

40 TAIWANESE FOODS WE CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT



DELL TW TA TEAM
KINO TANG

FLAVORS OF Taiwan



1. BRAISED PORK RICE (滷肉飯)

A Taiwanese saying goes, "Where there is a wisp of smoke from the kitchen chimney, there will be lurou fan" (braised pork with rice). The popularity of this humble dish cannot be overstated.

"Lurou fan" is synonymous with Taiwan.

The Taipei city government launched a "braised pork rice is ours" campaign last year after Michelin's Green Guide Taiwan claimed that the dish is from Shandong Province in mainland China.

A good bowl of lurou fan has finely chopped, not quite minced, pork belly, slow-cooked in aromatic soy sauce with five spices. There should be an ample amount of fattiness, in which lies the magic.

The meat is spooned over hot rice.

A little sweet, a little salty, the braised pork rice is comfort food perfected.



*Jin Feng Lu Rou Fan (金峰滷肉飯),
10 Roosevelt Road, Section 1, Jhongjheng District, Taipei City;
+886 2 2396 0808*

2. BEEF NOODLE (牛肉麵)

You know it's an obsession when it gets its own festival.

Beef noodle soup is a dish that inspires competitiveness and innovation in chefs. Everyone wants to claim the title of beef noodle king.

From visiting Niu Ba Ba for one of the most expensive bowls of beef noodle soup in the world (TW\$10,000, or US\$334) to a serendipitous duck into the first makeshift noodle shack that you spot, it's almost impossible to have a bad beef noodle experience in Taiwan.

Lin Dong Fang's beef shanks with al dente noodles in a herbal soup are a perennial favorite. The streetside eatery's secret weapon is the dollop of homemade chili-butter added last.



*Lin Dong Fang (林東芳),
274 Bade Road, Section 2, Jhongshan District, Taipei City;
+886 2 2752 2556*

*Niu Ba Ba (牛爸爸),
No. 16, Alley 27, Lane 216, Section 4 Zhongxiao Donglu, Da'an
District, Taipei City;
+886 2 2778 3075/ +886 2 8771 5358*

3. OYSTER OMELET (蚵仔煎)

Here's a snack that really showcases the fat of the land of Taiwan. You've got something from the sea and something from the soil.

The eggs are the perfect foil for the little oysters easily found around the island, while sweet potato starch is added to give the whole thing a gooey chewiness -- a signature Taiwan food texture.

No wonder it was voted best snack to represent the island in a poll of 1,000 Taiwanese by Global Views Monthly in 2007.



*Lai's Egg Oyster Omelet (賴記雞蛋蚵仔煎),
Ningxia Road Night Market;
+886 2 2558 6177*

4. BUBBLE TEA (珍珠奶茶)

Bubble tea is representative of the "QQ" food texture that Taiwanese love. The cute-sounding phrase refers to something that is very chewy, just like the tapioca balls that are the "bubbles" in bubble tea.

It is said that this unique drink was invented out of boredom. Liu Han-Chieh threw some sweetened tapioca pudding into her iced Assam tea on a fateful day in 1988 and one of the greatest Taiwanese exports was born.

Huge variations on the theme have since emerged, including taro-flavored tea, jasmine tea or coffee, served cold or hot.



*Chun Shui Tang teahouse (春水堂),
48 Yi-shu St., Longjing, Taichung County;
+866 4 2652 8288*

5. COFFIN BREAD (棺材板)

This Tainan specialty is a mutated offspring of French toast and chowder.

An extra thick piece of bread is hollowed out to resemble a flat bread bowl. It is toasted to harden it and then filled with seafood chowder.

Legend says a Taiwanese chef who studied Western cooking invented this bread-soup-bowl-with-corners.

One day an archeologist tried the toast and told the chef, “It looks just like the coffin I am excavating now.”

Thus, the chowder soup took on its morbid Chinese name, which means "coffin bread."



