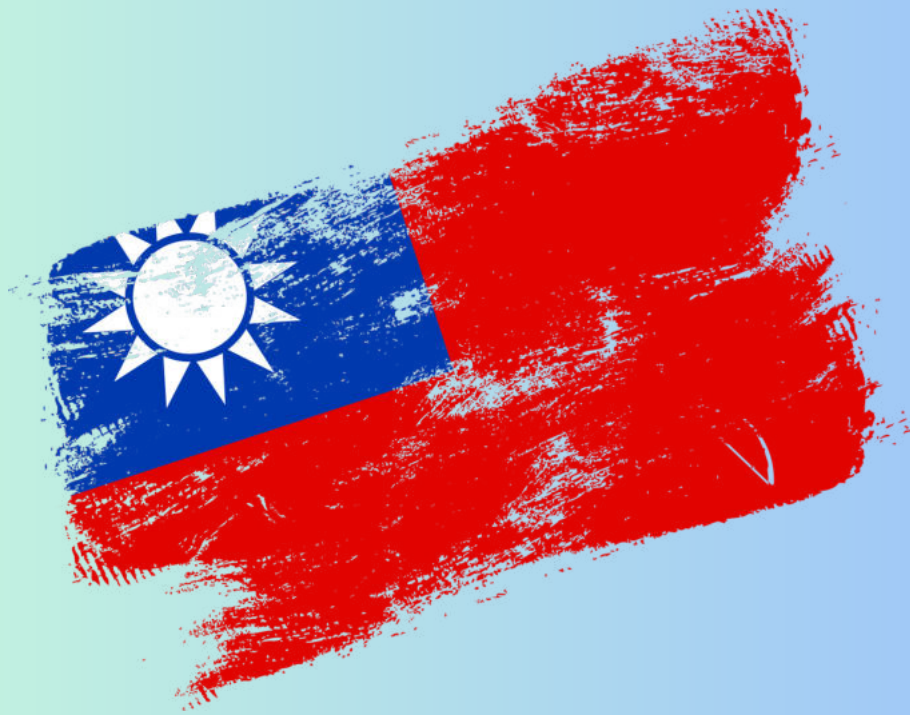


TASTING NOTES

Taiwanese Tasting Menu

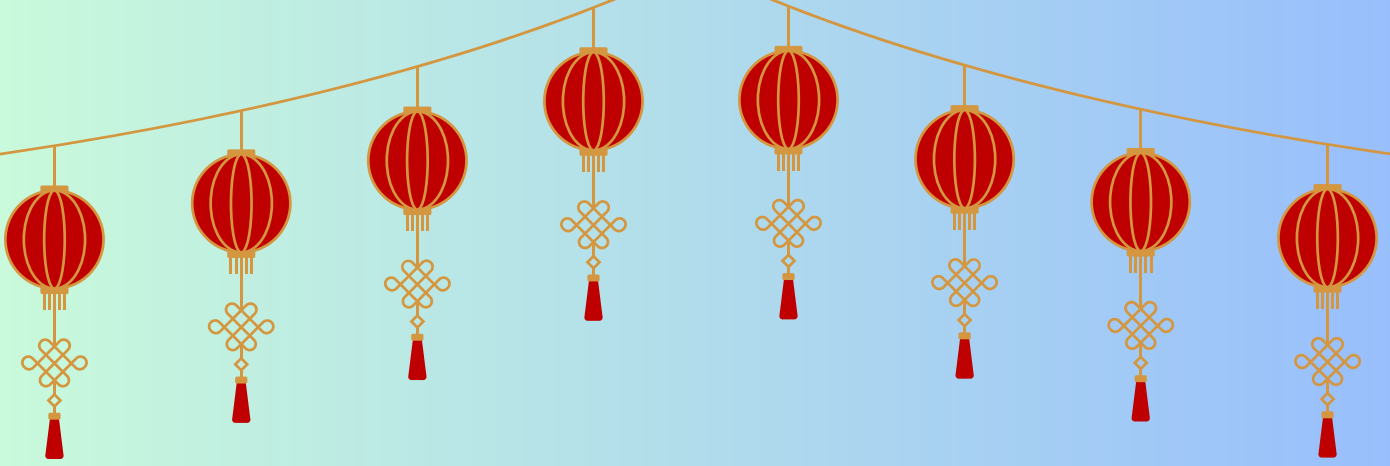


March 20 - August 1, 2026

Friday & Saturday evenings

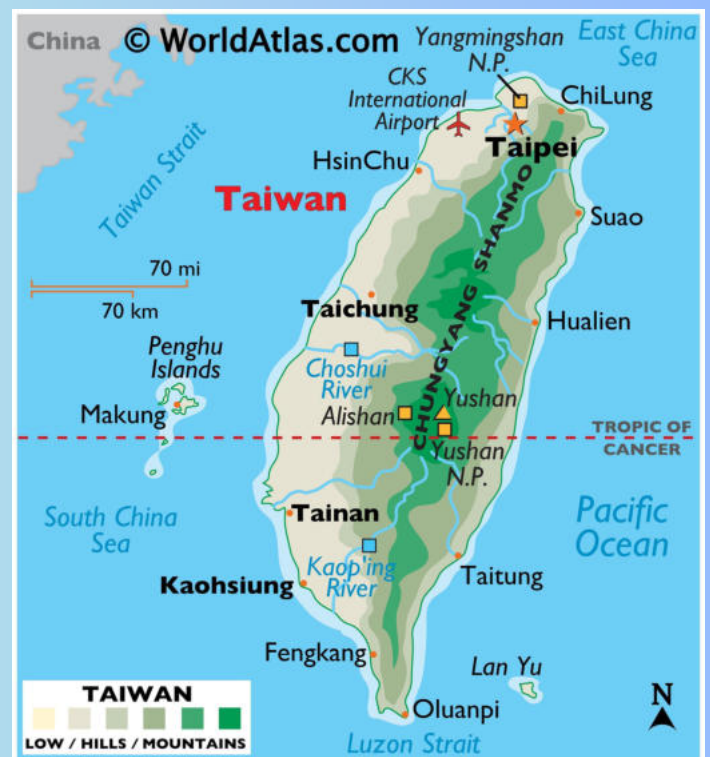
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Trigo Food + Drink
132 Main Street
Lafleche, Saskatchewan



A Warm Welcome

Welcome to our Taiwanese Tasting Menu. Taiwan has been a country we have wanted to feature for quite some time. Often grouped together with the People's Republic of China, Taiwanese people will proudly state that they stand on their own. While the cuisine and culture certainly borrow from each other and share similarities, there remain distinct differences that justify the spotlight being shone on Taiwanese cuisine.



It seems like every other month Taiwan appears in international news, often accompanied by the words “China,” “threat,” and “conflict.” The Chinese government paints Taiwan as a renegade province they claim is theirs to take, despite the fact that Taiwan is a self-ruled democracy of 24 million people who have never, in their history, been ruled by the People’s Republic of China.

While some may say that Taiwanese food is simply a subset of Chinese cuisine, it is not, as Taiwan is not a part of China. However, many dishes have Chinese roots, mainly due to immigration, Taiwanese food culture is entirely unique.

Taiwan tells the story of a country shaped by many colonial influences, yet it remains vibrant in its self-expression. It is important not to lose sight of the fact that, for many Taiwanese people, the history of food and the stories that accompany each dish are vital to its long-term preservation.

During the time I spent in Taiwan in January 2026, I was very fortunate to gain first-hand knowledge and experience with Ivy Chen, a local food historian and culinary teacher. She has been operating her cooking school, Ivy’s Kitchen, in the Shilin district of Taipei since the 1990s. She has taught thousands of students, from tourists to professional chefs from all over the world.

