

Follow the Sizzle: Eating Your Way Through Taiwan!

A Real Traveler's Guide to the Night Markets, Local
Secrets, and Soulful Bites of Taiwan

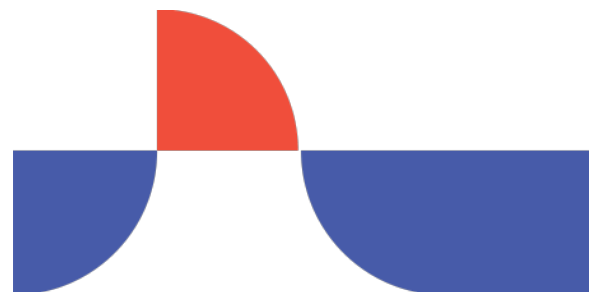


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Glossary for Hungry Travelers

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Bonus: Taipei Food Lover's Guide

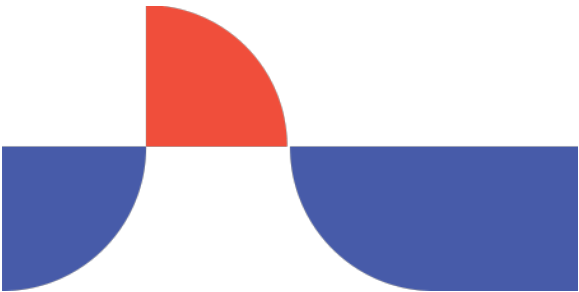
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A Real Traveler's Guide to the Night Markets, Local Secrets, and Soulful Bites of Taiwan





Quick Start: Plan Your Trip by Chapter

Just Landed? Start with Chapters 1 & 2 for a crash course in night market survival.

First Food Crawl? Head to Chapter 3 for the must-try street snacks.

Sweet Tooth? Chapter 4 dives into Taiwan's drink & dessert culture.

Leaving Taipei? See Chapter 5 for regional eats and hidden flavors.

Want to Eat Like a Local (without speaking Mandarin)? Go straight to Chapter 7.

Holiday Trip? Chapter 11 covers festive food traditions and seasonal specialties.

Bonus Tools: Check the Glossary & Taipei Food Guide in the back for offline help and can't-miss spots.



01

Welcome to the Island of Night Markets





How It All Began

I didn't come to Taiwan for the street food. I came in the mid-90s, long before bubble tea had its own emoji. Taipei back then was scooters, mystery noodles, and a sense that something was happening. I showed up with a backpack, a camera, and a few weeks carved out of a restless life. I didn't plan on coming back.



But I did. Again and again. Taiwan became my second home, a part-time life lived between two worlds. And while the reasons I stayed changed, one thing kept pulling me back to the street: the food.

This book is for travelers like me. The ones who land hungry. The ones who skip the brochures and wander the alleys. The ones who don't speak the language but speak fluent curiosity. If that's you, welcome. Let's eat.

Discovering the Pulse of Taiwan, One Bite at a Time

The first time you step off the MRT near Shilin, the smell hits: fryer oil, grilled meat, and something borderline illegal-smelling—but addictive. That's your welcome to Taiwan's night markets. They don't whisper. They slap you awake.

Night markets are where Taiwan comes alive after dark. Teenagers wander, families huddle, vendors shout, flames leap from woks. It's chaos. It's comfort. It's dinner.



Back in the day, stalls were fewer, lights dimmer, but the energy? Still electric. Whether it's Shilin, Liuhe in Kaohsiung, or Keelung's waterfront frenzy, every market has its own vibe. Some blast Mandopop, others hum old ballads. All smell like adventure.

To truly know Taiwan, skip the museum. Walk into the steam. Follow the smoke. Let your nose and your gut do the navigating.

The Soul of the Streets

One of my first meals in Taiwan was down a Tainan alley barely wide enough for a bike. A man in a stained apron handed me beef soup and vanished. I didn't get a smile. I got umami.

Over 300 night markets span the island. Some specialize in seafood. Others in fried snacks or hot soups. They all follow one rule: roam, snack, and keep moving. You're not here to sit. You're here to wander.

This isn't fine dining. This is fine wandering.





What Makes This Culture Unique

Unlike Western meals—order, sit, sequence—Taiwan’s night markets are a freestyle affair. A bite of fried chicken here, a sip of sweet tea there, maybe grilled squid for the win. No rules. No wrong turns.

Locals treat it like a scavenger hunt. Everyone’s got their stall. Their secret bite. Their grandma vendor frying tofu since the ‘80s. Tourists chase the Instagram-famous. The real stuff? It’s tucked between the forgotten corners.

Etiquette here is unwritten but vital: wait your turn, don’t block the lane, share tables, and thank your vendor—even if all you manage is a smile.



A Note to First-Time Travelers

New to Taiwan? No Mandarin? No problem. Pointing works. So does curiosity. So does hunger.

The beauty of Taiwan's food scene is how open it is. You don't need to know the language. You just need to show up and try. You'll be welcomed.

Wrapping It Up

Night markets aren't just places to eat. They're places to feel. They hum with the rhythm of the island. The smells, the sounds, the steam—it's a crash course in Taiwan, one skewer at a time.

If you want to understand this place, don't follow a map. Follow the smoke. Follow the crowd. Start with your stomach. Let the story unfold from there.





02

Mastering the Night Market Game



Rookie Moves and a Skewer Mishap

My first time in a Taiwanese night market, I nearly bit into raw pork. I pointed, smiled, and faked confidence at a meat skewer stall. The vendor yanked it from my hand just in time. His face said it all: rookie.

Consider this chapter your street food boot camp. No guesswork. No embarrassment. Just tips to get you moving through the market like a local.



Walk First, Bite Later

Do a full lap before buying anything. Smell everything. Listen to the sizzle. See where the locals line up. The best bites are rarely at the front.

Pro tip: If it's deep in the market, smells incredible, and has a line? That's your jackpot.

Timing is Everything

- Golden Hour (7–9 PM): Peak chaos, peak flavor.
- Early Bird (before 6 PM): Fewer crowds, fresher seats.
- Late Night (after 9:30): Leftovers, discounts, and late-night energy.
- Weekdays: More locals, fewer tourists. Tuesdays are gold.
- Rainy Nights: Fewer lines. Locals stay. Tourists don't.





Blend In Like a Local

- Move with the crowd.
- Don't block stalls or paths.
- Share tables—it's expected.
- Watch others order, then mimic. Point. Smile. Nod.
- Thank the vendor: a smile or “xièxiè” goes far.

Rookie Mistakes to Avoid

- Don't fill up on the first snack.
- Don't assume you know what something is.
- Don't skip dessert.
- Don't try to juggle four things while walking. One hand free, always.

Bourdain Moment: This isn't about conquering the market. It's about surrendering to it.

The Confidence Booster

Start safe: fried chicken cutlet, scallion pancake, or braised pork rice. Nail that. Then go deeper.

And if you screw up? Burn your tongue? Order the wrong thing? Perfect. That's part of the fun.

Next stop: the iconic dishes that define Taiwan's street scene—your edible playlist. Let's eat.





03

The Street Food Starter Pack





If Taiwan had a passport, it would be printed on wax paper and smell faintly of grilled sausage.

