

TAIPEI 台北

STORIES FROM THE CAPITAL

SPRING 2019

| VOL.15

FLOWER VIEWING IN TAIPEI



The Etiquette for
Sending Flowers in Taiwan:
Do's and Don'ts

10 Things to Pay Attention to
When Visiting a Taiwanese Temple

Baosheng Cultural Festival:
A Festive Event Full of History,
Religion and Community

Breakfast in Taipei:
Start Your Day Like a Local

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Notes from a Taipei Spring

Spring is an exciting time in Taipei, a season when the cool, wet weather of winter subsides, and the sun emerges once again to bless the city with a renewed spirit of life and creativity. The change in energy is evident in the air, floating on the breeze like the scent of azaleas, calla lilies and hydrangeas drifting from the city center to the slopes of Yangmingshan.

Thanks to its beautiful scenery and convenient transportation, locals and tourists alike can easily enjoy the many splendors of the spring season in Taipei. At this time, numerous activities are held by Taipei City Government and the private sector, such as the Taipei Azalea Festival, to welcome tourists from around the world to experience the joy of blossoming flowers.

Flowers are of course the best medium to express affection, but they can also be used to decorate your home and elevate your mood. In this issue, *TAIPEI* introduces the unique flower etiquette of Taiwan, and will also teach you the secrets of flower decoration to make your home a place of beauty and divine fragrances.

In addition, from April to June, the Baosheng Cultural Festival is grandly presented in Taipei. We have invited experts to introduce Taiwanese culture and this charming festival, another hallmark of spring.

And of course, spring is a time to try new things. In this issue, *TAIPEI* invites you to restaurants that abound with fresh ingredients sprouting in urban gardens and farms in the surrounding hills, from edible blossoms to Japanese wagashi, breathing new life into all varieties of cuisine found throughout the diverse cityscape of Taipei. This is also a city steeped in the culture and art of tea drinking, allowing tourist to enjoy the delicacy of a cup of good Taiwanese tea.

Spring is indeed a time for celebrating. What better place for it than a city that seems to exemplify the essence of spring itself?

TAIPEI

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Calendar of Good Times

MARCH

3/14 - 4/7

2019 Taipei Azalea Festival

In Tokyo, you can see sakura, and in Amsterdam there are tulips, but in Taipei City, one thing you must put on your calendar is the Taipei Azalea Festival (台北杜鵑花季). In the warm March weather, the city will be dotted with azaleas, the official flower of Taipei City, that convey a sense of profound happiness.

One of this year's key events will be held at the Taipei Water Park (臺北自來水園區) on March 16. In Daan Park (大安森林公園) there will be a picnic concert on March 23, and 228 Peace Park (228和平公園) will also host a concert on April 6.



3/30 - 5/5

2019 Treasure Hill Light Festival

Treasure Hill (寶藏巖) is made up of houses that were built during the sixties and seventies, and were constructed against the hillside facing the river, constituting a unique settlement in Taipei City. The theme of 2019 Treasure Hill Light Festival (寶藏巖光節) is "A Land of Happiness", in which scenes and stories of the regular folks that have passed through this neighborhood are reproduced in front of the public through the eyes of the artists. Visitors are in for a fantastic time to experience the magic and wonder of this one-of-a-kind place.

3/29 - 4/28

2019 Zhuzihu Calla Lily Festival

Every April, Zhuzihu (竹子湖) on Yangmingshan (陽明山) is adorned with blooming calla lilies. Visitors can enjoy the beautiful sea of flowers and pick some calla lilies at local farms. A creative market will take place from April 4 to April 7 in front of the Miaobang Garden next to the Calla Lily Boulevard at Yangmingshan. The flowering period will continue until May, even after the official calla lily season, visitors can still go to Yangmingshan to enjoy the flowers.



3/20 - 4/8

Taipei Rose Garden's 2019 Spring Exhibition

The Taipei Rose Garden creates a flowery landscape with exquisite attention to detail, allowing people to enjoy the glory of roses in all seasons. The 2019 Spring Exhibition will be held at Xinsheng Park area of Taipei Expo Park (花博公園新生園區), where tourists can enjoy thousands upon thousands of roses. This year, the theme is "Alice in Wonderland", inviting visitors to enter a dreamy rose garden and enjoy a wild adventure with Alice.



MAY

JUNE



4/1 - 6/30

2019 Baosheng Cultural Festival

Baosheng Cultural Festival (保生文化祭) is one of Taiwan's most representative celebrations. Baosheng Emperor was born on March 15 of the lunar calendar (which is on April 19). This year Baoan Temple (大龍峒保安宮) will prepare the three offerings ceremony to welcome Baosheng Emperor. The festival starts from March to May (going by the lunar calendar). The two-month long festival is marked by a religious extravaganza that comprises a series of activities. The fire lion is another deeply important ritual of the festival which is the last left alive cultural event over the nation. The annual event is a blast for Taiwanese and visitors alike.

4/12 - 4/18

2019 CKS Shilin Residence Rose Show

You can see 125 varieties, around 2500 roses from Japan, Germany, France, and England in the exhibition. Strolling amongst the flowers makes you feel like you are in a stately European manor. Come and be surrounded by roses and romance as well! The exhibition takes place at the CKS Shilin Residence Park (士林官邸公園), and entry is free.



Mid May - Mid June

2019 Hydrangeas Flower Festival

Every year, from the late-May to the end of June, Yangmingshan is transformed into "the sea of hydrangeas." Hydrangeas in full bloom are all arranged in layered patterns. The forerunners are white, blue, and pink hydrangeas while the most eye-catching, the fuchsia ones, appear in June.



6/7 - 6/9

2019 Taipei Dragon Boat Festival

The Taipei Dragon Boat Festival (水岸臺北 2019 端午嘉年華) takes place annually at Dajia Riverside Park (大佳河濱公園), where tourists can enjoy the largest dragon boat competition in Asia. Elite teams all around the world are invited to participate in the race. Furthermore, a variety of peripheral activities, including dragon boat training, dragon boat eye-painting and egg-balancing contest, are available for all to enjoy.



4/13 - 4/14

2019 Taipei Traditional Market Festival

There are more delicacies hidden in a traditional market than you can imagine! Each year, the festival finds a new theme for people to savor different snacks. The 2019 event will be held at the Corridor Plaza in Taipei Expo Park (花博公園). Vendors from traditional markets all over Taipei City are invited to reserve a booth, presenting the diversity and charm of these unique marketplaces.

Flower Viewing in Taipei: Three Routes Recommended for Couples, Friends, and Families

WORDS BY

Jenna Lynn Cody

/

PHOTOS BY

Taiwan Scene, Department of Information and Tourism, Taipei City Government

Taiwan may have blazing hot summers, but its mild weather in other seasons allows flowers to bloom year-round. From January through the spring, there are many places to see flowers in Taipei, and flower festivals abound. In January and February, plum blossoms can be seen along the western path near the rose garden at the CKS Shilin Residence Park (士林官邸公園), located in the Taipei City district for which it is named, and in nearby Zhicheng Park (志成公園). Soon after, cherry blossoms begin to emerge on Yangmingshan (陽明山), and are a popular attraction for late winter travelers and day-trippers. Pink and white azaleas spring forth in March across southern Taipei, especially around 228 Peace Park (228 和平公園) and National Taiwan University (NTU). From April to June, calla lilies and hydrangeas take their turns to appear on Yangmingshan.

Many of these gorgeous blooms can be visited one after the other as a day trip. Below are some popular routes for flower viewing in the spring.







ROUTE 1

WHEN TO GO

Taipei Azalea Festival will be held from March 14 to April 7, and you can go anytime from mid-March to May.

ROUTE

NTU → Daan Park → 228 Peace Park

A ROMANTIC JOURNEY FOR COUPLES: VIEWING AZALEAS

Azaleas represent joy, love, and passion in Taiwanese culture. In Taiwan, azaleas bloom in late winter and early spring in an explosion of pink, purple and white, although pink is the most popular color. Rather than travel all the way to the outskirts of Taipei to view these ethereal blossoms, visitors can see them on display in the very heart of the city. In recent years, the Taipei City Government has held azalea activities in conjunction with picnics and concerts in Daan Park and at National Taiwan University during azalea season.

This year, the Taipei Azalea Festival (台北杜鵑花季) is going to be held from March 14 to April 7. Daan Park (大安森林公園), a sprawling 26-hectare green space in the centrally located Daan District, is the perfect



Morning

Hearts and Flowers at National Taiwan University

There is a unique custom among students at National Taiwan University: when the azalea blooms fall, lovers will use the wilted blossoms to spell out names, short messages and form hearts on the grass. Stay for 1-1.5 hours, and if enough blossoms have fallen, perhaps create a heart yourselves.

Start your journey from MRT **Gongguan Station** (捷運公館站) **Exit 2** - walk or rent a YouBike to ride across the campus.



place for a spring picnic, and an optimum location for azalea viewing. Since there are various YouBike stations scattered around the park, including the one next to the Daan Park MRT Station (捷運大安森林公園站), it's quick and convenient to hop on a bicycle there and take a ride over to the NTU (National Taiwan University) campus, another prime spot for flower fanatics. The distance from the southern end of Daan Park to the university grounds is about a kilometer, as the crow flies. Take this as an opportunity to see a bit of the city on your way to the historic educational institution, where many of Taiwan's brightest minds have been inspired by the natural beauty, including the azaleas, that abounds amid the Japanese-style buildings.



Afternoon

228 Peace Park

Azaleas bloom in many parks in Taipei, and 228 Peace Park is no exception. Enjoy the azaleas here, and visit the Taipei 228 Memorial Museum (臺北二二八紀念館) for a potent reminder of Taiwan's traumatic historical event, the 228 incident, showing how people in Taiwan transform tragedy into hope, love and resilience.

Take the MRT to **NTU Hospital Station** (捷運台大醫院站) **Exit 4**, or hop on a YouBike (there's a YouBike station at that exit).



Lunchtime

A Romantic Picnic in Daan Park

Enjoy the azaleas blooming there, and have a romantic picnic in the park. If picnics aren't your thing, nearby Yongkang Street (永康街) has several lunch options, many of them quite famous. You can easily spend up to two hours in the neighborhood just walking around and eating.



The southern end of Daan Park is a short walk or YouBike from National Taiwan University, or you can take the MRT to **Daan Park Station** to the north.



ROUTE 2

WHEN TO GO

The 2019 Calla Lily Festival will be held from March 29 to April 28. Weekdays will be less crowded.

ROUTE

Shuicheliao Trail → Zhuzihu → Calla lily farms

HIKING WITH FRIENDS: VIEWING CALLA LILIES

If you visit Taipei in the spring, you're likely to see families, friends and lovers on the MRT holding armfuls of elegant calla lilies. They are likely coming from Yangmingshan, specifically Zhuzihu (竹子湖), literally "bamboo lake". Although there is no lake here - the area is named for a lake whose waters receded long ago, leaving behind fertile soil perfect for flowers - the sea of calla lilies rustling in the cool mountain breeze is reason enough to come. These are meaningful flowers to see with friends, as calla lilies represent the vitality of youth. It's highly recommended to take a hiking trip to Yangmingshan with friends and make calla lily bouquets as a tribute to friendship.



Morning

Shuicheliao Trail (水車寮步道)

The entrance is located next to Hutian Bridge (湖田橋) near Hutian elementary school (湖田國小). Unlike other hiking trails, Shuicheliao Trail was built by the residents for the local rice milling industry and rice transportation. Nowadays, the rice fields have been transformed into flower gardens, making the former rice road the most popular flower trail in spring. It's recommended to spend 1 hour on the trail.

Take Bus **128** or **S8** at **Shipai Station**, or take Bus **129** or **S9** at **Beitou Station** and get off at the **Hutian Bridge School stop**.

Please note that Bus 128 & 129 only departs on weekends during flower season.



The overall size of the calla lily fields during peak season is about 10 hectares, and the lilies there comprise approximately 90 percent of Taiwan's total output. The best way to take it all in is to go for a nice, leisurely hike or bike ride through the area, and there are several hikes and cycling routes suitable for all fitness levels. A good starting point for many of these sojourns is the Zhuzihu Police Station. From there, Zhuzihu Road (竹子湖路), aka Calla Lily Boulevard (海芋大道), passes by many of the calla lily fields, and though the climb can be strenuous at times, the views are well worth the effort.



Afternoon

Calla Lily Farms in Zhuzihu Area

Calla lily farms in the Zhuzihu area are often decorated to demonstrate the year's theme and the owner's taste and creativity. Tourists can enter the private calla lily gardens to collect flowers, but usually there is an NT\$100 admission fee.

The Calla lily farms are just a few minutes walk away from Zhuzihu.



Lunchtime

Zhuzihu

Several trails run through fields of gorgeous calla lilies. There are more restaurants and places to have afternoon tea in a scenic setting where friends can enjoy a good time and recover from the fatigue of the morning hike. You can easily spend another hour or two here.

It takes 15 minutes walk from Shuicheliao trail to Zhuzihu.



