

Top U.S. officials discuss options to protect Americans in Iraq from Iran attacks, senior official says

WASHINGTON (Reuters) -Top U.S. national security officials agreed on Wednesday on a proposed range of options to present to President Donald Trump aimed at deterring any attack on U.S. military or diplomatic personnel in Iraq, a senior administration official told Reuters.

The meeting was spurred by an attack on Dec. 20. At least eight rockets landed in Baghdad's heavily fortified Green Zone in an attack targeting the U.S. Embassy, causing some minor damage, the Iraqi military and the embassy said on Sunday.

The official said the so-called principals committee group of officials, including acting Defense Secretary Chris Miller, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and national security adviser Robert O'Brien, discussed the situation at the White House.

They agreed on a "range of options" that will be presented soon to Trump, the official said. The official would not describe the content of the options or say whether they included military options.

"Each one is designed to be non-escalatory and to deter further attack," the official said.

The Iraqi military blamed the Dec. 20 attack on an "out-law group."

But U.S. officials blame Iran-backed militia for regular rocket attacks on U.S. facilities in Iraq, including near the embassy in Baghdad. No known Iran-backed groups have claimed responsibility.

The senior administration official said the aim of the White House meeting was "to develop the right set of options that we could present to the president to make sure that we deter the Iranians and Shia militias in Iraq from conducting attacks on our personnel."

An array of militia groups announced in October that



they had suspended rocket attacks on U.S. forces on condition that Iraq's government present a timetable for the withdrawal of American troops.

But a rocket strike on the U.S. Embassy on Nov. 18 was a clear sign that Iranian-backed militias had decided to resume attacks on U.S. bases, according to Iraqi security officials.

Washington, which is slowly reducing its

5,000 troops in Iraq, threatened to shut its embassy unless the Iraqi government reins in Iran-aligned militias.

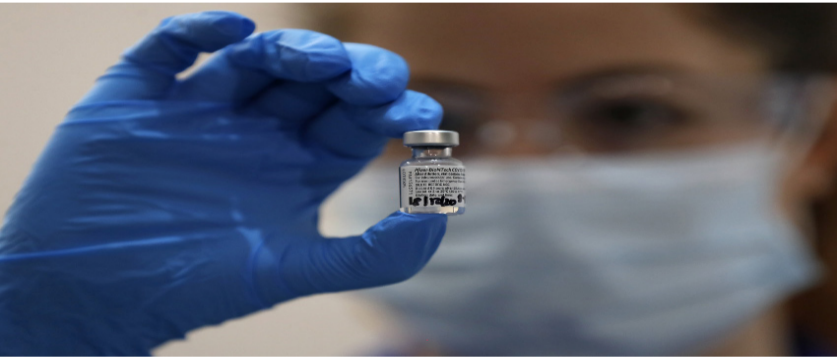
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Stay Home!

BUSINESS

Wear Mask!

The First COVID-19 Vaccine Is Heading Your Way - What You Need To Know



Pfizer-BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine has been tested for safety and efficacy in more than 44,000 people. Still, stopping viral spread will take more than immunizations, says the CDC. The agency is calling for those who are vaccinated to continue wearing masks and practicing safe physical distancing.Frank Augstein/AP

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

Who specifically is eligible for the vaccine now?

With more than 2,300 deaths now routinely linked to the coronavirus in the U.S. each day, getting a safe vaccine into people's arms has been an urgent priority. The FDA late Friday issued an emergency use authorization for the vaccine made by Pfizer and German biotech firm BioNTech to be given to people ages 16 and over.

Is the vaccine safe? Pfizer has run tests that include more than 44,000 people. An FDA analysis of the vaccine's safety and effectiveness on people aged 16 and older found "no specific safety concerns" that would preclude the vaccine's use. Some mild to moderate side effects are common — mostly swelling, pain, redness at the injection site, fatigue and sometimes including fever that resolves within about 24 hours

I'm not high risk or an essential worker, so how soon can I get vaccinated? Not for a while. The Department of Health and Human Services expects to send about 2.9 million doses out in the first push this week. Those doses are to be divided up among states based on their population. Last week, Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex Azar promised that the government would provide enough vaccine for 20 million Americans before the end of the year and says there should be enough for everyone in the U.S. in the spring — likely not just the Pfizer vaccine but also others that are still in the research pipeline.