赤崁棺材板 (*Chìkàn Guāncai Bǎn*),
No. 180, Kangle Market, West Central District, Táinán;
+886 6 224 0014

6. SLACK SEASON DANZAI NOODLES (擔仔麵)

You've gotta love a place called Slack Season and it's the first pit stop on any trip to Taiwan.

The iconic eatery originated in Tainan about a century ago. A fisherman sold noodles during the slack season and the joint became so successful that he quit fishing altogether.

The signature bowl of Slack Season noodles is served in shrimp soup with bean sprouts, coriander, minced pork and fresh shrimps.

This bowl of comforting flavors is so addictive that a man from Tainan ate 18 bowls in a row, according to Slack Season.



*Slack Season Tainan Main Store (度小月),
16 Jhongjheng Road, Tainan City;
+886 6 223 1744,
as well as various locations, see website
for more details: www.iddi.com.tw*

7. PAN-FRIED BUN (生煎包)

Do you like the fluffiness of cake as well as the crunchiness of potato chips? The pan-fried bun gives you the best of both worlds.

These buns are made with spongy white Chinese bread that are pan-fried on the bottom. Break them open to reveal the moist porky filling.

A Shanghainese staple, the Taiwanese version differs in two ways: it is slightly bigger in size and it hits the pan upside-down.



*Hsu Ji (許記),
Shida Night Market, Taan District, Taipei City;
+886 9 3085 9646*

8. GUA BAO (割包)

It's a hamburger, Taiwan-style.

A steamed bun sandwiches a hearty filling of braised pork belly, pickled Chinese cabbage and powdered peanuts.

The filling is chopped up into small pieces and mixed together so there's a bit of everything in every bite. Consider doing this with Western hamburgers.

Take in a big mouthful and enjoy the salty, sour and sweet flavors and the greasy pork swimming in your mouth.



*Lan Jia Gua Bao (藍家割包),
No. 3, Alley 8, Lane 316, Section 3, Roosevelt Road, Taipei City;
+886 2 2368 2060*

9. IRON EGG (鐵蛋)

It's called the "iron egg" because this mini egg is tough as nails. With a rubbery consistency these chewy eggs dyed black from long-braising in soy sauce, are a highly addictive delicacy in Taiwan.

Often made from quails' eggs, the little balls are cooked for hours in soy sauce then air-dried. The whole process is repeated over several days until the protein becomes tough and acquires the desired amount of chew.



Seaside A-Po (海邊阿婆),
151-1, Jhongjheng Road, Tamshui; A-Po (阿婆),
135-1, Jhongjheng Road, Tamshui

10. PINEAPPLE CAKE (鳳梨酥)

This iconic Taiwanese pastry is one of the best souvenir options. These mini pineapple pies are filled with candied pineapple.

If you want the best pineapple cake experience, try SunnyHills which uses only local pineapple as filling. It yields a darker filling, rougher texture and a more sour taste.

The traditional pies at other shops are filled with a mix of pineapple and chewable bits of winter melon. They have a fruity sweetness and a golden casing of crumbly buttery pastry.

Stores that replace pineapple completely with winter melon to cut costs are committing a big no-no.



*SunnyHills (微熱山丘),
1/F, No. 1, Alley 4, Lane 36, Section 5, Minsheng
East Riad, Songshan District, Taipei City;
+886 49 229 2767;
www.sunnyhills.com.tw*

11. TIAN BU LA (甜不辣)

Tian bu la refers to fish paste that has been molded into various shapes and sizes, deep-fried, then boiled in a broth. Before eating, the pieces of solid fish paste are taken out of the broth and smothered in brown sauce.

Doesn't sound like much, but it delivers plenty of the sweet flavors and chewy textures beloved by Taiwanese. Tian bu la is basically a Taiwan take on Japanese oden, with more sugariness, tougher fish cakes and a signature sauce.

After finishing the pieces of fish cakes, there's more to come. Get some soup from the vendor and add it to the remaining sauce in the bowl. Mix and drink the flavor bomb.



