

TAIPEI

Vol. **13**

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A Cornucopia of Flavors
at Taipei's Traditional
Markets



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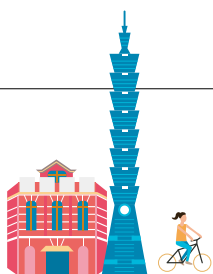
A Cornucopia of Flavors at Taipei's Traditional Markets



The many traditional vendors and their market shops represent a microcosm of life in Taipei. The food emporia featured in this issue of *TAIPEI* show the vital energy of the different districts. We've invited Titan (Zhang Qiuyong), Chef Ah Chi, David Bagherzadeh (Chef at Lao Wai Yi Pin Beef Noodles) and Tatsuya Ono (Chef at Taiwanippon) to talk about the local mercantile scene in Taipei. Xinfu Market in Wanhua District glows with the spirit of rebirth, Beitou is like a slice of life, Binjiang is packed with all kinds of flavors, and the Taipei Expo Farmers Market offers a glimpse of rural life. With all the sounds of vendors hawking their wares and people chatting and laughing, and the vibrant scenes of people coming and going, and so much produce and authentic snacks for sale, these local emporia present a metropolis in miniature. Come experience the hospitality and life force of Taipei City!

In addition to all the fun sites downtown, Mother Nature is also within reach. Ringed by mountains, Taipei City has many verdant sites. You can take the bus or MRT and easily explore nature over many hiking trails. From Xiangshan Hiking Trail, you will see the most amazing night views of this capital city, while Shuicheliao Trail offers the observer the colorful blossoms of Zhuzihu. Jiantanshan Hiking Trail tells a tale of human activity within its historical ambiance, and the Camphor Tree and Zhanghu Trails Loop provides views of the local farm scene. Finally, the Yuanjue Temple and Liyushan Trails Loop seems like a route a pilgrim might follow! You can even plan big and take a grand hike over several trails.

With Taipei's convenient transportation network, you'll find that nature is within reach. You'll get to enjoy local delicacies at traditional markets and breathe in the fresh air of forests all in one day. A variety of fun and foody tours are waiting for you! In this issue, we'll help you to discover traditional markets and hike some trails. Let's go!



Thanks for taking a look at *TAIPEI* magazine. In order to bring *TAIPEI* closer to its readers, the Department of Information and Tourism invites you to fill out this questionnaire and return it to us. For each subsequent issue of *TAIPEI*, 10 completed questionnaires will be drawn at random, and each of those lucky people will receive a free copy.