Trucks are being loaded with much needed coronavirus vaccine.

If there are a few different vaccines coming, which one is best for me? Right now, you don't have much choice. Only the Pfizer vaccine has been granted emergency authorization for use. A vaccine that works in similar ways made by Moderna is expected to get that authorization, too — perhaps as soon as next week. Measures of the safety and effectiveness of the two vaccines seem roughly comparable. Other vaccines under development use different approaches to the same end. One relies on a harmless virus loaded with a coronavirus gene for a protein that will induce an immune response, and several companies are working on more traditional, weakened-virus vaccines. Some of the candidate vaccines are single-dose, while others (including Pfizer's and Moderna's) require two shots, spaced three to four weeks apart for full protection. Some of the vaccines must be kept extremely cold. **Where will I be able to get the vaccine?** Many doses of Pfizer's vaccine have already been deployed to the company's hubs in the U.S. and will now be shipped across the U.S. According to Operation Warp Speed, the vaccines will be picked up from manufacturers by UPS, FedEx and medical supply company McKesson for delivery to pharmacies, nursing homes, public clinics, hospitals, doctors' offices, mobile

clinics and military facilities. Initially, states are likely to direct first supplies to larger distribution centers — such as hospitals and long-term care facilities. The drugstore chains CVS and Walgreens are responsible for delivering the vaccine to nursing homes, which are likely also to be among the first places for availability. States will be in control. You can check out what your state has been planning on Page 25 of this document on vaccine distribution from Duke University and the National Governors Association. **What side effects can I expect from the vaccines?** In the Pfizer and Moderna trials (which included an average of two months of follow-up), vaccine recipients have reported mild symptoms (such as sore arms, redness at the injection site, headache or fatigue) a little more frequently than with flu vaccines, says Dr. Paul Offit, a pediatrician at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and a member of the FDA's advisory committee evaluating the vaccines. Offit says mild to moderate symptoms — similar to the range of side effects seen with the shingles vaccine Shingrix — are to be expected, and people need to understand that.



Vaccine recipients, especially under age 65, also "could have fever — including rarely high fever — fatigue, headaches, chills, muscle aches, joint pain, enough so that one could miss a day of work," Offit tells NPR.

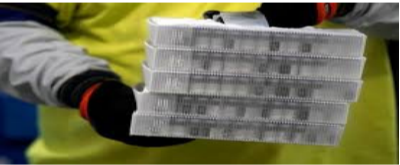
"But that's just your immune system being vigorous and working for you," Offit says. "In many ways, it's a good thing. But you can't have people surprised by this because it is actually a fairly common problem." An FDA-posted fact sheet and prescribing instructions regarding the Pfizer vaccine reports that in one trial, 0.4% of people who'd gotten the vaccine had a serious adverse event compared with 0.3% of those who received a placebo. A New England Journal of Medicine report published this week described the incidence of serious adverse events as "low, and similar in both groups." In the U.K., which began vaccinating with the Pfizer vaccine earlier this week, there have been two or three cases of strong allergic reactions in people who have a significant enough history of severe allergies that at least two routinely carry EpiPens. The reaction was safely quashed with a shot of epinephrine. The fact sheet the FDA posted advises health workers to not give the Pfizer vaccine to "individuals with known history of a severe allergic reaction (e.g., anaphylaxis) to any component of the Pfizer-BioN-

Tech COVID-19 Vaccine." The agency noted in a press briefing Saturday that the warning does not extend to the 1.6% of people who have had a severe allergic reaction to foods or something in the environment. Both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are based on a new model — getting genetic material into people's cells so that the cells produce proteins that will trigger an immune reaction. "There's no particular reason based on the science to be concerned about long-term side effects," says Dr. Jesse Goodman, former FDA chief scientist and now at Georgetown University. "But that said, careful monitoring over time will be needed."

I'm pregnant. What should I do about getting immunized? Many vaccines are safe and effective and are recommended for pregnant women, but pregnant women were excluded from both the Moderna and Pfizer studies, so no one can say for sure how the vaccine will perform in this group. Several studies have shown that pregnant women who get COVID-19 are more likely to have a worse run of it, so it would be helpful to have more data. "We think and hope the vaccines will be useful and safe for pregnant women," says Goodman. "But we need the studies."