ROUTE 3

WHEN TO GO

Mid-May to the end of June or early July

ROUTE

Zhuzihu → Wild Herb Potherb cuisine restaurants → Hydrangea fields

A FAMILY FLOWER OUTING: VIEWING HYDRANGEAS

Following the end of the calla lily season in late-May, hydrangeas are welcomed in the Zhuzihu area. Hydrangeas are regarded as a symbol of hope and an auspicious flower for families. They are also symbolically connected with gratitude and the desire to understand others. Hydrangeas usually bloom from the plum rain season (from mid-May to mid-June in Taiwan) to early summer. At that time, the clefts in the mountainside are blanketed with pale blues and purples.

Yangmingshan is the most popular place for hydrangea viewing, suitable for everyone from children to elders. Parents won't have to worry about spending time and energy to move around, as navigating the mountain is quite convenient. Photo buffs will find ample opportunity to take stunning



Morning Zhuzihu

Head to Zhuzihu, stay for 1-1.5 hours and enjoy the scenery there. The surrounding mountains make it easy to forget that you're less than an hour away from the center of a major Asian metropolis. There are several easy paths suitable for children.

Take the MRT to **Shipai Station** and transfer to Bus **128** or **S8**, or head to **Beitou Station** and then take Bus **129** or **S9** to the **Zhuzihu stop**.

Please note that Bus 128 & 129 only departs on weekends during flower season.



pictures of the surrounding landscape during hydrangea season, while families revel in the chance to pick their own bouquet in designated areas for a small fee. These routes are suitable for families with children.



Lunchtime

Wild Herb Potherb Cuisine Restaurants in Zhuzihu

There are restaurants serving healthy meals throughout the area. Yangmingshan is famous for Wild Herb Potherb cuisine. Many tourists come to Yangmingshan to enjoy wild vegetable dishes, such as wild vegetable ramen, wild vegetable hot pots, and stir-fried vegetable dishes.



Afternoon

Hydrangea Fields in Zhuzihu Area

The hydrangea fields are popular with couples and families, and have plenty of flat walking paths nearby where children can play and enjoy the hydrangeas and other flowers. You may see couples taking wedding photos, which are almost a must for any local couple getting married here. The fields are a three-minute walk from the Zhuzihu stop if you wish to head directly here.

The hydrangea fields are around 15 minutes walk away from Zhuzihu.

COVER STORY





Throwing Away the Floral Design Rulebook

An Interview with Florist Takako Mine

WORDS BY / TRANSLATION BY / PHOTOS BY
 Utumi Yoko / Wu Jieru, Joe Henley / Samil Kuo

"There was a large flower shop in front of my home, so I sometimes got a flower for free, or sometimes I'd buy flowers for myself when I was very young. I was always surrounded by flowers," Japanese florist Takako Mine recalls. To Ms. Mine, flowers have long been a tool to explore the world and a very important part of her life. This did not change after she relocated from Tokyo to Taipei. In fact, her life has never been so bright thanks to the inspiration of Taipei, a city filled with colorful flowers.

MOVING FORWARD IN TAIPEI AFTER THE TOUHOKU EARTHQUAKE

When the catastrophic earthquake of March 11, 2011 struck, Ms. Mine's child was just three years old. She packed up her belongings and came to Taipei to live with her kind friend for a short while until the aftershocks calmed down. At first, she intended to stay for only a week, but the stay was prolonged by the warm sense of friendship she discovered in the city and her own maternal instincts. With the soft, loving expression of a mother, Ms. Mine says that "I got so much help from local friends in Taipei and also found a suitable kindergarten for my daughter. I finally decided to stay."

With her new life in Taipei, Ms. Mine finds one fascinating point of the city is that the mountains are within an hour's drive from the urban core, and flowers can be sent to the flower market the morning they are picked. This is quite unique and rare in the world. "There's a plantation in the backyard of my daughter's school that is very close to Yangmingshan. I can go there to pick flowers in the blink of an eye! When I lived in Tokyo, I had to travel to Chiba to do so. It's just amazing and convenient for me that Taipei is so close to the mountains."

1 | 2

1. *Ms. Mine moved to Taiwan with her family to start her new life in Taipei.*
2. *Applying artistic knowledge to floral arrangement, the floral works are naturally integrated into the interior.*

COVER STORY

FOUNDING A THRIVING FLORAL BUSINESS IN TAIPEI

During her post-secondary school days, Ms. Mine studied art in New York. There she discovered art installation, and through that medium she became inspired by and deeply devoted to feminist art. After going back to Japan, she worked as an assistant at the flower shop across the street from her childhood home and learned how to use flowers in window displays, which inspired her to go back to the world of flowers. Later, she took a job in a flower shop within a lifestyle shop called H.P. FRANCE. With excitement in her voice, Ms. Mine recalls that “Many people working there never studied in any art school or as a flower expert or buyer, yet they worked freely without being bound by any rules. I was deeply affected by their working perspectives.” This gave her a new definition of floral design. A bouquet of flowers did not need to be comprised of a single variety of rose anymore. Instead, it could be combined with different flowers, branches and leaves, or sold together with a vase and miscellaneous goods.

“Since the flower shops in Taiwan are mostly selling flowers for Buddhist altars or orchids as a gift for friends or business openings, I thought I would open a flower shop that sells one flower arrangement for one person instead,” she goes on. “And in Taipei, people seem to always buy their meals from shops but not cook for themselves, therefore they must like to arrange something nice for themselves.”

Ms. Mine started her business with such a simple concept, but her shop, Salon by Takako Mine, is not simply about making flower arrangements. In addition to selling combinations of flowers vases, she has also started many workshops to share her love of flowers. These workshops not only provide participants with the know-how involved in arranging or packing flowers, but also instill ideas about interior design. “I have taken special care to arrange one spot where our customers can enjoy themselves and take a picture. This is a strategy that sets us apart from other flower shops,” she says.



1 3
2

1. *The flower shop not only sells flowers, but coffee and snacks as well.*
2. *Other artfully created items are also exhibited among the floral arrangements and plants.*
3. *Opening her shop in Taipei, Ms. Mine's aim is to share with people who love flowers ways in which they might decorate their homes.*



► Video Interview



REGARDING CONDITIONS OF FLOWERS IN TAIWAN

Taiwan has higher humidity and longer daylight hours than Japan, hence larger flowers can be cultivated here, and not merely tropical flowers, either. There are many kinds of flowers growing in the mountains, and countless varieties of fern along with wild grasses growing in fields. Above all kinds of plants, Ms. Mine's favorite is the Christmas Rose with its especially lush leaves, a species that can also be found in Taiwan.

"When I am walking on the streets in Taipei, I always see apartments with plants growing on the balcony. It seems to me that people living in Taipei are fond of growing flowers at home. Actually, I find more and more people enjoying planting tree as well. I just love to see people's home gardens to feel their sense of compassion toward their plants"

For people who love flowers, Jianguo Flower Market (建國假日花市) is one of the best places to visit. In Japan, people without proper permission cannot enter a wholesale flower market, but not so in

Taiwan. At the Jianguo Flower Market, a great variety of flowers, plants, and even fern families can be found, and all are sold at very reasonable prices. People who love flowers, trees or even succulent plants can find something to suit their needs. Another good spot to go is the Taipei Botanical Garden (台北植物園). There plants thrive in the high humidity, so the best time to go as suggested by Ms. Mine is actually on a rainy day.

The characteristics of the flowers found in Taipei vary by season, but of course those blossoming in spring are very colorful, with an abundance of species. In summer, winter, and autumn, too, countless types of flowers can be seen wherever you go in Taipei, from the surrounding mountains, to the colorful streets, alley and lanes.

Being an independent female and a strong mother as well, Ms. Mine still possesses within her young heart an unbridled passion for flowers, as always. With years of experience in traveling and living abroad behind her, she has now found her sense of belonging in Taipei. Surely, her boundless enthusiasm and knowledge will continue to captivate all who enter Salon by Takako Mine. T

SALON BY TAKAKO MINE-STYLE FLOWER ARRANGEMENTS

From Flowers for Home Decoration to Flowers as Gifts

Ms. Mine would like to demonstrate a simple way to make a bouquet of flowers for home decoration, which can also be a sweet gift, in just a few simple steps.

Tools

Vase

Flower scissors

String for tying flowers (about 100 cm)

Scissors for cutting string



Preparation

Separate the larger plants, thin plant strips, and the main flowers into different lots.

For demonstration purposes, we're using the seasonal and local flowers Delphinium and mountain lily, adding a few exotic species to dress up the arrangement.



Step 1

Firstly, arrange the plants in the vase with their best angle towards yourself. Since the plants will grow little by little, they should be arranged with nearly the same height to each other in the vase in the beginning. It is easier to arrange the height of the plants at this stage rather than later.



Step 2

Strip the leaves from the lower portions of the taller flowers and move these to the back side of the vase. Arrange the flowers freely, and to create a suitable spring image, it is advisable to add flower buds, small flowers or wild grasses to the arrangement as well.



Step 3

Lastly, for the major flowers, arrange three red flowers into a triangle formation, and adjust its direction to convey a sense of the blossoms swaying freely in the spring breeze.



Step 4

Cut the string first, then hold up the flowers you arranged with both hands, stripping the excess leaves. Next, bundle the arrangement up with two loops of string around the stems of the flowers and cut off the excess string.



Step 5

Cut the stems evenly, and the arrangement is complete.





(photo / Artsy Vibes)

The Etiquette for Sending Flowers in Taiwan: Do's and Don'ts

WORDS BY

Jenna Lynn Cody

PHOTOS BY

Artsy Vibes, César Gaviriam, Niccole Lim, Alisa Anton, Natasha Welingkar, Rebecca Matthews

Taiwan is an island with a huge variety of flowers. Orange daylilies blanket the east coast mountains in late summer. Calla lilies draw visitors to Yangmingshan in early spring, competing with the kapok trees flowering in Tainan. Flowers are also culturally and historically significant in Taiwan. For example, Tung blossoms are important to Hakka people who live in Yangmei (楊梅) and Gukeng (古坑).

Since flowers play such an important role in Taiwanese life, it's no surprise that a culture of flower etiquette exists in Taiwan. Birthdays, weddings, opening a business and funerals all come with special rules surrounding what flowers may be sent and why. For visitors and residents, such knowledge may not only be an interesting way to better understand local culture, but also potentially useful as one builds lasting business and social relationships.

SENDING BIRTHDAY FLOWERS

Kalanchoe

The literal meaning of “kalanchoe” in Mandarin translates to “longevity flower”, owing to their slow growth and long blooming period. It's therefore a clear choice to congratulate someone on their birthday.

Rohdea

The rohdea, or “sacred lily”, is an evergreen that is a popular birthday choice for its name in Mandarin, which means “evergreen” (literally “ten thousand years of green”), and can also mean “young forever”.



(photo / César Gaviriam)

SENDING WEDDING FLOWERS

Rose

One of the best flowers you can send to congratulate a couple on their wedding is the rose. And with red roses would be an astute choice inasmuch as red symbolizes good fortune as well as romantic love. You may wish to choose a variety without prickles (thorns), as thorny stems may connote unhappiness to some.

True Lily

Not to be confused with the more common daylily, true lilies are popular wedding flowers as their name calls to mind a Chinese idiom meaning “happily together for a hundred years” (bainian haohe / 百年好合). They also symbolize pure and innocent love.



(photo / Niccole Lim)

SENDING FLOWERS FOR BUSINESS EVENTS

Peony

In Taiwan, it's especially common to send flowers to mark the grand opening of a business. Peonies are a popular choice as they are symbols of wealth and abundance for their luscious petals, refined scent, and because they are hardy perennials.

Crepe Myrtle

As with the poinsettia, the crepe myrtle is popular, for it is both red and long-lived. In fact, an old name for crepe myrtle in Chinese is *Bairihong* (百日紅), meaning “red for a hundred days”.



(photo / Alisa Anton)

SENDING “GET WELL SOON” FLOWERS

Carnation

Carnations represent blessings or warm wishes, and are therefore popular as wedding and Mother's Day flowers, as well as flowers that you may send to a friend or acquaintance who is ill. Light colors, such as pink, purple and yellow, are good choices as they convey a message of friendship and affection.

Baby's Breath

Also known as “gypsophila”, baby's breath is a gentle flower that connotes caring and purity of emotion. It pairs well with carnations when sending “get well soon” arrangements.



(photo / Natasha Welingkar)

SENDING SYMPATHY FLOWERS

Chrysanthemum

Chrysanthemums mean a sad farewell in Taiwan. White chrysanthemums in particular are symbols of mourning in not only Taiwan, but also Japan and China. Sending white chrysanthemums for a funeral is most suitable, it can be paired with yellow chrysanthemums as well, for a solemn ambiance. Colorful chrysanthemum arrangements, however, must be avoided. They have a happier meaning than is appropriate to the occasion. Red, especially, must not be included. T



(photo / Rebecca Matthews)



Spring Has Sprung: Beautify Your Home with Decorative Flowers and Plants

WORDS BY

Tu Hsinyi

TRANSLATION BY

Joe Henley

PHOTOS BY

Timothy Buck, Nathan Fertig, Samule Sun, Mr Cup Fabien Barral, Liu Deyuan

The silent branches slowly decorate the land with patches of green at their own pace, the quiet transformation of nature providing a glimmer of spring.

