

重庆 · CHONGQING

The Real Chongqing Food Guide

What to eat, what to skip, and where locals actually go

Hi, I'm Elias

A Chongqing local, licensed guide. I've spent years pointing friends and travelers toward the food this city actually eats — and steering them away from the stalls built for tourists, not locals.

This guide is my personal list: real dishes, real spots, and the honest tips I'd give a friend before their first bite.

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01

2 Tourist Food Traps—Skip These

Learn to spot them before they spot you

TOURIST TRAP

“Ha Er Guo” Candied Fruit Balls

哈儿果 / “Golden Plum” street baskets

What it looks like: bright red/orange “berries” piled high in a basket, sold by street vendors near tourist sites. Looks like fresh fruit — it isn't.

What it actually is: a candied preserve (蜜饯) made from cull-grade small peaches or overripe plums, soaked in sugar, dye, and heavy additives. Locals call it “ha er guo” — “ha er” means “fool” in local slang, a nod to who ends up buying it.

Why to skip it: sickly sweet, heavy artificial-fragrance taste, sometimes a faint plastic aftertaste. Priced around 25–35 RMB per 500g (jin) or more — far above what the raw fruit is worth.

How to avoid it: if a fruit looks unnaturally glossy and uniform and is sold from a roadside basket near a scenic spot, walk past it. Buy fruit from a supermarket or a fixed fruit stand instead.



TOURIST TRAP

“Scoop-Your-Own” Flower Fruit Tea Stalls

花果茶 self-serve bins found on pedestrian shopping streets near major attractions

THE PRICE TRICK

1.2 RMB per gram

= 600 RMB per jin (500g)



The trick: the tiny “1.2 RMB/gram” sign looks cheap, but almost no one converts grams to jin (500g) in their head. A few casual scoops with the big scoop can add up to 100–300+ RMB before you notice.

What's actually in the cup: dried fruit peel, cheap tea stems, and a large share (roughly 30–40% of the volume) of colored gummy candy used purely to bulk up the weight — not to flavor the tea.

The taste switch: the free tasting cup is brewed with a large amount of sugar and tastes great. The bag you actually buy is not — expect sour, thin, over-processed flavor once you brew it at home.

How to avoid it: if there's no fixed-price bag and the sign only shows a per-gram price, skip it — or ask for the total price before they seal the bag.

02

Must-Try Local Foods & Drinks

What Elias actually orders when friends visit

1 Liruotao Yogurt

李若桃酸奶 — fresh, thick, fruit-topped yogurt

A local dessert-drink chain that whips fresh yogurt to order and layers it with real fruit — strawberry, matcha, and seasonal flavors. Thicker and less sweet than the bottled yogurt drinks tourists usually try, and genuinely popular with locals, not just photogenic.

PRICE

Typically 16–25 RMB per cup, depending on toppings.

WHERE

[Add your favorite branch name + Google Maps / Amap link]

VEG

Yes — fully vegetarian, dairy-based.

TIP

Go in the afternoon — popular flavors sell out by evening.



2 Chongqing Local Beer

重庆啤酒 — the city's own pale lager

Not famous outside the city, but it's what locals actually order with skewers and hotpot. Light, crisp, and built to survive Chongqing's heat and spice — cools your mouth down between bites better than most imported lagers.

PRICE

About 5–8 RMB a bottle at a convenience store; 10–20 RMB at a restaurant or skewer stall.

WHERE

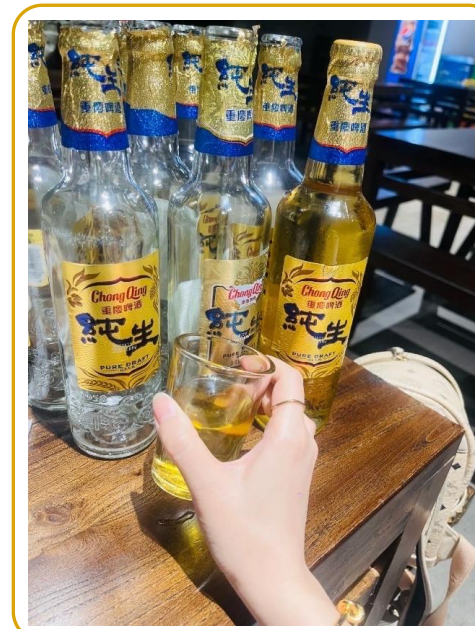
[Add a restaurant/bar name that stocks it cold]

VEG

Yes — vegan-friendly.