E-book

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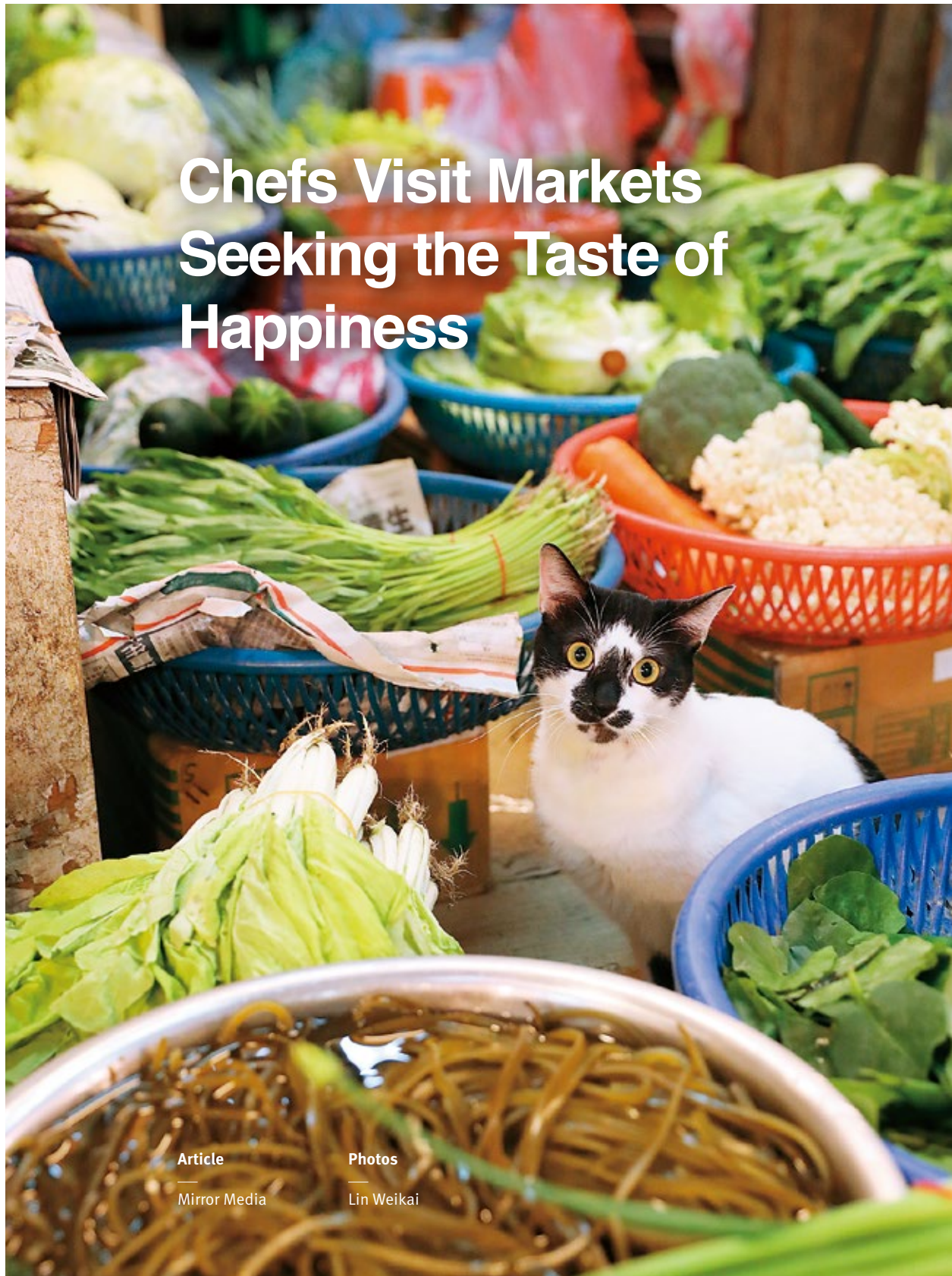
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Chefs Visit Markets Seeking the Taste of Happiness



Article
—
Mirror Media

Photos
—
Lin Weikai

To learn about a city's culture, you first need to check out its local markets. The many vendors and shops there create a microcosm of local people's lives.

For example, Xinfu Market (新富市場), next to Lungshan Temple (艋舺龍山寺), sells deli products and cakes that worshippers can use to affirm their devotion to the gods. Beitou Market (北投市場), located in the hot spring district, offers authentic local dishes and grocery items from all over, and thus presents an image in miniature of Taipei, the capital of gourmet food.



Taipei is a fast developing city with prospering businesses; each local market asserts its own style and atmosphere, but you'll find the same friendliness and hospitality inside each one.

But where can we find and taste these nurturing Taiwanese market dishes? Two chefs, from different generations, Chef Ah Chi (阿基師) and Titan (Zhang Qiuyong; 張秋永) are here to take us on a tour.



Early one morning, Chef Ah Chi went shopping at Beitou Market. He tried to keep a low profile, but many people still recognized him. He smiled and said “Hi” to them, and when he started to worry that the crowd around him was getting so big it might affect the vendor’s business, he thoughtfully picked up produce and helped to sell it. Gestures such as this, and his cooking skills, of course, have made him one of the most popular chefs in Taiwan!

Beitou Market’s main building is a two-story structure that was built back in the day, and small wooden stools are still a significant feature here. As with Xinfu Market, this public emporium was established in the Japanese era. It has a large sales area, plenty of vending stands, all sorts of vegetables and fruits, and many other low-priced groceries. It’s most famous for its fresh oysters, rice pudding, braised pork on rice, and other local dishes. Tea culture is featured here. Beitou is the biggest public market in Taipei City, and also the center of life for the good denizens of Beitou.



