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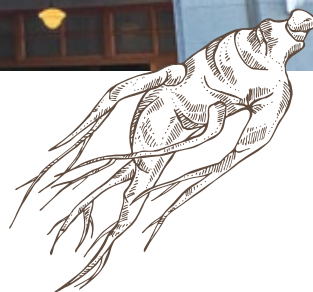


A Hundred Years of
Glory in Dadaocheng



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A Hundred Years of Glory in Dadaocheng

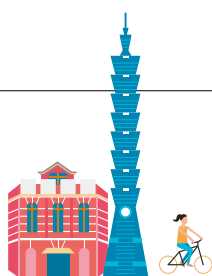


Dadaocheng was once a large grain-sunning ground in the Datong District of Taipei. Today, it carries on, blending creativity with the old-time glory of its hundred-year history. Strolling the neighborhood, one smells the therapeutic aromas of tea and Chinese medicinal herbs in the cold winter air.

With the variety of dried foods and snacks, and the colorful cloth of the embroidery stores painting a pretty scene, this old neighborhood is looking fabulous again and bursting with creative energy. It provides a glimpse of Taipei as it was in those halcyon days when Tamsui Port first opened to foreign trade in the early 1860s.

The hustling, bustling and booming economic scene, crowded with people and busy with traffic, might not exist anymore, but today's Dadaocheng has had a rebirth, and some of those century-old stores here are prospering again. Visiting historical Dadaocheng, one experiences the cultural side of Taipei City, and the boundless inventiveness of the new generation.

The infusion of new with old appears not only in the history and renaissance of this neighborhood's streets, but is reflected in the cuisine as well. Taipei is a hub of worldwide culinary trends, and its vegetarian cooking is built upon a traditional base, with some innovative twists thrown in. Taiwanese chefs have mastered fresh local products, and by combining them with international elements, a brand new vegetarian gastronomy has been born. New ingredient combinations and unique homemade sauces make these amazing dishes totally scrumptious! The new Chinese food and Cantonese veggie eateries have developed innovative cooking methods and combos, turning Taipei into a "must-eat" city for vegetarian gourmands.



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E-book

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Painting Hundred-Year-Old Stores in New Gouache

Article

Xu Cifang

Photos

Taipei Fine Arts Museum

Kuo Hsueh-Hu (郭雪湖, 1908~2012), one of the most important Taiwanese artists, was born in Dadaocheng and depicted the prosperous and bustling life of that neighborhood in his 1930 painting: *Festival on South Street* (南街殷賑). In this piece, one sees common people walking around, store signs everywhere, and businesses booming. If you look closely, you will even notice a sign reading “Sony,” which indicates how prosperous trade was back then.

Some of these century-old businesses are still going strong with their old-time glory inspiring the new rising generations. In Dadaocheng, the energies generated by heritage and innovation do not diminish each other, but rather combine, transfer and create a community that belongs to this generation, and one that will surely bring even more glory over the next 100 years.

Artist: Kuo Hsueh-Hu
Title: *Festival on South Street*
Date: 1930
Media Technology: Gouache on silk
Dimensions: 188x94.5cm
Collected by TFAM

Taiwanese Tea Travels Overseas –

Tea Family Descendants Regain their Glory

Article

Chen Wanyu

Photos

Lin Weikai



By about 150 years ago, in the late Qing dynasty, the Dadaocheng tea trade had reached its peak. “March to October was the busy period for roasting spring, summer and fall tea. One could smell the aroma of tea and flowers on every street, making Dadaocheng the most perfumed neighborhood of all! Women tea sifters strolled along the streets....” One can just picture the busy tea production scene back then from such descriptions as this one in the book, *Taipei City’s Road and Street History* (台北市路街史).

In 1866, British businessman, John Dodd brought *Anxi* tea plants to Taiwan from China. He applied methods that were similar to the contractual farming system of today, in which farmers were given loans and encouraged to plant and produce tea. In 1869, he exported a shipment of boxes from Tamsui Port to New York with “Formosa *Oolong* Tea” printed on them. From that day on, Formosa Tea made a name for itself around the world, and everyone knew how delicious it tasted.

The Heyday of Booming Export Trade

After that, foreign enterprises set up business in Taipei; even tea merchants from Fujian Province, China came to trade in tea. In its heyday, the trade saw

“Reflecting a change in era, the hundred-year-old tea store has experienced multiple transformations. But, with creative packaging and design and advanced promotion, it aims to make people love the culture of tea again.”

250-plus tea stores and foreign investment companies in the neighborhood covering Chongqing North Road (重慶北路), Yanping North Road (延平北路), Dihua Street and Guide Street (貴德街). Dadaocheng soon became the richest district in Taiwan.

Founded in 1890, Wang Tea (有記名茶) is one extant store that actually witnessed those glorious days. It stills does business at the old spot on Chongqing North Road. The father of fifth-generation owner Wang Shengjun (王聖鈞) told him that his great grandfather would often stand on the pier at Dadaocheng supervising as tea boxes were loaded onto the ships. One year, they loaded 500,000 Taiwanese cattles of *Baozhong* tea! At a very young age, his father asked the old man, “Five-hundred thousand cattles of tea, exactly how big is that?” Great grandfather laughed and said, “Well, that’s enough for us Taipeiers to drink for a whole year.” This conversation shows how well the tea export business did back then.



Wang Tea maintains the only operating tea roasting room in Dadaocheng.



Wang Shengjun has taken over Wang Tea, transformed its business model, and added tea production tours to get more people participating.

Looking at Historical Buildings to Imagine Old Time Glory

Another tea store that had such a heyday was Sin Hong Choon Trade Co. (新芳春茶行). It was the biggest tea company of all in the 1930s, and in 2016, it reappeared as an exhibit hall and met its public again. Its docent, Chen Deen (陳得恩), knows everything about Sin Hong Choon. He says that the first generation of the Wang family settled in Dadaocheng in 1913. Old Wang started work as tea taster, and in six years' time had saved enough to open his own store, which he named Sin Hong Choon. It was built with three bays facing the street, which was the style favored by over 80% of the stores along Minsheng West Road (民生西路) between Chongqing North Road and Yanping North Road. Tea vendors carried bags that weighed 60 catties each in and out of those stores all day long.



Sin Hong Choon has been transformed into an exhibit hall for tea culture.

Sin Hong Choon is situated in an eighty-year-old three-story house. It was originally constructed to be a western-style residence that could be used for commercial purposes too. Luckily, it is so well-preserved that people nowadays can see how interior space is arranged and imagine the wealthy life a typical Dadaocheng tea merchant once had. One will learn from the exhibit that destinations for tea export included Amoy in China, London, Amsterdam, Casablanca and Thailand. *Oolong* tea was sold in Europe and America, and *Baozhong* tea in the South Seas. Taiwanese tea had spread its flavor and aroma all over the world!

As Exports Decline, the Tea Trade Focuses on Domestic Sales

After restoration from colonial rule, Taiwan, which had been badly damaged by the war, saw its overseas tea business decline substantially, with exports shrinking day by day. Many old tea stores had made their fortunes through exporting, but now



To deal with industrial transformation, Wang Tea keeps adjusting brand packaging and product design.

couldn't survive any longer. For example, Jinji Tea Co. (錦記茶行), founded by Chen Tian-Lai (陳天來), one of Dadaocheng's most active tea merchants, closed up shop in 1952.

By the 1970s, Taiwan had gone through an industrial transformation, an increase in value of the New Taiwan Dollar, a shortage in tea production labor, and rising wages in the country overall. Tea

"In its exhibit hall, Sin Hong Choon preserves and promotes tea culture, hoping it will stay in people's minds forever."



Sin Hong Choon once did a booming export trade. These boxes are replicas of tea boxes from the early years.

production costs in Taiwan had increased so much that the country lost its competitiveness in the export market. Tea manufacturers in Dadaocheng gradually moved away to places with cheaper labor costs. The end came when the once-prosperous Sin Hong Choon closed its doors in 2004.

Wang recalls that there was a time when his family was doing both domestic and export tea business, but hardly any customers were dropping by the store. Around 2003, business started to get better, and about the same time, the economy turned prosperous again. More and more people were demanding a superb cup of tea, and the promotion of tea culture was becoming more widespread. So, Taiwanese consumers started paying attention to tea's quality.



Domestic sales became an opportunity for the old tea stores to regain their former glory. Wang's father decided to change direction, focus on domestic sales, and reestablish a well-known brand name.

The New Generation Pursues a Path of Cultural Creation

Wang Tea upgraded their seventy-year-old-plus factory, kept the production room's original look, and renovated the whole place into a small tea museum. They hired docents to give tours and tell people about such things as the different types of tea, the production process and the significance of preserved documentation. All of this allows visitors to get to know tea culture better.

In 2012, Wang took over the family business and brought new energy and creativity with him. For example, he started producing teabags for the younger set, gave the flagship tea a new name, and cleverly combined the tea's infusion process, its unique flavor, and life experience to create a culturally creative product.

Today, there are fewer than ten tea stores with a history like Wang's left in Dadaocheng. But a change in times won't stop these old emporia from moving forward. New generations will once again set sail from the port at Tamsui riverside, Dadaocheng! 🏮



Chinese medicinal herb stores in Dadaocheng sell wholesale, and also retail product for gifting and personal use.

With a Thousand Years of Wisdom – Chinese Medicinal Herbs Turn Over a New Leaf

Article

Chen Wanyu

Photos

Lin Weikai, Wang Hanshun

Dihua Street (迪化街) is pungently aromatic. The section heading north from Taipei Xia-Hai City God Temple (台北霞海城隍廟) to Mingshen West Road is called Dihua South Street, and is known for the soothing scents of Chinese medicinal herbs that linger in the air. Back in the Japanese era, the Dihua Street neighborhood was the chief Taipei location for wholesale Chinese medicinal herbs. Herbal medicine dispensaries are still mainly clustered around Minle Street (民樂街), which has caused it to be nicknamed “herbal lane” by the locals. A refreshing herbal essence lingers there.

*“Walk out of the store and take action.
Introduce Chinese medicinal herbs to more
people. Erase the stereotype. Bring new life.”*



The owner of Shang Cien Yuan, Chen Jianguo works with both feet on the ground to pass down the knowledge and expertise this store acquired over a hundred years.

Before the Japanese period, trade in Dadaocheng mainly focused on groceries and tea; Chinese medicinal herb was only a side business. But when market demand increased, herbs parted ways with groceries and became a separate business unto themselves. In addition, experts were needed to do quality control due to the large disparity in product. Training these experts was something passed down from master to apprentice and from father to son. Once those young trainees had completed their education, they often opened their own businesses in the same neighborhood, and this resulted in a thriving commercial district.

There are today about 200 Chinese medicinal herb outlets in Dadaocheng. They come in a

variety of business models, of which 90% are wholesalers. Most enterprises are resellers, selling both wholesale and retail. This kind of store usually sells groceries as well. In the early years, sweet snacks were sold to customers to alleviate the bitterness that often comes with Chinese medicine. But later on these products became part of inventory simply to satisfy customer demand and convenience.

The second largest business segment is the wholesale market. Wholesalers purchase large amounts of imported Chinese medicinal herbs from many different sources, grade them as to quality, and then sell them to resellers. Also, many retail outlets include a pharmacy, where a doctor versed in Chinese medicine provides advice. Shang Cien Yuan Apothecary (上乾元參藥行) is one of these.

Import Restrictions Lifted and Price Becomes Affordable

In the early years, the availability of herbs was limited due to import restrictions. Products sold on Dihua Street were distributed mainly via the Taipei Chinese Herbal Apothecary Association (台北市中藥商業同業公會), and were hard to get and pricey. It wasn't until 1988 that the restrictions were lifted and the price of Chinese medicinal herbs became affordable. For example, jujube, which had cost NT\$960 per Taiwanese catty, dropped to NT\$70 per catty – less than one tenth the original price. With Taiwan's economy booming, more and more people wanted to buy these herbs as gifts or to improve their own health. Chinese medicinal herb stores on Dihua Street started to ride the “money wave” that tea merchants had enjoyed in bygone days. On a typical shopping day back then, the neighborhood

would be just as busy as any commercial street before Chinese New Year is today.

Cian Yuan Apothecary (乾元參藥行), one of the stores appearing in the painting *Festival on South Street* by Kuo Hsueh-Hu, is now over one hundred years old. The third-generation owner of this business, Chen Jianguo (陳建國), has stepped into his father's shoes but changed the store's name to Shang Cian Yuan. Growing up in the store, Chen witnessed and participated in the glory that was the trading of Chinese medicinal herbs along Dihua Street.

