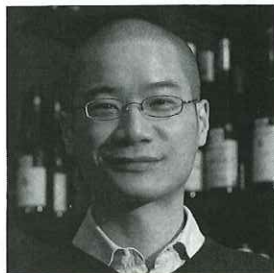


critics' picks

# Peter Liem

## The Dim Sum Palace



Despite its name, *Wong's King Seafood Restaurant* in Portland, Oregon, is most famous for serving the finest dim sum in town. Chef Fu

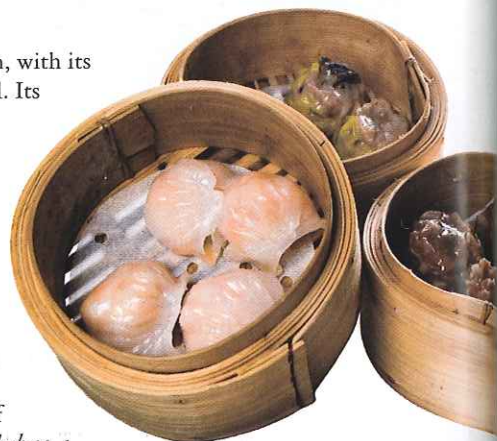
Lai Wong and his family preside over this Cantonese-style banquet hall, serving a largely Chinese clientele. In the evenings the menu shifts from dim sum to other Cantonese specialties, including delicacies from the live seafood tanks that give this restaurant its name.

If I were to bring wine to *Wong's King*, the first thing that comes to mind is Champagne: The yeasty character from the bottle fermentation and the long lees aging echo the umami-rich flavors of Cantonese cooking, while the bubbles clean the palate and provide refreshment, filling the role that tea would traditionally play. In addition, dim sum is normally served in the late morning or early afternoon, and with its liveliness and freshness, Champagne seems highly appropriate for this time of day. A crisp blanc de blancs like the Pierre Péters Cuvée de Réserve would be a fine foil for steamed dishes such as *har gau* (shrimp dumplings) or *siu mai* (pork dumplings), while a Champagne with more body, such as the 100 percent meunier

Brut Réserve by Michel Lorient, could match the savory depth of flavor found in the steamed beef meatballs called *ngau yuk* or the *lo mai gai*, sticky rice with mushrooms and Chinese sausage wrapped in a fragrant lotus leaf. German riesling would be another

excellent partner for dim sum, with its delicate body and low alcohol. Its light residual sugar echoes a similar impression of sweetness in many dim sum dishes, whether it's the shellfish sweetness of salt-and-pepper squid or the more complex sweetness found in the traditional Cantonese preparation of chicken feet. I could imagine the brightly zesty St. Urbans-Hof Riesling QbA paired with *lo bak go*, a daikon cake with dried shrimp and pork sausage, the fruitiness of the riesling complementing the cake's savory flavors while its acidity cuts through its slightly fatty richness. Or drinking Josef Leitz's Rudesheimer Magdalenenkreuz Riesling Spätlese, with its juicy, succulent vigor, alongside *Wong's char siu bao*, classic barbecued pork buns.

Some might prefer a dry German riesling with dim sum, but if I were to choose a dry wine, I might rather have a grüner veltliner from Austria, such as Hirsch's Heiligenstein. With its balance of both savory and fruity aromas, the Hirsch would be my pick for *Wong's cheong fun*, wide rice noodles stuffed with beef and scallions. For a richer pairing, try the Löss Grüner Veltliner by Hiedler: Its smoky, stony depth would complement the darkly complex flavors of the soy sauce that the noodles are dressed in, playing once more off an umami theme. ■



**Pierre Péters Champagne Brut Cuvée de Réserve** \$58

Terry Theise Selections/Michael Skurnik Wines, Syosset, NY

**Michel Lorient Champagne Brut Réserve** \$40

Bonhomie Wine Imports, South Orange, NJ; Charles Neal Selections, Richmond, CA

**St. Urbans-Hof 2007 Mosel Riesling QbA** \$11

HB Wine Merchants, NY

**Josef Leitz 2007 Rheingau Rudesheimer Magdalenenkreuz Riesling Spätlese** \$26

Terry Theise Selections/Michael Skurnik Wines, Syosset, NY

**Hirsch 2007 Kamptal Heiligenstein Grüner Veltliner** \$30

Terry Theise Selections/Michael Skurnik Wines, Syosset, NY

**Hiedler 2007 Kamptal Löss Grüner Veltliner** \$20

Terry Theise Selections/Michael Skurnik Wines, Syosset, NY

