

Forbes

Rare Elegance And Creative Chinese Cuisine At New Philippe Chow In New York's Meatpacking District



Having a bar crowd is unusual for a Chinese restaurant but Philippe Chow's is swank. PHILIPPE CHOW

The fact that, since January, Philippe Chow in the Meatpacking District has emerged as one of the most glamorous-looking restaurants of any stripe in New York won't come as a total surprise as you descend a dark, mirrored staircase to the dining room. Its predecessor, Megu, though far different in design— all red and neon—was built both to attract and to wow a glam crowd. Philippe Chow has a cooler vibe of sleek black and taupe, with glowing lights and stunning back-lit bar. Even on a recent slow summer Tuesday night, the women guests dressed to the nines in spaghetti strap tops, tight mini skirts and spiked heels; the men favored very tight black t-shirts and shaved heads. Tattoos were in flagrant display.



With two New York restaurants, Philippe Chow visits both each night and visits every table.

PHILIPPE CHOW

This is Chef-owner Philippe Chow's second restaurant. His first has been on the Upper East Side for fourteen years and still appeals to a crowd who know that it has no connection to the restaurants called Mr. Chow. The name confusion caused quite a stir when Mr. Chow's owner, Michael Chow, sued Philippe Chow for being a deliberate knock-off of the older restaurant, which has branches in New York, London and Beverly Hills. To make a long story short, Philippe Chow showed that his last name would take up several pages in a Hong Kong phone book, and that was that.



Formerly the Japanese restaurant Megu, Philippe Chow's decor is now sleek black and white.
PHILIPPE CHOW

Philippe Chow also differs from Mr. Chow's by having much better food and from a huge Asian nightclub like Tao by actually focusing on the food not the razzle-dazzle. He is always at one of his restaurants, often at both in a night, and his menu is long with traditional favorites and his own new dishes, like the curried calamari (\$24) he recommended to us. He also has a full-time pastry chef.



Chicken satay is a popular starter at Philippe Chow. PHILIPPE CHOW

A good beginning is one of the smoky *satay* dishes on skewers, like chicken with peanut-sesame sauce (\$3 each), or the lettuce wraps (\$18) which you fill with seasoned minced meat or vegetables, fold up and eat with your fingers. “Mr. Cheng’s Noodles” are hand pulled and retain that wonderful elasticity when combined with a classic pork sauce, and I could eat platter after platter of Chow’s dumplings, especially the pork soup variety whose liquid gushes out of the delicate dough and fills your mouth with flavor (\$6 each).



Shrimp is battered and stir-fried for crispness. PHILIPPE CHOW

Green prawns are stir-fried with vegetables, a good shot of garlic and toasty cashews (\$37), and rosy filet mignon here is crusted by a good searing then sauced with an assertive black pepper crunch (\$41).

Peking duck is always the measure of a Chinese restaurant, and Chow's is a fine one (you can have it for two or more people, up to \$85), with very thin, crisp mahogany skin, the proper amount of fat and velvety flesh to be wrapped with scallions in a delicate pancake. I wish the hoisin sauce had not been so thick, and it would have been even nicer if they had preceded the meat with a duck soup.



Cotton candy covers Philippe Chow's version of Baked Alaska for dessert. PHILIPPE CHOW

To go with main courses, have the moist, fragrant vegetable fried rice (\$12).

I don't expect Chinese restaurants to have first-rate desserts, but Chow's warm flourless dark chocolate cake with caramel, frosted cocoa nibs and vanilla ice cream (\$14); warm apple and almond tart with caramel, almond crumble and soy milk ice cream (\$14); and the creamy coconut mousse (\$14) would be a hit at any American restaurant in town.

Unique, however, is the cotton candy baked Alaska (\$18), which arrives like a carnival confection of cotton candy, which, when you insert a fork, collapses over meringue, strawberry *semifreddo*, chocolate cake and roasted strawberries (\$18). It's a showpiece, certainly, but it also irresistible.

Philippe Chow has a considerable wine list, and there are good bottles at reasonable prices. The wines by the glass, which is a good way to go in a Chinese restaurant with do many disparate sweet and salty flavors, are a very good selection—if pricey—ranging from Livio Felluga Pinot Grigio 2016 (\$19) to a Chapoutier Côtes-du-Rhône 2017 (\$15). As you might expect, there is a long list of specialty cocktails, which will run you (\$17 to \$22).

So there's a lot going on at Philippe Chow, starting with that descent down a mirrored staircase into a shadowy, sexy space where the menu is full of both traditional Chinese pleasures and novel ideas. It's all in good fun but it's all buoyed by very good taste.

Philippe Chow

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