Chen recalls that around 1990, the store stayed open until 10 pm and employed about twenty staff working until midnight in two shifts. In the daytime, seven or eight employees were on duty to take care of the non-stop flow of customers.

Changing Market Strategy for Chinese Medicinal Herbs

Over the past twenty years, western medicine has grown in popularity, the national health insurance has become a reality, and people now consider diet, and not Chinese medicine, as the main factor to be considered in staying healthy. As a result, demand for Chinese medicinal herbs has suffered and merchants have had to think of new ways to pass down the wisdom of ancestors and keep their

businesses going. Chen says that he doesn't have any fancy marketing methods or gorgeous store decorations to help him; instead, he simply walks out of his shop to spread the word and increase public exposure. He often hosts or attends seminars on health through Chinese medicine, introduces related activities whenever he can, and works with publishing companies to develop books on the topic. In these ways, he markets himself and promotes Chinese medicinal herbs at the same time.

Since 2015, another old store, Liu An Tang Chinese Medicine Co. (六安堂參藥行), has been part of the Store Reformation Project hosted by Taipei City Office of Commerce (台北市商業處). With the help of an advisory team, this shop has worked family history into interior design. Its fourth-generation owner, Yang Kaiyu (楊凱宇) and his father Yang Shifu (楊世福) have developed products that are more convenient for consumers, such as single-use packages and tea bags filled with healthy Chinese herbs. These are sold at the store and online, which makes them very popular with the younger set and Japanese tourists.

"Traditional herbal medicine with attractive packaging to meet customer needs and develop new markets."



Many old stores on Dihua Street employ a traditional type of separated package called a "tiger-head pack."



Liu An Tang's fourth-generation owner, Yang Kaiyu, has introduced new products designed for customer convenience. (Photo: Wang Hanshun)



After renovations, Yao de Herb' new industrial-style design attracts young people, making this a popular check-in spot. (Photo: Wang Hanshun)

Regulations Cause Herb Shops to Decline

The herb shops, particularly those along Minle Street, have faced the same fate as Chinese medicine stores. In the early days, taking herbs to improve health or for medicinal purposes was common. But along came the National Health Insurance (NHI) with its strict regulations and the amount of business they did with customers such as Kuo-Shu Guan (a type of Chinese physiotherapy clinic) and other purveyors of folk medicine dropped sharply.

Herb resellers have also struggled to maintain long-standing business relationships.


The third-generation owner of Yao de Herb (姚德和青草號), Yao Shengxiong (姚勝雄) says that he started helping his father when he was in junior high school. Back in that booming era, the store usually opened between five and six in the morning, and closed at eleven or twelve at night. After the NHI took effect, only three of six herb wholesalers survived. Many of these shops began running tea stands and selling tea in addition to herbs.

Reformation Project Links Up With the New Generation

Once Yao Shengxiong took over, he continued to run both the wholesale and herbal tea stand businesses. Later, he decided to join the Store Reformation Project to give the store a new life. He admits that he was really struggling before the reformation. He worried that old customers wouldn't like it, but he also realized that a dying store needs a chance at rebirth. So now, this herbal tea stand has been transformed into a hipster-style tearoom, and thus linked up with the young generation and the international world of tourism.

At first, some of the old patrons could hardly recognize the place and stopped coming. But, eventually they came back and younger folk started stopping by to take pictures and check-in on social media. Thus, more and more people have gotten to know the store.

“Store reformation has changed more than interior design and product display – more importantly, it has inspired new operational strategies.”

Herb businesses specializing in Chinese and folk medicine have withstood waves of modernity, confronted their fears of being replaced by newcomers, and held their rudders in rough seas. The new generation have selected a course that navigates close to the common people, while passing down their ancestors' thousand-year-old wisdom and keeping their businesses sustainable. 



The third-generation of Yao de Herb, Yao Shengxiong, welcomes the chance at rebirth that store reformation brings. (Photo: Wang Hanshun)

Witnesses to History: the Rice and Grocery Industries –

Finding New Expressions of the Spirit of Ancestors

Article

Chen Wanyu

Photos

Wang Hanshun, Lin Weikai



“Increase variety in your inventory, find new sources, and progress in faster, more innovative ways – you’ll soon find yourself owning a piece of the market.”

Walking along Dihua Street’s middle north section between Minsheng West Road and Guisui Street (歸綏街), one sees grocery stores everywhere. They stock all kinds of dried foods, snacks and canned goods, and the smell of seafood lingers in the air. The busy rice mills of yesteryear are long gone from the north section between Guisui Street and Daqiaotou (大橋頭), and this neighborhood is now occupied by prosperous old stores and vibrant new cultural and creative businesses.

In the late Qing, most groceries were imported from mainland China. During the Japanese era, goods imported from Japan were tax-free, so you could find their dried salty fish and scallops among other items at these stores. In the 19th century,

Taiwan opened its ports to foreign trade, and since Dadaocheng was located near one, it became the most important grocery wholesale market in northern Taiwan.

Grocery Trading is Like Dealing in the Stock Market

Linfuzhen (林復振商行), founded by one of Dadaocheng’s pioneers, Lin Youzao (林右藻) and his family, is one of the oldest stores in Taipei. Fifth-generation owner, Lin Zhaogang (林兆剛) remembers family elders saying that the Japanese era was a time of scarcity, and that prices fluctuated widely in Taiwan right after restoration from colonial rule. Grocers needed to



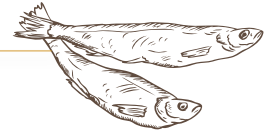
Over the past one hundred years, Dihua Street has been the first choice for grocery shopping in northern Taiwan. (Photo: Wang Hanshun)

pay attention to changes in market demand. As in the stock market, a trader needs to know when to buy and when to sell. But, if one has sharp eyes and makes the right moves, he or she can realize amazing profits!

From the 1960s to the 1980s, Dihua Street was the center of grocery wholesale in northern Taiwan. Be it domestic products, such as dried shrimp and mushrooms, or imported goods, such as ginseng and abalone, all were sold to individual customers,

as well as resellers and restaurants, by Dihua Street wholesalers.

Lin recalls that when he was little, his aunts and other family elders were forever scooping dried shrimp into shopping bags. The business back then was several dozen times larger than it is now. People bought gifts for all kinds of occasions. Chinese New Year was an especially busy time, and stores needed to stock up a couple of months in advance. Over the New Year's period, sales averaged more than one thousand gift



boxes per day! And, although they had almost 20 staff working at the store, overtime was unavoidable. This is how good business was back then.

In the 1980s, convenience stores and hypermarkets appeared, and people changed their consuming habits. As a result, the wholesalers' most loyal customers, the independent grocery stores, went out of business, and the wholesale business hit rock bottom.

Releasing New Products and Doing Retail on the Side

In the late 1990s, Lin took over his family's business at a time when the middle section of Dihua Street was lifeless. Their store was an old one, but a few long-time customers still dropped by. Lin notes,



Linfuzhen has developed new products to meet market demand. (Photo: Wang Hanshun)

“Our primary customers changed from wholesalers to resellers and retailers, and the volume of our business were reduced by ninety percent!”

Today, as a result, many grocery stores do both wholesale and retail business, and not only sell traditional grocery items, but also provide online shopping. Some business owners have even looked overseas with an eye to becoming agents for new product lines. Lin says, “One of the ways we can expand product lines in the future is to discover fine things from all over Taiwan and sell them. For example, Chenyuanho Soy Sauce (陳源和醬油) and Chushan's (竹山) natural dried bamboo shoots used to be something only Yunlin (雲林) locals knew about, but now they're exclusively sold at Linfuzhen.”

The Rise and Fall of Rice Over the Past Century

The grocery business along Dihua Street is still going strong, but once you pass Guisui Street and enter the north section, the booming rice business of one hundred years ago is just a memory.

One of the rice stores has been transformed into a restaurant: Rice & Shine (稻舍). The owner, Ye Shoulun (葉守倫), is a fifth-generation descendant of a local concern, Ye's rice stores. This business bears witness to the rise and fall of rice in Dadaocheng.



The interior of Rice & Shine has an old-time retro atmosphere.



In the past century, the traditional rice store has weathered many changes but always kept going through industrial transformation.

Founded in 1923, Ye's rice mill once did a booming trade. In 1969, it closed due to changes in agricultural and food policy and to the social environment. "At that time, mill owners usually owned the land too. They could set the price of rice themselves. Later, the government set up the Food Department and assumed control of rice prices. Moreover, the land reform policy went into effect and many rice stores couldn't keep afloat. My grandfather was the last rice entrepreneur in the Ye family." Ye Shoulun speaks with the voice of experience about the changes he's witnessed and the rise and fall of the business. He says that in his grandfather's time, there were 46 rice stores along the north section of Dihua Street, but now there's only one left.



By combining rice dishes with cultural exhibits, Ye Shoulun has found a new path for traditional rice stores.




Old House Becomes a Restaurant and Exhibition Complex

Ye opened his shop at the old site in 2016, after it had been resting for about 50 years. He sells specialty rice from different parts of Taiwan and locally-processed produce. He's joined the Taipei City Urban Regeneration Station project, and transformed his one-hundred-year old house into a cultural complex, which combines rice meals with exhibits.

"In the old days, my grandfather and others would go all over Taiwan to buy rice, and now I visit many places to find good strains, too. The rice cuisine in my restaurant promotes Taiwanese rice, and thus passes on the spirit of my ancestors." Ye says that, by providing meals using local ingredients,

"Pass on the spirit of the traditional rice trade, promote rice cuisine with delicious dishes, and revive the glory of the industry!"

holding speeches, giving advanced tours, and hosting classes and performances, he hopes to attract people into the old house, where they can enjoy some delectable warm rice.

Grocery stores in the middle section of Dihua Street have found a new positive energy and raised their competitive game. The old stores on the north section have revived the spirit of their industry, and put the traditional rice industry and the history of Dadaocheng back into people's imaginations. 



Pins & Needles finds its path to success by focusing on customized handmade embroidered handbags.

An Exquisite World in Fabric and Embroidery – Fine Handcrafts Carry on the Glory of the Past



Article

Zheng Jinyao

Photos

Yang Zilei



Founded by Li Peiru, Pins & Needles stands out among around the hundred-plus fabric stores in Yongle Market.

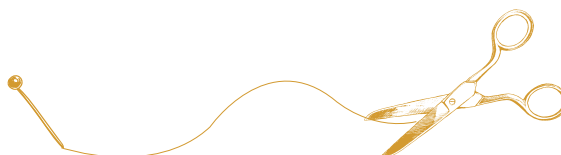
In the 19th century, Dadaocheng pier became a hub for goods from different places. The “Public Yongleding Foodstuff Market,” which later became Yongle Market (永樂市場), was set up in this neighborhood by the Japanese. Back then, in addition to the staples of trade, ships also brought in fabrics such as silk and printed cotton fabric. Stores selling imported material appeared in Yongleding, so this neighborhood gradually developed into the main wholesale and retail fabric center in northern Taiwan.

Second-generation fabric store proprietor, Li Peiru (李佩儒) still remembers the glorious days of the 1970s. “A lot of wealthy people came here to buy fabric which they would have the tailor make into a formal outfit.”

Her mother Mrs. Li has been running her shop for over 30 years. She says that in the old days, when a classy family planned a wedding, they’d come to the store and be fitted for their outfits, which usually included cheongsams for the mothers, and dresses for the bride and her bridesmaids.

In the 1980s, the textile industry in Taiwan revitalized and in addition to fabrics imported from

“The fabric industry is contemporary lifestyle in miniature; it can find opportunity in any era.”



overseas, a lot of locally-produced textiles became available. Yongle Market owners still recall those halcyon days with great joy, when even stock market analysts would come to chat. They’d learn which factory was releasing new fabric and how sales were doing, and this knowledge would then influence stock prices.

Fast Fashion Goes Up; Customized Down

“By the year 2000, fast fashion had appeared, mass-produced apparel had replaced traditional customized clothes, and the business of fabric stores was nothing like what it used to be.” At that time, Li Peiru was not thinking of taking over the family business, but then things started to change. She notes, “People used to buy fabric only for making clothes, but then they needed it for home and furniture – things such as curtains or pillow cases.” This change caused merchants to choose differently when purchasing. Besides the fine-weave and delicate fabric used in apparel, they needed heavier and brighter textiles, and functional cloth such as material that could block the sun. Some stores even specialized in making sofa covers.