*Simon Tian Bu La (賽門甜不辣),
95 Xining South Road, Wanhua District, Taipei City;
+886 2 2331 2481*

12. BA WAN (肉圓)

The ba wan is Taiwan's mega dumpling.

Made with a dough of rice flour, corn starch and sweet potato starch, it looks almost translucent after cooking. Pork, veggies and sometimes eggs are stuffed inside and gravy is poured on top.

It is commonly believed that ba wan was invented during periods of scarcity. The simple pork dumpling was then a luxurious snack enjoyed only during the Lunar New Year festival.



*Tonghua Bawan (通化肉圓),
No. 7, Alley 39, Tonghua Street, Da'an District, Taipei City;
+886 2 2707 8562*

13. FRIED CHICKEN (鹽酥雞)

In the fried chicken hall of fame, Taiwan deserves its own exhibit. Not only has it made the giant fried chicken cutlet (No. 35 on this list) a cult classic, but its popcorn chicken is dangerously addictive.

The chicken is chopped into bite-sized pieces, marinated, dipped in batter and deep-fried. A generous sprinkling of salt and pepper complete the morish morsels. It's a ubiquitous snack on the city streets.



Taiwan's First Popcorn Chicken Store(台灣第一家鹽酥雞創始總店),
No. 530-1, Bei'an Road, Zhongshan District, Taipei City

14. FLAKY SCALLION PANCAKE (蔥抓餅)

There is nothing more appetizing than the sight of a flaky scallion pancake being slowly torn apart. Add cheese and egg fillings to maximize the visuals.

Devour this night market staple in a few bites to ensure it is steaming hot and chewy.



Shida Night Market, Taipei City

15. OYSTER VERMICELLI (蚵仔米線)

A bowl of great oyster vermicelli should have a thick, flavorful soup base while the thin rice noodles and oysters should still retain their distinct texture.

Some people will add chopped intestines for a funky dimension to the soup.

It is a gooey, slurpable dish, more soup than noodle, with an intense briny taste.



*Ay-Chung (阿宗),
8-1 Emei St., Wanhua District, Taipei City;
+886 2 2620 9989*

16. STINKY TOFU (臭豆腐)

This is the world's best love-it-or-hate-it snack and Taiwan does it just right.

The "fragrant" cube of bean curd is deep-fried and draped with sweet and spicy sauce. If you hold your nose, it looks and tastes just like a plain ol' piece of fried tofu, with a crisp casing and soft center like pudding.

But what's the fun in eating that? Inhale deeply and relish the stench, the smellier, the better.



Raohe night market, Taipei

17. SWEET POTATO (地瓜)

Leaving taste, smell and nutritional value aside, the sweet potato stands out for one particular reason in Taiwan -- it is shaped like the island. For this, the sweet potato occupies a very special place in every Taiwanese heart.

Taiwan-grown sweet potatoes are added to soup with ginger, or roasted by street vendors in ovens converted from oil-drums, or ground to a flour and added to other dishes to give texture, or fried into sweet potato chips.

As long as the beloved root vegetable is in it, Taiwanese love it.



Also on CNNGo: [Be a Taipei Sweet Potato Mama for a day](#)

18. SHAVED ICE MOUNTAIN (刨冰山)

One good thing about the hot, humid and stormy summers in Taiwan is the excuse to eat shaved ice mountain.

An oversized pile of shaved ice is heaped with fresh fruit and flavorings, such as mango pieces, juice and sweet condensed milk. It wins hands down just by looks alone.

A more traditional take is a smaller option, less dramatic but with freshly made mini rice balls.



*Feast on mango shaved ice at Yong Kang 15 (永康15),
15 Yong-kang St., Taipei City;
+86 2 2321 3367;*

*For classics go to Tai Yi Milk King (臺一牛奶大王),
82 Xin Sheng South Road, Section 3;
+86 2 2363 4341*

19. PEPPER CAKES (胡椒餅)

The must-have at Rao He night market, the pepper cake is a crispy pocket filled with juicy pork that is infused with the aromatic bite of black pepper. Baked on the wall of a clay oven, the pies are a delicious ode to the pepper plant.

