantonese cuisine in the western US dates back to the Gold Rush, during the time of which Hong Kong was part of the Canton province. Later, to satisfy a growing population of diners seeking a more authentic experience, Cantonese chefs became enterprising. Among the culinary styles introduced to America was “dim sum,” which soon became popular. Judging from the existing ACR names, the Cantonese food tradition continues to be the more popular style of Chinese food today.

Although the data-set relates to a segment of the US (LA County), the naming practices observed are broadly applicable. Indeed, one could have easily come across a “dragon” or a “panda” in names of ACR located in other American cities. Surveying the ACR landscape online, one can uncover a *Panda Buffet* in Bozeman, *Lucky Panda* in Laredo, *Giant Panda* in Fargo, and *Panda IV* in Springdale. Moreover, the same non-chain ACR name can be used without any legal repercussions. *First Wok* seems most ubiquitous; it can be found in Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, Farmington, and Sioux Falls. Thus, while this study provides only a snapshot of the phenomenon, it lends general insights into the naming practices of American Chinese restaurants more generally and, in its small way, contributes to the field of food onomastics.

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