The customized handmade bag has found a stage where traditional fabric stores can shine.

“With a market filled with mass-produced products, consumers start looking for something customized, more durable and with higher quality.” In 2006, Li noticed another change in the market, which was the appearance of DIY classes where consumers learned how to make their own handbags and accessories.

Second-Generation Owner Makes Bags by Hand

In 2011, the number of apparel stores in Taiwan had reached its peak, and Li could see that the trend had run its course. “All trends follow a bell curve. When the apparel industry started to shrink, the custom fabric business, which was already targeting consumer needs, found its best chance for development.” In 2014, she opened Pins & Needles (針線勤) next to her mother’s fabric shop. It specializes in custom handmade bags, and also holds courses teaching people to design and make their

own bags. As a result, customers who had rarely set foot in Yongle Market before have now started to visit fabric stores.

Li brings out a beaded pink purse with clasp frame and says: “This purse uses a French handwoven fabric costing NT\$30,000 per yard. The beadwork is sewn by hand and the price of this little thing is NT\$18,000!” She says this exquisite imported fabric came from her mother’s store, and was intended for a Haute Couture wedding gown. This humble cloth store actually hides many such treasures, which just need a stage where they can shine.

Li wasn’t planning to take over her family’s business, but then she saw an opportunity to kill two birds with one stone. She realized that, “After a bolt of fabric had been cut to make a piece of apparel, the remnants left over could be used to make a matching handbag.” Now that she’s about to take over business she says, “I’ll purchase more new fabric and display more samples in the store, so that customers can imagine how their outfits, handbags and shoes will look”

Fabrics can be used in different ways; it might be a fascinating dress for a lady, or it could be a simple table cloth. The textile industry is more than just a business – it represents a whole lifestyle.

Contrary to those shops selling modern and European-style handbags, Lianhui Embroidery Store (聯暉繡莊), an unassuming little shop outside Yongle Market has stuck to the traditional handmade path and tried to find its way in this sunset industry.

Traditional Embroidery Survives the Low Price Onslaught

Lianhui was the first embroidery shop in Dadaocheng, creating mainly custom items for religious institutions – pieces such as a god statue’s robe, a table skirt for an altar, or a *Ba Xian Cai* (八仙綵; an embroidered banner depicting the eight immortals).

Third-generation owner, Tong Zhenxi (童振熙) says, “Embroidery stores have been through two glorious periods: one in the 1950s, when mainland Chinese settled in Taiwan after the war and wanted to worship their ancestors; and another in the 1970s when a certain illegal gambling game became popular. By then, temples were receiving a lot of donations, which allowed them to purchase a greater number of worship-related products. When business was ascendant, they often worked day and night. “Twenty years ago, I sometimes woke up in the middle of the night, worrying that I wouldn’t get the work done on time,” Tong says.

In its heyday, there were fifteen embroidery stores in Dadaocheng. Every household had its own ancestral tablet, and temples could be seen everywhere. When people living in the northern part of Taiwan above Hsinchu (新竹) wanted to buy *Ba Xian Cai* or some clothes for a god statue, their first choice was Dadaocheng. Today, there are only three embroidery stores like Lianhui left in all Taipei.

“Compared to the peak, our business now is only a tenth of what it was.” Tong has analyzed the whole industry and says that, in the heyday, people went for

industrial mass production to meet the demands of quantity. But later on, they found they couldn’t fight mainland China’s production lines, which employed even cheaper labor. One after another, embroidery stores in Taiwan closed, but Lianhui always insisted on handmade products and thus survived the onslaught of low-price competition.

Tong says, “There are some old embroidery places like ours in Tainan (台南) and Yilan (宜蘭). They produce only handmade work done by experienced masters. The price they charge is even higher than ours.” To make a twelve-foot *Ba Xian Cai* by hand takes a master about ten days and the price will be between NT\$70,000 and NT\$200,000!

Diversification and Insistence on Handmade Products

In the old days, a typical embroidery store mainly provided items for weddings, celebrations and



Lianhui Embroidery Store mainly fills customized orders for religious items.



An embroidery for worship employs vivid colors and fine craftsmanship.

funerals – pieces such as the *Ba Xian Cai*, table skirts, and the “double happiness cloth” draped over the stage at a restaurant wedding banquet. “But there aren’t as many people now who care for tradition. We might only sell one set of embroidered dowry products in a whole year.”


Tong still insists on handmade work, although he has made some changes to meet market demand. For example, there used to be strict rules for making a god statue’s robe. Traditionally, Mazu’s finery could only be in orange, but these days, a devotee might choose bright peach or green, and Tong goes along with it.

In addition to the religious items, embroidery stores take many other kinds of orders. “In recent years, a lot of culture workers have joined the *zhentou* (陣頭; “battle-array” performance troupes) activities, and order all kinds of embroidered flags.” These exquisitely produced handmade works of art have become the pride of the nation. “Last year, someone ordered an embroidered work depicting

“Adapting to changing times while maintaining flexibility, and insisting on handmade methods while recognizing the need to pass on skills rarely seen nowadays.”

two dragons. When we wrote up the receipt, we saw that it was to be a gift from the Office of the President to a foreign guest!” Lianhui’s work has also included birthday couplets for Chiang Kai Shek and an embroidered flag for the Qing Long junior-league baseball team.

Although the store doesn’t receive as many orders as it used to, Tong states positively: “Not many stores can handle this kind of handmade embroidered work. If you need exquisite embroidery or a *Ba Xian Cai*, you have to come to old stores like ours.”

By adjusting the direction they are going, traditional fabric and embroidery stores in Dadaocheng have made a beautiful turn and thus gained a chance at rebirth. 

Sumiki Hikari's City Wanderings

A Gramophone Record Named Twatutia

How many years have passed since I visited First Record Store (第一唱片行) at No. 88, Bao'an Street (保安街) for the first time? I think it was probably back when Yohei Hasegawa, guitarist of the famous Korean independent band, Kiha & The Faces, came to Taipei. Hasegawa was a lover of vinyl, so I went to First Record Store with him. We begged a staff member to let us see their vinyl record collection, and she warned us: "They're not all for sale" as she led us to the second floor – usually closed to the public. This helpful person was Xiao Ling (小玲), the granddaughter of the store's founder, and we became close friends later. That first impression seem a bit rude; but the more I've gotten to know her, the more I've discovered that she's actually full of endless warmth and energy, and has a big heart too! She's the personification of Taipei in my mind.

Dadaocheng used to be the dining and entertainment hub of Taipei. In the Japanese era, there were row upon row of restaurants and coffee shops that served as cultural salons where the literati and landed gentry hung out – the birthplace of the New Cultural Movement! Founded in 1935, First Theater (第一劇場) included such facilities as a movie theater, a performance hall, a dance hall and a billiard parlor.

First Record Store, established in 1965, was situated right next door. I like to imagine that after people had

finished dancing or watching a play back then, they'd come here with the music still lingering in their ears and buy records or cassette tapes before heading home. The store has a great selection of Japanese *Kayōkyoku* and *Enka* as well. Posters and records line the walls, so that one can hardly see what's underneath. As I looked at the store's decorations, I could almost hear the happy and excited people of an earlier day as they strolled along the street. After that moment had passed, the gramophone record called "First Record" was filling my ears with the sounds of the past.

Xiao Ling's mother has been taking care of this store from the beginning, and Xiao Ling and her brother have opened a coffee shop, which, incredibly, serves tasty dumplings next door. She shops daily at a traditional market to buy fresh pork and dumpling wraps, and she makes a thousand dumplings a day. These have rich fillings and are so yummy you'll never get tired of them! After your belly is full, you walk off the meal along Dihua Street and visit museum207 (迪化207博物館). If you head straight up to the roof there, you can look out over a sea of south-Fujian-style roof tiles. These always remind me of snakes stretching out to show people their bellies. The Taipei sky extends far into the distance, while the melody of Dadaocheng rises over the orange roof tiles into the clear blue sky. 🇹🇼



Dadaocheng: Reminiscences of Beginnings – An Interview With Entertainer, Otani Mondo

Article

Chiang Hsinying

Photos

Yang Jiaying, 4Point Design, Lin Junyao

One Friday afternoon, Otani Mondo showed up bearing a casual look. No agent or assistant accompanied him and he looked handsome in a simple white T-shirt, a pair of ripped jeans and black leather boots. From years of exercise, his strong, fit body is his best “outfit.” From top athlete to highly-popular entertainer, Mondo has been through a tough, yet exciting, decade. Such a life path has naturally caused him to keep altering his course; yet the only thing that hasn’t changed a bit is his proactive mindset.

For Mondo, 2014 was the year when his career took off. He performed on entertainment shows and TV dramas, and also played the small role of a Japanese cop in the movie, *Twa-tiu-tiann* (大稻埕). The film concerns a character who travels through time and arrives in Dadaocheng circa 1920. There were many such tales told of this neighborhood between the years 1860 and 1945. As the movie’s plot thickens, some old sites such as Dadaocheng Wharf (大稻埕碼頭), Taipei Bridge (台北大橋), Taipei Zongshan Hall (台北市中山堂), Cian Yuan Apothecary (乾元參藥行), Lao Mian Cheng

(Photo: Yang Jiaying)



Lantern Shop (老綿成燈籠) and Taipei Xia-Hai City God Temple appear on the big screen; so the audience gets to see real life as it was in this “Number One City” Taipei’s good old days!

Dadaocheng looks very different now from how it appeared in the past, but traces of history can still be found here and there. With the scent of tea, Chinese medicinal herbs, agarwood and dried foods lingering in the air, one can actually “smell” the cultural and historical context of Dihua Street. This old town site carries some special features characteristic of the old days, yet it keeps transforming. One can form a personal image of Taipei here, whether from the past or the present. For Mondo, Dadaocheng reminds him of his beginnings, back when he was a stranger in a strange land, giving his all and fighting for his dreams.

“I participate in the Games for myself, not for my country.”

Mondo started learning Taekwondo in junior high school, and was active in sports until age 26, when he quit the national team. During his decade as a national athlete, he won numerous trophies. For most athletes, competing in the

Olympic Games is the ultimate dream, and Mondo was no exception. In the first round of the 2001 Taekwondo World Cup, held in Vietnam, he fought against a Korean who had won four championships in a row. Mondo was too complacent at first, and let his opponent fight back and kick him right in the head! This caused Mondo to bite his own lip and bleed profusely, yet he insisted on finishing the bout, even after swallowing blood! After losing, he went back to the athletes’ lounge only to find that his blood had seeped through his *dobok* (Taekwondo uniform) until the Japanese flag on it could hardly be seen. He later thought, with great regret, “What exactly am I doing?!”

With the glory of Japan uppermost in his mind, being defeated only made Mondo want to win even more, which is only natural for any athlete. Several months after his bloody defeat, he encountered the Taiwanese team at the U.S. Open Taekwondo Championship. “The Taiwanese are so loud! They laugh and enjoy themselves, but once they step into the arena, they kick beautifully!” Mondo exclaims. Taiwanese players have forged their place in the Taekwondo world,



For tourists from foreign lands, the retro atmosphere and cultural and creative trends in Dadaocheng may seem exotic, but for Mondo, they remind him of his beginnings. (Photo: 4Point Design)

and their Olympic bronze medalist, Huang Chih-hsiung (黃志雄), was Mondo's idol at the time. Huang's unique kicking style was rarely seen in Asia, but Mondo was about the same height and rank, so he decided to come to Taiwan to learn more about Taekwondo. The following year, he received a special visa jointly issued by the Olympic committees of both Taiwan and Japan, and he started his three years of training at National Taiwan University of Sport.

“Right at the start of training, I got kicked in the teeth – and had one broken.”

Born in Miyazaki Prefecture, Kyushu, Japan, this athlete spoke no Chinese and couldn't keep up with the others. On his first day of training, he got kicked in the teeth and had one broken. His classmate, the famous Taiwanese Taekwondo fighter, Su Li-Wen (蘇麗文) took him on her motorcycle to a dental clinic, and the dentist fixed his tooth for free! In order to catch up with the other trainees, Mondo practiced and practiced, even weekends and holidays, working harder than anyone. However, he still managed to gain six kilos by devouring cheap but tasty Taiwanese chow! The simple, passionate Taiwanese folk he encountered reminded him of his hometown, Miyazaki.