This chapter is your no-fuss, grab-a-napkin, taste-everything crash course into the essential street foods that define the night market experience. No Mandarin required. No itinerary needed. Just an appetite—and maybe some stretchy pants.



Stinky Tofu (Chòu Dòufu)

You'll smell it before you see it—pungent fermented tofu, deep-fried and topped with garlic sauce, pickled cabbage, and chili.

Local logic: The stinkier it smells, the better it tastes. Think blue cheese dunked in a deep fryer.

Vibe check: Best eaten near a temple or side alley where the scent is part of the ambiance.

Fried Chicken Cutlet (Jī Pái)

Pounded thin, breaded thick, fried hard. This face-sized cutlet is Taiwan's crunchy love letter to chicken.

Flavor tip: Spice levels vary—"medium" might still melt your face.

Eat it: Fresh from the fryer. Napkins optional but encouraged.





Grilled Sausage (Xiāngcháng)

Sweet, sticky pork sausage often served with raw garlic or inside a grilled sticky rice bun—Taiwan’s version of a hot dog, but better.

Look for: Tiny charcoal grills tucked into night market corners, especially around Chiayi.

Scallion Pancake (Cōngyóu Bǐng)

Pan-fried, flaky, and greasy in the best way. Add an egg, cheese, or basil for bonus points.

Secret find: Yilan does it best—layered, crispy, and impossibly craveable.



Braised Pork Rice (Lǚ Ròu Fàn)

Simple. Soulful. Minced pork belly slow-cooked in soy sauce and spooned over white rice. A local staple that never misses.

Pro move: Order a small bowl to save room for more.

Oyster Omelet (Ô-á-chian)

Egg, oysters, sweet potato starch, and a drizzle of sweet-savory sauce. Slightly gooey, oddly satisfying.

Texture alert: You'll either love it or question your life choices. But you won't forget it.



Peanut Ice Cream Roll (Huāshēng Bīngqílín Juǎn)

Shaved peanut brittle, cilantro, and ice cream—all wrapped in a thin flour crepe.

Sounds weird? Trust the locals. The combo works.

This isn't the full list. But it's the core playlist—the tracks that get stuck in your memory and show up in your dreams.

If you're unsure what to try, just look for the longest line. If it smells weird, lean in. If you can't pronounce it, point and smile.

Because here, the food doesn't need translating. It just needs tasting.





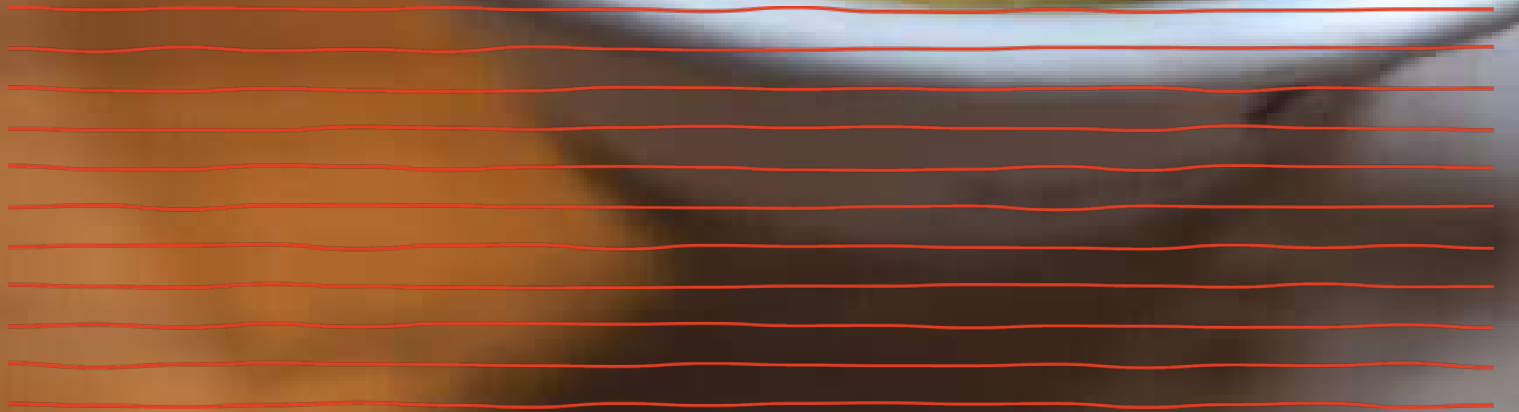
Next: Let's cool things down and sip into the world of chewy drinks, icy towers, and dessert you need a spoon and a strategy to finish. Chapter 4 is all sugar, slush, and snack magic.





04

Taiwan's Sweet Tooth & Sippable Obsession



Taiwan doesn't just snack—it sips, chews, and slurps like it's a competitive sport. This chapter is your passport to the sweeter, slushier, and squishier side of Taiwan's food scene.

We're talking bubble tea perfected, desserts piled like mountains, and drinks so packed with toppings you'll need both a straw and a spoon.

Bubble Tea (Zhēnzhū Nǎichá)

Let's give it a second spotlight—because Taiwan invented it, and no matter where you've had it before, it hits different here.

What's in it: Black or green tea, milk, chewy tapioca pearls, optional pudding, grass jelly, or red beans.

Pro tip: Skip the tourist chains. Look for bubble tea shops near high schools—they know what's good. Order like a local: "Half sugar, less ice" is the golden ratio.



Shaved Ice Mountains (Bàobīng)

Towering bowls of finely shaved ice topped with mango chunks, condensed milk, grass jelly, mochi, pudding—sometimes all of the above.

Go during: Mango season (May to July). Trust us.

Scene: Best enjoyed in alleyway dessert shops near night markets or college towns, surrounded by sticky tables and slurping students.



Tofu Pudding (Dòuhuā)

Delicate tofu served warm or chilled with brown sugar syrup, tapioca pearls, or peanuts. Soft, subtle, and oddly refreshing.

Texture win: If you've never had dessert tofu, this will change your stance on bean-based sweets.





Grass Jelly (Xiāncǎo)

A slightly bitter, herbal jelly that's often mixed with honey water, lemon juice, or loaded onto shaved ice.

Flavor vibe: Earthy and mellow. Think herbal tea in jello form.



Bonus: Helps balance all that fried food.

Taro Balls (Yùyuán)

Chewy, pastel-colored balls made from taro or sweet potato flour. Served with grass jelly or in sweet syrup soups.

Where to try: Jiufen's old-school dessert shops, with foggy mountain views and bowls of purple, chewy goodness.

Desserts in Taiwan are about more than sugar. They're about texture, temperature, timing—and finding a snack that doubles as a memory.

Drinks aren't just beverages. They're personality statements. Are you chewy or smooth? Milky or herbal? Hot, iced, or blended?

Whatever your style, Taiwan's dessert scene has you covered—with toppings.





Next: Let's get out of Taipei and taste Taiwan city by city. Chapter 5 is your regional flavor map –from sweet Tainan soy sauce to the ocean-rich eats of Kaohsiung.





05

Regional Flavors You Need to Know



Taiwan may be small, but its food map is massive. Every region tells a different story—flavored by coastline, mountains, culture, and history. Think of this chapter as a culinary rail pass: north to south, east to west, one bite at a time.