TIP

Ask for it “bing de” (冰的 / ice-cold) — room-temperature bottles are common in small shops.



3 Local Spicy Wine

重庆麻辣酒 — a chili-kissed cocktail

A newer bar trend: cocktails built around Chongqing's signature heat — chili-infused syrups, Sichuan peppercorn tinctures, fresh chili garnish. Sounds intense, drinks surprisingly balanced — sweet and citrus-forward with a slow-building tingle.

PRICE

Typically 45–80 RMB per glass at a craft cocktail bar.

WHERE

[Add the bar name + address]

VEG

Usually yes, but confirm — some infusions use fish sauce or animal-based bitters.

TIP

Ask the bartender to dial the chili level up or down — most will happily adjust.



4 Chongqing BBQ (Chuan Chuan)

串串 — skewers grilled or boiled street-side

Everything on a stick: lotus root, gluten puffs, tofu skin, quail eggs, meat and offal, all brushed with chili oil and cumin. Order by pulling skewers from a communal tray — you're billed by however many empty sticks are left on your table at the end.

PRICE

About 2–4 RMB per veg skewer, 5–10 RMB per meat skewer.

WHERE

[Add your go-to street/stall name + address]

VEG

Plenty of veg skewers (lotus root, potato, tofu, mushroom) — just ask for 素串 (su chuan).

TIP

Late night (10pm+) is when the best stalls are actually busy and fresh.



5 Chongqing Hotpot

重庆火锅 — the city's signature dish

Numbing, fiery, beef-tallow broth simmering with dried chilies and Sichuan peppercorn, shared around a table with friends. This is Chongqing's real culinary identity — louder, oilier, and spicier than the hotpot most travelers have had elsewhere in China.

PRICE

Typically 70–130 RMB per person for broth, meats, and veg.

WHERE

[Add your favorite hotpot restaurant + address]

VEG

Yes — ask for a clear (清汤) or mushroom broth, plus tofu, lotus root, and mushroom plates.

TIP

First time? Order “yuan yang guo” (鸳鸯锅) — a split pot, half spicy / half mild broth.



6 Chongqing Noodles (Xiaomian)

重庆小面 — breakfast, lunch, or midnight snack

Thin wheat noodles in a dark, chili-oil-and-peanut broth, usually topped with pickled vegetables, scallion, and a crispy fried egg or wonton. Cheap, fast, and eaten by locals at every hour of the day — it's the dish Chongqing people actually miss when traveling.

PRICE

Typically 9–16 RMB per bowl.

WHERE

[Add your favorite noodle stall + address]

VEG

Ask for 素面 (su mian, no meat topping) — broth itself may still use lard, ask to confirm.

TIP

Say “wei la” (微辣 / a little spicy) if you want the heat toned down — default is fully spicy.



7 Mala Soft-Serve Ice Cream

重庆麻辣冰淇淋 — *sweet meets spicy*

Pure Chongqing humor: soft-serve swirled with dry chili flakes, red chili oil, or a “hotpot base” crumble. First bite is cold and sweet, then a slow chili tingle and a toasted, smoky aftertaste creeps in — locals joke it's the perfect “fire extinguisher” after a spicy meal. Flavors typically include dry-chili (干海椒香辣), red-oil chili (红油辣椒), and numbing-chili crumble (糊辣壳麻辣).

PRICE

Around 10 RMB per cup — sold at small stands on busy pedestrian streets.

WHERE

[Add your favorite stand name + address]

VEG

Yes — vegetarian (confirm dairy-free needs separately, this is a dairy soft-serve).

TIP

Order the mildest flavor first (dry-chili) before trying the red-oil or numbing versions.