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CHEF AH CHI

BEITOU MARKET IS A TRAINING GROUND FOR CHEFS

Article

Shi Ruide

Photos

Lin Weikai

Despite some minor renovations, this old-fashioned market has maintained its atmosphere of friendliness and hospitality. It's like a miniature of the world outside, with life stories of vendors and people from all over being told every day. Even an experienced cook like Chef Ah Chi has deep feelings about this microcosm – Beitou Market.

Using Ingredients From Local Markets to Exhibit Excellent Culinary Skills

All great chefs start with the basics. Chef Ah Chi likes Beitou Market for what it can offer – so

many options for ingredients that it's the perfect training ground for chefs. "My first impression of local markets was all about eating. When I was a kid, the adults often brought me there, and while they shopped for groceries, I devoured Taiwanese snacks. After a time, I learned to tell good taste from bad, and then traced those tastes back to the ingredients. The first thing you need to know about cooking is what each ingredient's special features are. Next, you need to train your brain and eyes to be able to properly select them. Moreover, instead of memorizing recipes and sticking to them, you need to learn how to match different elements," says Chef Ah Chi.



Beitou Market offers many of the delicacies favored by local people.



When it comes to cooking, Chef Ah Chi says the first thing you need to know is what each ingredient's special features are.



Tea culture is a unique feature of Beitou Market; authentic Taiwanese black tea is popular among tourists.

After all these years, does he still have a passion for cooking? Chef Ah Chi raises his voice, “Oh, yes, of course. I love cooking for people.” Whether at the hotel where he works, or in his kitchen at home, Chef Ah Chi sets up a “lab base” and designs all his unique dishes personally.

He states forthrightly, “My number one entertainment is watching foreign cooking shows on TV; and, as you can see, every chef there asserts the

importance of local markets. By visiting such a place, whether it’s in his own country or abroad, a chef gets to know the particular culture of a region, and then can apply the skills he has learned to make delicious dishes.”

“I appreciate their spontaneity and creativity, although for me, I like to combine my creativity with local features, and never skip the basics. If you just cook with any ideas that pop up in your head



Chef Ah Chi believes that cooking involves lives; you get to savor a sense of personal relationship.

and goof around with it, I don't consider that creative." Accordingly, Chef Ah Chi draws on Beitou Market's friendliness and hospitality, adds some flavors from the Japanese era, and thus creates his unique Taiwanese delicacies.

He gives an example, "Japanese *Dorayaki* (a dessert with a sweet filling sandwiched between pancakes) usually is stuffed with adzuki bean paste. One time, I tried to make it the Hakka way and used preserved mustard greens as stuffing instead. This vegetable must be simmered with colloid-rich pork skin until it becomes mushy, otherwise it will fall apart and lose its texture.

Then you drain the extra oil out of the cooked vegetable and leave it to cool. As to the pancake part, you need to add sugar and soy sauce to bring out the flavor, then broil it. This creates a new flavor combining Japanese dessert and traditional Hakka style.

Satisfying Both Host and Guests; Caring for Taste and Relationship

Chef Ah Chi believes that the best Taiwanese cuisine should be simple but tasty. Sautéed Salted Mustard Greens With Tofu Skin (雪菜

炒腐包) seems basic enough, but there's some life philosophy accompanying the rich texture of this dish. Salted mustard greens are a common ingredient in Taiwanese cuisine, but there's also a little Hakka in its background. Its saltier taste goes very well with plain rice. In the bygone days when life was difficult for Taiwanese people, this was considered a gourmet dish on the dining table.

Chef Ah Chi stresses the importance of being a person who takes care of everything. "Besides the menu, a chef needs to be aware of the personal relationships at the dining table. For example: What's the purpose of this gathering? Who are the guests? Furthermore, you need to take course preparation and order into consideration. There's



In addition to fresh produce and a variety of tea drinks, Beitou Market also features local dishes, such as braised pork on rice.



