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NEW OPENINGS

Legendary Beijing Eatery Makes US Debut in NYC

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Chinese celebrity chef Dong Zhenxiang wants his newly opened New York restaurant DaDong to bring more than a touch of luxury to its serving of Peking roast duck, a dish once favored by China's emperors.

After the \$98 duck is carved table-side by a server in white uniform, the customer can choose to dip the crispy, lacquered skin into a \$42 tin of Kaluga caviar. While the skin and meat can be eaten wrapped in the traditional wheat flour pancake with hoisin sauce and julienned scallions, DaDong also offers the option of a flaky sesame pastry with garlic paste and cucumber.

The painstaking presentation reflects Dong's blending of traditional Chinese and modern international influence to create dishes that are simple yet with a twist of extravagance.

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Dong's culinary vision helped him achieve success in China with his Beijing-born Da Dong Roast Duck chain of 14 restaurants. Two Shanghai branches were recently awarded a Mi-

chelin star each for the second year in a row. Now he aims to do the same in the U.S. in his first foray overseas.

The New York flagship, which opened Dec. 11, sets out to maintain DaDong's reputation for fine dining. Designed by hotel architect George Wong, the palatial 17,500 square-foot space overlooking Bryant Park in midtown Manhattan seats up to 440 people, physically conveying the scale of Dong's ambitions to conquer the U.S. market.

Those ambitions appear to be reciprocated. When reservations opened in October, eager diners made 2,500 bookings within two hours, temporarily overloading the server. Reservations now extend through February.

The frenzy recalled last December's opening of Tim Ho Wan, a Hong Kong-based dim sum chain that briefly held the mantle of the world's cheapest Michelin-starred restaurant, with customers happy to wait up to four hours.

Elon Zhang, a financial professional

who works a few blocks from DaDong, said he was excited to try the upscale restaurant. “The only place to eat Peking duck in New York that I'm aware of is Peking Duck House. You can't really take a client there,” he said, referring to the no-frills establishment in Chinatown. “Generally Chinese restaurants in the U.S. are not big on service. They are somewhere you would go with family, not with clients.”



Slow Cooked Lobster With Saffron Rice from DaDong