The time I spent with her was not only educational but also deeply inspirational. I must have heard the expression **“the Taiwanese flavour”** a hundred times during my time with her. For Ivy, identifying and recreating the true flavours of Taiwan, not a mash-up of regional Chinese or Japanese cuisines is vitally important, as it relates not only to food, but also to culture and identity.



Taiwan is often misunderstood by the world as a Mandarin-speaking collective of people who may or may not be Chinese. It is seen as the land of glitzy night markets and hearty bowls of beef noodle soup. While these descriptors may hold some truth, they only skim the surface.

It is impossible, however, to describe Taiwanese food without acknowledging Chinese immigration. The first wave, in the 17th century, consisted primarily of Hokkien-speaking people from the southern Chinese province of Fujian, who brought with them a love of seafood, rice, and pork. Further immigration in the mid-20th century broadened the culinary landscape. Add to this the colonial influence of Japan, intermarriage, and time, and what emerges is a richly diverse and eclectic cuisine.

While the culinary influence from Fujian brought lightly seasoned dishes and a strong use of ginger, garlic, and green onions, Taiwanese cuisine thrives on ingredients that grow well locally. For carbohydrates, this means sweet potatoes and rice. Sweet potatoes are so ingrained in the food heritage of Taiwan many people say that the map of Taiwan actually looks like the shape of a sweet potato. I don't think they are wrong! For protein, pork dominates. Given that two-thirds of Taiwan is covered by mountains, and pigs require less grazing space, they play a significant role in the Taiwanese diet. Conversely, cattle are less common, and most beef is imported from countries such as Australia and the United States. This is somewhat surprising given the popularity of dishes like beef noodle soup.

Overall, Chinese and Japanese influences have had the most significant impact on Taiwanese cuisine. Although Taiwan was once an outpost of the Dutch, their culinary influence is minimal. That said, it is often suggested that the Dutch may have inspired Taiwan's love of deep frying.

And of course, when the United States provided Taiwan with significant economic aid during the Cold War in the 1950s, Western culinary influences followed - particularly through crops such as wheat and soybeans.

Oolong Tea Service

During our trip to Taiwan in January 2026, we spent the day at Wang Tea in Taipei, the oldest tea house in Taiwan. We were treated to a wonderful tea tasting ceremony where we were able to sample many different styles of Oolong Tea, the tea Taiwan is most known for. After much debate and discussion, we selected the High Mountain Oolong Tieguanyin (“Tee-Gwan-Yin”) for Trigo. The tea is characterized by heavy roasting and a reddish colour. It’s rich, sweet, and slightly creamy.

Your tea will be presented in tea pots and cups we purchased in Taipei. Each full pot contains 4 grams of tea and one can get 5 brews from the tea leaves, ensuring that all of the flavour is extracted. If your pot runs low, please don’t hesitate to ask for more hot water for another brew. We also feature Tieguanyin Oolong tea in 2 of our cocktails.



We shipped 30 smaller packs (75 grams) of Tieguanyin tea (along with a brewing instruction pamphlet) to Trigo from Taipei and they are available for purchase if one is interested. You only need a small amount of tea per pot with a complete bag yielding 19 full pots with a total of 95 brews.



Xiao Tsai / Xiao Chi (Street Food / Small Eats)

Gua Bao

One of the most iconic and most recognized foods from Taiwan is the Gua Bao. Often referred to as the Taiwanese Hamburger, or in Taiwanese Hokkien as “tiger bites pig” with the bun symbolizing the mouth of a tiger and the pork in the middle as the pig. It’s design is akin to a wallet and is an omen for more money.

Our recipe includes a 20-hour braised pork belly with light and dark soy sauce, Shaoxing rice wine, spring onions, garlic, ginger, star anise, garlic powder, dried red Thai chillies, Chinese cinnamon bark, and orange peel.

Once the bun is filled with the pork, stir-fried pickled mustard greens are added, topped with a sweet peanut powder, and garnished with cilantro.



