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ZHANG YIMOU + CHRISTIAN BALE

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Frites, Cuivre (42RMB)

Cuivre's skin-on fingers of potato are more akin to thickish chips than the traditional thin and crispy French fry, but they have outstanding flavour and are pleasantly free of the pools of grease that bring down some other chip options around town. Served in a brown paper bag fashioned into a small bowl – another stylish touch from this chic and well-judged restaurant – they make for a great bar snack while sat beside Cuivre's sawn-off Forever bikes.

Cuivre 1502 Huaihai Zhong Lu, near Wulumuqi Lu, Xuhui district (6437 4219). Open 6-10.30pm Mon-Fri; 11.30am-2.30pm, 6-10.30pm Sat-Sun. ☎ Shanghai Library. 徐汇区淮海中路1502号, 近乌鲁木齐南路

Spicy Mexican, Fries My Life (18RMB)

FML's cups of fries aren't the most generously-portioned chip servings in town, but at this price, you could get two servings for less than some of the more upscale frites options around. This chain sells fries and nothing else, so they're pretty confident about their recipe. You can mix and match from an array of fry shapes including crinkle, steak house and wave cut, as well as a wide variety of sauces ranging from the traditional flavours (mayonnaise, 15RMB), to the acquired (wasabi mayonnaise, 14RMB) to the bizarre (chocolate, 16RMB). Our favourite combo though is to add the Spicy Mexican's jalapeno pepper slices and lip-smacking squeezey cheese sauce to their crunchy but light golden waffle fries. It's a dirty, exceptionally unhealthy snack, but a good one.

Fries My Life (FML) No 41, B2 Reel Kitchen, Park Place, 1601 Nanjing Xi Lu, near Changde Lu, Jingan district (no tel). Open 10am-10pm daily. ☎ Jing Temple. 薯我生活 静安区南京西路1601号越洋国际广场B2楼41号, 近常德路

Curly fries, Hooters (28RMB)

Don't get dragged down by thankless discussions involving the morality of Hooters, just know that the American chain's curly fries are a revelation. Forgoing the orangey spiciness usually associated with these kinds of potato twists, Hooters' curly fries are skin-on spirals of lightly golden potato, fried to perfection: a not too greasy, but soft and squidgy interior encased in a perfectly crispy outer shell. Oddly, given the oh-so-American nature of the restaurant, the fries invoke the classic British chip shop chip in both texture and flavour, if not shape. If the guy from The Sailors Fish and Chips (see page 39) could only get online and replicate Hooters' curly fry recipe, Shanghai would have a indisputably authentic chippy on its hands.

Hooters First Floor, Super Brand Mall, 168 Lujiazui Xi Lu, near Fucheng Lu, Pudong (5049 0199). Open 11am-midnight Sun-Thur; 11-1am Fri-Sat. ☎ Lujiazui. 猫头鹰餐厅 浦东陆家嘴西路168号正大广场1楼, 近富城路



Hot chips Fry offerings from (clockwise from opposite) Kartel, Cuivre, Mr & Mrs Bund, Kabb and (below right) Munchies.

Poutine, Kabb (45RMB)

Xintiandi doesn't seem like the destination for a snack as tawdry as poutine (chips with cheese and gravy) yet Kabb's take on the classic Canadian dish is hard to beat. Purists may be outraged – there are no cheese curds in this version, merely grated mozzarella, and the gravy is a gently sweeter version that you wouldn't want in a pie or on your roast dinner – but it works. The slight sweetness of the gravy contrasts with the crispy fries beneath and makes Masse's more traditional poutine gravy (which also includes mushrooms, 35RMB) seem a touch bitter, while the grated cheese mixes in nicely without morphing into an inedible sloppy mess like the poutine at Julie's Canadian Food Experience (45RMB). Ignore the horrified looks of Gucci bag-clutching Xintiandi shoppers and shovel away.

Kabb No 5 Xintiandi North Block, 181 Taicang Lu, near Madang Lu, Huangpu district (3307 0798). Open 7am-midnight daily. ☎ Huangpi Nan Lu. 凯博 黄浦区太仓路181弄新天地北里5号楼, 近马当路

French fries, Kartel (40RMB)

Kartel's French fries took us by surprise. Perhaps it's the French nature of the bar, but we were expecting a serving of thin, crispy fries. However, their offering, handsomely presented on a slate with small pots of gloopy ketchup and mayonnaise, is neither frite nor traditional French fry. Instead you get a pile of thick cut home-style chips that are every bit as satisfying as their skinnier cousins in the Kartel owners'

homeland. The potato inside has more bite to it than the average fry and the crispiness on the outside varies from chip to chip, but these are ultimately a very moreish bar snack and one of our favourite bar fries. **Kartel** Fifth Floor, 1 Xiangyang Bei Lu, near Julu Lu, Jingan district (5404 2899). Open 6pm-midnight daily. ☎ Jingan Temple. 静安区襄阳北路1号5楼, 近巨鹿路

XXLPP9PP, Mr & Mrs Bund (50RMB)

There's no ketchup in sight for this fancy-pants French fry. The giant down-the-rabbit-hole-scaled fry called 'XXLPP9PP' (50RMB) is actually crushed potato flesh fried in the shape of a twig. The super-fry is dusted, fittingly, with giant salt flakes and coarse black pepper. On the side is a Dijon mustard sorbet that gives a vinegar kick on the backend. The fry by itself doesn't have compelling flavour; the interior is rather dry, not like the buttery potato puree on the regular menu. However, it's certainly an entertaining order, and would go well paired with the gravy from chef Paul Pairet's remarkable beef bourguignon or perhaps the refreshing tomato salad. Then again, we love the 'regular' fries here (hand-cut French fries *alouettes*) just by themselves – a big bowl (it has to be at 50RMB) of delightfully airy fries served with both the Dijon sorbet and a delicious foamy aioli dip.

Mr & Mrs Bund Sixth Floor, 18 Zhongshan Dong Yi Lu, near Nanjing Dong Lu, Huangpu district (6323 9898). Open 6.30-10.30pm Sun-Mon; 6.30pm-4am Tue-Sat. ☎ Nanjing Dong Lu. 黄浦区中山路18号外滩18号6楼, 近南京东路

French fries, Munchies (15RMB)

When we first envisioned this feature, Munchies was one of the first names that sprang to mind. We've lost count of the number of times Munchies' lightly crunchy crinkle cut wonders have, together with one of their burgers, saved us on a miserably wet evening or a hungover morning. When you order them as a dish in their own right, the portion is generous and easily one of the best value dishes on this list.

Munchies 974 Wuding Lu, near Jiaozhou Lu, Jingan district (6218 4616). Open 10am-10pm Mon-Fri; 10am-midnight Sat-Sun. ☎ Changping Lu; 563 Shunchang Lu, near Xujiahui Lu, Huangpu district (6311 3616). Open 10am-10pm daily. ☎ Madang Lu. 梦奇屋 静安区武定路974号, 近胶州路; 黄浦区顺昌路563号, 近徐家汇路

“Poutine purists may be outraged”