Many varieties of fish are sold at Beitou Market.

more to think about than just whether the food on the stove is well cooked or not," says Chef Ah Chi.

Chef Ah Chi believes that being a good chef also involves bonding with people. You are sharing "the taste of happiness with your customers," and passing on a fulfilling warmth and hospitality. "On special Chinese holidays, after I finish cooking, I always go to each table to say hi. People are so happy to see me and want to take pictures with me. I make fun by saying that my photo is as good as a credit card with a very high limit. Take as many as you want and put it to good use!"

That day at Beitou Market, Chef Ah Chi helped vendors sell products, and filled the place with the warmth of humanity.



Recipe

Sautéed Salted
Mustard Greens With
Tofu Skin




Sautéed Salted Mustard Greens With Tofu Skin looks like a simple dish, but it offers a rich flavor with the essence of life stories.

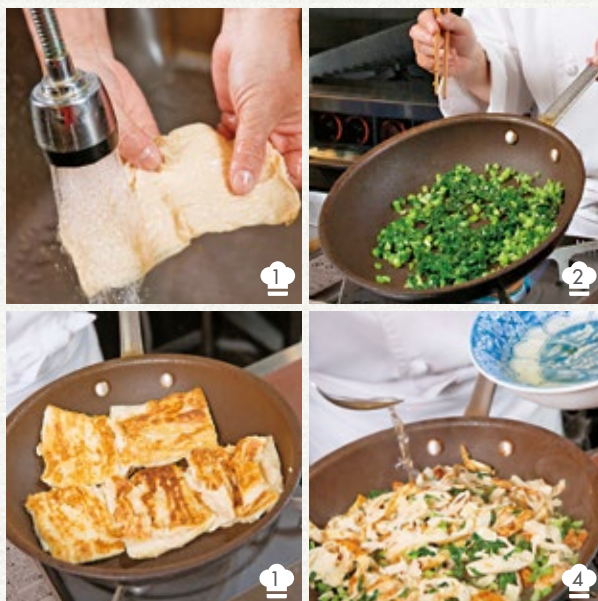


Ingredients

- 4 fresh tofu skin sheets
- 300 grams of salted mustard greens
- 1 green onion
- 1 piece of ginger (chopped)
- 2 tablespoons of minced garlic
- 1 red chili
- 3 tablespoons of sesame oil

Preparation

- 1 Wash tofu skin thoroughly, sauté and then cut into small pieces.
- 2 Fry salted mustard greens and set aside.
- 3 Add the following ingredients to the frying pan in this order: three tablespoons of sesame oil, tofu skin, salted mustard greens, green onions, ginger, garlic and red chili, and stir fry them.
- 4 Add water and simmer until the liquid is fully reduced. Stir thoroughly and serve. 



\TIP/

Mustard greens are salted, so wash them first before using, but save the salt water. You can add it to the frying pan while cooking, so there's no need for extra salt.



TITAN

VISITS XINFU MARKET
SEEKING AUTHENTIC
TAIWANESE FLAVORS

Article

Shi Ruide

Photos

Lin Weikai



Instead of a typical chef's apron, Titan wears a colorful T shirt and a pair of sneakers, and with his swarthy complexion, he is the picture of a young man bursting with energy. If you didn't know him from TV, you'd never think that this thirty-something man has over 10 years of culinary experience, including working for famous hotels, teaching cooking courses, and publishing several books.

Recognizing Fresh Ingredients in Front of You

The moment Titan steps into Xinfu Market on Dongsanshui Street (東三水街) in Wanhua District, the "chef radar" he was born with clicks on right away. He surveys the area, picks up a vegetable, has a quick sniff, then touches the fish and squeezes the meat. "When I shop at local markets, there are two things I look for most: low prices and freshness. The advantage of traditional markets is you can assess freshness yourself. At the supermarket, where the produce is sealed in plastic wrap, you can't really touch or feel the item, and it's just not fun!" says Titan.



Titan thinks that Xinfu Market is small but well-equipped with just about everything.

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