Homemade Taiwanese Pork Sausage

One of the defining characteristics of Taiwanese sausage is its sweetness. Taiwan uses a fair amount of sugar in their sausage making. Southern Taiwan uses more sugar in many of their dishes than the north (due to its historical sugar production), so although all Taiwanese pork sausage is sweet, the kind you find in the south is ultra sweet. The other interesting thing about this dish is the inclusion of raw garlic. Taiwanese pork sausage is traditionally served with either slices or a bowl of raw garlic. It may be strange for most of us to eat raw garlic on its own but try it together with the sausage; it cuts through the sweetness nicely.

We make our Taiwanese Pork Sausage in-house. If you are interested, we will have some for sale in the freezer in our market area. The ingredients include pork shoulder, garlic, sugar, Shaoxing cooking wine, sea salt, curing salt, white pepper, Chinese 5-spice, and cinnamon.



Fried Egg Tofu

To make this dish we first must make homemade soy milk. To this we strain in an egg-salt-sugar mixture and then steam over low heat for about 25 minutes. When completely cooled, the tofu can be sliced into squares and then deep fried in a wok. When I first made this dish in Taipei with my cooking instructor Ivy Chen I asked her “how do you know when the tofu is done?” Her matter-of-fact response was “when the outside resembles old man skin!”. That always stuck with me; no instant read thermometer needed!



The sauce that is drizzled over the top includes soy sauce, sugar, rice vinegar, bonito (smoked tuna) flakes, garlic, and chili oil. Garnishes include cilantro and sesame seeds.



Taiwanese Cucumber Salad with Tiger Dressing

A light refreshing dish of cucumber salad completes the first part of our Taiwanese Tasting Menu. In order to draw as much moisture as possible away from the cucumbers we marinate them in salt and sugar for about 1 hour before rinsing them. We add a little garlic and bell pepper before tossing with our homemade Tiger Dressing, which is a staple Taiwanese salad dressing, consisting of chilli, garlic, Chinkiang Black Vinegar, Sugar, Sesame and Canola Oils, Salt, and White Pepper.

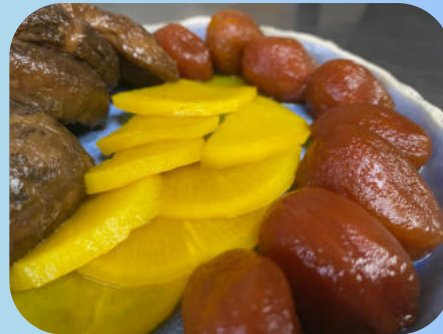


Taiwanese Pickles

All our homemade pickles have been canned using the water bath method and will have safe storage for about 18 months. We have prepared extra jars which are available in our market area if you'd like to take some home.

- Yellow Pickled Daikon – Daikon (Lo Bok), Sea Salt, Caster Sugar, Pickling Salt, Rice Vinegar, Carlic Cloves, Green Sichuan Peppercorns, Chinese Cinnamon Bark, Kampot Black Peppercorns, and Bay Leaves.

- *Soy Pickled Shitake Mushrooms* – Reconstituted Dried Shitake Mushrooms, Mushroom Soaking Liquid, Ginger, Light Soy Sauce, Chinkiang Black Rice Vinegar, Dark Brown Sugar, Star Anise, Chinese Cinnamon Bark, Thai Bird's Eye Chilli.
- *Soy Pickled Tomatoes* – Grape/Cherry Tomatoes (skin removed), Caster Sugar, Rice Vinegar, Light Soy Sauce, Dark Soy Sauce, Lemon Juice.