The issue came up during the advisory meeting Thursday, and Pfizer said it would be releasing results on toxicity studies in rats in the next few days. The FDA's guidance did not preclude offering the vaccine to pregnant women, but experts say there isn't enough information to assess the risks versus benefits in a way that would merit blanket advice. **What about kids?** Participants in Pfizer's vaccine studies were mostly adults, and the FDA's authorization is for people 16 and older. But, so far, only 163 people in Pfizer's 44,000-person trial were as young as 16 or 17, notes Dr. Cody Meissner in an interview with NPR. He is chief of pediatrics at Tufts University Medical Center and one of the FDA advisory committee members. Half of that group got the placebo, and none of the participants in the research trial was younger than 16, Meissner notes. The American Academy of Pediatrics is calling for adding younger people to the vaccine clinical trials. The FDA's Dr. Peter Marks, director of the Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research, notes that many 16- and 17-year-olds are working as checkout workers or are otherwise active in their communities, so their risk of contracting the coronavirus can be elevated. "We think the known and potential benefits outweigh the known and potential risks" of immunizing this age group, he says.



My mom got her first dose and I want to visit. Are there still safety issues?

Yes — remember, both doses are necessary for full effectiveness. And for now at least, you should take the same precautions you did before vaccination, says Goodman. "Until the population is broadly vaccinated and the outbreak under control, which will take many months, everyone — vaccinated or not — needs to continue to wear masks and practice distancing to protect themselves and others. **If I've had COVID-19 should I get vaccinated anyway?** It looks like getting vaccinated when you've been infected in the past is safe — in both the Pfizer and Moderna trials, about 5% to 10% of volunteers turned out to have already been infected. And many experts say the extra protection of immunization might be helpful. But the CDC is waiting until there is more information about how long "natural immunity" lasts to give advice about that. **How much will getting immunized cost me?** The government will be providing vaccines for free, but providers will be allowed to charge a fee for giving the shots. They can recoup the fee from public and private insurance plans and from a government fund to cover uninsured individuals. **Will I need a booster shot?** Some of the vaccines further down the pipeline are single shots, but the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines require two doses to hit the 95% effectiveness level. With other multidosed vaccines, people often miss the second shot.



Is it safe to send kids back to schools? It likely will be awhile before any of the COVID-19 vaccines are authorized for use in children — the early vaccines have not been tested in kids under age 16. And it's going to take a long time for vaccination to lower the overall rate of infection in the community and thus lower the likelihood of the coronavirus coming into the schools from outside. Infectious disease experts say that for now, the safety of the youngest students has much more to do with whether their school makes sure that students, faculty and staff keep properly distanced and wear masks where appropriate; provides washing-up areas; and ensures good ventilation. (Courtesy www.npr.org)

Editor’s Choice



People watch as a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket, topped with the Crew Dragon capsule, is launched carrying four astronauts on the first operational NASA commercial crew mission at Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Florida. REUTERS/Joe Skipper



A temporary hospital in the Krylatskoye Ice Palace, where patients suffering from the coronavirus are treated, in Moscow, Russia. REUTERS/Maxim Shemetov



Dustin Johnson of the U.S. is presented with the green jacket by Tiger Woods of the U.S. after winning The Masters in Augusta, Georgia. REUTERS/Brian Snyder



Supporters of President Donald Trump sit on the “Patriot Elk” formerly known as the”Nightmare NElk” during a “Stop the Steal” protest in Salem, Oregon. REUTERS/Alisha Jucevic



El Paso County detention inmates, also known as “trustees” (low level inmates) and Sheriff officers and morgue staff help move bodies to refrigerated trailers deployed during a surge of coronavirus deaths, outside the Medical Examiner’s Office in El Paso, Texas. REUTERS/Ivan Pierre Aguirre



A health worker takes a swab sample from a tourist coming from Mexico upon his arrival at the Jose Marti International Airport in Havana, Cuba. REUTERS/Alexandre Meneghini



Luiza Erundina, 85, leftist Guilherme Boulos’s candidate for vice-mayor, holds her hand to a man’s from inside the “cata voto” (Vote Catcher), a car with a plastic booth to protect herself from the coronavirus during the campaign in Sao Paulo, Brazil. REUTERS/Amanda Perobelli