Nourishing plants and flowers is not only a way to show your appreciation for someone, but also a therapeutic process, and there are many places for flower and plant lovers to go to in Taipei to indulge their passion. Jianguo Holiday Flower Market in Taipei City is a place where visitors can learn about plants and flowers of all kinds. There is also the Taipei Flowers Auction (台北花卉批發市場), where people come to buy flowers in bulk. As for those looking to purchase some bonsai and potted plants, the Taipei Pot Plant Auction (台北花木批發市場) is a must-see.

FLOWERS ARE VYING TO CATCH PEOPLE'S ATTENTION

"People often use the phrase 'spring bloom' to describe this time of the year, and it's no exaggeration," says Chen Genwang (陳根旺), deputy manager of the Taipei Flowers Auction Company. "Flowers of all kinds are blooming en masse during this season, and exhibit their most beautiful side to the public."

Amongst myriads of flowers and plants nourished by people, springtime flowers and plants that convey a sense of happiness and sweetness are most welcome when given as gifts. Roses and balloon flowers convey a message of love. Lilies imply that everything will turn out well, and the calla lily represents youth and enthusiasm. For potted plants, there is the moth Orchid, shaped like a butterfly spreading its wings, symbolizing happiness. Then there is the joyful ZZ plant and cyclamen. Bulbous plants have been gaining popularity over the past few years, with current trends leaning toward the flamboyant amaryllis and the delicate hyacinth.

"Flowers and potted plants are not necessities like vegetables and fruits, but they are essential when it comes to beautifying people's lives," says Chen. "Their beauty and fragrance add something green for us to behold and make our lives vibrant." People can use flowers with different meanings to convey their affections or simply place them in their homes or offices to make the surroundings a feast for the eyes. Or they can temporarily withdraw themselves from busy city life by spending quality time exercising their green thumb.

- 1 | 2 **1/2. Flowers and potted plants have a way of brightening the living environment as well as the spirit.**
(Photo / Timothy Buck & Nathan Fertig)
- 3 **3. Potted plants placed by the window bathe in rays of sunlight, adding energy to the house.**
(Photo / Samule Sun)



ADORN YOUR HOME AND BRING NATURE INTO YOUR LIFE

"Flowers and potted plants can bring people closer to nature and alleviate their stress," says Xie Chuizhan (謝垂展), a floral design instructor who has been invited to floral design exhibitions overseas many times and won the top prize at the 2017 Taiwan Cup Flower Design Competition. "Flowers and potted plants serve as media that transfer the outdoor liveliness in springtime to people's homes, so the people living inside can embrace nature and refresh their living environment."

Xie suggests that if you want to make your residence more cozy and soothing, you can put a little glass bottle with some flowers in it at the entrance to greet guests. Colorful flowers are suitable for living rooms, the dining table, or the coffee table. Though different colors and species cultivate different moods, it is not recommended

FUN TAIPEI

that you use lily, lavender, or the sweet olive, all of which have a strong fragrance. The reason, according to Xie, is that “Heavily fragrant flowers can make you feel dizzy in a confined environment.” Xie further expresses that if you do want some fragrance in your home, you can place flowers on the balcony or window sill, where ventilation is better. You can also hang green plants in the restroom to make the space lively.

However, there are few things to take note of when choosing spots for potted plants. For example, places near appliances such as a refrigerator are not ideal for plants or flowers. One reason is that the temperature in these areas tends to be too high for plants and flowers to grow. Another is the increased risk of electric shock and fire caused by sockets and wires when you water the plants.

You can also build a variety of environs and atmospheres, and make house decor more fun by employing vases and combining plants of different characteristics and flowers of various colors. For instance, use hanging pots to grow climbing plants such as ivy to lend a romantic touch to the wall with the plant's drooping stems. A home's entire outlook can be changed by something as simple as growing succulent plants such as cacti in small and delicate pots. The combination of green eucalyptus leaves with a brightly-colored Orchid, pot mum, and baby's breath can revitalize the environment.

|| **NOURISH WITH CARE TO EXTEND THE BEAUTY**

As for how to extend the time in which you can enjoy viewing beautiful blossoms and verdant leaves, choose flowers and plants with a longer blooming period and buy flowers that are fresh and durable by examining the buds, the thickness of the stems, and the color of leaves (the greener the better). Our experts have a few tips on how to take care of these delicate guests at home to share with you.

“One of the reasons why people steer clear of buying flower bouquets is the odor of stagnant water,




which can be easily solved by adding a few drops of bleach,” says Chen. Chen also mentions adding a sugar cube (or fructose) in the water to provide extra nutrients to the flowers. A couple of drops of white vinegar will go a long way if you want to inhibit bacteria growth while supplementing the flower's growth and vitality.

In regard to gardening, make sure there is sufficient light and water. You can also trim the plants when necessary to keep them healthy. “By means of pinching, leaf picking, and trimming, we remove the excess stems and leaves to prevent nutrients from being wasted so the plant will grow better,” says Jiang Mingwen (江銘文), a plant doctor at a botanical clinic at the Jianguo Holiday Flower Market. According to Doctor Jiang, the average time of changing the soil and pot for a plant is once every three to five years. Doing this will prolong the plant's life to decades rather than years, and right now (the springtime) is the best time to do this!

You Shichang (游世昌), chairman of the Council of Jianguo Holiday Flower Market, admits that though Taiwanese people are commonly fond of flowers and plants, many of them lack the knowledge to take care of them properly. In fact, many flower markets are holding courses related to plants from time to time and providing comprehensive



gardening services, like Jianguo Holiday Flower Market's botanical clinic, which is open to members of the public. "The number of people bringing pictures of their plants plagued by diseases and insects for professional assistance is increasing," says You. With access to the botanical knowledge on the rise, more and more people are rolling up their sleeves, getting their hands dirty, and taking better care of their flowers and plants.

The footsteps of winter are fading as the warm spring sun emerges, and the changing of the seasons is marked by the fragrance of flowers wafting through the air. Visit your nearest Taipei City flower market to buy a flower bouquet and a potted plant or two to give your home a complete makeover! 



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1. **Use different types of plants to build a whole new atmosphere.**
(Photo / Mr Cup Fabien Barral)
2. **Regular trimming is one trick to help a plant stay healthy.**
(Photo / Liu Deyuan)



Jianguo Holiday Flower Market



Jianguo N. Rd., Daan Dist.



Saturday & Sunday, 9:00am - 6:00pm



Taipei Flowers Auction



28 & 36, Xinhua 3rd Rd., Neihu Dist.



Monday to Saturday, 4:00am - 12:00pm



Taipei Pot Plant Auction



15, Sec. 1, Xinglong Rd., Wenshan Dist.



Tuesday to Sunday, 9:00am - 6:00pm





Baosheng Cultural Festival: A Festive Event Full of History, Religion and Community

WORDS BY

Joe Henley

PHOTOS BY

Chang Ziyu, Samil Guo, Su Jianan, Xie Chenghan, Wang Nengyou

The Baosheng Cultural Festival (保生文化祭) is an excellent opportunity to immerse yourself in Taiwanese culture. Originally a birthday party for Baosheng Emperor (保生大帝), the god of medicine, the festivities have grown into a two month-long celebration of Taiwan's history and culture. At the center of it all is Dalongdong Baoan Temple (大龍峒保安宮) in Taipei, where the deity Baosheng Emperor celebrates his birthday during the third lunar month.

To introduce you to the Dalongdong (大龍峒) area of Taipei, where many of the key events of the Baosheng Cultural Festival take place, we interviewed Stephanie Huffman, an American writer currently based in Taipei. In addition to writing a book about Taiwan, Huffman is focusing her graduate studies on Taiwanese history and culture.



► Video Interview

***Baosheng Cultural Festival is one
of Taiwan's most representative
celebrations.***

(photo / Chang Ziyu)



CULTURAL TAIPEI

“I’ve lived in Taiwan for two years and just love it here.”

Stephanie Huffman might be a relative newcomer in the Taipei ex-patriot community, but she has gotten more out of her brief time in Taiwan’s capital than most could cram into a decade. With a recently released book, *Formosa Moon*, a quirky, fun, and informative Taiwan travelogue she co-wrote along with her partner, travel writer Joshua Samuel Brown, and a graduate degree in Taiwanese history and culture from Taiwan’s National Chengchi University due this summer, Huffman has quickly become a sought after voice on all things Taipei.

We caught up with Huffman for a chat about the upcoming Baosheng Cultural Festival, which runs from April to June. But before getting into all that, we wanted to know what Huffman, a lifelong student and observer of many different cultures, finds especially fascinating about Taiwanese culture itself. The answer, it turns out, is something near and dear to her heart — the art of puppetry — a theme that turns up from time to time in *Formosa Moon*.

AN INTRO TO THE BAOSHENG EMPEROR & THE BAOSHENG CULTURAL FESTIVAL

“Taiwanese glove puppetry is a very unique art form,” says Huffman. “You can see a puppet show live or watch the excellent *Pili* puppet show (霹靂布袋戲) on television. I highly recommend seeing a puppet show and visiting a puppet museum.”

Taiwanese glove puppetry does have a strong connection with the Baosheng Cultural Festival, as it is one of the performances of the *jiaxingxi* (家姓戲), literally “family name plays”, during festival time. The plays, Huffman further explains, are done in the classical Chinese style, and bear the names of local families who sponsor their production. All of this is done to honor the man of the hour, or rather the man of the month (two months, actually), Baosheng Emperor, a deity Huffman has had ample time to study during the course of her degree.

“Baosheng Emperor was a doctor who lived in China during the 10th century,” she explains. “It is said that



the death of his parents inspired him to study medicine. He was known for his healing abilities and for helping the poor, and today he is worshiped as the God of Medicine.”

Baosheng Emperor is kept busy, Huffman says, by the prayers of Taiwan’s faithful for personal healing or for the good health of their loved ones. Even those who have been cured of an ailment might show up at a temple dedicated to the Medicine God to offer their prayers of gratitude. But of course, the best time to show one’s reverence for the one responsible for that most irreplaceable aspect of life — good health — is during the festival named for the god himself.



CAN'T-MISS CULTURAL EVENTS

The festival began, Huffman says, as a single-day celebration of Baosheng Emperor's birthday. "Over the years," she goes on, "it has grown into an expanded two month-long festival. There are many events to attend, including religious ceremonies, traditional dances and the well-known Fire Lion fireworks display. Numerous varieties of folk art will be on display and local families host traditional Chinese plays throughout the festivities."

During those festivities, there is a lot to take in, as Taipei becomes a cauldron of activity and a metropolis standing in tribute to one of its most beloved celestial beings. Visitors might notice this as a time when temple processions abound in the streets with much revelry and fanfare. These parades, says Huffman, are actually something of an inspection tour, a ritual that is said to bring peace to the community. As for what else can be expected?

"Palanquins carrying gods and other sacred items will be carried in the streets near the temple," says Huffman of her own experience in taking in the proceedings. "Large puppets will be worn, and you can see them walking and dancing during the processions. There will be a fire walking ritual, traditional opera performances, drumming, dancing and lots of fireworks."

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1. **Author and student Stephanie Huffman is passionate about Taiwanese temple culture.**
(photo / Samil Guo)
2. **Three offering ceremony (三獻禮) to celebrate the birth of the Baosheng Emperor.**
(photo / Xie Chenghan)
3. **The dragon and lion dance performances are lively and extraordinary.**
(photo / Su Jianan)



THE DEEPER MEANING OF THE BAOSHENG CULTURE FESTIVAL

Fireworks are not the only pyrotechnic display on deck, however. No, there is something far more impressive at play, and that's saying something, given the awe-inspiring nature of the fireworks shows that take place during the festival. During the course of the Baosheng Cultural Festival, those who count themselves among the most devoted and brave of Baosheng Emperor's believers may prove their devotion by walking barefoot across burning hot coals.

"For some, fire walking is an act of devotion which may deepen their faith," says Huffman. On the other hand, she adds, "Others walk across the burning coals as an expression of empowerment. It is a powerful exercise either way!"

In keeping with the fire theme, the fire lion is another deeply important ritual of the festival, wherein a lion statue is set ablaze in front of the temple, and tens of thousands of beehive rockets light up the night sky. Burning the lion, says Huffman, is said to ward off bad luck.

In addition to these dynamic cultural events, the Baosheng Culture Festival also comprises many activities such as sketch competitions, religious lectures, and historic art tours. In order to make local temples a center of faith for residents, Baoan Temple also organizes a number of social welfare activities, such as awarding scholarships to outstanding students and holding free public health checkups. Thus the Baosheng Cultural Festival not only plays an important role in balancing traditional and contemporary culture, but also provides a direct link between the daily lives of people in Taipei and their unique Taiwanese culture.



Dalongdong Baoan Temple



61, Hami St., Datong Dist.



Monday to Sunday, 6:30am - 9:30pm



Take the MRT Red Line to Yuanshan Station (捷運圓山站). Go out of Exit 2 and follow Kulun Street to Dalong Street



EXPLORE THE CULTURE OF THE DALONGDONG NEIGHBORHOOD

Speaking of Baoan Temple, the house of worship is set amidst the historic Dalongdong neighborhood, once a village unto itself in the days before many such villages expanded into one another to form the city of Taipei we all know today. Dalongdong is a favorite Taipei destination for Huffman, and a center of fascination for many visitors to a city where old and new have struck up a peaceful coexistence.