Taiwanese Fried Chicken

We debated about including this dish on the menu for a long time. We knew that we wanted to include 3-Cup Chicken (coming later in the menu), which is arguably more of a traditional Taiwanese chicken dish. In visiting several Night Markets in and around Taipei there always was a long line of people waiting at the fried chicken stand, more than any other food stall. Not one to miss out, I took my position as well. After my first bite I was hooked. Somewhat embarrassingly I kept returning to the Taiwanese Fried Chicken stand at the Night Markets. Rooted in the American South, fried chicken seemed to take on a new dimension when prepared in a Taiwanese style. When I inquired of my cooking instructor Ivy why it seemed like the fried chicken stands at the Night Markets were always so busy compared to the more traditional stands (like beef noodle soup, oyster omelettes, scallion pancakes) her response was that it was the American influence, particularly with the younger generation.

I'm not sure of the exact ingredients used during the preparation of the fried chicken I had at the many Night Markets I ate at, but it sent me down a recipe/research rabbit hole as I thought it the best fried chicken dish I ever had. It is for these reasons that I wanted to include this dish on our menu. I'm not sure I am able to get it exactly right like I had at the Night Markets, but maybe close enough! So, there you have it...two chicken dishes on our menu.

Our preparation includes marinating the chicken thighs in a batter of our homemade soy milk, garlic, ginger, corn flour, cumin, Chinese 5-spice powder, soy sauce, and rice vinegar. Once marinated for several hours the chicken is dredged in a spiced flour mix of tapioca flour, red Kampot pepper, cayenne pepper, garlic powder, Chinese 5-spice powder, and salt. We first deep fry the chicken for a few minutes at a low 325F, let the chicken cool completely before returning to the deep fryer at the higher temperature of 375 F for a few more minutes just before service.

Accompanying you chicken is a homemade hot sauce (garlic, ginger, rice vinegar, light soy sauce, chilli powder, hot paprika, caster sugar, and honey.)

Sweet Potato Fries with Plum Powder

Sweet Potatoes are very popular in Taiwan and are grown throughout most of the country. The sweet potato is so engrained in Taiwan many refer to the shape of the country to the shape of a sweet potato.

Since we decided to have Taiwanese Fried Chicken on the menu, we also had to include Sweet Potato Fries, as they are the perfect accompaniment. Like the chicken these fries are also battered before being double deep-fried at 2 different temperatures. The key mandatory ingredient here is the Taiwanese Plum Powder that is sprinkled over the fries. The plum powder hits all the taste sensations: sweet, sour, salt. Taiwanese plum powder is not solely for sprinkling on sweet potatoes fries but is also used to sprinkle on fruits and can be use in drinks. It is difficult to source Taiwanese Plum Powder outside of Taiwan and can be very expensive if ordered online. I did not purchase any when in Taiwan as the menu hadn't been decided yet and I wasn't sure whether sweet potato fries would be included. As luck would have it I found it on one of my stopovers in Amsterdam at a very large Asian Superstore. I was very happy! Although the staff at the store were perplexed why I was purchasing an entire case and packing it into my suitcase! So, if you are interested in bringing some authentic Taiwanese Plum Powder home with you, we have some at our market area.

A Little More

Braised Beef Short Rib with Scallion Pancake

If you walk the streets of Taiwan, you're likely to stumble upon a street vendor selling flaky spring onion pancakes called cong zhuo bing topped with anything from cheese, egg, basil, or ham. These pancakes are cooked in lard on a flat griddle and "flaked up" through some vigorous spatula action. I've watched these master cooks several times and their technique is truly mesmerizing, and, as I found, difficult to replicate without considerable practice. Lucky for me Taiwanese scallion pancakes come in all different thickness levels, not just the super thin flaky style.

There is still a fairly steep learning curve to the thicker scallion pancakes, like the one you are having this evening. There are plenty of steps, from resting the dough, separating into individual portions, brushing each piece with lard, sprinkling the scallions on top,, rolling the dough into a rope, and then wrapping it like a coil, before another rest and final rolling process. Finally, the pancake is fried on a griddle.

Topping the pancake is our long slow braised beef short ribs (about 20 hours). The braise includes garlic, honey, scallions, fermented bean paste, sea salt and chilli powder. Once done the braising liquid is cooked further to reduce, then strained, followed by whisking through of peanut butter.