Ethiopians who fled the ongoing fighting in Tigray region prepare to cross the Setit River on the Sudan-Ethiopia border in Hamdait village in eastern Kassala state, Sudan. REUTERS/El Tayeb Siddig

Christmas Trees
That Light Up The World

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

(Editor’s Note) Keeping Faith in Times of Pestilence

The year 2020 will be remembered as the year of global pestilence brought on by the coronavirus pandemic. It has also been a time of immense loss and deep grief, the likes of which we pray to never experience again. It has also been a year of heightened bravery of front line workers and health professionals that the world has not seen in a millennial. While this year has brought us sadness and loss, there also have been miraculous triumphs in medical technology that will now serve mankind for years to come in the battle against illness. Today is the day for family, friends and being together and keeping in touch with friends a world away. Please join us on a brief journey around the world and see how the humble tree of Christmas continues to light up peoples’ spirits over the entire globe.



The world's largest Christmas tree display rises up the slopes of Monte Ingino outside of Gubbio, in Italy's Umbria region. Composed of about 500 lights connected by 40,000 feet of wire, the 'tree' is a modern marvel for an ancient city



A Christmas tree befitting Tokyo's nighttime neon display is projected onto the exterior of the Grand Prince Hotel Akasaka.



Illuminating the Gothic facades of Prague's Old Town Square, and casting its glow over the manger display of the famous Christmas market, is a grand tree cut in the Sumava mountains in the southern Czech Republic.



Moscow celebrates Christmas according to the Russian Orthodox calendar on Jan. 7. For weeks beforehand, the city is alive with festivities in anticipation of Father Frost's arrival on his magical troika with the Snow Maiden. He and his helper deliver gifts under the New Year tree, or yolka, which is traditionally a fir.



The largest Christmas tree in Europe (more than 230 feet tall) can be found in the Praça do Comércio in Lisbon, Portugal. Thousands of lights adorn the tree, adding to the special enchantment of the city during the holiday season.



'Oh Christmas tree, oh Christmas tree': Even in its humblest attire, aglow beside a tiny chapel in Germany's Karwendel mountains, a Christmas tree is a wondrous sight.



Ooh la la Galeries Lafayette! In Paris, even the Christmas trees are chic. With its monumental, baroque dome, plus 10 stories of lights and high fashion, it's no surprise this show-stopping department store draws more visitors than the Louvre and the Eiffel Tower



In addition to the Vatican's heavenly evergreen, St. Peter's Square in Rome hosts a larger-than-life nativity scene in front of the obelisk.



Drink a glass of gluhwein from the holiday market at the Romer Frankfurt's city hall since 1405 and enjoy a taste of Christmas past.



牛肉火锅
藏着潮汕人的禅心无定

对潮汕牛肉火锅的评价，是一门凡学。

在餐饮点评类APP上，外地的潮汕牛肉火锅经常收获一堆诸如“汤寡淡”“肉不新鲜”的差评；而旅行探店类的APP上，人们对潮汕本地牛肉火锅却从不吝赞美之词，诸如“名不虚传”“鲜嫩可口”之类的形容词连篇累牍，惹人口水。

清水煮牛肉蘸酱，这个过程简单的料理方式，究竟在潮汕发生了怎样的质变，成为挖不动、搬不走的地方特色。

关于分切

作为古代中国南方尽头的边疆，与潮汕相关的名人，比如韩愈、苏轼，大多与贬官有关。迁客骚人们远离了皇权和礼教，对于耕种的牛跃跃欲试。

这种与农耕文明截然不同的传统，和爱吃牛肉的四川人一样，有其独特的地缘原因。

所以，潮汕吃牛肉习惯由来已久。而火锅，则是当地各种牛肉料理集大成的作品。

这张图是许多火锅店标榜的，说明潮汕吃牛肉讲究的“金字招牌”。但其实际仅仅几年前，连潮汕本地人都分不清这些部位的命名。

本地人大多沿用菜市场的提法，以肥瘦比例区分胸口腩、肥牛、嫩肉、上盘牛脚趾；老饕们则会进一步把肥牛细分为雪花、吊龙、肥胛等等。细分的目的不是为了故弄玄虚，而是为了捋顺涮锅的顺序：先瘦后肥。