By the 2005 East Asia Games in Macau, Mondo had dropped his weight from 70 to 58 kilos, and he defeated the reigning Japanese champion. He then rejoined the Japanese national team and was on the last mile of qualifying for the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, when something happened to make him fall apart both physically and psychologically. He found self-doubts such as: “Have I reached my limit?” and “Can I get any better?” entering his mind. He was at his peak athletically, but such thoughts bothered

him at the 2006 World University Taekwondo Championships, and in a moment of distraction, he snapped his cruciate ligament and his life as a sportsman ended right there. He chose to come back to Taiwan and start from Ground Zero.

“Failing again! No way! I'll never accept that.”

Mondo began his second career by working as a model, but it didn't turn out as well as he thought it would. He was rejected over and over again at auditions. Oftentimes, his paycheck was barely enough to pay his rent. And due to restrictions placed on foreigners working in Taiwan, he was forced to teach martial arts on the grounds of the National Dr. Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall (國父紀念館) in exchange for food and drink. And, what's more, he notes that “Taiwanese people really don't mind standing someone up!” He often waited half an hour for a student to show up, only to have the person text him that he or she was “taking leave” that day! But everything changed and his life finally settled down when he met his benefactor, Jimmy Hung (洪天祥), the man who led him behind the scenes to find work as a martial arts choreographer.

He's also found success in the movies as a martial arts body double, which is very tough work. It might take a whole day to shoot a scene that plays for just a few seconds; and getting injured is a regular occurrence. But all efforts pay off in life, and through this work he learned about storyboarding, editing and scene setup. Each of these newly-acquired skills has helped him greatly in the entertainment business. At first, he didn't want to be a guest on TV variety shows, but then, in 2014, he went on the famous program, *Half and Half* (二分之一強). His handsome looks and humorous way of talking drew a lot of attention and, after that, his “showbiz” career started to take



Mondo's favorite spot is Taipei Xia-Hai City God Temple, which has a haze of incense in the air all year round. Many foreign visitors have heard about it and come a long way to visit this shrine. (Photo: Lin Junyao)

off. Mondo admits, "I was going to focus on acting only, but by that time I was already thirty-something years old and I just couldn't allow myself to fail again." Aided by his increased popularity, athletic energy and engaging, humorous style, Mondo was able to tackle all kinds of jobs, such as hosting TV shows and organizing and planning intellectual travel programs. His excellent performances have allowed him to become the tourism ambassador for his hometown: Miyazaki Prefecture.

"When I feel I'm losing motivation, I just visit Dadaocheng and see if I am any different from what I was at the beginning."

In one particular gourmet show, Mondo introduced Nagoya Japanese Dorayaki (名古屋

屋日式銅鑼燒), a fifty-year-old stand in front of Yongle Market (永樂市場). Its authentic Japanese-custard filling reminds him of a flavor from his childhood. He also tried Mullet Roe Cheese Oolong Tea (烏魚子奶蓋烏龍茶), which is made by combining finely-chopped mullet roe with thick foamed cream and delicate Oolong tea. These flavors blend beautifully and this drink surely represents the spirit of modern placemaking.

For tourists from foreign lands, the retro atmosphere and cultural and creative trends in Dadaocheng may seem exotic, but for Mondo, they remind him of his beginnings. "Dadaocheng makes me think of the time when I first entered the entertainment business. Back then, I'd grab any chance, no matter how small the role or how little it paid. I often come here to recall those days."

Mondo's favorite spot is Taipei Xia-Hai City God Temple. This temple has a footprint of less than fifty pings, yet it has heard the prayers of hundreds of thousands of worshipers over the years. It is crowded with the faithful, and there's a haze of incense in the air all year round. Many people from foreign lands have heard about it and come a long way to visit this shrine. "This is what travelers do; it's not so much about religion, but more like seeking a sense of peace in your heart."

Having lived in Taiwan for over a decade, Mondo often takes garbage bags with him to pick up litter on the street. He gets upset when he sees people carelessly dropping cigarette butts. Also, he likes to go to animal shelters and help with the stray pups in his free time. These are just three of the ways he shows his love for Taipei. Now that he has a permanent visa, the days of struggling under working visa restrictions

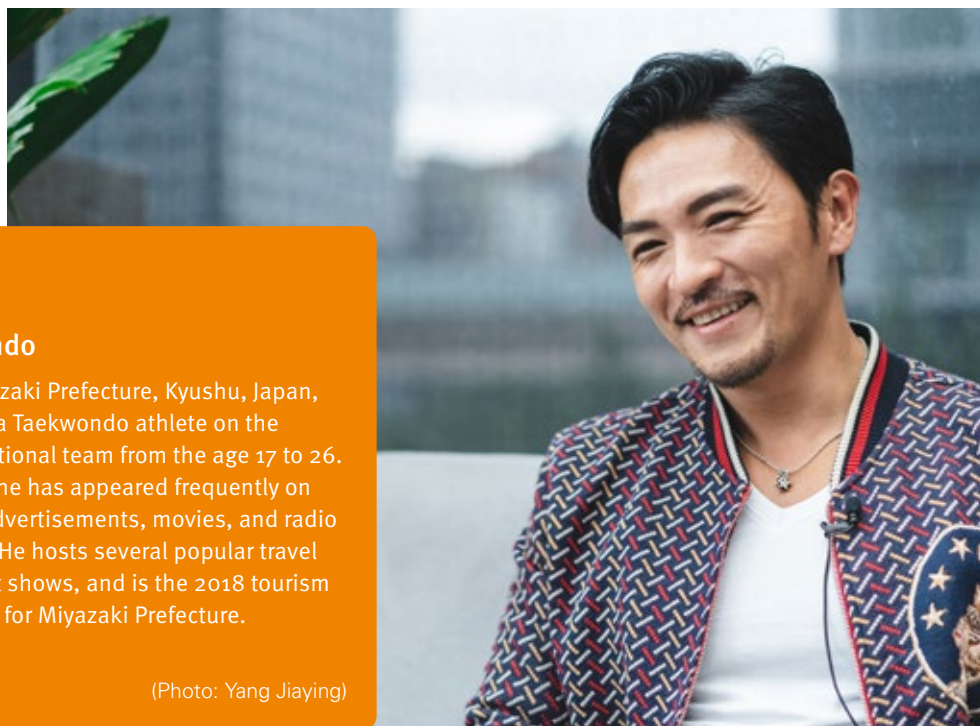
have become just an anecdote to share with others. In his eyes, Taipei is a bit rushed, a bit crowded, and a bit pricy, but one can always turn down some small alley to find cheap, tasty local cuisine. As a host of a gourmet show, Mondo has tried all kinds of dishes, and believes that the fastest way to fit in to such city is to follow the old saw: "When in Taipei, do as the Taipeiers do."

Looking over the past eleven years, we see that Mondo has transformed himself from an athlete into a successful entertainer, a fact which few would have believed possible in 2007. He has always trusted in his own abilities deeply, so his dreams have been realized without question. Currently, Mondo's aim is to win a Golden Bell Award, with his many co-workers and fans supporting him. When you find the direction to your dreams, sooner or later, they'll come true! 🇹🇼

Otani Mondo

Born in Miyazaki Prefecture, Kyushu, Japan, Mondo was a Taekwondo athlete on the Japanese national team from the age 17 to 26. Since 2007, he has appeared frequently on TV shows, advertisements, movies, and radio broadcasts. He hosts several popular travel and gourmet shows, and is the 2018 tourism ambassador for Miyazaki Prefecture.

(Photo: Yang Jiaying)



A man with dark, curly hair and glasses is shown in profile, looking towards the right. He is wearing a white t-shirt with a colorful, floral and calligraphic design on the left side. He is holding a small, open brochure or map with both hands, and a pen is visible in his right hand. The background is a bright, out-of-focus outdoor scene with greenery and a building.

Dadaocheng in the Eyes of Günter Whittome

A “Must-Visit” Tour Recommendation

Article

Rick Charette

Photos

Yang Jiaying,
Taipei City Government Department of
Information and Tourism

(Photo: Yang Jiaying)

Günter Whittome came to Taiwan, which he now calls home, from Germany, and came to Germany as a tot, just 5 years old, via England. His father is English, his mother German. The family packed their bags and headed to Germany when his mother found she could no longer tolerate the often gloomy weather of northwest England.

His father was a language teacher, and Günter developed the same love for language learning. He started university with English and French studies, then switched over to Chinese studies, spending time studying both in China and Taiwan during this period. Taiwan has been his home since late 2003, but the first time he came to the island was as a student in 1985, and he visited a number of times afterward.

Günter's master's thesis, published as a monograph, was on the infamous 2/28 Incident of 1947, a major uprising for which the spark occurred on Yanping North Road just outside Dadaocheng. In 2005 he wrote the Taiwan edition for *Polyglott On Tour*, a travel-guide series published in German, and handles all edition updates. These are done every 18 to 24 months, with the seventh edition to be brought out this spring, making Günter a regular Dadaocheng visitor for update research.

First Impressions and the Decision to Make Taiwan Home

"I first came in 1985 to study at Fu Jen University (輔仁大學). I found Taiwan quite open intellectually and economically, and was impressed. My master's thesis was on the 2/28 Incident, and I had long wanted to move here."

The island has changed dramatically since he first came as a student, he says. "Taiwan has become a democratic country – one of Asia's few true

democracies – and more prosperous. Public transport has become much more convenient. I clearly remember cross-town trips, even into the 1990s, in rumbling buses over roads well short of 'good' condition, with drivers flying over the roads whenever space opened up, especially during evening rides.

Today's Taipei is a place of smooth Taipei Metro rides, and YouBike and scooters rentals, so convenient and pleasant. There are also far more cultural institutions in the cities today, and Taiwan has become more internationalized as a result of foreign travel becoming so common after martial law was lifted in 1987. These are among the reasons why foreign travelers are so positively impressed nowadays when they come."

Noting the steady increase in tourists from the EU in recent years, he states that among the reasons is Taiwan's reputation as a safe country to travel, as a free and democratic country, with very friendly people, great cuisine, and so much to see in terms of nature and culture. "And international tourists are always searching for new places, 'blind spots' on the world map. Another reason is positive news that sometimes pops up in the international media; for example, discussion regarding the possible legalization of same-sex marriage earlier this year, which younger people around the world, especially, have taken note of. This creates a positive impression of Taiwan as a progressive Asian country, a special place."

Talking about the experience of international travelers in general, he says that most do not have a clear idea about Taiwan, gleaned only "bits and pieces from the sporadic international media coverage, which generally runs stories only when there are tensions with China, big elections are held, etc. Sometimes there are stories that talk about strange or funny eclectic things, like the bubble

tea phenomenon, for example.” Most international travelers are very pleasantly surprised when they do come, however. “For example, one German writer I know was quite astounded at the great variation found on an island only the size of a single German state. High mountains so close to the wide ocean, such great cultural diversity. Based on the impressive diversity, she thought Taiwan must be 50 times bigger than its actual size.”

A History Buff's Interest in Dadaocheng

The starting point of Günter's Dadaocheng interest, “of course, was my research for my master's thesis; many key events happened around, and in, Dadaocheng. It is a very important place to go to when visiting Taipei, the reason I cover it in my travel book.” Dadaocheng is one of the places of origin for Taipei

City, he says, starting as a village in the 1850s. It brims with history, and there are not many comparable places in Taiwan. One thing both locals and first-time foreign visitors criticize “is Taiwan's many ugly buildings; many neighborhoods have a few nice historical buildings, but they are almost hidden away amidst the densely packed architecture. Dadaocheng is one of the few places with clustering of many attractive old buildings in a small area. And since the 1990s, when Taiwanese began celebrating their own history, many rundown Dadaocheng heritage buildings have been renovated.”

What you see on a Dadaocheng day-tour “is the history of an old riverport merchant settlement, with both Western trading-house merchants and local merchants, a thriving tea industry in the 19th century. And today, foreign visitors are also quite interested in the boutique museums popping up throughout

A Chinese New Year's Eve family dinner was painted on the wall of the rooftop viewing area at museum207.



the area, exploring both Chinese and specifically Taiwanese culture.”

Five “Must-Visit” Spots for Day-Trip Foreign Visitors

After stating he had spent considerable time condensing the many possibilities to a list of “just five” that would do justice to Dadaocheng on a single-day walkabout tour, Günter offered a list of five “favorite must-visit spots”: the Taipei Xia Hai City God Temple, Yongle Market, museum207, Ama Museum (阿嬤家—和平與女性人權館), and Dihua Street. “These offer a mixture of the various aspects historical Dadaocheng has to offer: merchants, religion, old-time culture, culinary specialties.”

