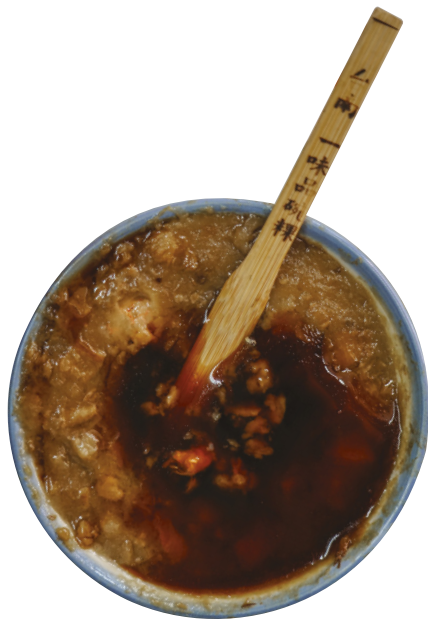


/ six dishes /



WA GUI (savory rice pudding) While this wobbly, brown dish won't win anyone over with its looks, *wa gui* is a surprisingly toothsome snack. Made from rice flour, pork and shrimp, and topped with thick soy sauce, it's served in the same bowl as it is steamed in. Traditionally eaten with a small wooden paddle (good luck with that), add some garlic or wasabi for extra flavor. **One Good Pin** draws long queues. 177, Section 3, Guohua St.; mains from NT\$30.

SHAN YOU YI MIAN (eel noodles) A mix of *yi mien* (egg noodles), cabbage, garlic, onion and chunks of fried eel, this thick, sweet and tangy soup is a Tainan roadside classic. The stall on the corner of Guohua Street has been serving it for more than 40 years—order the stir-fried version if goopy soup is not your thing. 46, Section 3, Guohua St.; mains from NT\$80.



Grazing Tainan

While Taipei offers a beginners' guide to Taiwanese cuisine, serious foodies should head further south, to culinary capital Tainan—the birthplace of some of the country's most popular dishes. Here, we seek out six quintessential local eats in this coastal food hub.

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHRIS SCHALKX



MIGAO (glutinous rice cake) While called a cake, this classic dish more closely resembles the ubiquitous Taiwanese *lu rou fan* (braised pork rice), but swaps out steamed rice for the sticky kind. Along with soy-braised pork, the Tainanese version is also topped with fish floss, cucumber slices and boiled peanuts. Visit **Shui Xian Gong Migao** near the Shui Xian temple, where constant crowds wait for one of their hearty bowls. 48, Section 3, Guohua St.; mains from NT\$25.



GUAN CAI BAN (coffin toast) Said to have been created by second-generation shophouse **Chikan Eatery** in the 1950s to satisfy U.S. Army personnel stationed nearby, *guan cai ban* is a thick slab of deep-fried bread, hollowed out to resemble a coffin, and filled with sweet and creamy seafood chowder. 180 Zhongzheng Rd.; mains from NT\$60.



SHI MU YU ZHOU (milkfish congee) This popular breakfast dish is composed of tender milkfish, fresh oysters and briny rice porridge. Order a bowl with crispy *youtiao* breadsticks, and a side of deep-fried fish intestines if you're an adventurous eater. **Ah Hang** uses only freshly caught fish, making it a local favorite. 704 Gonggyuan South Rd.; mains from NT\$70.

BA BAO BING (eight treasure shaved ice) Tainan's ferociously hot summers call for something cooling—*bao bing* (shaved ice) does just that. You'll often find it topped with fresh fruits, but the city's signature style comes piled with "eight treasures," including peanuts, red and green beans, mochi and brown sugar. **Bing Xiang** is a city-wide favorite known for serving up generous portions. 160, Section 1, Minsheng Rd.; mains from NT\$50.



MARKET MEALS

TAINAN'S FAMED NIGHT MARKETS MAKE IDEAL GRAZING STRIPS—HERE ARE SOME OF THE CITY'S BEST.



Yongle Market Part-wet market, part-food court, Yongle Market and the shophouse restaurants on adjoining Guohua Street attract diners from breakfast to dinner. Locals arrive as early as 5 a.m. for a pre-work breakfast, and tourists take over around noon for some of the city's most famous eats. It gets busy, but the *popiah*-like spring rolls at **Jin De** and the *gua bao* (Taiwanese hamburger) at **A Song** are worth the wait. Sec. 3, Guohua St.; open 5 a.m.–10 p.m.



Hua Yuan Night Market This is Taiwan's biggest night market, so you'll be spoiled for choice among the 400 vendors who hawk their food here. Seek out **A San Ge Ke** for their crispy oyster omelets and follow your nose to **Jie Chan Xiao Pu** for stinky tofu fermented in black tea (it tastes better than it smells). Locals and tourists visit in huge numbers, so arrive around 6 p.m. to beat the crowds. Sec. 3, Hai-an Rd.; open Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays, 5 p.m.–1 a.m.

RIGHT: DREAMSTIME.COM



Da Dong Night Market Set on a huge parking lot in the east of the city, Da Dong offers a never-ending array of eating options, as well as clothing, electronics, toys and carnival games. A fail-safe strategy to scout out the best snacks? Just join the longest queues. Pork out on the fried salty short ribs at **Shan Pin**, or line up at **Gu Duo Mee Sua** for their famed gooey oyster vermicelli soup. Sec. 1, Linsen Rd.; open Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays, 6 p.m.–1 a.m.

LEFT: FACEBOOK.COM/JIE.MENTOR14



Wusheng Night Market As Dadong and Hua Yuan markets attract the biggest crowds, smaller Wusheng, one of the city's oldest, remains delightfully local. Foodie favorites include *guai shu shu*, the Taiwanese sticky rice pork sausage found at **Zheng's Sausages**, and the sweet egg-shaped pancakes at **Lao Zheng Pai** that can be ordered with custard or red-bean fillings. 42, Lane 69, Wusheng Rd.; open Wednesdays and Saturdays, 6:30 p.m.–1:30 a.m.