Make sure you get more than one, or risk the overwhelming sense of regret when you have to wait again in the long queue for more.



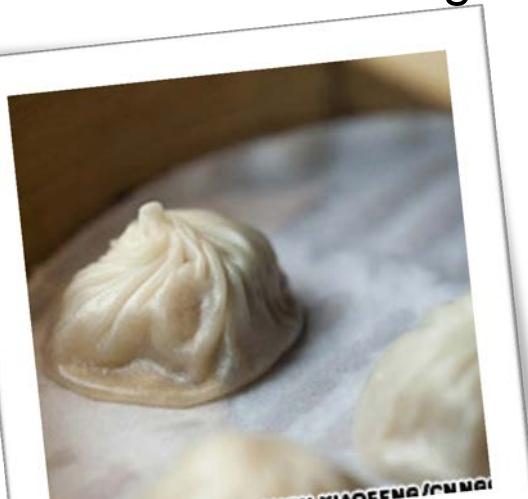
Raohe night market, Taipei

20. DIN TAI FUNG DUMPLING HOUSE (鼎泰豐小籠包)

Xiaolongbao may be a Shanghainese delicacy, but some argue that the Taiwanese perfected it. Taiwanese restaurant Din Tai Fung does its Shanghai comrades proud with their succulent pork soup dumplings.

Din Tai Fung's bite-sized xiaolongbao have a consistently high quality. Their paper-thin wrappings hold rich hot broth and tender pork meatballs.

Gasps can be heard intermittently at Din Tai Fung as diners brave the scalding hot soup that squirts out upon biting the dumpling.



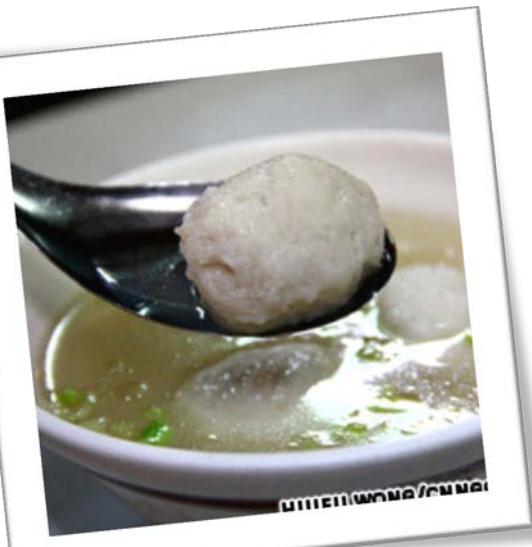
*Din Tai Fung Dumpling House,
192 Xinyi Road, Section 2, Taipei City;
+886 2 2321 8929*

21. FISH BALL SOUP (魚丸湯)

What is better than fresh seafood? Why, fresh seafood made into balls, of course.

Look for handmade fish balls in Taiwan as the process incorporates more air into the ball thus allowing more broth to be soaked up. They also have a bouncier chew.

Jiaxing is a popular purveyor in Taipei best known for its specialty shark meat balls.



*Jiaxing Fish Ball (佳興魚丸),
No. 21, Lane 210, Section 2, Yanping North Road,
Datong District, Taipei City;
+886 2 2553 6470*

22. RIBS STEWED IN MEDICINAL HERBS (藥燉排骨)

This is Taiwan's version of bak kut the, the Chinese meat soup that is also popular in Singapore and Malaysia.

In Taiwan, the soup is slow-cooked in Chinese medicine, extracting the essence from pork bones and more than 14 nutritious herbs, roots and dried fruits. It's yum and good for you too, especially for keeping warm in winter.

There isn't much meat on these lean bones, but the point of the dish is the soup. Don't be shy to pick the bones up with your hands and suck the juices off them. In fact, it's odd not to do so.