如果肥肉太早下锅，脂肪就会析出，变成褐色的颗粒，让汤色发浑，影响品相和口味。先下瘦肉、再下肥瘦相间的、最后再涮纯肥的，这就保证了一顿火锅大部分时间内汤色的清澈，和滋味的纯粹，也给了人们仔细品味每一部分肉质细微差异的空间。

如果在分切这件事上走进玄学，难免以其昏昏，使人昭昭。

关于肉质

火锅店标榜的“本地牛现杀”，其实也是假的。潮汕地区人多地少，还有大量沿海的盐碱地，曾经在清中后期和民国时期发生过严重的内卷，否则也不可

能出现大量背井离乡下南洋的华侨。耕地不足，自然条件受限，当然不可能培育出优质的牛肉。

事实上，潮汕牛肉火锅里的牛，大多从贵川运输而来，到了潮汕本地短暂养殖后再进行屠宰。少部分火锅店也会采用广西和江西的牛，价值较高，以此作为揽客的噱头。但事实上这些地方的牛种都是蒙古黄牛，味道上并无太大差异。

相反，广东本地的水牛，或者产自山东的杂交黄牛，绝不是好的煮火锅选择。

这是许多外地火锅店常犯的错误——水牛肉质精瘦粗老，只适合炖煮成牛腩煲，不适合短时间烹制；杂交黄牛个体大、出肉率高，但肉质薄，在不讲究的情况下，更容易买到。

母牛由于肌肉脂肪多，味道比公牛更好，涮后更入口即化，但这也并不绝对。潮汕很多火锅店会采用从小阉割的阉牛，味道相比母牛一点都不逊色。

真正影响肉质优劣的决定性因素是屠宰时间。很多网红火锅店常常会挂几块“还在跳动”的肉在店铺外揽客。但太新鲜的肉其实并不是最好吃的，一则，屠宰后还在跳动的部位往往是运动量比较大、肌肉发达的熟成牛肉，实质上是采取了适当的保水方式，防止牛肉腐败的同时，耐心等待肉质再次软化，并释放出更多氨基酸。

而潮汕牛肉好吃的奥妙，在于抓住了屠宰之后、尸僵之前的一小段时间。有了鲜味，肉质还嫩。一般屠宰场都是凌晨杀一次，中午杀一次。凌晨的肉是送去集市菜场的，流转周期比较长，所以牛的品质也较差。老牌火锅店通常会直接向屠宰场购买中午屠宰的牛肉，所以吃潮汕牛肉火锅一般会安排在晚餐和夜宵，6-8小时的间隔期，恰好让肉处于最佳食用的状态。

而午市牛肉火锅，则多是前一天晚上剩下的，不

好吃。

关于汤底

一千斤的牛，去掉骨架下水，大约三四百斤净肉。这些肉里，真正适合涮火锅的精致部分，按照店家的选料要求不同，能分拣出15%-40%。

所以潮汕那些苍蝇馆子里，一盘薄薄几片肉要价三四十元，真的不贵。但反过来讲，那些装潢精美，宣称一头牛只能吃一顿火锅，一盘肉高达几百元的馆子，也有故弄玄虚的嫌疑。

分切剩下的部分，就是火锅汤的原料。牛骨牛筋是汤的底色，全程不能开大火，也是为了防止骨髓里的脂肪形成悬浮颗粒，只让水溶性氨基酸慢慢分解析出，所以清澈见底，但又滋味浓厚，鲜甜可口。

从汤头，到蘸料，都只用牛肉，最多辅以少许蘸料和蔬菜，实现了真正意义上的原汤化原食。如果在牛肉火锅店里，问店主有没有虾滑、酥肉、面筋，应该会遭到一顿白眼。这在中国其他地区的火锅中，是不多见的。

汤里要加一点点南姜和盐调味祛腥。南姜外形和生姜类似，但滋味完全不同。它的香味近似肉桂，辣中带甜，比生姜激烈而富有攻击性。古希腊时代，欧洲人拿它作为香辛料和熏香材料，而今天，坚持使用它来调味的只有潮汕和东南亚的部分地区。

一锅牛骨清汤上桌前，照例要加一些萝卜、玉米，这是食客们的开胃小菜，还能让汤水增加蔬菜清甜的味道。

牛肉丸、牛筋丸也是放在汤里一起上桌的。这些东西本是分切牛肉的边角料打成，价值不甚高，好处在于肉质久煮不变，越煮越香，所以根本不需要单独装盘，因为量大，很多有口碑的老店甚至是随汤附赠的，并不需要额外点。