Tainan — Sweet, Sticky, and Full of History

Taiwan's oldest city also has the sweetest tooth. In Tainan, even the soy sauce leans sugary.

Must-tries:

- Dànzǎi Miàn: Noodle soup with shrimp, pork, and backstory in every slurp
- Eel Noodles: Tangy, slippery, and packed with punch
- Coffin Bread: A hollow toast stuffed with creamy stew—ridiculous, but works

Local vibe: Tainanese food feels nostalgic, even on your first bite. Bonus points for temples hiding snack vendors like culinary speakeasies.





Kaohsiung — Seafood Soul of the South

As a port city, Kaohsiung serves ocean on a plate. From night markets to ferry-side grills, it's seafood done loud and proud.

Must-tries:

- Grilled Squid
- Oyster Pancakes
- Milkfish Soup

Pro tip: Take a ferry to Cijin Island. Walk, snack, repeat. Sunset tastes like soy and sea breeze.

Hualien & Yilan — Indigenous Roots, Wild Flavor

Taiwan's east coast is greener, quieter, and full of Indigenous influence. It's where flavors come from mountains and memories.

What to try:

- Millet wine and leaf-wrapped meats
- Wild boar skewers grilled over fire
- Stir-fried mountain greens
- Scallion pancakes (especially Yilan's buttery, crispy versions)

Field note: Some of the best eats are roadside trucks with ocean views on one side and misty cliffs on the other. Trust the line.





Taichung — Creative Crossroads

Located in Taiwan's midsection, Taichung blends tradition with trend. Expect classic night market bites and café culture mashups.

What to hunt down:

- Sun Cakes (flaky pastries with malt filling)
- Bubble Tea (some say it started here)
- Fried Mushrooms, Chicken Skewers, and crazy desserts at Yizhong Night Market

Reset tip: After eating your way through Fengjia Night Market, stroll Taichung's art districts or leafy parks. Digest, recover, repeat.





Taiwan isn't one flavor. It's dozens—woven together with soy, smoke, salt, and steam. The further you travel, the deeper the taste.

Next: Chapter 6 dives into the local legends and cult favorites that don't show up on tourist maps—but locals crave them like comfort food and bragging rights.





06

Deep Cuts & Local Legends



This chapter isn't about what you've seen on Instagram. It's about the underdogs, the offbeat, the "you ate what?" moments that stay with you long after the trip ends. These are the dishes locals love, tourists fear, and true food adventurers dream about.

Pig's Blood Cake (Zhūxiě Gāo)

It looks like chocolate mochi. It's not. It's steamed sticky rice and pig's blood on a bamboo skewer, rolled in crushed peanuts and cilantro.

First bite: Confusing. Third bite: strangely addictive.

Find it: Traditional markets and night stalls. If the vendor's over 60 and doesn't smile, you're in the right place.



Fly Heads (Cāngyíng Tóu)

No insects involved. Just garlic chives, minced pork, and fermented black beans that resemble—you guessed it—fly heads.

Taste: Funky, punchy, wok-fired magic.

Eat it: Over rice at a plastic-table joint with laminated menus and sizzling pans.





Three-Cup Everything (Sānbēi Jī... & Friends)

Originally chicken, now also squid, tofu, and mushrooms. Cooked in equal parts sesame oil, soy sauce, and rice wine, plus a heap of basil.

Smells like: Heaven. Sounds like: sizzling clay pots.



Try it: When you hear the sizzle before you see the dish.

Grandma's Dumplings & Alleyway Gold

Some of Taiwan's best food isn't on a map. It's ladled from a cart, scooped from a wok, or folded by hand in a shadowy alley.

Tell-tale signs: Steel cart. No signage. Vendor won't take your money until you finish. Possibly superstitious. Definitely delicious.

Pro tip: If it looks too rough for Yelp, it's probably worth your time.

These dishes won't win beauty contests. Some won't even make your Instagram. But they'll win your memory.

They're the bites that make you pause, laugh, sweat, and tell stories about for years.





Next: Chapter 7 shows you how to eat like a local—even if you can't say anything beyond “zhègè” and “xièxiè.” Language barrier? Not a problem when your stomach's fluent.



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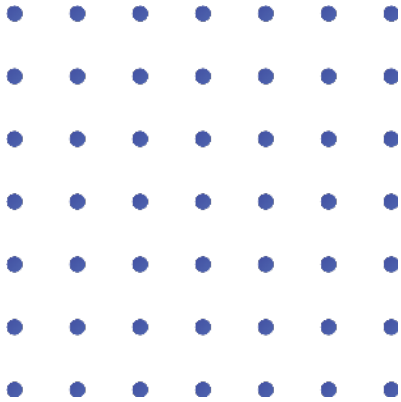
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Eat Like a Local Without Speaking Chinese



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I once nodded my way into three bowls of stinky tofu because I thought the vendor was asking how spicy I wanted it. I smiled, said "yes," and ended up with a full table and a crowd of giggling onlookers.

Moral of the story? Pointing is safer than pretending.

You don't need to speak Mandarin to eat well in Taiwan. You just need a few tricks, a curious spirit, and a willingness to laugh at your own mistakes.

It's Okay Not to Speak the Language

Taiwanese people are famously kind—especially when it comes to food. They want you to enjoy it. They won't expect perfect pronunciation. A smile and a willingness to try go a long way.

Mistakes are part of the fun. And sometimes? They get you an extra dumpling.





Five Phrases That Unlock the Market

Zhège (這個)—"This one." The MVP of your food ordering toolkit. Just point and say it.

Duōshǎo qián? (多少錢?) – "How much?" Say it with a smile while holding up the food item.

Bù là (不辣) – "Not spicy." Crucial if your taste buds are tourists.

Tài là le! (太辣了!) – "Too spicy!" Use only if things go nuclear.

Xièxiè (謝謝) – "Thank you." The one word you should use often—and mean it.

Hǎo chī (好吃) – "Delicious!" Guaranteed to earn you a smile.

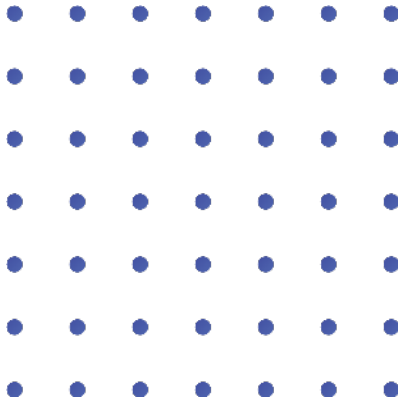
Speak with Your Hands (and Face)

You can get surprisingly far with gestures:

- Point at the dish you want
- Hold up fingers for quantity
- Pat your belly to show satisfaction
- Smile and nod for approval

Local move: Watch how others order. Then mimic their style. It works.





When the Menu Is a Mystery

Many stalls have no English signs. Some have no signs at all. If you see someone eating something that looks good, just point to their dish and raise your eyebrows. Most people will nod or help you out.

In cities, QR menus or Google Translate stickers are common. No signal? Just ask for “zhège” and roll with it.

The Gift of Not Knowing

Not speaking the language can be a superpower. It forces you to slow down, engage, and pay attention. Every order becomes an adventure. Every bite, a mini victory.