Nanya Night Market, Taipei City

23. GOOSE (鵝肉)

Geese, proudly bred on Taiwan farms, are never wasted. From the skin to the blood, they are made into delicious dishes.

The salted or smoked geese in Hou Yi are revelatory. Every bite of the juicy goose meat with slightly smoked goose skin is a celebration of poultry.

Or try one of Bistro Le Pont's bowls of steamed rice topped with goose, chili oil and x.o. sauce. The grains of rice are a vehicle for goose fat and flavor.



*Hou Yi (後驛鵝肉),
No. 29, Lane 220, Changan West Road, Datong District, Taipei City;
+886 2 2555 0498*

*Bistro Le Pont (樂朋小館),
176 Chaozhou St., Taipei City;
+886 2 2396 5677*

24. DING BIAN CUO (鼎邊趨)

Ding bian cuo is a bowl of slippery rice flour pasta.

Rice flour batter is poured along the side of a huge wok. It slides and spreads along the heated wok and forms slices of rice flour noodles.

When dried, the sheets will be cut into smaller pieces that become the very thin and very chewy noodles when cooked as ding bian cuo.

Wu Jia ding bian cuo is a century-old family business. Their ding bian cuo are served with handmade pork cakes, shrimp cakes, cabbage, daylily and bamboo shoots.



*Wu Jia ding bian cuo (百年吳家鼎邊趨),
Keelung Temple Street Night Market, Taipei City*

25. TAIWANESE SAUSAGE WITH STICKY RICE (大腸包小腸)

Taiwanese pork sausage alone is a superstar at night markets, but when served as the snack "little sausage inside big sausage" it is unbeatable.

Basically, it's like a hot dog, but instead of a bun, sticky rice is stuffed inside a sausage casing to make an oversized rice sausage. That rice sausage is slit open to stuff in a pork sausage. So it's a little sausage inside a big one. Get it?



Fengjia Night Market, Taichung County

26. MOCHI

(麻糬)

These glutinous rice balls are soft as marshmallows and filled with sweet or salty things.

The most traditional mochi are filled with red bean paste and rolled in peanut powder. But in recent years, strawberry jam, sesame paste, green tea jam and peanut paste are some of the popular choices of filling.

You can learn how to make mochi by visiting the Royal Taiwan Mochi Museum (around US\$5 per person).

Remember to chew carefully before swallowing, the sticky mochi are practically a choking hazard.



Royal Taiwan Mochi Museum(台灣麻糬主題館),
No. 3, Tzu Qiang 3rd Road, Nantou County;
+886 49 225 7644, see the class schedule
at www.taiwanmochi.com.tw (In Chinese only)

27. LANTERN SOY SAUCE BRAISED FOOD (燈籠滷味)

No matter what you choose from the Lantern Lu Wei food stall, it will take on the taste of the signature five-spice soy sauce. It's a little sweet, not too salty and very aromatic with cloves, star anise, cinnamon and other spices.

Pick your preferred ingredients and the chef will cook it in the pot of special sauce. This makes a perfect light meal before a big night out.

Expect to wait in line as the chef never rushes but takes his time to allow the sauce to be well absorbed by the food.



*Lantern Lu Wei (燈籠滷味),
Shida Night Market, Taipei City*65

28. SUN CAKES (太陽餅)

Originating in Taichung, the suncake is simply a flakey pastry filled with maltose. And yet this sweet nothing has come to represent Taichung City and is a souvenir sought out by all visitors.

Countless sun cake shops flourish in Taichung, all claiming to be the original store, which none of them are.

But maybe it's time for them to shine. The one and only original sun cake store Tai Yang Bakery closed down unexpectedly when the 68-year-old boss decided to retire.

Along Tze Yo Street, Zhongzheng District, Taichung County

29. TUBE RICE PUDDING (筒仔米糕)

Sticky rice and Chinese mushrooms are fried with seasoning and stuffed into a bamboo tube together with pork and egg. The tube of rice is steamed again to further soften the texture until it becomes a cylindrical pudding.