As an introduction to local culture, “No. 1 would be Taipei Xia Hai City God Temple. Though small, this temple is very important. It has always been the heart of Dadaocheng, as with major temples everywhere in the Chinese-speaking world, the center of local life, social as well as religious.” Within the small interior is a legion of almost 600 deity statues. One is the Old Man Under the Moon (月下老人), Chinese culture’s Cupid, so efficacious he is known far from Taiwan, with the number of Japanese tourists paying calls noticeably high. The temple was built in the 1850s, a few years after Dadaocheng’s settlement.

In Chinese culture each urban agglomeration has its own City God, who watches over the behavior of district citizens and judges their fate upon death, calculating good and bad deeds on an abacus often displayed prominently in such temples as a reminder to the living. “If visiting, ask at the main counter for Titan Wu (吳孟寰). Titan is a volunteer who speaks English, and gives enjoyable in-depth tours of the

temple’s history, gods, cultural significance, and other spots to visit in Dadaocheng.”

His No. 2 must-visit is Yongle Market, “another interesting place, even for foreigners who’ve lived in Taipei/Taiwan awhile. After seeing the many types of traditional-style fabrics here, and how the shops are operated, there’s also a good food court with traditional treats. Street performers also entertain in front of the market, especially on weekends and holidays. The temple and market are right by each other, on old Dihua Street.”

Today’s market is in a modern-era multi-story edifice. The original street-level market was established in 1896, at the beginning of the Japanese era (1895–1945). Then as now, it was home to almost one hundred fabric merchants; the fabric emporium lives on today on the building’s second and third floors, catering to regulars from DIY-adept housewives through fashion designers through overseas tourists looking for unique gift and souvenir buys. Fabrics range from delicate Hakka (客家) floral prints to gaudy neon themes. On-site tailor shops can custom-craft a wide range of apparel and other practical-item desires.

Go further north along Dihua Street, Günter advises to visit two small museums that are intriguing windows into the island’s history and culture, “my No. 3, museum207, and No. 4, the Ama Museum. The latter covers the history of Taiwanese women during the Japanese period, especially the ‘comfort women’ issue.” This may not be the type of place that many international visitors would normally visit, he understands, “but the issue is important in many senses, including modern political relations, and is a key to understanding the island’s modern-era past.”

The Ama Museum is designed as a memorial hall honoring wartime comfort women. There are

displays of historical materials on the related rights movement, cultural artifacts, and cultural-arts creations by former comfort women. “Ama” (阿嬤) is a term of affection equating to “grandma.” The on-site Ama Café serves fair-trade coffee and sells museum-theme goods and consignment goods on behalf of female entrepreneurs and charity partners, and is a sanctuary where support and training for survivors of domestic violence is provided.

At museum207, housed in what was originally a pharmacy built in 1962, the exhibits showcase the Taiwan of the past, such as the widespread use of terrazzo flooring and the complex art of Taiwanese gift-giving, with items ranging from lucky red envelopes to mirrors adorned with auspicious messages on display. A bonus for visitors is the roof access, from which precious panoramas of the community and points beyond are enjoyed.

“My No. 5 is Dihua Street as a whole – the food and many other specialty items found in the old shophouses along this long heritage street. As you walk along Dihua Street, you see the open-front displays of spices, fried fish, fried seaweed, Chinese medicines, and countless other intriguing things, reminiscent of how everything looked a century ago.”

He specially recommends a famous bakery, Lee Cake, located not far from the City God Temple. “There’s a direct connection between the two. Traditionally, their goods were the type used in temple offerings, made in large sizes, but now are also made in small sizes as take-home treats.” Something that makes it especially appealing to tourists, he adds, is that the interior has been renovated, with an appealing layout, and there are many traditional bakery instruments on display. “Lee Cake now also offers enjoyable DIY classes.



Built in 1962, museum207 used to be a dispensary of Chinese medicine.

You are taught how to make old-time Chinese-style treats, which you can take home afterwards.” These are generally on weekends/holidays.

The Lee Cake shop was opened in the 1890s, and the fifth-generation proprietors, like the owners of many local businesses, have in recent years thoroughly refurbished their traditional-style shophouse, in a cooperative effort to once again make them attractive works of art, in particular the facades. The shop’s best-selling traditional treat, the *ping’an* turtle (平安龜), is a cake shaped like a turtle, a traditional symbol of longevity, stamped with the characters *ping’an*, meaning “peace and safety.”

Bonus “Must-Experience” Attractions

“I think one fantastic Dadaocheng experience is the annual City God birthday festival, which foreign tourists can experience if they are here at the right time of year. This provides a great look into religious life in Taiwan.” The Taipei Xia Hai City God Cultural Festival (台北霞海城隍文化節) includes

timeless deity processions and ceremonies, theatrical shows, markets, exhibitions, and guided tours.

“I also strongly suggest just walking around, not just on Dihua Street, but up and down the Dadaocheng side alleys, breathing in the atmosphere. This may well leave an even deeper impression for the foreign visitor compared to Dihua, where the tourists congregate. There is a fun atmosphere”

The director of the Taiyuan Asian Puppet Theatre Museum (台原亞洲偶戲博物館), located on Xining North Road (西寧北路), is a Dutchman, Robin Ruizendaal, who is also director of the Taiyuan Puppet Theatre Company (台原偶戲團). “This is an especially suitable experience for children. If your kids get a little bored looking at all the heritage buildings, this colorful museum provides much of

playful interest. The resident troupe provides live performances, mostly on Saturdays.” The museum collection surpasses 8,000 pieces, and there are tourist-oriented sessions in puppetry skills and puppet-making.

“Wang Tea is a little further away from Dihua Street. On weekends traditional performances of Chinese music are presented here.” This is a heritage tea-seller established as a tea-trading business way back in 1890, still run by the Wang family. A prime witness to the evolution of the Dadaocheng community, through the years it has proudly maintained its charcoal-roasting traditions, which are explained to interested visitors on tours.

Happy Dadaocheng culture spelunking! 🇹🇼



(Photo: Yang Jiaying)

Günter Whittome is a German-British linguist, travel-guide writer, avid history spelunker, and owner of a respected translation firm, ChineseContext Whittome + Chang, who has lived in Taipei since the early 2000s. A member of the German Association of Translators and the Interpreters and Association of Interpreters and Translators in Northern Germany, he does Chinese to German/English translation and interpretation, and is also proficient in Taiwanese, French, Spanish, and Latin. He is the author of *Polyglott on Tour Taiwan*.

15 Suggestions for a Day in Dadaocheng

Article

Taiwan Scene

Photos

Taiwan Scene, Lee Kaiming, Fleisch Bar



If strolling through scenic history-drenched streets filled with cultural attractions, unique shopping venues and an abundance of great food is your thing, Taipei's Dadaocheng neighborhood is well worth a visit. The neighborhood just north of Taipei's Beimen, or MRT Beimen Station (捷運北門站) become increasingly popular with travelers over the past few years (much to the bemusement of locals, who've been hanging out here since the late Qing dynasty).

While we haven't been coming here that long, we do remember the days when the sight of a western tourist was enough to turn a head or two, which gives us an interesting perspective on the area.

Here then is a 15-point primer designed to help you make the most of your own experience in Dadaocheng:



1 Do Your Sightseeing From North to South

The further south you go in the neighborhood, the more crowded things get, with the epicenter of the *people mountain people sea* experience being in the area centered around the Taipei Xia-Hai City God Temple. Since you'll get there eventually (and there's an attraction nearby best saved for later in the day), we suggest you do the unfashionable thing and take the MRT to Daqiaotou Station, starting your tour at the northern end of Dihua Street.

2 Stop Into Uni Jun Soap Shop

Located in a Japanese-era year old complex just south of Minquan West Road (民權西路), Uni Jun is a fragrant shop where visitors can buy handmade soaps (and even make their own). It's a good place to shop for gifts, but the reason we love it so much is that they make great coffee – which is a good way to start any journey. The relaxing vibe is another plus.

📍 358-1, Sec. 1, Dihua St., Datong Dist.

3 Grab a Meal at Rise & Shine

A two-minute stroll down Dihua street brings you to a restored two-storey red brick historic building that demonstrates both the typical facade and interior of the area's Japanese period. The restaurant serves good (and surprisingly healthy) traditional Taiwanese style set lunches for under NT\$350, and has English and Japanese menus. Even if you're not eating anything, the restaurant is worth checking out.

📍 329, Sec. 1, Dihua St., Datong Dist.



4 Stop Into Lee Cake

Just a bit further down Dihua Street is a traditional cake shop dating back to the waning days of the Qing dynasty. They offer DIY cake making classes and free samples. Due to the pedigree of the place, locals come here to buy gifts to bring relatives down south. If you're visiting Taiwanese friends or business associates later in your trip, a small present from Lee Cake (李亭香餅店) will be greatly appreciated.

📍 309, Sec. 1, Dihua St., Datong Dist.



5 Remember the Past at the AMA Museum

This unassuming not-for-profit museum is dedicated to keeping alive the memories of women forced to serve as sex slaves, or "comfort women" by the Japanese military during the second world war. It's a heavy subject, and the volunteer-run museum has done an amazing job in making sure that the voices and stories of those victimized are not forgotten. Leave a donation if you can, have a coffee on the first floor, or both.

📍 256, Sec. 1, Dihua St., Datong Dist.

6 Wander off the Main Drag

Most casual visitors stick to Dihua Street, but the alleyways of Dadaocheng pack a lot of cultural cache, including small temples and shrines, neighborhood gardens and shops, and of course the locals who are the lifeblood of the neighborhood. While much of the main drag has a mixture of old-school shops and hip artistic venues, the alleyways are where you'll find the most authentic (and in some cases, barely renovated) old Dadaocheng vibe.



7 Stroll Through Dadaocheng Park

This small park located in roughly the center of the neighborhood has a traditional Chinese pavilion and red brick archway. But the centerpiece of the park is the bronze sculpture of Lee Lin-Chiu (李臨秋), one of Taiwan's most popular 20th century songwriters. If you show up at the top of the hour between 9 am–6 pm, a speaker next to the statue will play a medley of Lee's most famous tunes, including “Longing for the Spring Breeze” (望春風) and “Four Seasons of Red” (四季紅).

8 Do Some Artsy Stuff at inBloom

inBloom (印花樂) is a Taiwan designer label of printed fabrics, and this store is its headquarters. In addition to being able to purchase all sort of cool locally made gift items at the shop, you can also try your hand at creating print and fiber art masterpieces of your own at one of inBloom's DIY classes. (The name of the place isn't a typo; like the Nirvana song, but minus the space and with an extra O.)

📍 28, Minle St., Datong Dist.



9 Head Back to Dihua Street to Do Some Snacking

Because three whole suggestions without food is way too long for any adventure in Taipei! The main drag around Minsheng West Road is the nexus of shops offering free samples of dried fruit, nuts and other local delicacies. Though sampling is always acceptable, if you come in the weeks before Chinese New Year, free snacks will be literally thrust upon you.



10 Pray to a Variety of Deities at the City God Temple

Not for nothing is Taipei Xia-Hai City God Temple considered Dadaocheng's main attraction. In addition to being one of the oldest temples in the area, it's home to both the City God and a celestial host of other folk deities. Traveling couples take note: The temple is a popular prayer site for the young and in love set, who come by to pray for romantic wishes involving couple-hood to be fulfilled.