肉丸本是客家人的做法，先民们翻山越岭来到南岭，沿途的食物供给、保存、烹饪条件很差，为了延长保质期，将肉类打成肉酱后煮熟，其实是一种取巧的办法。来到潮汕地区后，结合了本地的鱼丸创制了牛肉丸，是外来文化成为流行的典型案例。

让人难过的是，本来只是“小路饮食”的牛肉丸，却在近年来被一部分商家包装成潮汕牛肉火锅的代表，不吃后悔的必点菜，标价甚至超过牛肉本身——买椟还珠，说的就是这了。

关于蘸碟

沙茶酱是潮汕牛肉火锅的灵魂所在，这是普遍的共识。但一个很多人不知道的细节能是，最早之前，潮汕牛肉火锅是没有蘸料的，它选用高汤混杂沙茶作为锅底，如是炭炉，整片牛肉浸没在沸腾的沙茶汤汁里，口味稍重的喜欢加本地辣椒酱。

但近年来，炭炉演变为燃气炉，因为火力大，火

候的控制成了难题。普通食客很难做到，沙茶底天然又容易糊底毁锅，所以店家无奈只能换成清汤。沙茶离开了锅底，成为蘸料。

这一“无心之失”把重口味调成小清新，或许也成了潮汕牛肉火锅让更多人接受的重要因素。

沙茶来自流行于马来、印尼等国的烤肉腌料“沙爹”（Satay）。它的印尼语词根“SATE”意思就是“烤肉串”。这是一种虾膏、花生、南姜、黄姜、香茅、红辣椒、椰子酱等香料混合而成的，类似于咖喱的重口味调料。

来自潮汕的南洋华侨们吸取采纳了这种调料，在用香油、陈皮、油炸蒜蓉和鱼露稀释沙爹后，发明了潮汕特色的沙茶酱。“茶”在闽南语里的读音就是“tie”，这是英语tea的来源，也极有可能就是沙爹被翻译成沙茶的原因。

沙茶酱的味道核心，来源于虾膏。这种由打碎的虾肉发酵而成的产品，有奇异的臭味和鲜味。因为发酵用到的菌群特殊，自己家里是没法做的。和酿酒的酒曲一样，需要在新鲜虾肉加入菌种，并在相对封闭的环境中完成，防止杂菌污染，并保持特殊独有的风味。在潮汕，所有的沙茶酱都是由汕头一家国营厂生产，由店家加入芝麻酱、葱酥、香油等各自的“秘制”配方混合后出摊。通常还会搭配一碟潮汕辣椒酱、一碟普宁豆酱，让嗜咸、嗜辣的食客自行调味。

国营厂产能有限，营销模式也落后，外地吃货的人不多，所以离开了潮汕，最重要的蘸料味道就无法保证。

关于煮法

牛肉、锅底、蘸料再讲究，没有到位的吃法，也是一道99x0=0的悲剧算数。

潮汕牛肉火锅的牛肉虽然鲜嫩，但一定是全熟的。肉质足够嫩，不需要半生，但若烫得不够到位，鲜味不能激发，就不能在入口即化的同时尝到浓郁的牛味。

潮汕本地人吃牛肉火锅讲究“三过水”，汤沸腾以后关小火，水温大致在80度左右低温慢煮，下水之后迅速用筷子将其抖散，均匀变色后捞起；再次下水，让肉停留在水中稍稍久一点，这次才是真正的涮肉，至红色彻底褪去拿起；这时观察肉的生熟度，如果稍稍显红，那么最后一下则为补刀之笔，如果火候已够，那么最后一下则为点睛之笔。

这样烹制的牛肉，其实近似于低温慢煮，甘甜味非常高。有高位段的食客，为了肉味更甜，甚至弃用牛骨汤，而用矿泉水炖煮，其实也是一种好的方法。最不可取的是，就是沸水下肉。火太大，外焦一下熟了，里面满是血水。肉没下多少，泡沫浮的一锅都是。如果走进一家火锅店，眼前所见皆是一片桑拿之景，烟雾弥漫，那么一定不是正宗的。

如果未曾见过太阳，我本可以容忍黑暗。如果尝过了潮汕本地的牛肉火锅，那么外地的牛肉火锅，自然都成了将就。