Da Qiao Tou started making the rice pudding in a small stall under a bridge more than four decades ago. The business has expanded since but the rice pudding stays the same.

Be sure to add the homemade turnip-laced sweet spicy sauce to the pudding.



*Da Qiao Tou (大橋頭老牌筒仔米糕),
41 Yanping North Road, Section 3, Datong District, Taipei City;
+886 2 2594 4685*

30. TAIWANESE BREAKFAST

Three elements to start a day right in Taiwan: sesame flat bread, deep-fried Chinese donut and soymilk.

Blogger Joan H from A Hungry Girl's Guide to Taipei says her favorite breakfast is from Fu Hang.

"I love the thick sesame flat bread at Fu Hang because it has a slight sweetness, a thin crispy layer and soft center from coming straight out of the hot metal barrel. Many sesame flat breads are dry and flaky but Fu Hang's shows why there is often a half-hour to hour wait on the weekends."



*Fu Hang Dou Jiang (阜杭豆漿),
2/F Hua Shan Market, 108 Zhongxiao East Road, Section 1, Taipei City;
+886 2 2392 2175*

31. PIG'S BLOOD RICE PUDDING (豬血米糕)

This pudding is a mix of pig's blood and sticky rice and stuck on the end of a stick like a lollipop. For the final Taiwanese touch, the pudding is coated in a sweet peanut powder.

Basketball star Jeremy Lin Shu-How endorsed pig's blood rice cake as one of his favorite snacks on his recent visit to Taiwan. If it is good enough for Lin, it is good enough for us.

*Xiao Li (小李),
No. 1-3, Lane 136, Section 4, Roosevelt Road, Taipei City;
+886 2 2368 3417*

32. THREE-CUP CHICKEN (三杯雞)

Three-cup chicken is cooked in a cup of rice wine, a cup of oil and a cup of soy sauce. To this Taiwanese culinary triumvirate is added some fresh basil, chilies and garlic for an irresistible combination.

Some kitchens have a different definition of three-cup chicken, such as a cup of wine, a cup of sesame oil and a cup of sugar.



Old Taiwan (新台灣原味),
1 Mincheng 3rd Road, Gushan District, Kaohsiung;
+886 7 522 8852,
www.oldtaiwan.com.tw

33. TAMSUI AGEI (阿給)

Agei comes from the Japanese "aburaage" which are deep-fried tofu pockets.

These Taiwanese agei are stuffed with mung bean noodles and sealed off with fish paste. A typical sweet-spicy sauce completes it.

The tofu soaks up the soup its cooked in so each bite bursts with broth. Paired with a soy milk, the agei makes a great savory breakfast.



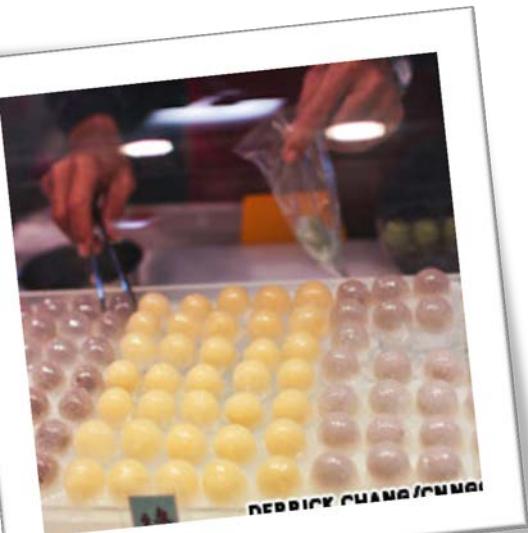
Zhenli Street, Tamshui

34. FEN YUAN (粉圓)

Fen yuan refers to all the chewy dough that Taiwanese like to add to their dessert.

Sometimes they are made with sticky rice flour and various fillings. The dough is slightly translucent when steamed, revealing the colorful insides -- red bean, green tea, egg custard. They are just so joyful to look at.