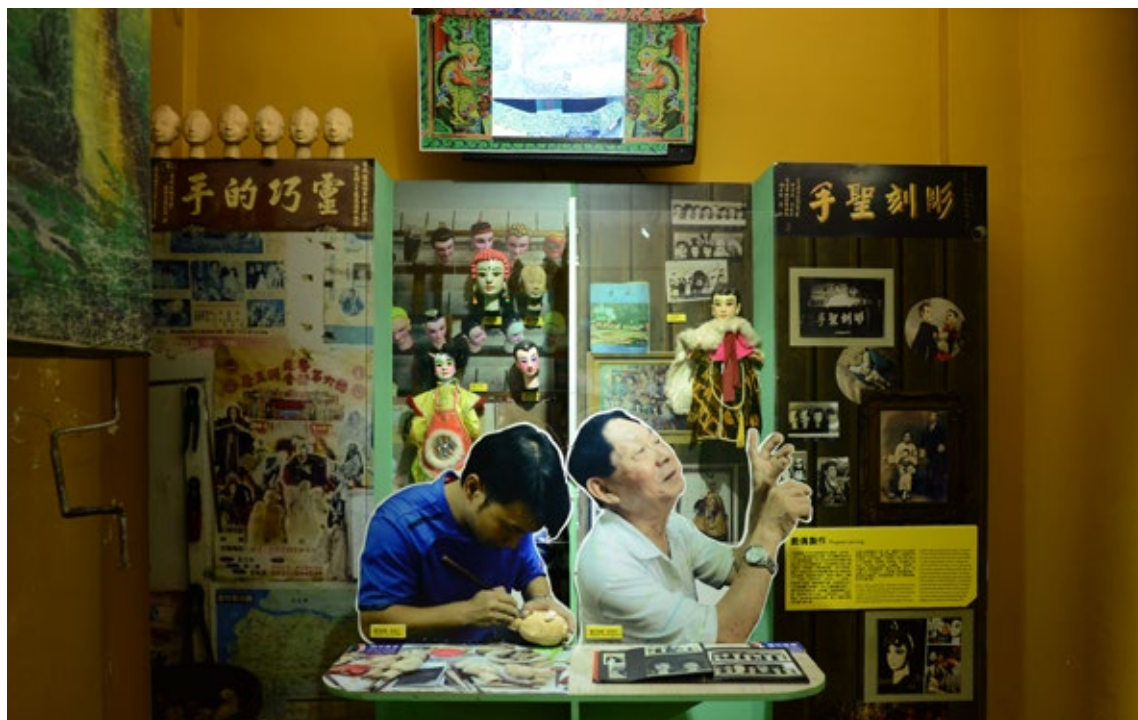


📍 61, Sec. 1, Dihua St., Datong Dist.

11 Catch Some Traditional Taiwanese Puppetry at the Taiyuan Asian Puppet Theatre Museum

Part museum and part theatre, this lively spot around the corner from the City God Temple is dedicated to the promotion and preservation of various forms of Asian puppetry, including (of course) traditional Taiwanese *Potehi* glove puppetry. The building itself, like most in the area, is worth the visit alone.

📍 79-1, Xining N. Rd., Datong Dist.



(Photo: Lee Kaiming)

12 Check Out the Fabric at the Yongle Market

If fabric is your thing, you'll want to spend hours navigating the booths and aisles of Taipei City's traditional fabric market. Even if fabric isn't your thing, it's worth the time to check out some of the shops on the first floor which specialize in making costumes for festivals and temple gods.

📍 21, Sec. 1, Dihua St., Datong Dist.

13 Stop Into Wang Tea for a Spot of Tea

This fifth generation tea shop is popular with travelers looking to learn about Taiwan's traditional tea scene. Wang Tea specialize *Oolong* and *Baozhong* teas, and visitors are welcome to visit the roasting and fermentation areas. Naturally, it's a great place to buy tea to bring home as a gift.

📍 26, Ln. 64, Sec. 2, Chongqing N. Rd., Datong Dist.

14 Have a Drink or Three at Fleisch Bar & Ginspiration Bar

These are two bars under one roof. Fleisch Bar (福來許) serves Taiwanese dishes and a variety of mixed drinks (both alcoholic and non-alcoholic). The third floor Ginspiration Bar (發琴吧) is more specialized, serving a variety of high class cocktails made with... you guessed it, Gin.

📍 76, Sec. 1, Dihua St., Datong Dist.



(Photo: Fleisch Bar)

15 Keep Snacking All the Way Home

Since you've started from the north, you'll probably end your tour by continuing south to MRT Beimen Station, or heading southwest to the Ximending neighborhood for a completely different vibe. But there's no reason to hurry, as Dihua Street and the surrounding alleys south of the City God Temple are chocked full of hole in the wall eateries, cafes and snack shops galore. Hang out late. Dadaocheng is a timeless neighborhood, and Taipei is a city that never sleeps. 📍



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Excessive alcohol consumption may be harmful to your health.

The Trendiest Vegetarian Restaurants in Taipei

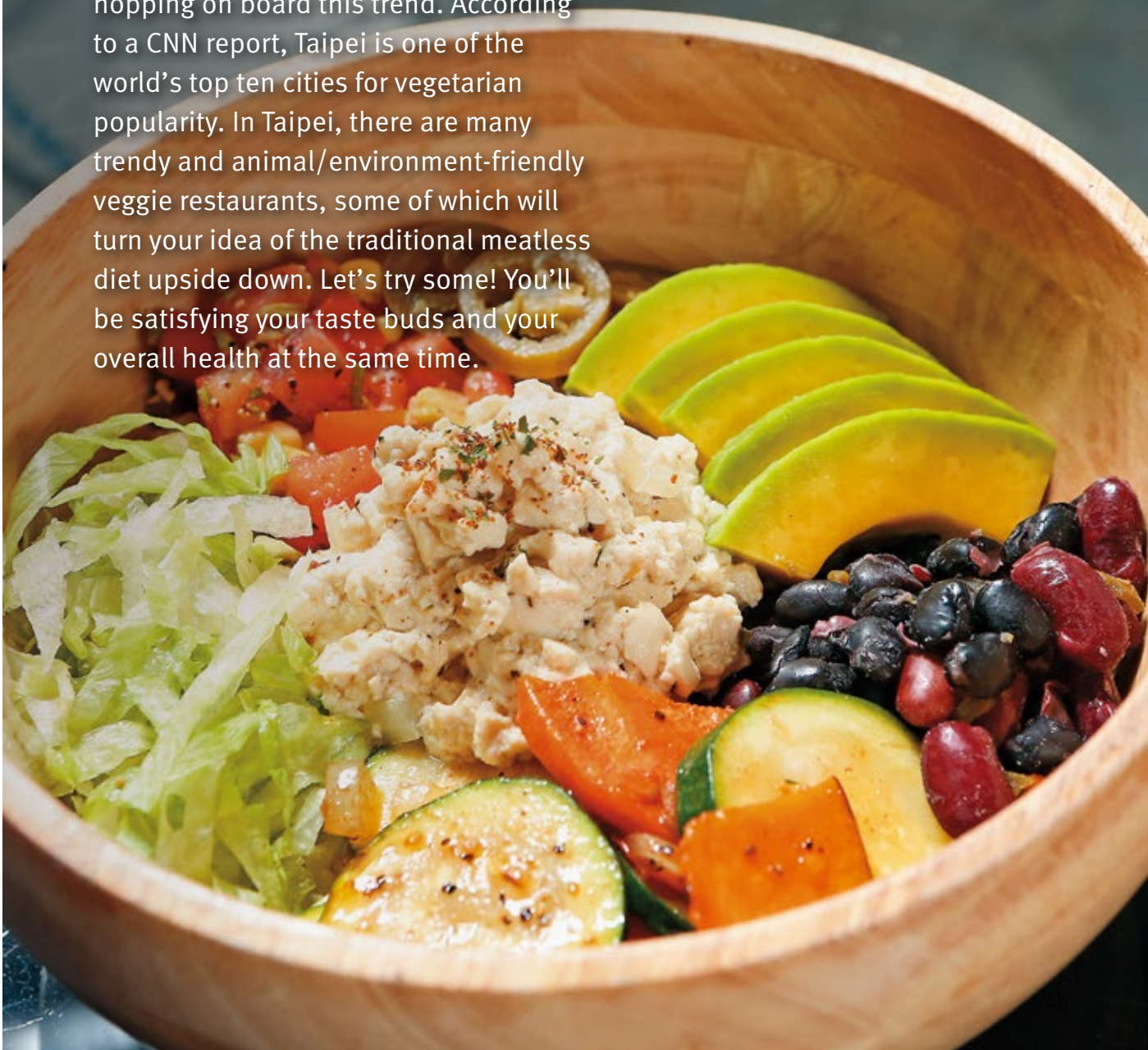
Article

Xu Cifang

Photos

Li Zhongquan, Yang Zilei

As vegetarianism sweeps over the world, more and more people are hopping on board this trend. According to a CNN report, Taipei is one of the world's top ten cities for vegetarian popularity. In Taipei, there are many trendy and animal/environment-friendly veggie restaurants, some of which will turn your idea of the traditional meatless diet upside down. Let's try some! You'll be satisfying your taste buds and your overall health at the same time.



Enjoy Trendy Exotic Vegetarian Cuisine

Article

Yang Zhihan

Photos

Lin Weikai, Li Zhongquan, élément



(Photo: Lin Weikai)

The famous chef, Joël Robuchon said in a 2014 interview that: “The trend in cuisine over the next decade will lead into the vegetarian world!” Following this global movement, new

veggie restaurants have been popping up in Taipei every couple of months. And when these places design their menus, they take customers’ concerns for ingredient origin and the story behind each product into consideration. These eateries have also learned to position dishes for taste and quality in the market, and made interior design and style key features of their businesses.

This trend of international cuisine can be witnessed in all the new restaurants popping up in Taipei, many of them building upon a traditional

base while throwing in some innovative twists. The first vegetarian eateries and markets in Taipei came about for religious reasons, or for concerns about animal welfare. Now, with Taiwanese chefs mastering fresh local ingredients and combining them with international elements, a brand new vegetarian gastronomy has been born, one that has turned Taipei into a must-visit city for veggie gourmands.

Fusion Vegetarian Dishes Rich in Nutrition

The latest vegetarian restaurants are pursuing current trends while offering a type of fusion cuisine. They provide flavors and cooking techniques from the Chinese, Korean, Mexican, French and Italian traditions. New dishes appear all the time, each with layers of different flavors and textures. From entrees to side dishes, they have designed innovative ingredient combinations, and thus completely changed the



A creative fusion of Chinese and Western cuisines, Sichuan Spicy Dumplings uses some ingredients that one would never think of! (Photo: Lin Weikai)

impression that cafeteria style was the one and only mode of vegetarian dining.

People quite often worry they won't get enough protein if they're not eating meat. But actually, the protein from grains, mushrooms, beans, vegetables and fruits is easier to digest than the protein from animals. "Super foods" are popular overseas, and include avocados, chick peas, quinoa, zucchini, kale and arugula. Each of these is rich in vitamins and minerals, and widely used in vegan cooking.

Fusion-vegetarian cuisine is popular in Taipei and many restaurants blend Eastern and Western elements. The hope is to make meat lovers fall in love with vegetarian food presented in a style both delicate and sophisticated.

Chinese Korean Fusion – Slightly Spicy and Sweet

With a "Korean Wave" sweeping over Taiwan,

the hip vegetarian bistro, Little Tree Food (小樹食) offers vegetarian dishes that come with the must-have Korean hot sauce. Their Avocado Macro Bowl (小樹酪梨蔬菜) is served with stir-fried quinoa rice and vegetables, plus some of that homemade sauce. It's similar to Korean *bibimbap*, and chocked full of surprising textures. Sichuan Spicy Dumplings (紅油皮蛋豆腐餃) combines Chinese and Western ingredients and sauces to create an innovative yet classic Chinese flavor.

By adding fresh, nutritious grains, beans, vegetables and fruit, these restaurants have created all kinds of dishes that exemplify the quintessence of vegetarian cuisine.

American Mexican Fusion – Delicate yet Filling

What most people picture when they think of American food is deep-fried meat or a juicy hamburger. So, what ingredients are American veggie

places in Taiwan using to replace the meat patty? URBN culture, a chic spot whose interior design mixes American street art with lofty spaces, uses king oyster mushrooms and BBQ sauce to make a very filling BBQed Pulled “Pork” Mushroom Grilled Sandwich (撕肉菇煎烤三明治), served on Ciabatta with a side of coleslaw. Mushrooms contain dietary fiber, polysaccharides, vitamin B complex and other nutritious minerals that amply replace meat.

Their amazing, richly-flavored Vegan Homemade Burger with Plant-based Kimchi Mayo (全植手工泡菜美乃滋漢堡), substitutes soy milk for egg yolk in its mayonnaise, and is made with the soybean product, tempeh as well as oats. For their Vegan Caesar Salad (凱薩沙拉), anchovies are replaced by chick peas in the dressing, and their milkshake is made with soybean or cashew milk. In URBN culture’s specialty drink, Sweet Potato Pie (地瓜派), one can taste sweet potato, date and cinnamon, with agave syrup taking the place of honey.