In Taiwan, food is the universal translator. Steam, slurps, and shared laughter go a lot further than any phrasebook.

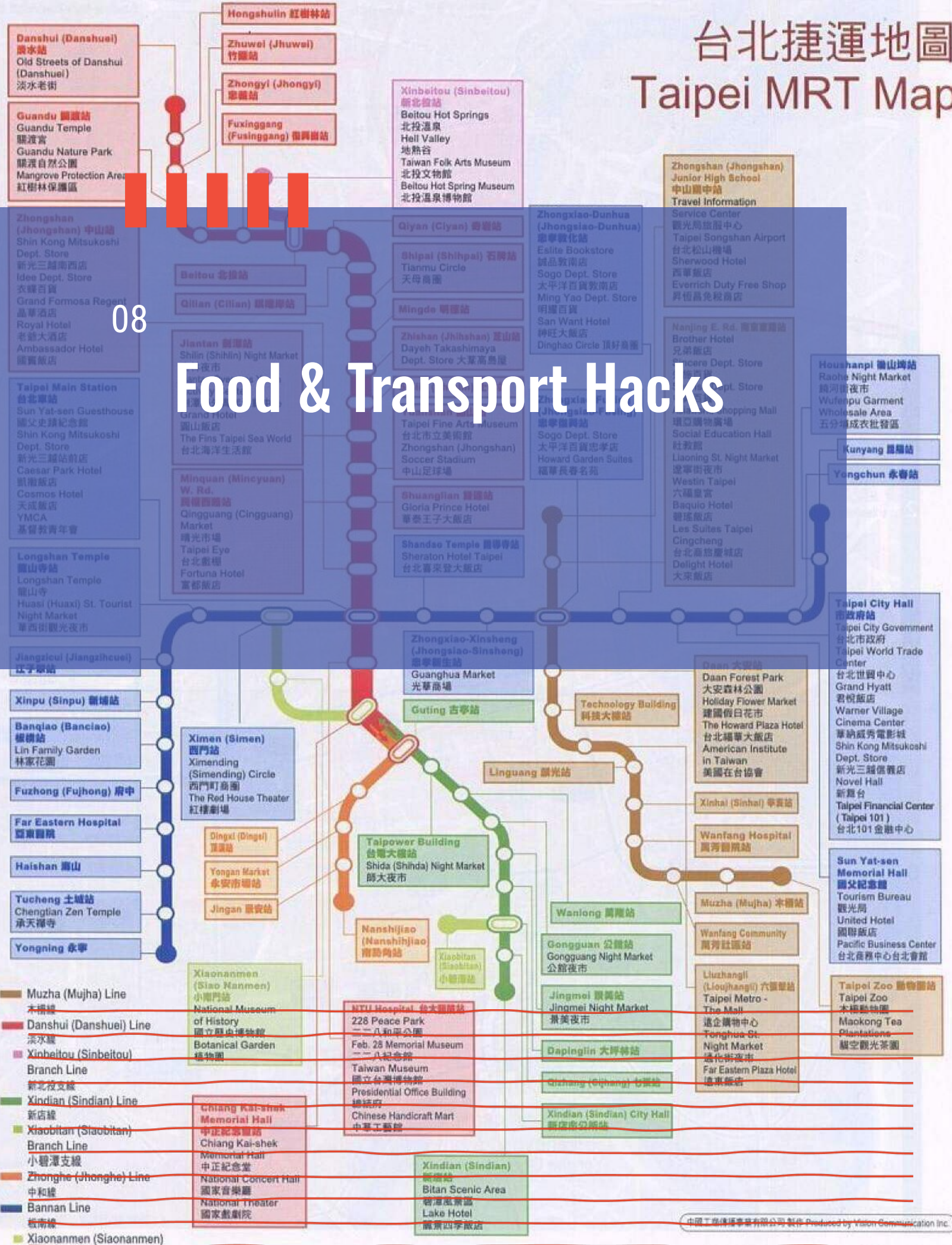
Next: Chapter 8 is your street-smart toolbox—food hacks, transport tips, and how to get the most flavor out of every mile.

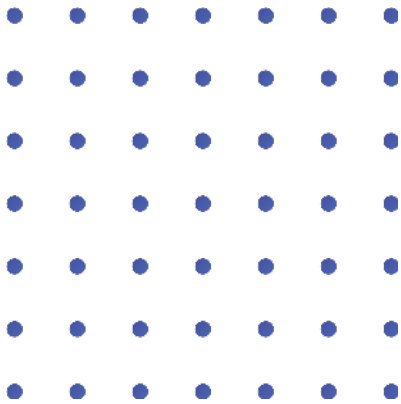


台北捷運地圖 Taipei MRT Map

08

Food & Transport Hacks





I once spent an hour weaving through Taichung backstreets looking for a fried chicken cart I'd read about online. Google Maps led me to a shuttered stall and a sign I couldn't read. Turns out, they're closed Mondays. I ate convenience store noodles in defeat, sitting on a curb with a plastic fork and a bruised ego.

This chapter is here to help you avoid that fate—and make every step more delicious.

Getting Around

Taiwan's public transportation is fast, clean, and tourist-friendly.

MRT (Metro): Your best friend in Taipei. Clear signage, cheap, fast.

TRA Trains: Great for short intercity trips.

HSR (High-Speed Rail): North to south in under 2 hours. Book online or at kiosks.





Buses: Inexpensive, widespread, but don't expect late-night service.

Pro move: Grab an EasyCard (or iPASS). It works on MRT, buses, some trains—and even at 7-Eleven.

App Arsenal

Here's what to download before the cravings kick in:

- Google Maps – Stall hours, walking routes, and food spot recon
- Google Translate – Snap signs, decode menus
- LINE Pay – Popular digital wallet
- Pleco – Excellent Chinese-English dictionary
- Papago – Handy voice translator in a pinch

Offline tip: Screenshot menus, addresses, or routes in advance. Taiwan signal is great—but dead zones exist.

Budget Flavor Moves

- Night Markets: Five dishes for the price of one restaurant meal
- Convenience Stores: Not a last resort—some 7-Eleven bentos are legit
- Lunch Sets: Go big at noon. Better deals, less crowds.
- Share Everything: Double your tasting power, halve the damage
- Department Store Food Courts: Air-con, clean, and full of variety



Local Pro Tips

- Bring tissues or wet wipes. Napkins aren't always a given
- Carry a reusable bag—for snacks or leftovers
- Don't chase the perfect stall. If it smells good and locals are lining up—go for it
- Hydrate often. Milk tea doesn't count

With the right tools, you don't need a tour guide—just an EasyCard, comfy shoes, and a little appetite-fueled curiosity.

Next: Chapter 9 dives into Taiwan's most underrated meals—breakfast joints, train station bentos, and the “wait, is this dessert or dinner?” daytime eats you can't miss.





09

Beyond the Markets— Breakfast, Bento & the Bizarre



It was barely 6 a.m., and the breakfast shop was packed. A scooter helmet in one hand, a flaky dan bing in the other—locals fueled up fast, efficient, and delicious. I pointed at the menu, mumbled “zhège,” and got a sweet-salty egg pancake that tasted like sunrise in a crepe.

Night markets get the headlines, but Taiwan’s food scene starts early—and stretches well into midday. Welcome to the island’s most underrated eating hours.