The village dates back to the mid-1800s and there are many well-preserved historic buildings in the area. The center altar of Dalongdong Baoan Temple is surrounded by a building featuring murals on its exterior walls. These murals, painted by celebrated artist Pan Lishui (潘麗水), depict famous stories from Chinese mythology and are popular with tourists. The temples pillars are full of impressive artistic details.

Right next door to Dalongdong Baoan Temple is Taipei Confucius Temple (臺北市孔廟), another important place of worship.

Confucius (孔子), Huffman explains, was a Chinese philosopher and educator, and his writings on morality greatly influenced Chinese society. “The temple is the only one adorned with southern Fujian-style ceramic adornments among the Confucius temples in Taiwan,” she goes on. “Furthermore, there is a black plaque which was inscribed by the former President Chiang Kai-shek (蔣中正) that reads, ‘Educate without Discrimination’ (有教無類) at the main hall of the temple. Although highly revered, Confucius is not considered a god. His temples therefore honor his teachings,” she points out, “and not the man himself.”

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1. ***“Fire Lion” is one of the highlights of the Baosheng Culture Festival.***
(photo / Wang Nengyou)
2. ***Many people and tourists participate in the Baosheng Cultural Festival.***
(photo / Wang Nengyou)



Taipei Confucius Temple



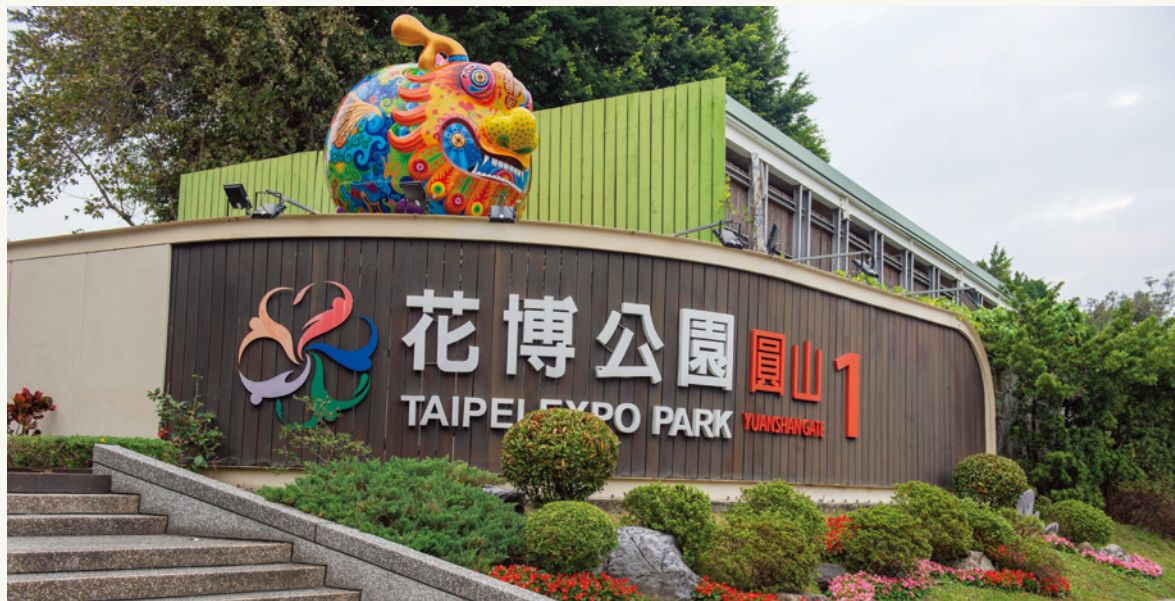
275, Dalong St., Datong Dist.



Tuesday to Sunday, 8:30am - 9:00pm



Take the MRT Red Line to Yuanshan Station (捷運圓山站). Go out of Exit 2 and follow Kulun Street to Dalong Street




TRAVEL

AROUND THE DALONGDONG NEIGHBORHOOD

Moving away from Dalongdong Baoan Temple and Taipei Confucius Temple, there are many restaurants and traditional shops surrounding the temples that tourists may also be interested in. As for tourist spots nearby, Huffman highly recommend Taipei Expo Park (花博公園). The park was originally built for the 2010 Taipei International Flora Expo (2010台北國際花卉博覽會), but has since been converted into an urban recreational area. Inside the park, there is an open air food court called MAJI Square (集食行樂). Visitors can stroll through the marketplace and find things like locally-made honey and organic vegetables there. Also, visitors can explore the park areas of Yuanshan (圓山園區) and Xinsheng (新生園區), and then walk to the nearby Taipei Fine Arts Museum (臺北市立美術館). After eating lunch at one of them many restaurants or food stands at MAJI Square, you can stroll through the marketplace and find things like locally made honey and organic vegetables. MAJI also serves as a performance expo so there's a good chance you'll hear music when you're there.

The months surrounding the Baosheng Cultural Festival are a busy time for all, and for tourists

visiting Taipei whether for the first time or the tenth, there is no better time to be in the capital. From centuries-old cultural practices to displays of art and pageantry, all are surrounded by some of the best food and drink to be found anywhere in the country in the heart of Dalongdong. This is a time when people come to together, faith is affirmed, and all are left looking forward to the festival's speedy return the following year. 



Taipei Expo Park



1, Yumen St., Zhongshan Dist.



Monday to Sunday, *all day*



Take the MRT Red Line to Yuanshan Station. You will see the park from the station landing.



MAJI Square



1, Yumen St., Zhongshan Dist. (Inside Taipei Expo Park)



Monday to Sunday, 11:00am - 9:00pm

FOOD

TO SAMPLE IN THE DALONGDONG AREA

Here are some recommendations for where and what to eat in Dalongdong during the festival, or at any time of year for that matter.



Chongqing Soy Milk (重慶豆漿)

What's better than a crepe? If you answered a deep fried egg crepe then this is the place for you. This breakfast dish is crispy and flaky on the outside with a soft and chewy center. Pair this with a tall glass of soymilk for a Taiwanese-style breakfast. Soymilk lovers can start their day here with a morning cup. If you want to try a delicious deep fried Taiwanese egg crepe (炸蛋餅) this is the place to go.

📍 32, Ln. 335, Sec.3, Chongqing N. Rd., Datong Dist.

🕒 Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, 5:30am - 11:30am
Saturday to Sunday, 5:30am - 13:00am

Hong Changji Pig's Blood Soup (紅昌吉豬血湯)

If you want to eat like a local then a visit to Changji Street (昌吉街) is a must. Here you will find several distinctive dishes including pig's blood soup. This dish is made with a soup broth base with added semi-solidified pieces of pig blood floating in your bowl. If pig blood soup isn't your liking, their braised pork on rice (滷肉飯) or fried tofu (油豆腐) are each a must-try dish.



📍 3, Ln. 50, Changji St., Datong Dist.

🕒 Sunday to Saturday, 10:00am - 10:00pm

CULTURAL TAIPEI

The House of Black Tea (紅茶屋)

Taiwan is famous for its tea and it will only take one cup of high-quality black tea to show you why. The shop has a history over 30 years and is still one of the most popular ones for the locals. This particular tea shop is known for their super cup, a tall and thick takeaway cup for tea lovers. Fans of bubble tea can also get their needs met here. The super cup black tea will fill your craving.

📍 56-1, Ln. 335, Sec.3, Chongqing N. Rd., Datong Dist.

🕒 Sunday, Tuesday to Saturday,
6:00am - 10:30pm



Dalongdong Nameless Oily Glutinous Rice (大龍峒無名油飯)

This dish is a Taiwanese classic you won't forget. This food stall's oily glutinous rice (油飯) is served with fatty meat and a sweet, spicy sauce. This is a traditional home-cooked recipe so different neighborhood restaurants will put their own spin on the dish. It is often made with pork.

📍 18, Aly. 18, Ln. 59, Hami St., Datong Dist.

🕒 Sunday, Tuesday to Saturday, 5:30am - 9:15am



Meinong Tailiang (美濃泰涼)

Grain millet is cultivated in Taiwan and is an important staple in the Aboriginal diet. Meinong Tailiang has turned this ingredient into a sweet snack. By combining millet flour with wheat flour, their signature millet donut is chewier than your standard donut.



📍 13-1, Aly. 21, Ln. 59, Hami St., Datong Dist.

🕒 Monday to Sunday, 10:00am - 8:00pm



10 Things to Pay Attention to When Visiting a Taiwanese Temple

WORDS BY

Stephanie Huffman

PHOTOS BY

Taiwan Scene

Taiwan has thousands of temples devoted to Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism or folk religion. All of these faiths, and their numerous deities, however, often coexist peacefully under one roof. Unique, beautiful and sometimes awash in incense and fireworks, Taiwanese temples can be a bit culturally and visually overwhelming for a first-time visitor. With a little prep time, you will be able to better understand and enjoy your temple experience.

If one thing rings true about Taiwan, it's that there's often something to celebrate at your nearest temple. Temple festivals sometimes denote a god's birthday, and there are many on the calendar. The birthday of Mazu (媽祖), for instance, is a huge celebration, taking place in either April or May, where the Goddess of the Sea is feted for watching over the lives of fishermen and other seafaring folk. Then

there are cultural festivities such as the Baosheng Cultural Festival, a celebration of the birthday of the God of Medicine.

As for the aesthetics of the temples themselves, Confucian temples are the least ornate because the teachings are the focus, not that artistry of the building. In contrast, at Taoist temples, tigers, dragons and human figures cover the exterior buildings in a splendor of bright colors. As for Buddhist temples, you will see Buddha statues and numerous important figures of the faith featured in the art and architecture such as the 18 Arhats, the original followers of the Gautama Buddha. Folk shrines, on the other hand, may feature the popular earth god Tudi Gong (土地公), who protects worshippers' land and lives from harm.

CULTURAL TAIPEI

1 WHAT'S THE GENERAL ETIQUETTE I SHOULD FOLLOW WHEN VISITING A TEMPLE?

The first thing you might notice is that many temples ask worshippers to slip off their shoes before entering. Oftentimes temporary slippers for guests are provided at the entrance, though larger and more popular temples may not follow this tradition. There is no strict dress code enforced, but respectful attire is both appropriate and appreciated.

Taiwanese temples have an almost dizzying amount of details to look at, but do refrain from pointing as it is considered rude to point at the gods. Instead, gesture with an open hand as if you were addressing a person.

Generally, photography is allowed in temples; if not there will be signs indicating otherwise. In any case, be mindful while taking photos. While you may be trying for a perfect shot for the 'gram, remember that you are sharing space with worshippers. Be mindful of them, respect the sanctity of the space, and try to avoid standing between a worshipper and the incense brazier or god statues.

2 WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH THE DOOR SILL?



Temples are decorated with an abundance of artwork, including the doorways. The doors themselves are painted with Door Gods who guard the temple. When approaching an open temple, you may notice a raised wooden lip at the bottom of the entranceway, which is the door sill of the temple.

These are meant to be stepped over, never on. The raised threshold is said to have both practical and spiritual purposes. Practically, the bottom sill could prevent floodwaters from entering the temple. Spiritually, sills help prevent unwanted spirits from entering the home of the gods.

For visitors, this raised lip can serve as a gentle reminder to take a moment to acknowledge you are entering sacred space. Most door sills are made of wood but some are metal. If you are visiting a temple where you are asked to take off your shoes, do so before stepping over the raised threshold.

3 WHAT'S UP WITH THE ROOFTOP DECORATIONS?



Symbolic artwork abounds at Taiwan's temples, both inside and out. The three figures most commonly seen on temple rooftops represent the three things that are most often prayed for: wealth, luck and longevity. Wealth is represented as a man holding a child. Luck is often the middle figure and is often portrayed as a man holding a *ruyi* scepter. Last but not least, longevity is represented by a bald, elderly man holding a walking stick.

Instead of these three figures you may see a carved pagoda. The more floors the pagoda has, the higher the main temple's deity is in the bureaucracy of the gods. Confucian temples will have pagodas with nine floors to indicate Confucius's high regard, even though he was not a deity. Other rooftop designs include dragons, flowers and figures from Chinese mythology. Rooftop fish statues are said to protect the temple by bringing water in the event of a fire.



4 WHAT DO ALL THE DRAGONS MEAN?

Dragons are an important part of traditional Chinese culture and featured heavily in Taiwanese temples. The mythical beasts signify power, good fortune, wisdom and creativity. They act as temple guardians, but are also symbols of enlightenment. You will find them on the rooftop, carved around the temple poles and featured in temple artwork.

If you look closely at a dragon sculpture, you may notice that the creature is actually a fusion of multiple animals. For instance, its eyes are said to be those of a cat, so as to allow it to see in the dark. Besides, its claws come from the majestic eagle. If you look closely at the claws on temple poles, you may find that the more claws the dragon has, the higher the status of the temple. Dragons also appear in alternative body shapes. A dragon can manifest with a normal dragon's head, but be attached to the body of a horse, a tortoise, or even a phoenix.