Just before the pancakes leave the kitchen the beef is topped with a small shredded salad with a mirin-sesame oil dressing.



Sticky Oil Rice

While this dish can be found on Taiwanese dining tables all year round, historically it is given as a gift to others after the arrival of a baby boy. Contrary to its name the dish should not be oily; there is just enough oil to coats the rice, leaving a glistening shine.



This dish is made with long grain glutinous “sticky” rice with dried shiitake mushrooms, dried shrimp, pork tenderloin, shallots, garlic, carrots, with a mixture of soy sauce, rice wine, canola oil, and black rice vinegar. Although optional we also topped the dish with a healthy glug of Haishan Sauce. You may have eaten or seen Haishan sauce. It’s often the finishing touch on many of Taiwan’s street food. It translates to “sea mountain sauce”, which is fitting as it seems to go on everything from the sea to the mountains and everything in between. It’s sweet and orange in colour and heavy on the use of ketchup. In addition to ketchup there is demerara sugar, white miso paste (a remnant of the Japanese colonial era), rice flour, and chilli sauce. If you’ve ever had an Oyster omelet from Taiwan, this sauce is liberally poured over top.

Three-Cup Chicken

Known as *San Bei Ji*, this dish became very popular in the 1970s in Taiwan. The defining characteristic of this dish comes down to the heavily reduced nutty, sweet, and salty sauce. The “Three Cup” refers to the mandatory use of Sesame Oil, Rice Wine, and Soy Sauce. However, each is used in different proportions and not one or three cups each. My Taiwanese cooking instructor Ivy thinks that the name “Three Cup Chicken” just sounded good and it stuck. Although the true origins of this dish can be trace back to the Jiangxi province of China, the biggest difference is that the Taiwanese rendition incorporates a handful of basil (in our case Thai Basil).



Shrimp, Pork & Cabbage Soup with Egg Floss

Taiwan is famous for its Beef Noodle Soup. There are numerous famous Beef Noodle Soup restaurants in Taipei, some even with Michelin Stars, and the long lineups that accompany many of them. When we were initially planning this Taiwanese menu about 1 year ago we were settled on having Beef Noodle Soup on the menu. We thought it was a no-brainer decision. After traveling there in January and trying a variety of the Beef Noodle soups we found some that were outstanding and some that were just so-so and not convinced some of them were worth the hype. There is a real art to making a great Beef Noodle Soup and some of the best restaurants and chefs have dedicated decades of their life to this one dish. Experience matters here. I didn't want to make a mediocre Beef Noodle Soup that was underwhelming. So, in discussion with my Taiwanese chef friend she suggested we should consider another popular soup that has all of the essence of the Taiwanese flavours. I made Shrimp, Pork, and Cabbage soup a few times in Taiwan, and to be honest, on the whole, I preferred it to the Beef Noodle Soups I tried. Not everyone will agree however and assert that Beef Noodle Soup is one of the essential dishes of Taiwan and maybe should have been included on our menu full stop!

This soup uses a very light chicken broth that is quite different than the chicken stock we have been making here for years. Ours is rich, loaded with ingredients, full of flavour, gelatinous, and long simmered. In Taiwan broth and stocks are quite light and bright and only cooked with minimal ingredients. It includes chicken, a few green onions, a little ginger, and a splash of rice vinegar. Simmered for about an hour and then strained.



Our soup includes dried shrimp and shiitake mushrooms, cabbage, shrimp, pork, carrots, bonito fish flakes, soy sauce, pepper, sugar, salt, black rice vinegar, cilantro, and spring onion. One of the unique features of this dish is the use of egg floss, which is made by whisking eggs very well and passing them through a strainer into hot oil. The eggs are circulated vigorously with chop sticks to create a “floss”, and this is used as a garnish to the soup.