Taiwan’s Breakfast Ritual

Wake up early, eat fast, and get on with your day. Taiwanese breakfast culture is high volume, low fuss, and pure comfort.



Go-to bites:

- Dànbǐng (蛋餅): Egg pancake, often jazzed up with cheese, corn, or ham
- Yóutiáo (油條): Deep-fried dough sticks, best dipped in soy milk
- Dòujiāng (豆漿): Soy milk, sweet or savory, hot or iced
- Fàntuán (飯糰): Sticky rice roll stuffed with pickles, pork floss, and—you guessed it—yóutiáo





Pro tip: Most shops open by 5:30 a.m. and close before 11. Don't sleep in.

Scene setting: Metal stools, tiled walls, steam in the air. You'll hear chopsticks clacking before the sun's up.



Midday Moves: The Bento Box

Also known as biàndāng (便當), Taiwan's bento boxes are portable flavor bombs—designed for train rides, office desks, or a park bench under a tree.

Classic combo: Rice, braised pork chop or fried chicken thigh, pickled veggies, a tea egg, and maybe tofu or greens.

Where to get them: Train stations, convenience stores, specialty bento shops.

Best enjoyed: On a TRA or HSR ride with a window view and soy sauce-slicked chopsticks in hand.

Price point: Budget-friendly (80–120 NTD) and shockingly consistent in quality.



The “Wait, What Did I Just Eat?” Bites

Not every snack has a sign—or a category. But they’re worth the bite.

- Tea Eggs: Simmered in soy sauce and spices, found at every convenience store counter
- Red Yeast Pork: Sweet, bright pink, and weirdly good
- Fried Milk Cubes: Crispy outside, creamy inside, and physics-defying
- Century Eggs: Black on the outside, creamy and funky on the inside—don’t knock it till you try it

In Taiwan, food doesn’t start at dinner. It starts at sunrise—at a plastic stool, with a bowl of hot soy milk, and a line that moves like clockwork.

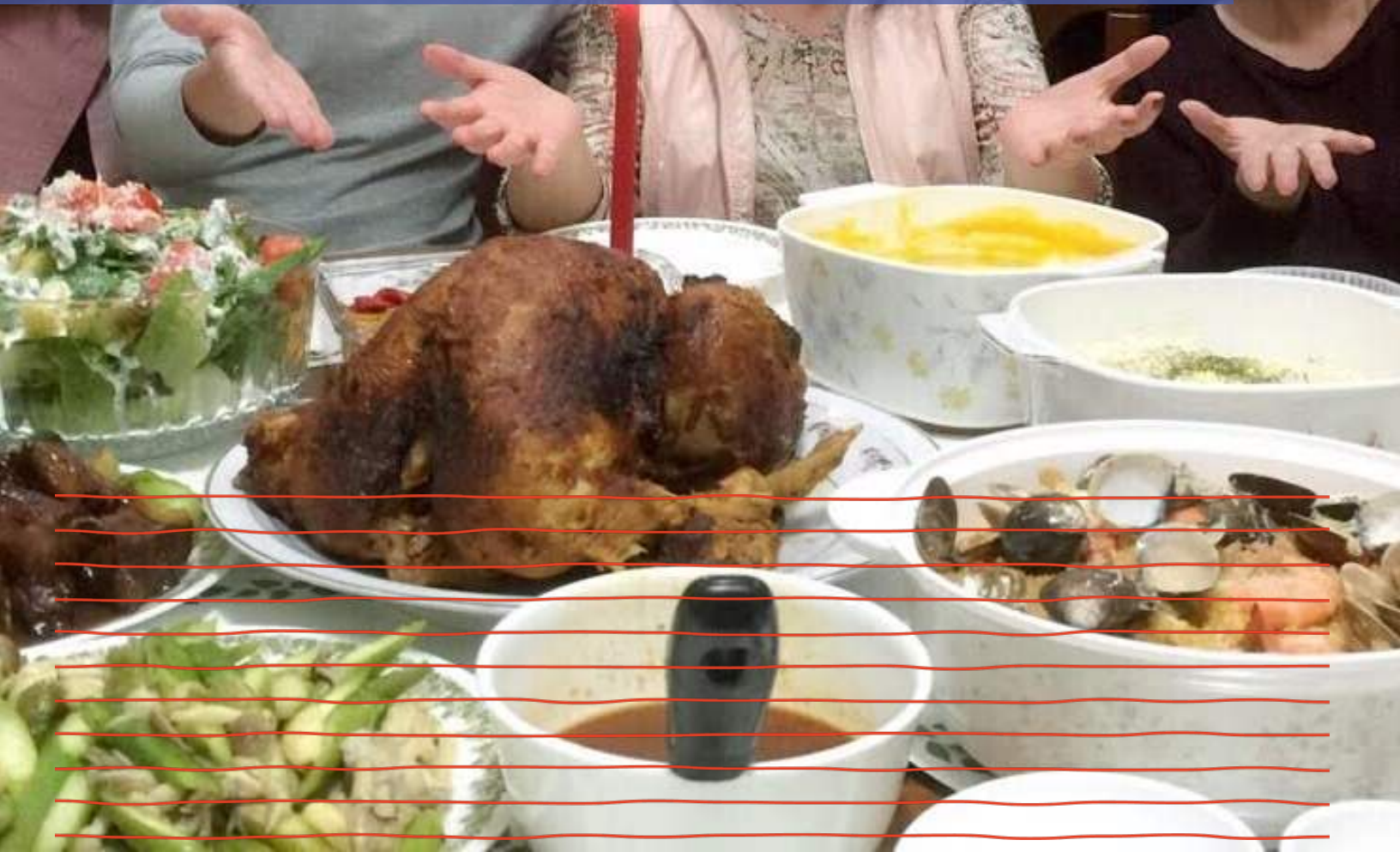
Next: Chapter 10 is about what happens when someone invites you to the table. Dining with locals? It’s not just a meal—it’s an invitation to belong.





10

Inside the Dining Circle



I was the only foreigner at a table of ten.
Before I could sit, someone filled my glass.
Before I could speak, a plate landed in front of me. Before I could decline, someone shouted “gàn bēi!” and we toasted with something that tasted like moonshine and courage.

In Taiwan, getting invited to a local meal isn't just dinner—it's an initiation.

The Invite

If someone invites you to a family meal, staff lunch, or countryside feast, say yes. You've crossed the invisible line from outsider to insider.

Cultural clue: Declining is polite. Accepting is golden. Just bring your appetite—and maybe a loose waistband.

The Table Dance

Taiwanese group meals follow a rhythm. Watch closely and you'll pick up the steps:



- Wait to be seated—elders and hosts sit first
- Don't pour your own drink if someone senior is present
- Wait for the toast or “chī ba” (let's eat) before diving in
- Use communal chopsticks if available. If not, follow others' lead

Pro tip: If your bowl is empty, someone will refill it. Gently decline with a smile—or eat your way to surrender.



Shared Plates, Shared Respect

Meals are served family-style. Dishes land in the middle, and everyone reaches in.

Etiquette 101:

- Don't reach across someone
- Rotate dishes or ask for help
- Serve others—it's a gesture of inclusion

Local signal: If someone serves you a bite from a shared plate, it's not just food—it's trust.