With the right combination of ingredients, vegetarian food can be fulfilling! In the Mexican Bowl (墨西哥大碗公), for instance, quinoa and rice are mixed together and served with avocado, lettuce, stir-fried mixed vegetables, spicy refried beans and salsa! Toppings such as cheese and sour cream may be replaced by fried tofu containing high-protein nutritional yeast. This nature-friendly restaurant features the special aspects of exotic cuisine, while providing rich and diverse flavors.



This combination of cuisines from different countries satisfies cravings through its multiplicity of veggie flavors.

French Vegetarian – A Feast for the Eye and the Palate

To run a successful vegetarian restaurant, one needs to develop dishes that look good, and appeal to non-vegetarians too! At élément (原蔬), the Black Quinoa Risotto with Porcini Mushrooms

Excessive alcohol consumption may be harmful to your health.

(黑藜麥牛肝菌菇燉飯) uses black quinoa as a substitute for risotto. This grain is high in protein, chewy, and easier on your body than polished rice.

The Mexican-Style Spicy Rigatoni (墨西哥起司辣味水管麵) is hot enough to waken your taste buds, and full of healthy fiber from the whole tomatoes. The crispy flat bread is baked with fig blue cheese, or with black truffle olives and mozzarella cheese, and has the crispy texture of Italian pizza. One can identify the different notes of saltiness and sweetness in the bread and its ingredients.

With health and nutrition as a foundation, and with a variety of dish options, new ingredient combinations, and unique homemade sauces, vegetarian food is not the same old boring thing that we remember. These unique creative dishes are so scrumptious you'll be coming back for more!



Black Quinoa Risotto with Porcini Mushrooms substitutes black quinoa for polished rice, and serves up taste and health. (Photo: élément)

Little Tree Food

🕒 12:00~21:00

📍 17, Ln. 116, Sec. 1, Daan Rd., Daan Dist.

☎ 02-2778-2277

URBN culture

🕒 12:00~22:30
(Sat. 11:00~23:00)

📍 252, Sec. 2, Keelung Rd., Daan Dist.

☎ 02-2378-8322

élément

🕒 12:00~21:30
(Sat. 11:00~22:00)

📍 21, Ln. 408, Sec. 4, Ren'ai Rd., Daan Dist.

☎ 02-2703-1099



Recipe

Spicy Garlic Mushroom Tapas

(by URBN culture)

Ingredients

King oyster mushrooms	200g
Minced garlic	1 tablespoon
Seasoning salt	1/2 teaspoon
Paprika	1/2 teaspoon



Preparation

- 1 Roll cut the king oyster mushrooms. Heat the oil in the pan and cook the mushrooms until they are dry, then remove them from the pan and set aside.
- 2 Add a little oil to the pan, add the minced garlic, stir fry and add seasoning salt.
- 3 Add paprika and fry until aromatic. Add 1/3 cup of water and the mushrooms from step one, then stir fry until the liquid is reduced by half.

\TIP/

This can be served as a side dish, or as a topping for bread, similar to Spanish tapas. 🇹🇼

Natural Ingredients – Great Tasting and Easy on the Body!

Article

Hong Chuanyu

Photos

Chen Yiwei, Wang Hanshun, Lin Junyao

The raw food trend now sweeping Taiwan comes highly recommended by many Hollywood actresses. This diet aims to retain as much nutrition as possible by keeping cooking temperatures under 45 °C. The main ingredients of raw food dishes include unrefined and unprocessed vegetables, nuts, seeds, fruit and sprouted grains, and all must come from the natural world.

Low-temperature cooking is not as easy as it looks; preparation is very complicated and time consuming. Take nuts as an example: to preserve

most of their inherent nutrition, nuts need to soak for over eight hours for activation, and then be baked in the oven for two days at 45 °C. The same applies for seeds and beans.

Customized Natural and Organic Cuisine

“Calculate nutrition, not calories!” is the motto at Plants, an eatery which knows a variety of ways to prepare ingredients, such as activation and sprouting, and which works with small local farms. By using crops grown with friendly, organic and natural

Sprouted grains

Sprouted grains contain the energy of seeds transformed into plant life, and are richly nutritious. Soaking time for sprouting varies according to grain type.

Nutrient activation

Soaking nuts for eight hours before cooking ensures easy digestion and absorption of nutrition.



The Mexican Wrap can be served with pitaya salsa, which adds a light and refreshing taste.
(Photo: Chen Yiwei)

methods, Plants delivers a raw-food-based cuisine that is full of life and has multiple layers of flavor.

“Gluten free” is another guiding principle at Plants. Barley, wheat and rye are replaced by such things as red lentils, flaxseed and buckwheat; so people with a gluten intolerance can enjoy their dishes as well. Their signature dish, the Mexican Wrap (墨西哥裸食捲) contains a puree of carrot, taco and vegetables, along with salad greens, cashew sour cream, and alfalfa sprouts in a corn and flaxseed tortilla. With a side of pitaya salsa, the resulting flavor is as good as any meaty meal!

At Plants, all ingredients are listed on the menu, and this eatery provides customized service. Each raw food lover has his or her specific needs met, and can happily enjoy their dishes.

Hand-made Dishes for a Balanced Diet

“I believe that customers will come back only when they receive tasty dishes. Sooner or later, they come to understand the health benefits of raw food,” says of Ooh Cha Cha (自然食) co-founder, Mai Bach from California.

When Mai developed recipes for their restaurant, he paid attention to the nutritional components of a balanced diet. He uses a lot of natural ingredients and insists on not using processed products; he even makes his own sauce. He is also concerned that many vegetarians may not be getting enough of the unsaturated fatty acid, Omega 3, so he adds yeast to his dishes to provide a more complete nutrition for his customers.

The Orange Cream Cake (可可甜橙派) is the star product at this store! This multi-flavored raw cream beauty has a brownie base and includes such things as activated and sprouted sunflower seeds, walnuts, pecans and a cashew-based cream filling. This treat is sure to satisfy your taste buds and be easy on your body!

Plants

🕒 Tue.~Thu. 10:30~18:00;
Fri.~Sun. 10:00~21:30

📍 10, Ln. 253, Sec. 1, Fuxing S. Rd., Daan Dist.

☎ 02-2784-5677

Ooh Cha Cha (Technology Building Branch)

🕒 11:30~21:00

📍 4-1, Ln. 118, Sec. 2, Heping E. Rd., Daan Dist.

☎ 02-2737-2994



The Orange Cream Cake tastes both sweet and sour.



Recipe

Chia Pudding (by Plants)

Ingredients (for two servings)

Raw nuts	80g
Filtered drinking water	400ml
Chia seeds	20g
Coconut nectar	2 tablespoons

Preparation

- 1 Add a pinch of salt to the drinking water, put the nuts in to soak, and leave it in the refrigerator overnight.
- 2 Drain off the water and rinse the nuts. Then blend them in fresh filtered water until the mixture is smooth. This is nut milk.
- 3 Add the chia seeds to the nut milk and wait twenty to thirty minutes, until they have soaked it up.
- 4 Add seasonal fruit, nuts, desiccated coconut, cornflakes or coconut nectar to taste, and let it sit at room temperature or in the refrigerator before serving.



(Photos: Lin Junyao)



Recipe

Brownie Balls

(by Ooh Cha Cha)


Ingredients (for six balls)

Walnuts	60g
Almonds	50g
Dried coconut flakes	30g
Dates	60g
Coconut or cacao powder	7.5g
Sea salt	1g

Preparation

- 1 Soak the walnuts and almonds overnight, then rinse and put them in a dehydrator at 40 °C for 12 to 24 hours to dry.
- 2 Grind the dried coconut flakes into powder in the food processor, and then add the walnuts, almonds, dates and sea salt. Blend the mixture to a paste.
- 3 Scoop the paste into large spoonfuls and roll into balls by hand.

\TIP/

These can be served as is or dipped in coconut or cacao powder for variety. 



Creativity Brings Out Veggie Dish Richness

Article

Yang Zhihan

Photos

Li Zhongquan, Yang Zilei, Lin Weikai

The common impression about vegetarian food is that it's either boring, tasteless or way too greasy. To turn around such false notions, creative Chinese and Cantonese vegetarian restaurants have developed innovative cooking techniques and ingredient combinations. They have made "less oily and salty" their priority, without losing the quintessential flavors of Chinese cuisine, be they light or rich.

Substituting Vegetables for Meat in Classic Dishes

Dietary habits and concepts have changed in modern times, and coming over to vegetarianism has become a trend in the culinary world. In business for over twenty years, and famous for its roast duck, Beijing Gold Kitchen New Vegetarian Cuisine (北平金廚新蔬食料理) transformed into a veggie restaurant eight years ago. It continues to flavor its dishes with that most traditional of northern Chinese seasonings: Sichuan peppercorn, and to highlight the natural sweetness of its veggie stock.

Its signature dish, Veggie Wrap (大餅捲時蔬) features cucumber, *Youtiao* (油條) and homemade soy meat wrapped inside a crispy Chinese pancake. It has a chewy texture and a wheaty aroma, and the

accompanying XO sauce is made of soy protein isolates, monkey head mushrooms, fermented black soybeans, hot peppers and Da Hong Pao Sichuan peppercorn. This sauce, by the way, is perfect for stir-frying with radish cakes, and it also goes well with baked cheese and loofah, adding a creamy yet piquant aftertaste.

Their Typhoon Shelter Duo (避風塘雙味) is composed of *bunashimeji* mushrooms and tofu and has a classic crispy texture. The delicious Braised Monkey Head Mushrooms with Anka (紅麴猴菇燒) is made by braising a mixture of mushrooms, anka paste and *Shaoxing* wine (紹興酒) and then deep frying it.



Beijing Gold Kitchen New Vegetarian Cuisine serves vegetarian northern Chinese dishes creatively.



The *Xiaolongbao* at Beijing Gold Kitchen New Vegetarian Cuisine comes with a filling of loofah and agar that bursts out light and sweet when you bite into it.

Meatless Cantonese Dishes – Naturally Sweet and Rich

Taipei's first Cantonese vegetarian eatery, Yang Shin Vegetarian Restaurant (養心茶樓) has mastered Chinese and Cantonese fusion cuisine and makes delicate dishes.

Their fluffy Cantonese Barbecued Vege Ham Pastry (鬆化叉燒酥) is composed of chopped mushroom and soy-ham filling with a homemade tomato barbecue sauce. It has a slightly sweet taste from being brushed with egg yolk and honey before being crisply baked. The rather plain-looking Deep Fried Pastry with Shredded Turnip (蘿蔔絲酥餅) doesn't have any minced meat and derives its natural sweetness from the shredded turnip. The Healthy Herb Rice Noodle Roll (蟲草花腸粉) creatively

presents a vegetarian version of Cantonese dim sum by wrapping diced king oyster mushrooms, diced potatoes and tasteless orange cordyceps in a net of rice paper. The mixture is briefly deep fried before being formed into a rice noodle roll. This wrap is thin and smooth and is sure to melt in your mouth! It exemplifies traditional Cantonese cooking but in a vegetarian way.

The Hong Pao Spicy Hot Pot (紅袍麻辣鍋) blends Chinese medicinal herbs, Sichuan peppercorns, bell peppers and other fresh vegetables, and homemade Chinese toon-flavored soy-pork "ribs" that have a smooth and springy texture. The delicious stock uses Chinese medicinal herbs, such as Chinese angelica and ginseng tails. This light dish is delicate and tasty, not at all greasy, and full of surprises!



The richly-textured tofu set meal comes with cashew-flavored soup.
(Photo: Lin Weikai)

A Feast of Soy – Handmade Fresh Every Day!

The trend in new vegetarian cuisine is towards natural flavors and products made by hand. DeliSoys (上善豆家) makes fresh soy milk and bean curd sheets every day. It also uses bittern extracted from deep-sea water to make its tofu and tofu puddings, thus offering extra protein and minerals to vegetarians.

Its richly-textured tofu set meal of braised Chinese cabbage and tofu balls comes with blanched organic vegetables, pickled tomatoes; and cashew-flavored soup on the side.

Such veggie eateries have broken through tradition, mastered cooking skills and become more creative to attract the younger set. At the same time, they are satisfying taste buds and health with rich flavors!

Beijing Gold Kitchen New Vegetarian Cuisine

🕒 11:20~21:00

📍 3, Ln. 38, Tianmu W. Rd., Shilin Dist.

☎ 02-2873-8680

Yang Shin Vegetarian Restaurant

🕒 11:30~21:30

📍 2F, 128, Songjiang Rd., Zhongshan Dist.

☎ 02-2542-8828

DeliSoys

🕒 07:30~21:00

📍 16, Ln. 107, Sec. 1, Fuxing S. Rd., Daan Dist.