CULTURAL TAIPEI

5 WHICH DOOR SHOULD I WALK THROUGH?



Temples generally have three doorways. If you're at all confused about which one to walk through, just remember this simple protocol: the dragons lead the way. When you are facing the temple, the door on your right will feature artwork with a dragon. This is the door you should enter through. To your left will be artwork featuring a tiger. This is the exit. In Chinese culture, it is considered auspicious to enter a temple with the dragon and exit with the tiger. Entering and exiting in this fashion moves visitors through the temple in a counter-clockwise fashion. Avoid walking through the middle doorway, as this entrance is reserved for the gods. However, this practice may be disregarded during festivals or at more popular temples because of large crowds. Keep in mind that smaller shrines may only have one small doorway.

6 WHAT DO THE STONE LIONS SIGNIFY?



When approaching a temple, you will notice a pair of stone lions at the front. Sometimes the two lions

will be carved identically, but a closer look will reveal that one is male, and the other is female. The lion closest to the dragon door is male, and he is often carved holding a gold coin or ball. The female is closest to the tiger door, and will have a baby lion underneath her. While you are generally not permitted to touch the temple decorations, worshippers may gently place their hands inside the lions' mouths. If you do, carefully touch the ball inside to see if it moves. While decorative, this clever bit of artistry serves as an indication of the advanced carving skills of the creator. Look closely, and you will see the ball was carved inside the lion's mouth, not carved separately and placed within, and cannot be removed.

7 ARE THE FOOD AND FLOWERS DONATIONS?



When visiting a temple, you may see bouquets of flowers or plates of food placed on tables before the deities. Both are offerings to the gods. Food offerings are traditionally raw and uncut, so it is common to see fresh fruit. A contemporary offering you may see is packaged food. While food, flowers and incense are the most common offerings, offering practices of some specific temples and deities are more distinct. For example, goddesses may be offered beauty products or particular flower varieties, and gods related to agriculture may be offered rice. While everyday offerings are common, larger celebrations, such as the aforementioned Baosheng Cultural Festival, will bring a larger amount. Taiwan is a caring society, and after the gods have had their fill, the food will be given to those in need. Other temple donations include tea, candles and joss money (yellow paper that is burned in a small furnace).

8 WHAT ARE THE DRUM AND BELL FOR?



Once inside a temple, look up to the ceiling. Taiwan's temples are richly decorated, and even the ceilings and floors serve as canvases. If there is a large drum and bell hanging from the ceiling, these two items will help you orient yourself. The bell is used to greet the morning light, so is positioned in the east. The beating of the drum announces the close of the temple at dusk, so is positioned near a western wall. If the temple is old, the bell and drum may be considered antiques, so they could be for display only. In that case, the antique versions may hang from the ceiling above their modern counterparts. Alternatively, electronic versions of the bell and drum may be played over the temple's speaker system. You are welcome to take pictures of these religious items, but please do not play them.

9 WHY DO PEOPLE THROW THE RED MOON BLOCKS ON THE FLOOR?



Worshippers come to temples for many reasons. They might visit to pray, to give offerings, or to commune with the gods. If you see people tossing a pair of red moon blocks onto the floor, these are

known as *jiaobei* (筊杯), crescent-shaped wooden blocks with one flat and one curved side. These moon blocks express the gods' answers to worshippers' questions. When visiting a temple, you are welcome to try them out. There is a designated area where *jiaobei* are used. Go there and take a pair firstly. Then introduce yourself to the gods of the temple. Ask them a yes-no question and then drop the blocks on the floor. The landing position of the blocks reveals your answer. If they both land flat side down, the answer is no. The curved sides both landing down means your question is irrelevant, and the rocking blocks indicate the gods are laughing. For an affirmative answer, you'll need one block to land curved side up and the other curved side down. *Jiaobei* are typically tossed between one and three times for any particular question.

10 WHAT IS THE REASON FOR THE WALL OF LIGHTS?



Many temples in Taiwan have a wall filled with glowing lights, known as *guangmingdeng* (光明燈), or blessing lights. This wall is actually made of numerous small boxes with a light and small figure in each one. The figure inside will match one of the main temple deities. At the bottom of each box, you'll see Chinese characters. This is the name of the person to whom the box is dedicated. In order to make a donation to the temple, worshippers reserve a box for a loved one. Having a box dedicated to you is believed to bring you good fortune.

Temples function as community centers in Taiwan. They provide gathering space to worship, and their tranquil courtyards provide space for tranquility and reflection. Temples are also a space for the community to celebrate the joys of life together. These walls of blessing lights reflect this communal spirit. T

Shaping the Memories of a Century: Master Guo Gengfu's Life of Mortar Shaping

WORDS BY / TRANSLATION BY / PHOTOS BY
Wang Wenyi / Joanne Su, Joe Henley / Yang Yenping, Guo Gengfu

Art Deco is an artistic touch to a building, made to reflect its unique characteristics. It conveys religious beliefs, features of folk culture, and facets of local life. Mortar shaping is one of those traditional art deco techniques that helps bring the style's true nature to light. It has different meanings for different characters and can be enjoyed from three different perspectives. First, for the god of the temple, mortar shaping is not necessarily directly related to the god him or herself, but instead has the function of augmenting the personality of the god. Secondly, for faithful, it highlights the momentum of the temple, and can further enhance one's sense of faith. For the craftsmen, mortar shaping is an occasion to show their skills to the public. For instance, if the rooftop is full of exquisite details, or the crossbeam is shaped from a single piece of wood (rather than multiple pieces), these are all ways to appreciate how the craftsmen excel in their chosen form of artistry.



As one visits temples in Taiwan, the traditional architecture and the decorative crafts of the interior always leave one in awe. Each temple looks and feels like a huge art installation made by way of extraordinary skills, and each of them showcases the devotion and uniqueness of the craftsman. The Guo-Chen family is one of the few families specializing in the craft of mortar shaping in Taiwan today, and at the head of the family is Master Guo Gengfu (郭亘富). Master Guo's great grandfather Chen Dating (陳大廷) was Taiwan's most famous craftsman in the early 20th century, and he passed on the mortar shaping techniques to his descendants. The four generations of the Guo-Chen family who have come after him have inherited the mission and the art, and continue to enrich the decorative techniques of temples around Taiwan.



THE ORIGIN OF THE GUO-CHEN FAMILY'S CENTURIES-OLD CRAFTSMANSHIP

The Guo-Chen family's skills are actually a living history of Taipei's cultural development. A hundred years ago, Chen Dating participated in a big face-off at Dalongdong Baoan Temple. At that time, the masters who were responsible for repairing the temple were divided into two factions. Those led by Chen Dating were responsible for the right side of the temple. The left half was supervised by Chen's opponent Hong Kunfu (洪坤福). "This confrontation was not about winning, but instead was a stage to showcase the family's skills," Master Guo recalls of the matchup, as if the destiny to become a master of mortar shaping was already settled for him a hundred years ago. "The work of the family can be a historical monument in Taipei. It is very meaningful to me," he says.



- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. As the representative of the fourth generation in his family, Master Guo is the only preserver registered with the Ministry of Culture. 2. Beifu Dadaocheng has a history of more than 90 years. 3. Master Guo started his mortar shaping career more than 50 years ago. |
| | | (photo / Guo Genfu) |

MORTAR SHAPING: A REFLECTION OF LIFE AND EMOTIONS

“Mortar shaping is part of my life. Even though I am retired now, I’m not tired. Because this job and my life have already blended together, every bit and piece of mortar shaping is embedded in my life,” says Guo with a warm smile.

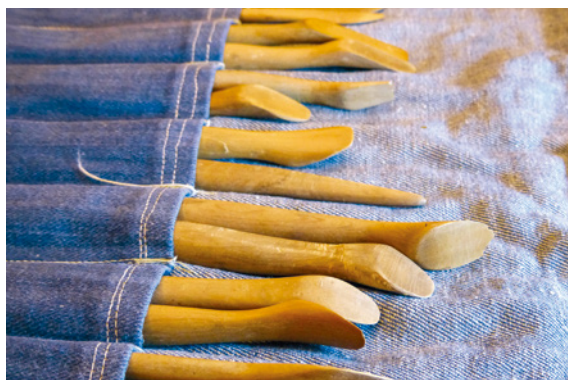
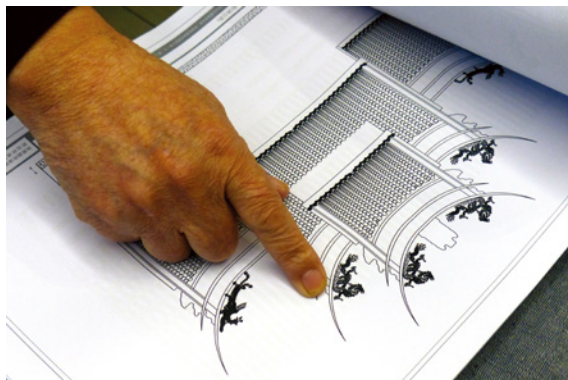
Seeing pictures of the Grand Hotel (圓山大飯店), Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall (中正紀念堂) and the Beifu Dadaocheng (北福大稻埕), Guo says, “Inspiration is really essential when I work. When inspiration strikes, the mortar could be shaped in no time, but when there’s no inspiration, I could look at a sculpture for a week and still be stuck with no ideas. That was really hard too.” As the representative of the fourth generation of the Guo family and the only preserver registered with the Ministry of Culture, Master Guo smiles and says that his journey toward learning the skills of his craft was not as smooth as those described by others. He is a master who was shaped by the words of a stern father.

CATCHING UP WITH THE TRENDS, KEEPING TRADITIONS ALIVE

Guo recalls of his father, “Whenever I skipped classes, he would tie me up under a table and scold me by saying, ‘If you keep on being naughty, you will end up pushing a rickshaw for the rich.’”

That reprimand had Master Guo begin his first work in earnest, at Xingtian Temple in Beitou (北投行天宮), at the age of 13. During the course of Master Guo’s training, his father used to kick and break his works if he was not satisfied, and would ask Master Guo to start a new one. However, the constant practice built up Master Guo’s unequalled perseverance in art. What’s more amazing is that Master Guo now uses professional graphics software to draft his works. Picking up his own drafts, Master Guo exclaims, “Look at the dragon here. I can zoom in multiple times and still every stroke is as clear as ever. I painted all this with the computer by myself, without any help from others.”

“If someone who sincerely and truly wishes to learn the technique, then let’s wait and see what happens.”



Master Guo’s wife also says that he devotes himself fully to his work. Even when he dreams, he dreams about work. And if she finds he is not in bed at night, he is at his desk practicing his art.

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 3 | 4 | 1. Master Guo keeps pace with the times and learns computer graphics. |
| 2 | 5 | 6 | 2. These are the mortar shaping tools that Master Guo used in the work. |
| | | | 3/4. There are many details in the mortar shaping on the building. |
| | | | 5. Mortar shaping details of Beifu Dadaocheng. |
| | | | 6. Pineapple mortar shaping patterns can also be found on buildings. |



|| INNOVATIVE INFUSION OF FAMILY WORKS: A BRAND NEW LOOK

When asked about his most iconic work in Taipei, Guo names the Beifu Dadaocheng with pride because it exemplifies the generations of techniques and the artistic ideology of the Guo family.

As Master Guo recounts the construction, his wife adds immediately, "He took the building to heart. We went to many places in Taiwan to select all the bricks and tiles for the construction. The red tiles on the exterior of the building you see now were found in southern Taiwan. We insist on the selection of the materials we use. It has to be good quality and echo the original characteristics of the building. That's how the restoration can be perfectly and professionally done and meet his belief in art, as well as the Guo family's philosophy in mortar shaping."

Speaking of passing on the heritage of mortar shaping techniques, Guo shakes his head. "It's really hard!" To be in the business requires more than a sense of what constitutes good art, as well as knowledge of aesthetics and a talent for creativity. The most important features include integrity, ethics and honor. "Let destiny take its course," is what Master Guo holds in mind for now. "If someone who sincerely and truly wishes to learn the technique, then let's wait and see what happens."

And finally, when speaking both of the future ahead, and the past behind him, Master Guo holds true to the values that were instilled in him, expressing gratitude for the ways in which those values were imparted to him many decades ago. "I can't let go of these techniques because I took on the mission to preserve," he says. "And whenever I see my works, I'm grateful that my father was so demanding of me. He made me who I am. I can't thank him enough for his guidance." T





If Only You Were in a Pair of Traditional Cloth Shoes: Dongtai Cloth Shoes Shop

WORDS BY / TRANSLATION BY / PHOTOS BY
Hsu Kaisen / Joe Henley / Lin Weikei

Dongtai Cloth Shoes Shop (東台布鞋莊) is hidden within an alley of the Chengzhong Open-Air Market (城中市場) off Wuchang Street (武昌街). Surrounded by beef noodle stalls and fruit vendors, the shop can only be recognized by a yellow signboard with red characters about the size of an air conditioner. The storefront is just big enough for one person to go through at a time. On a traditional green steel frame hang pairs of cloth shoes adorned with colorful embroidery of different kinds. There is a family portrait sitting on the display frame, which shows Mrs. Xia-Zhu Suqin (夏朱素琴), the shop's creator, her son, her daughter in law, and her six grandchildren. The decoration of the store seems frozen in 1949, the year when it was first established.