Milkfish Belly (optional add-on)

Milkfish is a unique fish in that it is prize for its unctuous belly and black strip of fat. While popular throughout Taiwan, it is particularly celebrated in the southern city of Tainan, where the fish is harvested. In fact, it’s an icon of the city with a large statue called the “Milkfish Kid” proudly displayed in the city.

One thing about Milkfish is that there are hundreds of small bones. I was fortunate to spend some time with a fillet master at the local fish market in Shilin, Taipei who showed me how to fillet the fish properly and remove just the belly. It’s a skill that requires practice and patience.

Milkfish is often prepared simply by pan frying with a little salt, rice wine, and a fresh squeeze of lime, which is how we’ve prepared it.



Desserts

Desserts with Beans? Is this true?

Yes, beans are desserts in Taiwan. Unlike western desserts that are characterized by butter, cream, chocolate, and sweets, Taiwanese sweets embrace native products like beans, root vegetables, and starches. Mixed with a little sugar and molded into colourful balls and served cold over shaved ice or a bath of brown sugar water. For a country that veers towards the sweeter side of things, Taiwan, ironically, doesn't have much of a dessert culture. Ovens are also not very popular in households, so eating cakes and pastries are quite rare and reserved mainly for large commercial bakeries and only purchased for very special occasions.

While we would love to dive into a rich German Chocolate Torte right now, we are metaphorically in Taiwan, so we should do as the Taiwanese do!

QQ

One of the most prized textures in Taiwanese cuisine is an elusive concept known as Q. Most often mistranslated as "al dente", Q is the texture that is both elastic and chewy, like tapioca pearls. It's reminiscent of the gummy bear texture. Many street vendors will advertise their goods with the letter Q in their sign, or QQ for particular emphasis. What follows are two important Taiwanese desserts with QQ.

Tang Yuan

Tang Yuan is a dish tied to the Lantern Festival – a celebration of the winter that falls on the last day of the 15-day long Lunar New Year festivities. While the dessert can be shaped into spheres the size of golf balls and stuffed with peanut or black sesame paste, the classic way to prepare tang yuan in Taiwan is to roll rice dough into miniature balls and serve it in a plain brown-sugar soup with ginger. The pink and white colours represent fortune and happiness.



Red Tortoise Cake

The tortoise represents longevity and the red colour represents good fortune and prosperity. The cake is traditionally served at special occasions or important cultural celebrations. There are many variations of the tortoise cake today, with different fillings and colours, such as durian and coconut.

Sweetened cooked red adzuki beans are made into a rough paste and wrapped in rice dough. The ball is then gently pressed into a Tortoise mold and steamed. The finished cake is brushed with oil as it should glisten with an almost latex-like sheen to it.



Trigo Market & Take-Away Items

Be sure to check out our market area for unique homemade crafted items and ingredients from around the world. We always try to offer homemade treats dedicated to our current and past menus, including unique spices and blends.

We also have a small, but growing, menu of homemade take-away/prepared foods that we recently started offering which may be of interest. These include Chicken Pot Pie, Roasted Butternut Squash Soups, Chickpea and Chorizo Stea, homemade Spanish Chorizo Sausage as well as Taiwanese Sausage, Shepherd & Cottage Pie, and Salted Dulce de Leche Brownies. All come with ingredient lists and preparation instructions.

There is a separate Take Away & Market Menu loaded on to your Tablet for you to view as well as being available through our QR Code.

Many Thanks

All of us at Trigo want to thank-you for spending your evening with us to experience our Taiwanese Tasting Menu.



We are dedicated to showcasing the culinary delights from all corners of the world. We offer two international menus per year (March to August and August to December). It generally takes about 1 year of planning for each of our menus, so we are always thinking ahead to what's next. Our small dedicated team is passionate about providing you with a unique culinary journey and we hope we have enjoyed yourself tonight.

We know many of you come from quite a distance and make a special effort to dine here. We are very grateful and hope to see you again at one of our other upcoming international tasting menus.

Adam, Tina, Keana, Jacey, Wadena, and Elvira