☎ 02-2731-6991



Recipe

Teppanyaki Soy Oyster

(by Beijing Gold Kitchen New Vegetarian Cuisine)

Ingredients

Firm tofu	120g
White crab mushrooms	70g
Straw mushrooms	120g
Daylily stem	1
Minced ginger	1 teaspoon
Minced celery	1 teaspoon
Basil	to taste
Chili pepper	half
Vegetarian oyster sauce	2 tablespoons
Dried fermented black soybeans	1 teaspoon
Sugar	1 teaspoon
Sesame oil	1 tablespoon

Preparation

- 1 Cut the chili pepper in half vertically and fine chop. Cut the daylily stem diagonally. Bring the water to boil, blanch the firm tofu, white crab mushrooms and straw mushrooms for two minutes, then remove and set aside.
- 2 Heat the oil in a shallow pan, add the minced ginger, minced celery, minced chili pepper, fermented black soybeans and daylily stem; then drip in some sesame oil and stir fry.
- 3 Add vegetarian oyster sauce to the stir fry mixture, then add one bowl of water and a teaspoon of sugar. Return the blanched firm tofu, white crab mushrooms and straw mushrooms to the pan, cover, and cook for three minutes.
- 4 Add the basil and thicken by adding a solution of equal parts potato starch and water; and it's ready to serve!



\TIP/

For the last step, mix in the thickening solution quickly, making sure to spread it out evenly. If you don't work fast enough, the dish will become lumpy.

Herban Kitchen & Bar: A Western Vegetarian Oasis in Taipei

Article/Photos

Taiwan Scene

Vegetarian food is everywhere in Taipei, but western-style vegetarian fare (let alone gourmet quality) is a bit harder to come by. So we headed to Herban Kitchen & Bar (二本餐廳) for a meal and a chat with owner Marco Henry Lapka about vegetarianism, veganism, and the pros and cons of Taiwan's meat-free dining scene.



Located on a quiet dead-end street in Taipei's fashionable Daan District, Herban Kitchen & Bar is definitely not your typical Taiwan vegetarian restaurant. You'll find no swastika marking the place as "Buddhist vegetarian" (and this, as we'd find out during our conversation, is not a bad thing) nor any trace of the slightly pretentious air found at some of Taipei's other upscale vegetarian restaurants.

This lack of pretentiousness makes sense. Marco hails from the American Midwest, where *putting*

on airs is frowned upon. As if that weren't enough, he's from Minnesota, the state that gave birth to the phrase "Minnesota Nice."

The Flexitarian Philosophy

"I'm from a small town in Minnesota, and I've spent most of the past two decades in Taiwan. You could say I've been in Taiwan about half of my life." The concept behind Herban Kitchen stems from a combination of the words "herb" and "urban," and reflect a variety of combinations, including hard and soft, *yin* and *yang*, plants and city. "We try to create a comfortable urban oasis using repurposed items. Ultimately, our goal is to serve comfort food that's tasty, filling and meat-free."

Though Herban Kitchen is a vegetarian restaurant in the "no animals were killed in the making of this meal" sense, the restaurant is far from vegan. While vegan means no animal products whatsoever (not even honey, which is

merely the sweat stolen from the toiling of bees), Herban serves milk, eggs, and cheese in carefully-selected variety and abundance. That said, strict vegans will find plenty to love about Herban Kitchen. For what it's worth, Marco calls himself neither vegan nor vegetarian.

"I'm more of a reductarian/flexitarian. I may eat meat a few times a month. I stopped drinking milk over 10 years ago, but I may have some ice cream, cheese, or butter now and then." Marco says he doesn't see vegetarianism as all or nothing prospect, but rather more of a spectrum. "You can choose to eat as much/little meat or vegetables as you want. It's up to you. At Herban, we serve both vegan and vegetarian."

Compared to most other places on the planet (except maybe India), Taiwan has a large vegetarian population. According to Marco, anywhere between 10-15% of Taiwanese consider themselves vegetarian, with an even larger portion of the population abstaining from meat regularly on various days throughout the year for religious purposes. But while this gives vegetarians an abundance of options from which to choose, according to Marco, those looking for an abundance of flavors may find something lacking. As far as nutrition goes, Buddhist vegetarian places tend to utilize a fair bit of mock meat, which is often highly processed soy and gluten.

Great Western Vegetarian Cuisine

Herban, by contrast, avoids processed foods. And vegetarian though it may be, Herban Kitchen's menu is distinctly western. Brunches are served until 5 pm daily using organic eggs, homestyle potatoes, and

artery-clogging but oh-so-delicious Hollandaise sauce. The rest of the menu offers a variety ranging from *tasty* and *super-healthy* (salads and other raw food dishes) to *super-tasty* but *still healthy* (pasta, tempeh burgers, and risottos) to super amazingly tasty and hey, you only live once (a sandwich called Super Cheesy containing three types of cheese, garlic aioli and whole wheat bread).

Herban also has enough gluten-free options (including a gnocchi made with wheat-free sweet potato starch flour) to be considered a good option for visitors looking for wheat-free dining options in a city not always kind to diners with wheat allergies.

Marco recommended Herban's signature dish, the baked Moussaka (焗烤穆薩卡), a Greek dish made with layered potato, eggplant, zucchini, tomato, onion, garlic and shallots topped with Bechamel cream sauce and cheese. As we ate the Moussaka, Marco told us about his relaxed "buy local when possible" philosophy.



Moussaka is one of Herban Kitchen & Bar's signature dishes.

“We work with various suppliers, and try to source as much local and seasonal ingredients as we can, including nearly all of our vegetables and spices, as well as the grains and flours we use for baking. The one real exception is with our dairy products. Milk and cheese are all imported, as we’re still not confident with the local dairy industry insofar as additives and material quality are concerned. So for our own peace of mind, we go with imported items when it comes to dairy.”

Other Vegetarian Restaurants Worth Visiting in Taipei

Naturally, Marco considers Herban Kitchen the best vegetarian restaurant in Taipei (and after eating his Moussaka, we tend to agree). But even the most successful restaurant owner needs to eat elsewhere every now and again.

“For non-western vegetarian restaurants, there are two places I really like. One of these is a fancy Cantonese-style dim sum place in the Zhongshan District called “Yang Shin Vegetarian Restaurant.” It’s totally vegetarian, which is kind of unusual for a dim-sum place. Another place I like in the same neighborhood is a veggie sashimi/sushi joint where the dishes go around on a little track. Great food, also completely delicious. Of course, I love some of the mom & pop noodle shops that are all over Taipei, and really all over Taiwan. It’s not hard to eat vegetarian food anywhere in Taiwan.”

Herban Kitchen & Bar


📍 27, Ln. 101, Sec. 4, Zhongxiao E. Rd., Daan Dist.

🌐 www.herban.tw



The owner of Herban Kitchen & Bar, Marco Lapka, has been living in Taiwan around 25 years.

As the desert (to-die-for tiramisu) came around, Marco discussed further his relaxed philosophy for folks not quite ready to take the leap into full-time vegetarianism but still looking to change their dietary habits in ways that might be a tad healthier and environmentally friendly.

“In the past vegetarianism had sort of a hippie reputation, but this is changing. I don’t think everyone needs to stop eating meat, but it would be a good idea if people could reduce their consumption of animal products. So yeah, my advice is to start with one good meat-free meal a day. If that works for you, then try going one day a week without eating meat. See how you feel after that. For me, I’ve discovered the less meat I eat, the less meat I want to eat.” 



interview video

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:

North of the Arrivals Hall of Terminal I and South 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

Taoyuan Airport MRT

Service locations:

A12 Airport Terminal 1 Station &
A13 Airport Terminal 2 Station

One-way fare: NT\$160



Passenger Shuttle Bus

Service locations:

Southwest of the Arrivals Hall of Terminal I (exterior vehicle pickup corridor) and northeast of the Arrivals Hall of Terminal II (exterior vehicle pickup corridor)

Shuttle-service companies:

Kuo-Kuang Motor Transportation, Evergreen Bus, Free Go Express, Citi Air Bus

One-way fare: NT\$85~145

Travel time:

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

Schedule: Every 15~20 minutes

Metro Taipei

Service Hours: 06:00~24:00; 24-Hour Customer Service Hotline: (02)218-12345



One-Way Trip

NT\$20-65



Day Pass

NT\$150



Taipei Metro Pass

24hr: NT\$180 | 48hr: NT\$280 | 72hr: NT\$380

Easy Card and iPASS 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.



Easy Card



iPASS

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 add-value function). You can visit Taipei City, New Taipei City and Keelung City within the validity of the pass.



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



Taipei Fun Pass
Transportation

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Pass/5-Day Pass/Maokong
Gondola 1-Day Pass
NT\$180/310/440/700/350



Taipei Fun Pass
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2 must-see attractions +
EasyCard featuring iconic
scenes of Taipei
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NOTICE

In order to facilitate inquiries by the public, the city government has set up the 1999 Taipei Citizen Hotline. Whether by telephone, cell phone, or Voice over IP (payphone excluded), dial 1999 for free access. There is a time limit, with service personnel restricted to 10-minute service availability, and a 10-minute limit on call transfers. Callers are asked to make the most efficient use of this resource, making all calls as brief as possible.

For more information, call 1999 or visit <http://english.rdec.gov.taipei/>



TAIPEI

TAIWAN EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Police / 110

Crimes, traffic accidents, and other incidents for which police assistance is needed

Fire and Emergency / 119

Fire, injury or accident, or other urgent matters for which emergency relief is needed

Women and Children Protection Hotline / 113 ext.1

24-hour emergency, legal information, and psychological services for victims of domestic violence and/or sexual abuse. Foreigner 24-hour General Inquiry Hotline: 0800-024-111

NON-EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Unit	Tel
Taipei City Govt. Citizen Hotline	1999 (02-2720-8889 outside Taipei City)
English Directory Service	106
IDD Telephone Service Hotline	0800-080-100 ext.9
Time-of-Day Service	117
Weather Service	166
Traffic Reports	168
Tourism Bureau (MOTC) 24-Hour Toll-Free Travel Information Hotline	0800-011-765
Tourism Bureau (MOTC) Toll-Free Traveler Complaints Hotline	0800-211-734
International Community Service Hotline	0800-024-111
Tourism Bureau Information Counter, Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport	Terminal 1: (03)398-2194 Terminal 2: (03)398-3341
Bureau of Foreign Trade	(02)2351-0271
Taiwan External Trade Development Council (TAITRA)	(02)2725-5200
Taiwan Visitors Association	(02)2594-3261
The Japanese Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Taipei	(02)2522-2163
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	(02)2348-2999
Ministry of Foreign Affairs Citizens Hotline	(02)2380-5678
Police Broadcasting Station	(02)2388-8099
English Hotline for Taxi Service	0800-055-850 ext.2
Consumer Service Center Hotline	1950
Bureau of National Health Insurance Information Hotline	0500-030-598
AIDS Information Hotline	0800-888-995

Source for Above Information:

Information For Foreigners Service / Tel: 0800-024-111
Tourism Bureau, Ministry of Transportation and Communications
Tel: (02)2349-1500

※ Entries in brown columns indicate service in English provided.

LIST OF TAIPEI VISITOR INFORMATION CENTERS

Taipei Main Station

(02)2312-3256
1F, 3, Beiping W. Rd.

Songshan Airport

(02)2546-4741
340-10, Dunhua N. Rd.

MRT Ximen Station

(02)2375-3096
B1, 32-1, Baoqing Rd.

MRT Jiantan Station

(02)2883-0313 65
65, Sec. 5, Zhongshan N. Rd.

MRT Beitou Station

(02)2894-6923
1, Guangming Rd.

MRT Taipei 101/World Trade Center Station

(02)2758-6593
B1, 20, Sec. 5, Xinyi Rd.

Plum Garden

(02)2897-2647
6, Zhongshan Rd.

Miramar Entertainment Park

(02)8501-2762
20, Jingye 3rd Rd

Gondola Maokong Station

(02)2937-8563
35, Ln. 38, Sec. 3, Zhinan Rd.
(Exit area, Maokong Station)

URS44 Dadaocheng

(02)2559-6802
44, Sec.1, Dihua St.

MRT Longshan Temple Station

(02)2302-5903
B1,153, Sec.1, Xiyuan Rd.

Taoyuan Airport Metro Station A1

(02)2331-3133
8, Zhengzhou Rd., Taipei City
(Level B1 corridor)



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