CUSTOM-MADE COMFORT BRINGS IN SWARMS OF ORDERS

Dongtai Cloth Shoes Shop has already seen seven decades go by since its establishment. The shop is now run by its creator's daughter-in-law, Mrs. Xia, who told us that her mother-in-law, Mrs. Xia-Zhu Suqin, was born to a wealthy family in Dongtai County (東台縣) in China's Jiangsu Province (江蘇省). She was extremely good at making cloth shoes for kids. After fleeing to Taiwan to avoid the civil war, she used her craftsmanship to trade for rice or peanuts with neighbors at first. Later, she made the acquaintance of some shoemakers who possessed the skills for shoemaking but had no place to use them, and decided to sell the cloth shoes they made. The shop's reputation spread by word of mouth, and eventually settled down in the Chengzhong Open-Air Market to operate in earnest.

Cloth shoes are comfortable to wear and customers can pick the fabrics and patterns they want. Above all, they are cost-effective. Regular customers who patronize Dongtai Cloth Shoes Shop include former first lady Soong May-ling (aka Madame Chiang Kai-shek, 蔣宋美齡), Lien Fang Yu (former second

lady, 連方瑀), Golden Horse Award-winning actor Ge Xiangting (葛香亭), Peking Opera actress Guo Xiaozhuang (郭小莊), and artist Terry Hu (胡茵夢). When the shoe industry started embracing mechanized production and challenged the survival of the handmade shoe sector, Dongtai remained unaffected. "Cloth shoe lovers will come to me anyway. I have never worried about not receiving enough orders; I only worry that I don't have enough shoemakers to take them on," says Mrs. Xia.

In its heyday, Dongtai Cloth Shoes Shop had ten shoemakers, each specializing in a particular type of shoe. However, it is hard to find someone willing to learn the skills nowadays. With experienced shoemakers retiring, the remaining ones are engulfed in orders. In the past, it took about two weeks to finish one pair of custom-made cloth shoes. However, with only one bespoke shoemaker who is already seventy years old remaining, customers have to wait for up to a month to get their shoes.



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1. *Soft and comfortable cotton shoes with custom-made patterns.*
2. *Places such as seventy-year-old Dongtai Cloth Shoes Shop, which is now run by Mrs. Xia, are hard to find these days.*

TAIPEI LIFE

During weekdays at noon, the Chengzhong Open-Air Market is always bursting at the seams, and Dongtai Cloth Shoes Shop is visited by regular customers from time to time. Mrs. Chang, who is buying shoes for her husband, says that her family members all love wearing cloth shoes, and she had already bought 30 pairs this year. “Do you see that pair of shoes over there? I have them in red, blue, and black,” Chang says, pointing at a pair of cloth shoes embroidered with beaded flowers resting on the display frame. “My daughter and I have many pairs of the same cloth shoes in different sizes.” Fearing that she might not be able to buy cloth shoes from the shop anymore, she seizes every chance she can to urge Mrs. Xia to ask the shoemaker to postpone retirement for a couple more years.

COUNTLESS SHOE TYPES MESMERIZE TOURISTS

All in all, there are about a hundred cloth shoes on display in the shop window. Shoes with a line in the middle are called “double connectors” (雙連鞋); the ones whose seams crawl onto the upper portion and form a cross are called “bevels” (斜口鞋); the ones with elastic bands on both sides of the upper part are called “loafers” (樂福鞋); those with elastic bands on both heels are called “Kong Fu shoes” (功夫鞋); the ones with a strip crossing the instep are called “Mary Jeans” (娃娃鞋). All shoes can be made of flannel, denim, waterproof fabric, batik fabric, printed fabric, lace, and the list goes on. The pattern designs include plain embroidery, 3D beaded flowers, and hand-painted designs.

Customers can snatch up the shoes that fit right away, or they can bring fabrics printed with their favorite patterns to make their own. You can use any fabric to make shoes as long as it is not hollow. “Back in the day, wives of officials often brought scraps of the fabric they used to make cheongsam and commissioned us to make shoes that matched their looks,” says Mrs. Xia.

Apart from the locals, tourists from the U.S. and Japan simply cannot resist the charm of Dongtai’s cloth shoes. The reason Japanese tourists are crazy for cloth shoes is that they can wear flat cloth shoes and still walk on tatami mats at home.



Mrs. Xia has a final trick up her sleeve: Cotton shoes. Cotton shoes are unisex with different sizes for customers to choose from. They are thick and warm and similar to snow boots that have become popular in Taiwan in recent years. Mrs. Xia says that Guo Xiaozhuang is particularly into their cotton shoes and buys seven or eight pairs in one go every time she visits the shop. The shoemaker in Mrs. Xia’s employ wanted to use up his remaining fabric and made the last batch of cotton shoes before retiring. Mrs. Xia, upon hearing the news, bought all his cotton shoes in advance. The cotton shoes you see in her shop are the last editions. Once sold out, the shelves will never be replenished again.



EMBROIDERING NEW IDEAS ON SHOE UPPERS

In the past, the shop was run on the precept of selling what you've got on the shelves. At times, they would convey customers' opinions to the shoemakers to make some improvements. Ever since the youngest daughter from the third generation came to the shop to help, she set her mind to add diversity to the humdrum cloth shoes. She would visit Dihua Street (迪化街) to purchase fabrics herself and buy imported materials and some uniquely printed fabrics every once in a while.

As Mrs. Xia puts it, her daughter has some novel ideas for cloth shoes. For example, in the old days, shoes had to have symmetrical patterns to be considered beautiful. However, her daughter would pointedly demand shoemakers not to cut symmetrical patterns. The results might be Snow White on one foot and Grumpy on the other, or different Van Gogh portraits on either foot. The common patterns of peony and phoenix were replaced by animated Little Red Riding Hood and the Big Bad Wolf. The shop is now a mix of traditional cloth shoes and modern designs. It even has its own Facebook page where new fabrics and

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1. Mrs. Xia's youngest daughter is in charge of developing new patterns for cloth shoes.
2. The eye-catching, intricate patterns on a pair of "double connectors."
3. As time goes by, shoes are no longer adorned with symmetrical patterns.
4. Handmade cotton shoes are similar to common snow boots, both of which are comfortable and can keep you warm.
5. The red embroidered shoes represent luck are one of the best sellers in the shop.



shoe styles are posted for people to see, creating more possibilities for this traditional industry.

Though Mrs. Xia has some complaints about the fall of the handmade shoe industry, she chooses to grin and bear it. She says she will keep on selling these shoes till the very last pair.

Spare some time to visit Dongtai Cloth Shoes Shop and let the beautiful footprints of these one-of-a-kind creations find their way to your heart. T



From Fingertips to Paper: Papercraft Artist Johan Cheng Cuts a Slice of Life's Most Beautiful Moments

WORDS BY / TRANSLATION BY / PHOTOS BY
Huang Yiting / Joe Henley / Wang Hanshun

Wielding a penknife in her hands, Johan Cheng (成若涵) gently slices through sheets of colored paper. Projecting strong and soft light onto the papers, the beauty of these papercraft works begins to manifest.

Papercraft artist Johan Cheng has been in the field for more than seven years, and the reason that urged her to put penknife to paper was a car accident in her last year of college. Though she already had a job waiting for her after graduation, during her recuperation period Johan couldn't help wondering about her future path, her field, and her life in general. After reading *The Element: How Finding Your Passion Changes Everything*, Johan decided to break the mold and build her own brand with the support of her mother.



|| FORGING HER OWN PATH

"I am a stubborn and persistent person. When I set out to do something, I'll convince myself that I can do it or that I must do it," says Johan. In the early phase of her papercraft career, she would stay at home working on her creations during the daytime and tutor at night to make ends meet. It took her a few months to get her first big case, *Jinbaoli Duck Restaurant* (金包里鴨肉閣). Afterwards, other custom cases followed, and Johan gradually made a name for herself.

The most common motif in Johan Cheng's works is the fusion of traditional history and modern culture, the epitome of which is called *Papercraft•Taiwan Scenarios Along the River* (紙雕·臺灣百景上河圖). The creation is inspired by a 2012 exhibition called *Along the River During the*

Qingming Festival: The Moving Version (會動的清明上河圖). That same year, Johan initiated a crowdfunding campaign using a popular online platform and raised NT\$230,000. The money, along with her earnings from previous work, went into her Project of A Hundred Scenes. Her favorite of the project is called *Yancheng, My Nation; 38, My Home* (鹽埕·國·參捌·家, *Yancheng* is one of the administrative districts in Kaohsiung. 38 is actually the name of the hotel she stayed at during her residence in the village.), which was a recording of a young girl from Taipei living in a village in Kaohsiung who tried to get closer to the locals and examine the history and culture of the region. It took her six months to finish the work. The collision of this determined soul and the residents of the old town district made her fall more deeply in love with Taiwan.

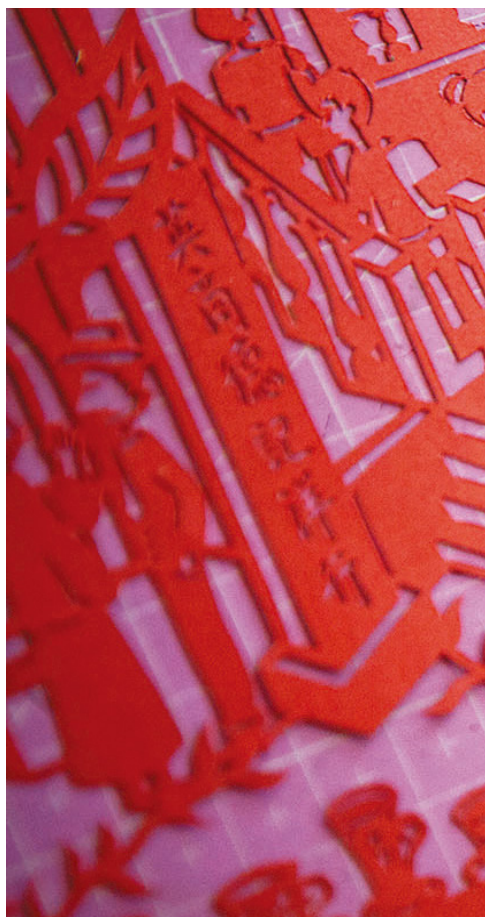
|| ABSORBING CULTURE TO ENRICH HER CREATIONS

Even though she was born and raised in Taipei, Johan Cheng was not conscious of the charm of her hometown until she return from the central and southern parts of Taiwan, where she felt nourished (body and soul) by people's friendliness and hospitality when launching the Project of A Hundred Scenes there. In her eyes, Taipei City is a city of tolerance. In her words, the city is "the place where cultural integration takes place; whether you are looking at the aspects of language, people's characters, buildings, colors, or even the island itself." Her work entitled *Homeland*, a depiction of the memory of the old Shilin District, and *The Life as Usual*, a big tent that connects the Zhongshan (中山) and Shuanglian (雙連) areas created for the Zhongshan Spring Festival (心中山生活節), both embody the tolerance and diversity of Taipei in her heart.

"Papercraft has been by my side through many important moments in my life. I can even make a chronicle of life with papercraft works. It is always there for me, giving me the ingredients to survive and memories to cherish. It pushes me forward," says Johan. For her, papercraft is no longer an art but something that clings to her life so tightly that they almost become a single entity. Her brand, Paper•cut by Johan Cheng, says it all: Johan is the maker of her works and her works make her who she is in return. **T**

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1. ***Johan Cheng is also the name of her brand, emphasizing her meaningful convergence with papercraft.***
- 2/3. ***Johan Cheng's papercrafts contain various materials ; sometimes paper, other times cloth. But one thing remains consistent --- her heart.***



“Papercraft has been by my side through many important moments in my life. I can even make a chronicle of life with papercraft works. It is always there for me, giving me the ingredients to survive and memories to cherish. It pushes me forward.”





Exotic Food in Taipei: Spring in the Plates

WORDS BY

Shih Yonghao

TRANSLATION BY

Joe Henley

PHOTOS BY

Yang Zhiren, Orchid Restaurant, <Bible of Japanese confectionery> published by Happiness Always

With spring's arrival, the blossoming land is awash in beautiful colors. The table is decorated with some fresh greenness as well, such as French cuisine embellished with newly sprouted flowers and plants or floral wagashi enjoyed with fragrant matcha, all of which comprise a symphony of vision and taste.

|| THE SPRING DISHES DERIVE FROM THE BLOSSOMS

How can the dishes show the colors of spring on the table? Gildas Périn, head chef at Orchid Restaurant (Orchid Restaurant 蘭), who excels in creative French cuisine, also sees a different light in the designs of spring dishes in Taiwan, a land full of clean spring air. The so-called "spring air" should not only include flowers, but also the sprouts of new life, which, of course, serve as inspiration for chefs to create new dishes as well.

