

The background is white with several large, dark green triangles pointing towards the corners. Four green cucumbers with light green stripes are scattered around the central text: one at the top, one on the left, one on the right, and one at the bottom.

Cucumber

Special edition of FLAL Newsletter, spring 2022
Managing editor: Megan Chen

Tasty, Healthy Boiled Chicken Keeps You Fit and Grateful



By Stephanie Liu

Whenever classes are over, students file out of the side entrance of NTPU and walk across Guoji 2nd street to Guoxue street. There are a total of eleven food carts lining on the sidewalk, as if a pocket-sized international street gathering various exotic food.

Among them is Mrs. Julie, a small food cart which sells boiled salty chicken. On the surface of the cart lies a freezer full of vegetables and meat. A few menus, pens and a bucket of bamboo skewers are placed beside, and a beige curtain with the shop name hung on the top. Julie Chen and Jason Liu are the owners of Mrs. Julie, who have been married for over three decades.

"After retirement, we seek for things to kill time. We are inept civilians, so the task should better be simple," said Julie. Since the couple live nearby, they decided to start over next to NTPU.

"We go to Sanxia traditional market every morning to buy ingredients. Sometimes we drive thirty minutes to the market in Banqiao," said Julie. Mrs. Julie possesses multifarious vegetables, providing over 30 options for customers to choose from.

As the season changes, the contents on the menu adjust accordingly. "Choosing fresh vegetables in season is especially important. We hope our consumers can eat without worries," said Jason. "Sometimes people complain about not being able to eat a certain kind of vegetable, such as broccoli or cabbage. Although we feel sorry for failing to meet their needs, we have our own persistence."

There are hot pot restaurants, pasta shops, and braised dishes stands everywhere around the school. They are oily and salty, but Mrs. Julie is different from them. The meal tastes light and flavorful. I will not feel nauseous after eating it," said Cynthia Liu, a junior majoring in foreign languages at NTPU.

The slogan of Mrs. Julie is "healthy light meal." Recently, as the health awareness raises, increasing number of people have begun to understand the importance of reducing processed foods in meals and ingesting those that are simple instead.

Under such changes in dietary concept, restaurants start to develop healthy lunchboxes with simple foods. Around NTPU, there are shops like Johnny Bro on Dagan road and Miss Energy on Xuecheng road. They are pioneers of this innovative trend. The healthy lunchboxes they sell are popular, especially among students and office workers.

However, compared to the two shops, Mrs. Julie provides vegetables to replace rice, the factor of obesity, inside the lunchbox. Moreover, it uses chicken breast as the main protein supplier to lower total cholesterol.

Julie explained, "Chicken breast is rich in protein and low in fat. It is suitable for people who want to lose weight or keep fit. It helps to create an ideal body shape."

Wilson Lee, a regular customer, claims that he comes to Mrs. Julie at least twice a week. "I go jogging in the campus after work as much as I can. After exercising, I walk over here and buy late-night supper. Chicken breast and vegetables are low in calories, so I am not anxious about getting fat at all."

According to the research released in early 2021, the number of orders for light meal on Uber Eats platform has nearly doubled over the same period last year. The quantities of cooperative restaurants in the healthy food category have also increased over three times.

In spite of the fact that food delivery has become a fashion trend, Mrs. Julie choose to serve meals in the most traditional way. "We have two people only. If the extra orders online make you turn like a spin, it is putting the cart before the horse," said Jason. "And the commission on the delivery platform is too high," Julie added.

Interacting with customers creates precious memories. Recalling her past seven months since opening, Julie pointed out that there were two customers who left strong impressions on her.



One day, the boy came and ordered only two vegetables. Julie was surprised because she thought that was definitely not enough for a growing teenager. Therefore, she added two more vegetables on her own initiative. The boy waved his hands as he saw it right away but fail to refuse her kindness. The extras were even for free.

Couple of days later the boy came again. This time, he ordered a set meal. To Julie's surprise, he paid the amount of money including the unpaid fare. "To speak frankly, I did not expect him to pay back when I helped. Thus, when he returned the money, I felt warm and gratified. Because that represents, he is grateful and does not take it for granted," said Julie.

Another story happened on a girl. One night, a girl was chatting happily with Julie, and after she took over the meal, she waved and said goodbye. However, she returned few minutes later, panting and scrabbling her school bag embarrassingly.

It turned out that the girl had forgotten to pay. "We charge afterwards. If we get into conversation with customers, sometimes we forget this step," said Julie. "People become forgetful when they grow old. Fortunately, NTPU students are honest and will come back to pay," Jason added.

The way how Julie and Jason interact with consumers makes Mrs. Julie widely praised, but the small food cart still faces the difficulty of growing its customer base. Since it does not cooperate with the food delivery platforms, its customers are mainly NTPU students and residents living nearby.

To solve the problem, Julie and Jason set up a Facebook fan page for Mrs. Julie in April. However, because they are too busy, they lack the time to manage it. And it is undeniable that they are not familiar with the means to operate things on the Internet.

"In the past, the way it works is word-of-mouth. But now, it is digital word-of-mouth," said Julie. She thinks, with the development of communication technologies, traditional marketing has to change. Realizing the difficulty Mrs. Julie is confronting, Zimi, Julie and Jason's daughter, decided to lend a helping hand.

Zimi posts photos on Facebook to attract consumers. "Few days ago, a company ordered thirty-six boiled salty chicken lunchboxes. The man contacted us through Facebook, and we believe it was a good phenomenon," said Julie.

