

Taking Addictive Chinese Food to a Whole New Level

By ACSH Staff — February 3, 2016



Chinese food via
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If you think you've heard it all when it comes to food ... think again. Recently, 36 restaurants in Xinhua, China were accused of cooking up their cuisine with poppy capsules, among other illegal substances, in an effort to make dishes more addictive, increase sales and entice customers to come back for more.

We all know that, over time, food producers have perfected the art of expertly engineering their fare to make it irresistible to consumers. But in this instance, these shady Chinese restaurants have taken the term "food deception" to a whole new level.

For those of you unfamiliar with the power of the poppy, let's break it down. A poppy capsule is made from the dried skin of the ripe fruit of an opium poppy plant. [Opium](#) [1], of course, is widely known to be a highly addictive narcotic. The opium poppy plant itself contains over 20 types of alkaloids -- defined as a group of naturally occurring chemical compounds -- including those found in [morphine and cocaine](#) [2]. Poppy capsules are common in the Chinese medical industry, but they are illegal to cook with, as they should be.

In 2014, China's Ministry of Public Security [issued a notice](#) [3] urging police nationwide to crack the underground poppy capsule ring by setting up systems to connect investigators to tipoffs, reward whistleblowers and publicly shame all restaurants, outdoor markets and snack bars not in accordance with the law. Obviously, they're still working out the kinks.

But what's makes this story even more interesting is that Chinese food-lovers basically consider it addictive to begin with -- even without the addition of poppy capsules. This has been blamed on monosodium glutamate, or MSG. MSG is a concentrated form of salt and critics claim it can [trigger cravings, interfere with hormones that regulate satiety](#) [4] and cause things like headaches. Yet MSG is found in many Chinese dishes and actual Chinese people have no idea what Americans who claim it is harmful are talking about. [Food Addicts Anonymous](#) [5] even claims that

food addiction is a very real biochemical disease. But *food* addiction, if it exists, and *drug* addiction, which is an actual proven thing, are clearly separate things - unless food makers combine them.

It's one thing to knowingly succumb to the natural dopamine effect related to food cravings, it's quite another to be duped by sneaky, underhanded restaurateurs putting highly addictive and potentially lethal drugs into your food without your knowledge.

While the Chinese authorities sort all this out, at least it's good to know that they're cooking up a nice dish for the perpetrators of this scam: all the accused establishments are under investigation and, if found guilty, their owners and inventive chefs could face criminal charges.

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Links

[1] <http://www.drugs.com/illicit/opium.html>

[2] http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/31/world/asia/restaurants-in-china-investigated-over-poppy-capsules.html?_r=0

[3] http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2014-12/26/content_19178361.htm

[4] <http://naturalsociety.com/the-real-reason-to-avoid-msg-industry-secret-ingredient-for-food-addiction/>

[5] <http://www.foodaddictsanonymous.org/>