



Mrs. Chang Serves A Chinese Dinner To Iowa State Friends

By Helen Peg Belken

IS THERE anyone who hasn't tried to use chop sticks? Even the resistance of the most indifferent, blase person has been broken by the fascination held by chop sticks. Their uniqueness, and the fact that we rarely see them used makes us doubly interested in them. Most of us Americans have considered the skillful management of chop sticks an art and have had very little chance to have that opinion changed. It was at the home of Mr. and Mrs. K. Chang, where I was fortunate enough to be a dinner guest, that I had a chance to "try my hand" at that art. "This is the most hopeless thing I've ever tried," went through my mind, at my initial experience. At the same time I was wondering how the Chinese could be satisfied with seemingly such unsatisfactory implements. Then, after a few lessons from an exceptionally patient member of that race, I began to realize that the chop sticks were, yes, almost easy to manipulate!

Mrs. Chang's dinner consisted entirely of Chinese food. We not only ate out of delicate Chinese bowls, but with spoons made of the same ware and matching the bowls.

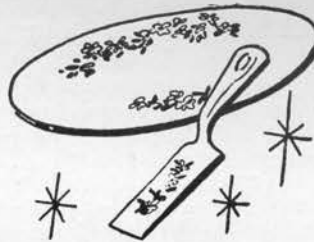
The food was all placed on the large dining table and each one helped himself as the food was passed by the host. Our first course was fried noodles, or as we call it, chow mein. This had been assembled on a platter and each one helped himself to a portion, placing it in one of the smaller bowls similar in size to the vegetable dishes that we use. We were then given bowls of boiled rice and it was with this rice that the rest of the meal was served.

Of the entire dinner probably the most novel dish was eggs chaotze. Beaten egg, partially cooked and filled with ground pork was made into the shape of half circles and fried to a golden yellow. Seasoned very little, but with a distinctive flavor, the eggs chaotze were a favorite at the meal.

Chinese cabbage and a species of

shrimp, a product of that country, were cooked together to make a very tasty dish. Eggs, similar in consistency to a baked custard, were served. By name, they were called steamed eggs and were made by thoroughly mixing together the yolks of eggs and steaming them.

Pork liver was served with fresh spinach, which had been cooked only long enough to wilt it. Pork egg soup containing spinach, and the most ten-



der of beef steak, fried and slightly seasoned, were the other delicious dishes included in the meal.

Shrimp egg sauce was on the table during the entire dinner. This sauce, which contains eggs of shrimp, is used as a condiment by the Chinese people. It isn't used in the preparation of the food, but is made accessible to the diner, who is at liberty to season with it that which he chooses and in the quantity he desires. All Chinese food is very bland in flavor since very little or no seasoning is used. The flavors of salt and pepper, which are the most popular of condiments in the United States, remain in the background of all Chinese dishes, depending, however on the dish. Probably the most noticeable characteristic of the food of the Chinese is the presence of fat. The greater proportion of the food is fried, consequently, the flavor of a pure lard is prominent.

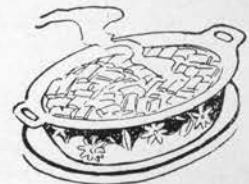
After dinner, tea was served in a manner similar to the way we serve after dinner coffee. I came to the conclusion that the reputation of the Orient for its exceptionally delicate teas is rightly placed when I was given the opportunity to drink some genuine Chinese tea. It was not only the deli-

cate flavor of the green tea that made it so delicious, but by the addition of several fragrant tai tai blossoms the aroma and also the tea were made more fascinating. These small white blossoms which floated on top of the tea added an attractiveness and appearance distinctive of the Orient.

The dinner Mrs. Chang prepared was characteristic, with few exceptions, of one which would be served in the home of almost any Chinese family of Shanghai. One of the differences being due to the fact that many Chinese foods are not known here. Also, fish, crabs, chicken and duck, which have important places on their menus, are often not on the market here.

Another misconception we have about the Chinese food which concerns the distribution of rice as a food is the general idea that rice is served in the homes of all Chinese. This is true only in the southern part of China. In the northern part bread, similar to ours, is used.

Mrs. Chang, who came to the United States only three months ago, is very much interested in American food, both in types of food and also in the preparation of it. She is exceptionally desirous of learning all that she can about it before she returns to China. There, at the present time, much of the in-



struction in the preparation and cooking of American food is done by American women. Together with her background of four years college work, which she did in Shanghai, and at the University, and with the knowledge of our food she hopes to gain here, Mrs. Chang feels that she will be more able to help in the private instruction concerning American food. In China this is promoted by the women's clubs made up of the faculty women.