In addition to whole flowers, Orchid Restaurant also uses simple ingredients such as coriander

sprouts and pea sprouts for decoration. General ornamental flowers, like the pansy, are nearly out of taste despite their colorful appearance. Compared to such, vegetable sprouts not only add some greenness, but also enhance the taste of dishes.

In the past, people mostly took edible flowers as decoration and embellishment for certain types of dishes. However, more practical usages will have to be found in order for these flowers to become a regular ingredient in all kinds of cuisine, including that of the French. Therefore, simple and common ingredients like cucumber are easier to use for delicate French cuisine. Cucumber slices can be added to iced yogurt, or can be made into sorbet



with a smooth taste, as well as added with cucumber flowers for decoration. The same ingredient can be made into an appetizer or dessert.

To connect French cuisine and the local land based on the changing of the seasons as well as the characteristics of local ingredients is also a big challenge when designing dishes. White asparagus which abound in spring have put a whole new flavor on the table at Orchid Restaurant. Local asparagus and Koshihikari rice are used, and the asparagus juice is a most essential byproduct that shall not be wasted. Applying the concentrated juice extracted from the bottom segment to grilled asparagus can enhance the taste of the dish. Finally, nori powder and celery can be added for yet more colors of spring.



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1. **To chefs, new sprouts and flowers are the symbols of new flavors alight on the clean spring air.**
(photo / Orchid Restaurant)
- 2/3. **Edible plants can decorate the delicacies to provide rich flavor for eyes and tongues.**
(photo / Orchid Restaurant)

EAT TAIPEI



|| OBTAIN THE BEST TASTE UNDER THE SUITABLE SOLAR TERMS

The Japanese wagashi (dessert), with equal parts delicacy and color when experienced through the lens of French cuisine, can bring the essence of spring to the table.

Emily Wu (吳意菁) from Tokyo Confectionery School shared her experiences after returning to Taiwan, and is now acting as a teacher of “Wagashi Experience” in Beitou Museum (北投文物館). She always wears an elegant wafuku in class, and seems to have dozens of creative ideas when speaking of wagashi.

“In the early days, wagashi were mostly for ceremonial purposes, and were rarely made in an animal shape. Later, due to the influences of the Japanese tea ceremony, the shape and flavor of wagashi began to be inspired by the solar cycle. To prevent affecting the original flavor of tea, ingredients with strong flavors will not be selected for making wagashi,” says Emily.

In other words, wagashi are made according to seasonal crops, scenes, and flowers of different seasons. For example, “Sakura Mochi” is a kind of mochi with a cherry-like pink color and red bean paste inside. A piece of pickled sakura leaf covers the mochi, and another salted sakura blossom is decorated upon it. Holding it in both hands is just like holding spring in one’s hands. Take a small bite, and the light floral fragrance and a flavor of mixed sweetness and saltiness expounds in the mouth.

- 1 2 1/2. Sakura Mochi covered in pickled sakura leaf represents the beautiful scene of blossoming spring. Wagashi inspired by the nature represents the beautiful scene of blossoming flowers on the dessert plate.**
(photo / Yang Zhiren)




|| WAGASHI REPRESENTS SPRING IN TAIPEI

In addition to Sakura Mochi, which has a most satisfying taste, there is also a kind of wagashi called “Nerikiri”. The term “wagashi” widely refers to traditional Japanese pastries. However, nerikiri particularly refers to the ones based on navy bean paste, which are then dyed with various pigments, and encased by red bean paste or mung bean paste, and lastly shaped, sculpted, pressed, and cut with various tools. Emily shares her expertise in making wagashi in the shape of an azalea which she learned in Japan. Firstly, slowly press and sieve some bean paste dyed green with a powder sieve made of horse hair, and make the paste into green shreds like a grove, which encase the red bean paste within. Then, press and sieve some red bean paste and scatter it among the mung bean paste. Such forms the lovely azalea in clusters in your hands, which is a common beautiful scene on the street of Taipei in spring.

However, since Azalea is the city flower of Taipei City, it should be, Emily maintains, the central focus on the plate rather than being hidden among green leaves.

Thus, Emily creatively uses the pinkish bean paste to encase the red bean paste first, and slowly shapes it into the form of an azalea with her crafty hands. Then, she draws the lines of petals, and adds some tiny red dots on them. The result is a stunning representation of a blossoming and lovable azalea.

These seasonal delicacies which are inspired by natural scenes create an exclusive flavor of Taipei, helping people to linger in these wonderful but fleeting spring days. 

AZALEA WAGASHI RECIPE

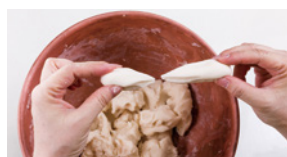
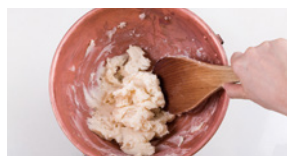
STEP 1 → Make Nerikiri (Wagashi Skin)

[Ingredients]

Navy bean paste	1,000g
Mizuame	50g
Glutinous rice powder	18g
Water	15 to 25g

[Implements]

A steel basin
A small pot with handle
(such as copper pot or deep cooking pan)
A wooden ladle
A strainer
Food wraps



(photo / Yang Zhiren)

- 1 Pour the glutinous rice powder into the basin, add 18g of water on the powder, and knead it. Add the water until the powder becomes paste, which should be slightly sticky but not attaching to hands. In principle, the amount of water is equal to that of the powder, but it should be slowly added due to possibly different dryness of different brands. You should judge how it can become paste yourself.
- 2 Add the water into the small pot to 80% capacity. After the water is boiled, make the paste into separate balls, knead it to a round shape, and boil them in the water until their shape is similar to that of mochi, which will take approximately 3 minutes. After that, take them out and pour out the water in the pot.
- 3 Add a small amount of water again in the pot (which is simply for dividing the navy bean paste from the bottom to avoid possible scorching), boil the paste using a small flame, and slowly stir it with the ladle.
- 4 Then, add the small rice balls and continue to boil them until the paste becomes malleable and flexible. Add mizuame to increase the wetness of the nerikiri, and then it is complete.
- 5 Sieve the nerikiri with a strainer for more delicate particles and then separate the nerikiri into small pieces and knead them into balls. Repeating this 2 to 3 times can make the nerikiri white.
- 6 Finally, wrap the package that has been reduced to room temperature with plastic wrap, and store it in the refrigerator. When used, it should be colored according to the desired shape. For example, the azalea in this demonstration is pink, so all you need to do is to dye it with pink food dye.

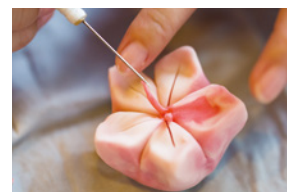
STEP 2 → Knead the Wagashi

[Ingredients]

Pink nerikiri	22g
Ready-made red mung bean paste	15g

[Implements]

A triangle rod
(or thin chopstick as an alternative)
A needle
A ball-ended rod



- 1 Knead the pink nerikiri into a round shape, and press it. Put red bean paste in the center, encase it, and knead it into a ball.
- 2 Use the triangle rod to press the edges of the ball into five flat surfaces, just as the five petals of an azalea. Since the petals of an azalea are slightly pointed, you can make the outline of petals using your hands or implements.
- 3 Use the needle or the ball-ended rod to draw lines on the petals, and it is complete.

Savor the Tea and Enjoy the Pleasant Aroma in the City on a Springtime Day

WORDS BY

Lin Shohan

TRANSLATION BY

Joe Henley

PHOTOS BY

Liu Deyuan, Liang Zhongxian, Alisher Sharip

In Taipei, you are never far from a century-old tea shop. Blessed with frequent international exchanges over the centuries, the city is the confluence of tea houses from different cultures. No matter where you roam, there is no way you can miss the elegant smell of tea among Taipei's streets and alleys.

SIP FROM THE TEA CUP WITH EASE IN TAIWAN'S CENTURY-OLD TEA SHOPS

The Chinese have a long history of tea drinking, which dates back to the era of Shennong (神農氏), the Emperor of the Five Grains in China 4,500 years ago. With such a long expanse of time, changes happen, making tea the most common drink amongst the ethnic Chinese all around the world.

Tiny as it is when compared to other places occupied by the Chinese, Taiwan still holds true to the essence of tea planting and tea making. The topography, climate, latitude, and altitude of the island are quite conducive to growing tea trees. Liao Mingzong (廖明宗), factory manager of the century-old Lin Hua Tai Tea Company (林華泰茶行), takes pride in Taiwan's tea making technology. "The three factors that secure the quality of Taiwanese tea are : conscientious tea farmers, tea-making craft workers with sophisticated skills, and high-end equipment," says Liao.

"Taiwan is bestowed with soft water in most regions," says Laio with a smile on his face as he pours some boiling water with the right temperature in the teapot. "Taiwan has it all: the right climate, the right soil, and the right people. That's why Taiwan is the land of tea drinking."

Taiwan has distinctive seasons and produces different types of tea leaves all year round, each of which is unique. What Liao recommends to us is something he calls Spring tea. In his words, the tea is made from "the new tea leaves that awaken after a long hibernation, so they have had plenty of resting time. These leaves are the most tender and





“Tea brewing should be casual without putting stress on the price of the tea. If you like it, it’s good tea.”

the freshest, and its sweet aftertaste and aroma are exceptional when compared to all other teas.”

When faced with a smorgasbord of spring teas with different origins on the shelves, how do we determine their quality? Manager Liao, equipped with 34 years of experience in tea making, gives us a tip: The color, the smell, and the taste are the three criteria for tea leaf quality. “The tea leaves should be complete, the color should be dark green but not dull without too many shredded or yellow leaves, and the aroma should be strong,” says Liao.

Once the selection has been made, three elements are to be taken into consideration when brewing a pot of tea: The amount of tea leaves, the temperature, and the brewing time. When preparing *Oolong* tea, for example, the brewer should warm the teapot in advance before pouring in an appropriate amount of tea leaves. Then pour boiling water into the teapot (the water-tea leaf ratio should be 150 c.c. to 5 grams of tea leaves.) Wait for about three minutes and pour the hot tea into the serving cup. Though it seems like a simple action, there are few tricks to proper tea pouring. “Pour the tea to 70% full to avoid spilling and burning the guests’ hands.” The brewer, however, can choose to adjust the thickness of the tea according to its type and the guests’ preferences.

Sure, there are some intricate procedures for tea brewing, but you can always skip them. “Tea brewing should be casual without putting stress on the price of the tea. If you like it, it’s good tea,” Liao stresses.



- 1 2 **1/2. Taiwan has various teas for people to choose from.**
(Photo / Alisher Sharip & Liu Deyuan)
- 3 **3. Judging the quality of tea leaves from their color and appearance.**
(Photo / Liu Deyuan)
- 4 **4. Pour the tea to 70% capacity to avoid spilling and burning the guests’ hands.**
(Photo / Liu Deyuan)

EAT TAIPEI

A COLLISION BETWEEN ORIENTAL AND OCCIDENTAL: SPARKS OF CULTURAL EXCHANGE

Let's change scenes from the traditional Lin Hua Tai Tea Company to the Zhongshan District, which is dotted with countless department stores and afternoon tea houses. Unlike other tea houses that give patrons a menu with tea names for them to choose from, smith&hsu presents a plate with more than 31 tea leaves for their customers to smell.

Among the jars on the plate, you can see local Taiwanese teas, Western black teas as well as tea blends, fruit teas, and herbal teas from all corners of the world. These small jars exude natural fragrances that make you feel like in exotic locales.

In smith&hsu, you can enjoy your *Tieguanyin* tea, grown by Taiwanese tea farmers, with a piece of cheesecake, or infuse your Taiwanese Green Tea with Bulgarian Rose Tea. You can practically see sparks of cultural collisions between the Oriental and Occidental teas bursting forth. But all of this talk of culture raises some questions. For one, what is the right way to enjoy the orthodox English afternoon tea? A traditional English three-tier cake stand should have a selection of salty and sweet pastries. It is also important to choose the right tea to go with the cakes. "Choose heavily fermented Oolong, black teas, or fruit teas with a slightly sour taste to go with cakes with heavy cream because these teas will help digest the grease and refresh your taste buds," says Zhang Yuhuai (張玉慧), smith&hsu's marketing director. "As for fruit pastries, go for slightly fermented green teas or partially fermented Oolong."

Smith&hsu has tried to solve the long-asked question of "adding tea first or adding milk first." The result showed differences in taste and flavor indeed, but they were subtle. Smith&hsu suggests



"Choose heavily fermented Oolong, black teas, or fruit teas with a slightly sour taste to go with cakes with heavy cream because these teas will help dig grease and refresh your taste buds."

that the decision be made according to the material of the tea utensils and the difference in temperature. That is, if you are using ceramic tea utensils, add hot tea first and then pour in milk; as for porcelain tea utensils, add whichever you like first.

Though there is a certain way of drinking English afternoon tea, Zhang expresses with delight that the essence of drinking afternoon tea is to communicate with other people. It might be complaints, talk of dreams, or a serious tête-à-tête; nonetheless, they are all beautiful moments of emotional exchange. Hot, warm, or cold, it doesn't matter what the temperature is so long as you feel comfortable with it.

