

Order Hotpot Like a Local

Your survival cheat-sheet for ordering in China — door to bill.

Screenshot this or print it. 18 phrases that get you a table, the food you actually want, the right amount of fire, and out the door without pointing once. Pinyin marks show the tone; the last column is a rough "just say it" guide.

1 · Getting a table

Hello / excuse me	你好	<i>nǐ hǎo</i>	"nee how"
Waiter! (to get attention)	服务员	<i>fúwùyuán</i>	"foo-woo-ywen"
Table for two	两位	<i>liǎng wèi</i>	"lyahng way"
Menu, please	菜单	<i>càidān</i>	"tswwhy-dahn"

2 · The hotpot order

I'll have this one (point)	我要这个	<i>wǒ yào zhège</i>	"waw yow juh-guh"
Half-spicy, half-mild pot	鸳鸯锅	<i>yuānyāng guō</i>	"ywen-yahng gwaw"
Spicy red broth	红汤	<i>hóng tāng</i>	"hong tahng"
Beef	牛肉	<i>niúròu</i>	"nyoh-roe"
Lamb	羊肉	<i>yáng ròu</i>	"yahng-roe"
Tofu	豆腐	<i>dòufu</i>	"doe-foo"
Tripe (a hotpot classic)	毛肚	<i>máodǔ</i>	"maow-doo"
Greens / veg	青菜	<i>qīngcài</i>	"ching-tswwhy"

3 · Spice level (the one that matters)

Not spicy	不辣	<i>bú là</i>	"boo lah"
A little spicy (mild)	微辣	<i>wēi là</i>	"way lah"
Less spicy, please	少辣	<i>shǎo là</i>	"shaow lah"

Local move: pointing works, but saying 微辣 (**wēi là**) instead of just nodding gets you a smile — and a broth you can actually survive.

4 • Money & manners

How much is it? 多少钱 *duōshao qián* "dwaw-shaow chyen"

The bill, please 买单 *mǎidān* "my-dahn"

Delicious! 好吃 *hǎochī* "how-chrr"

Thank you 谢谢 *xièxie* "shyeh-shyeh"

5 • If you have an allergy

I'm allergic to peanuts 我对花生过敏 *wǒ duì huāshēng guòmǐn* "waw dway hwah-shung gwaw-meen"

I can't eat spicy food 我不能吃辣 *wǒ bù néng chī là* "waw boo nung chrr lah"

Want to actually say these out loud — and 5,000 more?

GuoTalk teaches you to **speak** Mandarin for real travel & food situations, with characters who talk back. Order hotpot like a local. Then everything else.

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