Fen yuan is more commonly made from tapioca without filling. And when black sugar is added, it becomes the black pearls in bubble tea, called pearl fen yuan.



Raohe Night Market, Taipei City

35. HOT-STAR LARGE FRIED CHICKEN (豪大大雞扒)

According to a Taipei Times' report in 2011, Taiwanese devour more than 250,000 fried chicken cutlets each day.

If piled atop each other, they would make a chicken cutlet tower 10 times as tall as Taipei 101, the island's tallest skyscraper at 508 meters.

Go to Hot-star for the original oversized chicken cutlet. The enormous slice of meat is as big as your face and very moist with a crispy crust. A generous coating of five-spice powder and pepper gives it a kick.

Starting as a small counter at Shilin night market, Hot-star is now a franchise present in Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore.



*Hot-star Large Fried Chicken (豪大大雞扒),
Shilin Night Market,
see other locations at www.hotstar.com.tw*

36. ANYTHING WITH CUTTLEFISH

Barbecued Taiwanese cuttlefish hits the spot every time. The island gets a lot of great cuttlefish and grill stations covered in cuttlefish skewers can be found everywhere in the southern tip.

Although a thick cuttlefish soup with herbs and veggies is a typical Taiwanese winter-warmer, the best way to enjoy the mollusks is fresh out of seawater, straight onto the charcoal grill.

Imagine the smoky aroma, dark grill marks, glistening furled edges and dustings of salt and pepper.



Fengjia Night Market, Taichung County

37. AIYU JELLY (愛玉冰)

Very wobbly and hardly tasting of anything, the aiyu jelly takes on the flavor of whatever it is eaten with.

Add it to lemonade and shaved ice for a refreshing summer drink. The jelly gives the liquid a fun gloopy texture.

Shida Night Market, Taipei City

38. KE LE BING (可樂餅)

Inspired by the Japanese deep-fried patty, korokke, and the French croquette, the ke le bing is now an indispensable snack in Taiwan.

Stuffed with mashed potato or minced meat, the disc-shaped croquette is coated with flour, eggs and breadcrumbs.

You can choose deep-fried meat, vegetables, seafood and anything else edible that can be molded into a disc shape. We love the pork and cheese combo the most.



*Koroke (肉丸餅),
49-10 Emei St., Wanhua District, Taipei City*

39. STEAMED SPRING ROLL (潤餅)

To describe it as the non-deep-fried version of a spring roll would be unfair, as "run bing" (steamed spring roll) was invented before the spring roll.

Every household has its own recipe for run bing. During festivals, families will gather at the table to have a run bing wrapping party. Each person chooses their own fillings from a buffet and rolls their own run bing.

Besides serving delicious run bing, Shin Yeh at Taipei 101 also offers an incomparable view of city.

*Shin Yeh (欣葉),
85/F, Taipei 101, 7 Xinyi Road, Section 5, Xinyi District, Taipei City;
+886 2 8101 0185,
see other locations at www.shinyeh.com.tw*

40. SPICY HOTPOT (麻辣火鍋)

Taiwanese are mad for spicy hot pot.

And who wouldn't be? The bubbling pots of broth are filled with all sorts of Chinese herbs and spices to create an incredibly rich flavor for all the raw, fresh ingredients that diners will dip into it.

New hot pot places pop up in Taiwan every day, each with a gimmick to attract insatiable hot pot diners.

There's all-you-can-eat hot pot and yakiniku served at the same table; there's bubble tea hotpot for the jaded.

But it is spicy hot pot with quality ingredients that stands the test of time. While Taiwan's spice-levels can't come close to Chongqing's, they're pretty piquant.

Head to perennial hot pot favorite and celeb-magnet Taihodien for a glam Taiwanese hot pot experience.



*Taihodien can be found across Taiwan,
see www.taihodien.com.tw for details;
try bubble tea hotpot at Yue Yin Xuan, 80 Wenzhou St., Ta'an
District, Taipei City*

TAIWAN WELCOME YOU!