1 | 2 | 3

1. ***English afternoon tea is a treat for both the eyes and the stomach.***
(photo / Liang Zhongxian)
2. ***The Japanese tea ceremony sets rigorous tea brewing protocols.***
(photo / Liang Zhongxian)
3. ***The Japanese tea ceremony puts equal stress on details and personal calmness.***
(photo / Liang Zhongxian)

THE JAPANESE TEA CEREMONY: THE TAO OF ALTRUISM AND SELF-DISCIPLINE

People can adapt the Chinese tea tasting and Western afternoon tea to suit their preferences. The Japanese tea ceremony, on the other hand, is relatively strict and must be carried out precisely according to the set protocols. Zhu Xiaomei (祝曉梅), a tea ceremony professor at the Japanese Urasenke School, recalls the time when the Japanese tea ceremony first entered Taiwan. Many people were bemused by the fact that it took 20 minutes to taste a cup of Japanese tea.

“Every component of the Japanese tea ceremony is based on the concept of altruism,” expounds Zhu. This means you have to adjust the temperature and thickness of the pot of tea you are making right away to pander to your guest. Apart from altruism, the brewer is also seeking self-adjustment, hoping to reach the level of discerning the nature of everything. Follow the ideal of anatman, the belief that there is no “self” and you will have nothing to worry about.

Taiwan's food and drink culture is heavily influenced by Japan, and a phenomenon you can easily witness is the prevalence of Japanese restaurants on the streets of Taipei. Matcha beverages are no doubt popular drinks among Taiwanese people. There are even courses teaching the authentic Japanese tea ceremony open to members of the public who are interested in the art. The Beitou Museum has been inviting members from the Japanese Urasenke School to teach people attracted to the Japanese tea ceremony since 2007. Students will be studying in a Japanese building

with tutors dressed in kimonos, making you feel like you really are in Japan. Surprisingly, the course has become a magnet for foreign tourists. It is fair to say that Japanese tea culture is now one of Taipei's tourist highlights.

Another selling point besides the beloved Japanese tea ceremony is wagashi, the Japanese confectionery, which is usually consumed along with tea. “Sakura trees are in full bloom during springtime, and the Japanese make wagashi in the shape of sakura,” says Zhu. Japanese Sencha made of the newly picked sakura is on top of her recommendation list. Instead of the bitter taste, Japanese Sencha has a relatively sweet flavor. The water used to brew Sencha should be around 70°C to 80°C as a higher temperature will make the tea too bitter to swallow.

Chinese, Western, and Japanese teas all have their own distinct merits to be enjoyed. When the inviting springtime weather arrives, do yourself a favor and make yourself a pot of tea and enjoy the taste of serenity and beauty. T





Breakfast in Taipei: Start Your Day Like a Local!

WORDS BY

Joshua Samuel Brown

PHOTOS BY

Taiwan Scene

The notion that breakfast is the most important meal of the day is shared by many cultures, but in Taiwan it takes on a special meaning in the springtime, for spring is traditionally viewed as the time to set precedents for the coming year. One Taiwanese saying goes:

“ Make your annual plan in the spring, and start each morning right to ensure the day goes well. ”

Of course, if you're visiting Taipei, there's no better (or culturally appropriate) way to start your day than with a traditional Taiwanese breakfast. First-time visitors to Taipei are often amazed at the breadth and depth of what's available for breakfast on the streets of Taipei (not to mention how early breakfast joints start opening - the Taiwanese tend to rise early).

Some traditional Taiwanese breakfast items have western counterparts, while others will be familiar to anyone who's traveled in China, Japan or Korea. But a few items are definitely uniquely Taiwanese. In this article, we'll be looking at a few dishes that Taipei people eat in the mornings and suggesting a few spots for visitors to find them during their early-morning journeys around Taipei.

Congee Served With Side Dishes

Like many traditional dishes, this Taiwanese breakfast has humble beginnings. Back in the day, Taiwanese families tended to be poor, and breakfast was generally the leftovers from the previous day's supper, which in most cases was rice and vegetables. Water would have been added to the rice the night before to make it more like a porridge (easier to digest in the morning), with a few pickles, fermented vegetables and maybe some pork floss thrown in for extra calories and flavors. Unsurprisingly, as Taiwan grew richer, this breakfast staple came to be associated with the poverty of the past. This association has lessened considerably in recent years as Taiwanese people, having become more health conscious, have realized that the breakfast staple of their grandparents is actually a pretty healthy way to start the day.

Congee is also a good hangover cure (or even a hangover prevention), which may account for the brisk business done after the bars close at the restaurants along Taipei's Fuxing South Road

serving different varieties of congee along with side dishes ranging from light vegetables, sweet potato chunks, stewed tofu and heavier items like sauteed pork and whole grilled fish.

As a staple breakfast item, you'll find congee at the breakfast buffet table of everything from the humblest guesthouse to the fanciest hotel. There'll always be a good variety of items to mix into your congee ranging from pickles and fermented vegetables to peanuts and pork floss. Be creative!



Xiaolizi Congee (小李子清粥小菜)



142-1, Sec.2, Fuxing S. Rd., Daan Dist.



Monday to Sunday, 5:00pm - 6:00am



Zhouji Meat Congee (周記肉粥店)



104, Guangzhou St., Wanhua Dist.



Monday to Sunday, 6:00am - 4:30pm



Shaobing - Youtiao - Soy Milk

Shaobing (燒餅), or baked cake, and *youtiao* (油條), a crispy-fried cake not unlike the western cruller, are two local staples. Both are delicious and filling, though the baked *shaobing* is probably a bit healthier for those looking to save their cholesterol intake for later visits to the night market. And while either item goes well with that most ubiquitous (but hardly traditional) breakfast beverage, coffee, for the full Taiwanese experience you'll want to have yours with a bowl of warm, freshly made *doujiang* (豆漿, soy milk). Though sweet soy milk is available, it's more traditionally served as a slightly savory, salty broth. And yes, it's considered perfectly acceptable to dip either *youtiao* into your soy milk. In fact, many breakfast places will serve *youtiao* and *doujiang* together in a bowl.



Fuhang Soy Milk (阜杭豆漿)



108, Sec. 1, Zhongxiao E. Rd., Zhongzheng Dist.



Tuesday to Sunday, 5:30am - 12:30pm



Dingyuan Soy Milk (鼎元豆漿)



30-1, Jinhua St., Zhongzheng Dist.



Monday to Sunday, 4:00am - 11:30pm

Pig's Blood Soup & Fried Noodle

File this one under "advanced" Taiwanese tastes, as it's unlikely that you'd find this particular dish back home. This dish contains cakes of congealed pig's blood in a savory soup. Its broth can be clear or thick, depending on the chef, and is often spiced with onion and garlic. The dish is generally served alongside a plate of fried wheat noodles, making it a heavy breakfast suitable for anyone expecting to be burning calories between breakfast and lunch, which provides customers a simple and quick way to pack in enough protein before a busy day.

The texture is somewhere between foie gras and tofu, and the flavor, though unmistakable, isn't as strong as liver, kidney or other organ meats considered by some to be sought-after delicacies. Like Taiwan's infamous stinky tofu, eating pig's blood soup is a good way for any foreign visitor to Taiwan to earn instant cool points with locals.



Mama Fang's (方媽媽小吃店)



2F, 100, Shidong Rd., Shilin Dist.



Tuesday to Sunday, 7:40am - 3:00pm



Lu's Noodle (呂巷仔口麵食館)



2-1, Lane 76, Heping E. Rd., Daan Dist.



Tuesday to Sunday, 6:30am - 2:00pm

Taiwanese Egg Crepe & Sticky-Rice Roll

File Taiwanese *Danbing* (蛋餅, egg crepe) under “Taiwanese breakfast items similar to western counterparts - with a local twist”. The concept is simple - a scrambled egg cooked with other items into a rolled-up thin flour crepe. Firstly, while some items inside the crepe are familiar to western palettes (cheese, ham or bacon), other items, like tuna or pork floss, are distinctly Taiwanese. And secondly, after rolling, the Taiwanese egg crepe is cut up into bite-sized portions easily held with chopsticks and usually dipped in sauce.

Fantuan (飯糰, sticky-rice roll) may seem a bit stranger to western visitors, though Japanese visitors will find them a bit more familiar. These breakfast snacks are made by wrapping rice around *youtiao*, egg and pickled vegetables. *Fantuan* are often made by street-side vendors, and some of them are quite creative with their *fantuan* recipes, switching out less-nutritious white sticky-rice for super-healthy Taiwanese-grown red and purple rice blends, which makes them not just a convenient breakfast option, but a downright nutritious ways to start your day.



Weiding Egg Crepe (味鼎蛋餅)



3, Ln. 21, Longjiang Rd., Zhongshan Dist.



Monday to Friday, 5:45am - 11:45am

Saturday & Sunday, 5:45am - 1:00pm



Liu Mama Sticky-Rice Roll (劉媽媽飯糰)



88, Sec. 2, Hangzhou S. Rd., Zhongzheng Dist.



Tuesday to Sunday, 5:00am - 11:30pm

Rice Noodle Soup

Rice Noodle Soup, or *mifen tang* (米粉湯), is a simple and traditional breakfast. Unlike most noodles eaten at other times of the day, rice noodle soup is made from rice rather than wheat. Rice noodles tend to be easier to preserve and dry, and come in various shapes, thicknesses and textures. Though every restaurant puts its own personal spin on the dish, one thing that generally remains consistent is that the breakfast version of rice noodle soup should have a milder broth than that found in a more hearty noodle soup. The stock for this dish is generally made from chicken, pork or seafood, and its broth sometimes contains meat, seafood and vegetables as well as noodles. Besides rice noodle soup, Taiwanese also generally like to order a few side dishes, small plates of varied vegetables, tofu, fish, or meat, to go along with it.



Luo Mama's Rice Noodle Soup (羅媽媽米粉湯)



8, Sec. 2, Xinyi Rd., Zhongzheng Dist.



Tuesday to Sunday, 7:00am - 3:00pm



Dadaocheng Rice Noodle Soup (大稻埕米粉湯)



15, Ln. 26, Sec. 1, Chongqing N. Rd., Datong Dist.



Monday to Saturday, 8:30am - 4:30pm

TRAVEL INFORMATION

For traveling between Taipei and Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport, whether by inexpensive, high-quality shuttle, safe and fast taxi, high-grade professional airport limo service, or the brand new Taoyuan Airport MRT, you're spoiled for choice in satisfying your particular time and budget.

TAXI

Service locations: West side of the Arrivals Hall of Terminal I and west side of the Arrivals Hall of Terminal II

One-way fare: Meter count plus 15%, with freeway tolls extra; average fare to Taipei around NT\$1,100

Terminal I Arrivals Hall taxi-service counter: Tel: (03) 398-2832

Terminal II Arrivals Hall taxi-service counter: Tel: (03) 398-3599

PASSENGER SHUTTLE BUS

Service locations: Terminal 1 bus pickup point: Bus pickup zone at B1 Arrivals Hall. Terminal 2 bus pickup point: Bus pickup zone at the east arcade of the 1st floor Arrivals Hall.

Shuttle-service companies: Kuo-Kuang Motor Transportation, Evergreen Bus, Citi Air Bus

One-way fare: NT\$65~145

Travel time: 40~60 minutes depending on routes (60~90 minutes for Citi Air Bus, which has more stops)

Schedule: Every 15~30 minutes

TAOYUAN AIRPORT MRT

Service Locations: A12 Airport Terminal 1 Station & A13 Airport Terminal 2 Station

One-way fare: NT\$150

Service Time: First train - to Taipei 05:59 / to Airport 05:57 ; Last train - to Taipei 23:36 / to Airport 23:55

METRO TAIPEI

Service Hours: 6:00am - 12:00 midnight **Customer Service Hotline:** (02) 218-12345

METRO TICKETS



ONE-WAY TRIP TICKET
NT\$20 - NT\$65



DAY PASS
NT\$150



24HR PASS
NT\$180



48HR PASS
NT\$280



72HR PASS
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IC CARDS

Easy Card (left) and iPASS (right) are available at MRT stations and convenience stores. Just add value before entering the system; the fare for each journey will be deducted appropriately. These cards also have an e-purse function for use at convenience stores and other authorized businesses, and for YouBike rentals.



There are three types of Taipei Fun Pass available: the Unlimited version (attractions + transportation), Transportation version (transportation only), and Classic Card version (National Palace Museum + Taipei 101 Observatory + EasyCard with addvalue function). You can visit Taipei City, New Taipei City and Keelung City within the validity of the pass.



Taipei Fun Pass Unlimited
1 Day Pass/2 Day Pass/
3 Day Pass
NT\$1200/1600/1900



Taipei Fun Pass Transportation
1 Day Pass/2 Day Pass/
3 Day Pass/5 Day Pass/
Maokong Gondola
1 Day Pass
NT\$180/310/440/700/350



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NT\$950

TRAVEL INFORMATION SERVICES

Tourism Bureau, Ministry of Transportation and Communication: 0800-011-765

Information for Foreigner in Taiwan: 0800-024-111

Taipei Citizen Hotline: 1999 (Outside Taipei City, please dial (02) 2720-8889)



Visitor Information Center



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