Giving Thanks

You don't need to bring a gift (unless it's formal), but showing gratitude matters.

Ways to say thanks:

- A sincere “xièxiè” (謝謝)
- A small box of fruit or sweets if it's a home meal
- A thank-you message afterward—text, LINE, or smile

Drinking tip: If the shots keep coming and you've had enough, toast with tea. It's the gesture that counts.

A shared meal in Taiwan isn't just about food—it's about being seen, included, and welcomed. And once you've sat at that table, you're not just a traveler anymore. You're part of the story.

Next: Chapter 11 serves up the festive eats of Taiwan's major holidays—from sticky rice dumplings to barbecue under a full moon.





11

Seasons of Flavor—Taiwan's Holiday Food Traditions



My first Lunar New Year in Taiwan was an explosion of color, noise, and table-bending feasts. Firecrackers snapped, elders shouted toasts, and I quickly learned that every dish had a meaning—and every toast came with a refill.

Seasonal food in Taiwan isn't just festive—it's symbolic, rooted in family, and often tied to centuries of custom. These aren't just meals. They're edible traditions.

Lunar New Year (Chūn Jié)

The granddaddy of them all. This holiday kicks off the lunar calendar with temple visits, family reunions, and tables so full you'll need a strategy.

Must-have dishes:

- Whole Fish (魚 yú): Served intact for prosperity
- Sticky Rice Cake (年糕 niángāo): A homophone for "higher year"—symbolizes growth and success
- Hot Pot: A bubbling, build-your-own feast that brings everyone together
- Tangerines & Oranges: Symbols of luck and wealth

Tradition tip: The youngest usually serves elders first. Expect rounds of rice wine and rapid-fire toasts.



Lantern Festival (Yuánxiāo Jié)

Fifteen days after Lunar New Year, this light-filled celebration wraps things up with glowing lanterns and sweet, chewy treats.

Signature bite:

Tāngyuán (湯圓):

Evening vibe: Parks glow with lanterns.
Wishes float through the air. Kids chase light and sugar highs.

Dragon Boat Festival (Duānwǔ Jié)

Held in summer to honor ancient poet Qu Yuan, this festival combines thrilling boat races with some serious dumpling action.

What to eat:

Zòngzi (粽子):



Cultural note: Homemade zòngzi = VIP treatment. If someone gives you one, you're officially in.

Where to go: Visit riverside towns like Lukang to catch the races and enjoy dumplings with drums in the background.





Ghost Festival (Zhōngyuán Jié)

A more spiritual celebration held in the seventh lunar month. Streets fill with incense, and families offer food to wandering spirits.

Typical offerings: Fruits, whole chickens, cakes, and wine placed on outdoor altars.

Traveler tip: Don't touch or move offerings. Observe with respect.

Atmosphere: Dim lights. Burning paper money. Opera performances for invisible audiences. Haunting in the best way.





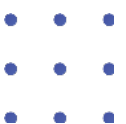
Mid-Autumn Festival (Zhōngqiū Jié)

A celebration of the full moon and family reunion—often held with open-air barbecues and seasonal treats.

Must-haves:

- Mooncakes: Dense pastries with lotus seed paste and salted egg yolk
- Pomelos: Peeled, eaten, and sometimes worn as hats by kids
- BBQ: Families grill under the moonlight—why? No one really knows, but no one complains

Best spot: Head to hills above Taipei or Keelung for moon views, meat skewers, and smoky laughter.





In Taiwan, holidays don't just mark time—they mark flavor. Each one tells a story through ingredients, rituals, and shared tables.

Next: Chapter 12 wraps it all up. What to do with your new street food skills—and why Taiwan might ruin you (in the best way) for food anywhere else.





12

The Final Bite





When I first came to Taiwan, I wasn't chasing a dish—I was chasing a feeling. That slow-burning magic that happens when a place surprises you with flavor, generosity, and moments that stick longer than the aftertaste.

Over these chapters, we've walked night markets, fumbled through language barriers, shared stools at sunrise, and burned our tongues in pursuit of something delicious. You've tasted the iconic, the odd, the under-the-radar—and maybe learned how to order a dumpling with just a smile.

If there's one truth I've found: eating well in Taiwan isn't about knowing where to go. It's about showing up. It's about pointing at the unknown and saying yes. It's about getting lost and finding flavor.

This book is a collection of those moments—drawn from years of filming, writing, and eating my way through alleyways, train stations, and roadside stalls. If you've made it this far, you're no longer just visiting—you're participating.





And maybe, just maybe, you'll end up like me: halfway across the world from where you started, chasing a rice ball down a side street and realizing you never really want to leave.

Stay curious. Stay hungry. And when in doubt—follow the smoke.

Want more stories, updates, or to see the meals in motion? Find me at: 👉

[youtube.com/c/AmaiwanTraveler](https://www.youtube.com/c/AmaiwanTraveler)

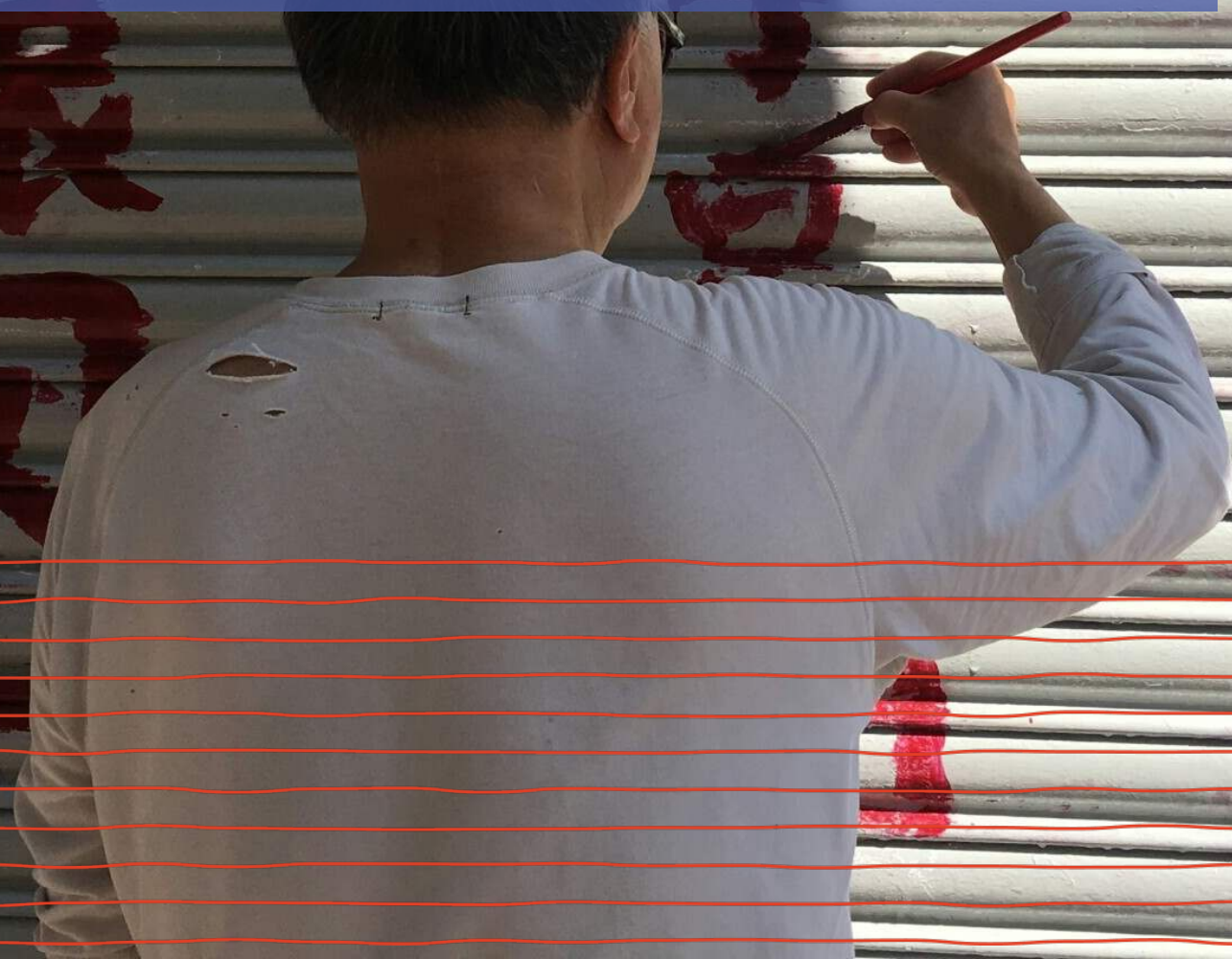
Wherever your next meal is—make it count. Taiwan's waiting.