03

Food Experiences Worth the Hype

Touristy, yes — but genuinely worth it

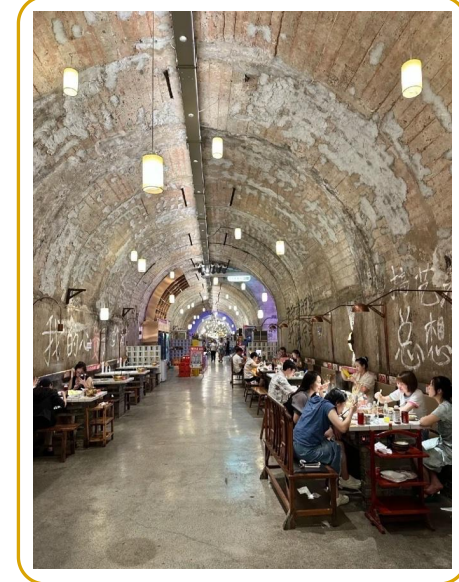
1 Hotpot in a Bunker

防空洞火锅 — hotpot inside a real WWII-era air-raid tunnel

Chongqing's hillsides are honeycombed with old bomb shelters, and a few have been turned into long, cool, atmospheric hotpot halls — neon signs, arched stone ceilings, rows of tables running deep into the tunnel. Novelty aside, the food is real, full-strength Chongqing hotpot.

LOCAL TIP

The most popular tunnels get genuinely crowded at night — go right at opening (around 5–6pm) or expect a wait.



2

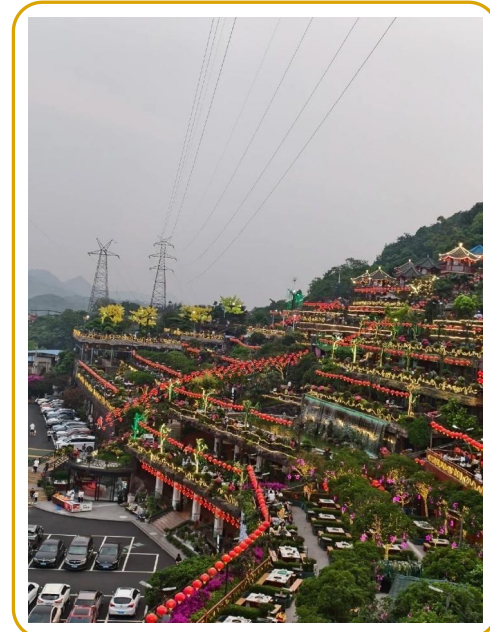
The World's Biggest Hotpot Restaurant

枇杷园 — Guinness World Record holder

A sprawling, terraced hotpot complex built into a hillside, officially recognized by Guinness World Records for seating capacity (5,851 seats). Lit up with lanterns at night, it feels more like a small illuminated village than a restaurant.

LOCAL TIP

Table location changes the experience a lot — ask for an upper terrace table for the best view, and reserve ahead, especially on weekend nights.



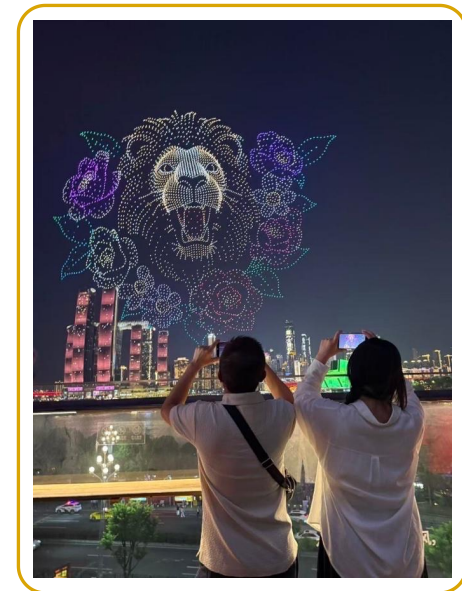
3 Dinner With a Drone Show View

VIP seating at a Japanese restaurant overlooking the show

A handful of restaurants along the river face directly onto Chongqing's nightly drone show. This Japanese restaurant's window-side tables double as the best seat in town — fresh sashimi in one hand, hundreds of drones lighting up the skyline in front of you.

LOCAL TIP

Book the view tables in advance. Most require a minimum spend of around 1,500 RMB for up to 8 guests — split well among a group.



Enjoyed the guide?

If this helped you eat better in Chongqing, a five-star review means a lot — it's how other travelers find a local guide instead of just following the same crowded lists.



Want the current spots?

Restaurant quality, queues, and table locations change often. Message me and I'll send the best current option for your route, budget, and spice level.

