



Residents flock to restaurants, cafes as dine-in services resume in Shanghai

Staff Reporters

PEOPLE flocked to restaurants — as well as bars and cafes — for morning tea, birthday celebration, reunion of sorts and — for some — fine-dining Japanese food on Wednesday, when dine-in services were finally restored in Shanghai after a long hiatus.

Following a two-month COVID-19 pandemic lockdown and then takeaway-only service, guests were excited and happy to socialize with each other and take a familiar or fresh bite at restaurants.

The pandemic-affected catering industry welcomed the long-awaited reopening and was fully prepared for it with strict pandemic control requirements.

Morning tea

At Sunya Restaurant, a famous Cantonese restaurant located on downtown Nanjing Road E., old customers came to take a familiar bite in the morning.

“Sunya is one of my favorite restaurants,” said a local woman, who came to enjoy a morning-tea moment with her husband. The couple are loyal customers of the restaurant.

“We planned our visit as soon as we heard that indoor dining curbs will be lifted,” she told Shanghai Daily. “We came here at 7:10am to line up, 20 minutes ahead of opening time.”

Some people came to spend time with old friends.

“We called Sunya to book a table on knowing that eating

in is allowed,” said a woman surnamed Zhang, who came with some of her friends.

Hotpot lunch

Haidilao, China’s biggest hotpot restaurant chain, reopened 40 outlets on Wednesday, with more to open “within days.”

Around 10 minutes after 12pm, more than a dozen people scanned the pandemic control code and venue code to enter a Haidilao outlet near Yuyuan Garden in downtown Huangpu District. Some were celebrating a birthday.

Reservations and seating was 20 to 30 percent higher than pre-pandemic level, according to Cheng Wei, chief of the eatery, who strongly recommended prior reservation instead of walk-in.

Wang and his girlfriend Liu, two university graduates, chose Haidilao as their first sit-in meal in a restaurant after cooking for themselves or ordering take-away food for several months.

“We love shrimp slip and Haidilao’s unique tomato pot. We did consider ordering a take-away hotpot but decided against it due to its complexity,” Wang said.

Cafes and small business owners

On Beijing Road W., people enjoyed cozy moments with friends inside cafes.

However, some coffee shops were only providing takeaway service.

“We will resume indoor service only after getting an

approval notice from the company,” said a man in charge of a coffee shop in downtown Jing’an District, which still only serves takeaways.

For owners of some small restaurants, such as ramen and wonton shops, the resumption of indoor dining is great news because it means more customers and, therefore, more income.

“I have been in Shanghai for decades and run a ramen chop-house, which has been open for more than ten years,” said an owner surnamed Meng, whose restaurant is located on Pingxinguan Road in Jing’an.

“During the lockdown period, the restaurant was closed for 75 days. We resumed takeaway service on June 3, but our earnings were only about 40 percent of normal.”