Next up: Flip to the glossary for quick-and-dirty ordering tips, cheat phrases, and pronunciation guides that'll turn your belly and your brain into co-pilots.





Glossary for Hungry Travelers



 Tip: Screenshot this section before heading out. It's your cheat sheet for navigating night markets like a pro.

Essential Phrases

#	Pinyin/Characters	Phonetic	Meaning
1	Zhège/這個	[juh4-guh]	This one
2	Duōshǎo qián/多少錢	[dwo1-shal3-chyan2]	How much?
3	Bù là/不辣	[boo4-lah4]	Not spicy
4	Tài là le!/太辣了!	[tie4-lah4-luh]	Too spicy!
5	Hǎochī/好吃	[how3-chr1]	Delicious
6	Xièxiè/謝謝	[shyeh4-shyeh4]	Thank you
7	Zǎo'ān	[dzow3-ahn1]	Good morning



Meals & Savory Foods

#	Pinyin/Characters	Phonetic	Meaning
1	Biàndāng/便當	[byen4-dahng1]	Bento lunch box
2	Dànbǐng/蛋餅	[dahn4-beeng3]	Egg pancake
3	Lǔ ròu fàn/魯肉飯	[loo3-roh4-fahn4]	Braised pork rice
4	Yóutiáo/油條	[yo2-tyaow2]	Fried dough
5	Zhuā Bǐng/抓餅	[jwah1-beeng3]	Scallion pancake
6	Chòudòufu/臭豆腐	[choh4-doh4-foo3]	Stinky tofu
7	Zhūxiěgāo/豬血糕	[joo1-shyeh3-gaow1]	Pig's blood cake
8	Cāngyíngtóu/蒼蠅頭	[tsahng1-yeeng2-toh2]	Fly heads (garlic chives stir-fry)
9	Sānbēi jī/三杯雞	[sahn1-bay1-jee1]	Three-cup-chicken





Desserts & Snacks

#	Pinyin/Characters	Phonetic	Meaning
1	Dòuhuā/豆花	[doh4-hwa1]	Tofu pudding
2	Dòujiāng/豆漿	[doh4-jyahng1]	Soy milk
3	Fàntuán/飯糰	[fahn4-twan2]	Sticky rice roll
4	Bàobīng/爆冰	[bow4-beeng1]	Shaved ice
5	Xuěbīng/雪冰	[shweh3-beeng1]	Snow ice
6	Xiāncǎo/仙草	[shyen1-tsaow3]	Grass jelly
7	Yùyuán/芋圓	[yoo4-ywen2]	Taro balls





Drinks

#	Pinyin/Characters	Phonetic	Meaning
1	Zhēnzhū nǎichá/ 珍珠奶茶	[jen1-joo1-nigh3-chah2]	Bubble milk tea
2	Yì bēi zhēnzhū nǎichá/ 一杯珍珠奶茶，半糖，少冰	[ee4-bay1-jen1-joo1-nigh3-chah2,bahn4-tahng2,shal3-beeng1]	One-bubble-milk-tea,-half sugar, less ice

Ready to sound like you know what you're doing—even if you don't? Flip back to the food chapters, find the stall, and give it a shot. Worst case? You get something unexpected. Best case? You get seconds.





Bonus: Taipei Food Lover's Guide

As someone who's called Taipei home on and off for years—and eaten my way through just about every night market—here's my personal list of can't-miss food spots that go beyond tourist traps and into the soul of the city.

Addiction Aquatic Development (上引水產)

- What to expect: Seafood market meets sushi bar meets upscale hot pot.
- Why go: Impossibly fresh sashimi, grilled scallops, sake stations.
- Vibe: Fish market goes fashion week.

Ay Chung Flour-Rice Noodle (阿宗麵線) – Ximending

- What to expect: Slurpy, peppery rice noodles with braised pig intestines.
- Why go: Iconic bowl, sidewalk eating, fast-moving line that never stops.

Huaxi Street Night Market (華西街夜市)

- What to expect: The OG of Taipei night markets—gritty, old-school, and loaded with traditional eats.
- Must-try: Turtle jelly, snake soup (for the bold).





Fuhang Soy Milk (阜杭豆漿)

- What to expect: Long lines at sunrise. Thick flatbread, eggy pancakes, hot soy milk.
- Pro tip: Arrive before 7 a.m. or scroll your feed while you wait.

Dadaocheng (大稻埕)

- What to expect: Historic tea shops, herbal jelly vendors, and snack stalls in baroque buildings.
- Why go: For a taste of old Taipei with plenty of new flavors.

Din Tai Fung (鼎泰豐)

- What to expect: World-famous xiaolongbao and impeccable service.
- Why go: It lives up to the hype. Go to the original branch near Taipei 101.

Jin Feng Braised Pork Rice (金峰魯肉飯)

- What to expect: Melty pork over white rice, served fast and cheap.
- Local favorite: Comfort food done right.

Lin Dong Fang Beef Noodles (林東芳牛肉麵)

- What to expect: Deep, flavorful broth with perfectly chewy noodles.
- Pro tip: Late-night craving? They've got you covered.

Nanjichang Night Market (南機場夜市)

- What to expect: Local, low-key, packed with dishes you won't find at touristy spots.
- Must-try: Sesame oil chicken soup, oyster omelet.





Raohe Night Market (饒河夜市)

- What to expect: One straight line of flavor bombs—pork pepper buns, grilled squid, stinky tofu.
- Why go: It's compact, curated, and easy to navigate.



Shuanglian Market & Breakfast Stalls (雙連市場)

- What to expect: Morning-only magic—dan bing, radish cake, and soy milk on repeat.
- Why go: Ultra-local, no frills, all flavor.



