

Chicken guts and chicken feet are a joy for a hungry panda to eat.

I'm not quite sure how to go about this one. I do try to make sure that each one of my logs has some sort of a theme to it. It makes for good literature. Basically, I think back on recent events and look for some sort of a theme running through them, whether it is traveling to China, first meal, first time wandering through various markets, registration, first day of class, etc.; some sort of theme for the document to appear as somewhat coherent. It also provides a basis to analyze life, make some observations, maybe make some conclusions, and learn something. This one will be no different. It's just that as I ponder on the recently completed Wednesday (it is presently 2:45 am), the theme that seems to have jumped out has been chicken meat, and I'm not referring to a tasty, grilled chicken breast. Remember I'm on an adventure in China, right? As wonderful as that would be to eat, it wouldn't make for a good experience, and I wouldn't tempt you to take the next 4 minutes of your life to read about it. This chicken meat theme has a much better story to it! Read on...

From what I hear, tonight October Fest kicks off. For most grad students, this fact answers most questions of what will be happening tonight. The obvious answer for Jeremie and I is that we will have to find something else to do than bounce from beer garden to beer garden. Easy enough. So for dinner, we went to a locals spot around the corner from the Joyous Supermarket.

As we investigated the menu, the man at the table next to ours started a conversation with us, in both English and Chinese. After a few minutes of chatting, his food arrived. He had ordered two different stir-fries. No surprise here, they were chicken (and vegetable) dishes. We inquired about the darker meat in one of the dishes, and he told us it was chicken guts (intestines I do believe).

Huh? This is edible? Well apparently. He invited us to give it a try and being in a somewhat carefree mood at the time, we shrugged our shoulders and said, "Why not?"

Flavor isn't too bad. Another one of those things that really tastes like the sauce it was cooked in. It is very chewy though. Not as chewy as squid, but it takes some effort to chew it up and get it down.

And to complete the theme of the day comes this story from the governments of China and the United States. Apparently the United States is going to levy a substantial tariff increase on tires exported to the US from China. In response, China is going to cut off the importation of American chicken meat, amongst other things. Beyond the seemingly random nature of the choice is the fact that Americans and Chinese are most concerned about the effect this ban will have on the chicken feet markets because the feet on American chickens are more luscious than any other and provide critical profits for the farmers. Best part is I'm not making this up!!!

Courtesy of the New York Times, I have summarized the issue. The whole article is at this link:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/16/business/global/16chickens.html?emc=tnt&ntemail1=y>

While China is threatening to cut off the importation of chicken from the US, poultry experts suspect the treats are empty because of the love Chinese consumers have for the scrumptious chicken feet. The big chicken feet result from the American preference for white chicken meat. A bird bred for big breasts is necessarily bred to have big, strong feet and legs.

“We have these jumbo, juicy paws the Chinese really love,” said Paul W. Aho, a poultry economist and consultant, “so I don’t think they are going to cut us off.”

About half of the chicken parts sold to China are wings and feet, which are worth only a few cents a pound in the United States. As delicacies in China, they fetch 60 cents to 80 cents a pound, and no other foreign market comes close to matching these prices. The United States is by far the world’s leading supplier of king-size chicken feet. “For some, the Chinese market is the difference between profitability and possible bankruptcy,” the letter warned.