Tonghua (Linjiang) Night Market (通化夜市)

- What to expect: Smaller market, big flavors. Classic Taiwanese snacks near nightlife.
- Pro tip: Great for a post-bar snack crawl.



Xing Fu Tang (幸福堂)

- What to expect: Brown sugar boba with torched tops and lots of flair.
- Why go: Trendy, tasty, and worth the short wait.



Ximending (西門町)


- What to expect: Taipei's youth culture hub. Fried chicken, Japanese sweets, and bubble tea galore.
- Why go: People-watching with a drink in one hand and a skewer in the other.






Yongkang Street (永康街)

- What to expect: Chic tea houses, scallion pancakes, mango shaved ice.
- Must-try: Yongkang Beef Noodles and the legendary Smoothie House.

 **Navigation Tip:** Most of these spots are easy to reach by MRT or bus. Walking between them isn't just doable—it's part of the experience. Bring your appetite, your camera, and a pair of forgiving pants.

For live tours, food walkthroughs, and behind-the-scenes stories: 

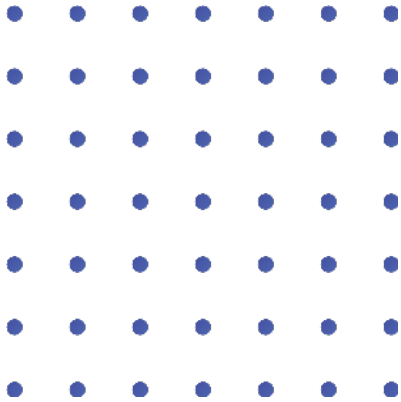
youtube.com/c/AmaiwanTraveler





About the Author

TINAM



Billy Murphey is a travel YouTuber, longtime Taiwan enthusiast, and the creator of Amaiwan Traveler—a channel dedicated to capturing the stories, streets, and eats of Taiwan and beyond. With a voice that leans more Anthony Bourdain than travel brochure, Billy brings curiosity, grit, and heart to every meal and moment.

He first landed in Taiwan in the mid-1990s with a camera, a backpack, and zero Mandarin. What started as a short trip turned into a decades-long love affair with the island’s food, culture, and people. Now, he splits his time between Taipei and Fort Lauderdale, Florida—still filming, still blogging, and still hungry.

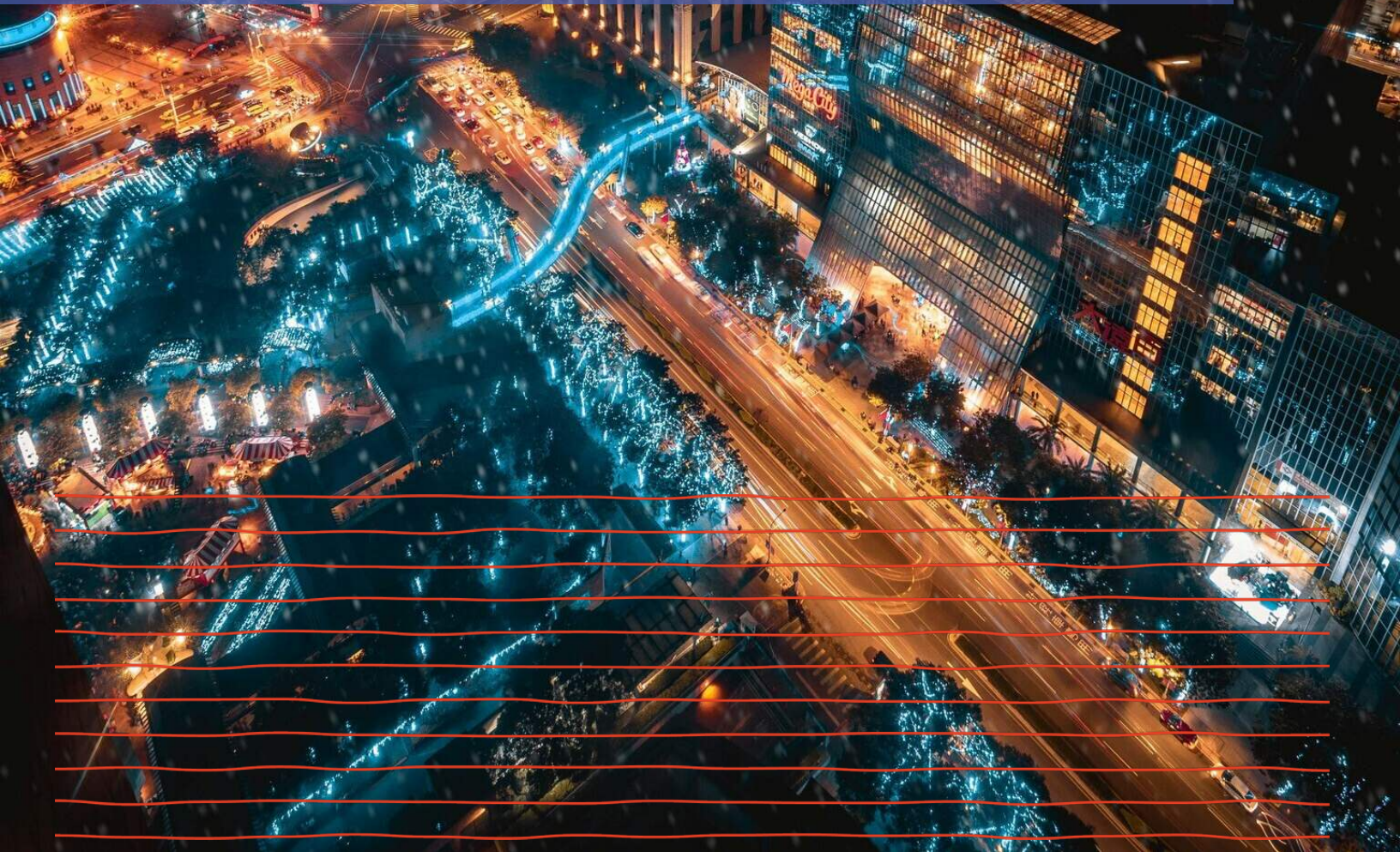
When he’s not chasing dumpling carts or sipping brown sugar boba, you’ll find him hiking Elephant Mountain or making the case that lu rou fan belongs on the list of world’s greatest comfort foods.

Follow his journey: [👉 youtube.com/c/AmaiwanTraveler](https://www.youtube.com/c/AmaiwanTraveler)





Back Cover Summary





Street Food : Eating Your Way Through Taiwan

Skip the tourist traps and dive straight into Taiwan's steamiest, stickiest, and most satisfying food experiences.

In this gritty and heartfelt guide, travel YouTuber and street food veteran Billy Murphey takes you from neon-lit night markets to back-alley breakfast joints—sharing the bites, smells, and stories that define the island's culture.

Inside you'll get:

- Must-try dishes (and which ones to skip)
- Real strategies for navigating Taiwan's food scene—even if you don't speak Mandarin
- Local insight on where to eat, what to order, and how not to embarrass yourself
- Region-by-region flavor maps and bonus food hacks

Whether you're a first-timer with a short layover or an expat still figuring it out, this isn't just what to eat in Taiwan. It's how to experience it.

"The best kind of food writing makes you hungry and makes you want to go. Billy does both."