Of course, Julie and Jason had considered putting advertisements on social media. But since the budget went beyond their expectations, they finally gave up the idea.

Zimi also checks the ratings on Google in her spare time. She transmits the feedbacks from customers to Julie and Jason. "We need to make improvements by hearing truthful voices," Jason explained, "People would leave in silence instead of telling you negative comments in person nowadays. It is strange, but we have to be used to it."

If one takes a closer look at the words under the ratings, it is not hard to feel Zimi's politeness and modesty. She does her utmost to reply all the comments, no matter if they are positive or negative. If it is a compliment, Zimi expresses appreciation. If it is an advice, Zimi apologizes and proposes compensation.

"One time I ordered carrot, but Julie missed the dish. I found that only until I got home, so I sent a message to Mrs. Julie on Facebook. The social media manager apologized and asked for my name. She promised to compensate the next time I visit. She even said that she will give me extra as reparation," said Jennifer Lai, a resident living on Xuecheng Road.

Julie and Jason's simplicity and sincerity makes the food cart seem precious and distinctive—they preserve the human touch that has long been diluted by the indifference of modern people. The couple not only hope their customers to taste a delicious meal during the day, but also treat meals with their heart to assure everyone who pays can eat with satisfaction and happiness.

Toast Makers Offering Food for Thought



By Megan Chen

If you wandered outside the campus, trying to find a decent place to fill your stomach, Amour . Sacrifice is a perfect place to go. The little store is located at a cozy corner on the GuoJi 2ndStreet, where NTPU students go to during lunch time. Walking near it, you will be enticed by the fragrance of hot pressed toasts coming out from its open door.

Opening from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., this place has been one of the most popular eateries around NTPU. Walking up to it, you will first see a wood floor with some outdoor tables with yellow sunshades. A sliding wooden door with a glass pane showcases the silhouette of a Shiba Inu, a breed of hunting dog from Japan.

While the unique design draws attention, the owner has his concern. "I hope customers don't shy away from coming in after seeing our décor," said Jun Hsu, a 39-year-old shop owner.

Glancing into the shop, you can feel the rustic vibe created by wooden walls and tables along with warm yellow lights. The counter is built with perforated bricks and wood board, and the entire shop shapes like the letter "I."

In order to arrive at the dining area, you need to walk through the aisle between the bar and the wall decorated with photos of adorable Shiba Inu and handwritten menu. When you reach the dining area, it will feel like you are inside a container because the walls are built in curly steel, adding an exotic appeal to the place.

'For a fancy place like Amour . Sacrifice, you might assume the meals are pricey, while actually the fares are affordable. You can get a cup of boba milk tea and a hot pressed toast with larva cheese, succulent chicken, and lettuce for only NT\$95.

If you are craving for something more, the shop also offers limited amount of Lao Beijing zhajiang rice for NT\$75. The place provides with diversified options on the menu, and every one of them has a unique name that will crack you up.

When asked about the secret of naming menus, Jun said that every meal on the menu is named randomly. There is no secret tip for naming food.

"I came up with Ding Ding Dang Series right after the 2018 mayor election of Taipei, and out of fun, I named this meal after the homophone of the candidate Ting Shou-Chung," the owner Jun Hsu laughed. "We also have a drink called Gustaf, which comes from my Swedish friend who used to be my client."



"I came up with Ding Ding Dang Series right after the 2018 mayor election of Taipei, and out of fun, I named this meal after the homophone of the candidate Ting Shou-Chung," the owner Jun Hsu laughed. "We also have a drink called Gustaf, which comes from my Swedish friend who used to be my client."

Before opening this store with his brother in 2016, Jun used to work in the international trade department of an industrial PC company for many years. Everything he experienced has now become the nutrients to nourish the shop.

The Chinese name of the shop literally means "slow down to think." The owner's brother Jarek, who thought we should all slow down on what we are doing and take time to think, gave this name to the store. When talking about the English name of the shop, Jun said that his brother picked the name when he rescued a Shiba Inu from the shelter.



"To take care of Lafy, the name of the dog, my brother had to sacrifice his free time, but all are made in the name of love. That is why he named this place Amour . Sacrifice," he said, quoting a line from The Little Prince –It is the time you have wasted for your rose that makes your rose so important.

Now, the customers who come to the shop cannot see the lovely house dog Lafy anymore because it is already twelve years old. Jun remembers when Lafy still came to shop. "Seeing Lafy so healthy and adorable in the shop, it's hard to imagine that he was so scrawny and ill when we adopted him," said Jun, drowned in the memory thinking about the cute little guy.

Six years ago, Jarek adopted Lafy, already in adult year. Now Lafy has become a grandpa dog, so he needs to stay at home for most of the time. It also means that in January next year, Amour . Sacrifice will be officially entering its seventh year of operation.

Whenever you go to the store, you can see Jun working in it. Although there are three other workers helping in the shop, Jun still comes to the shore nearly every day. With his passion and effort, Jun and his brother Jarek successfully opened the third branch of Amour . Sacrifice on November 21st, 2020 in ShanHua, Tainan.

The true amazement comes from the fact that none of the brothers are originally shop owners. Jun worked in industrial PC company while Jarek was a former elementary school teacher.

Before opening Amour . Sacrifice, Jun and Jarek had already set their mind on being their own boss. They ran a franchised beverage store called The Red Sun. Some of their guests today at Amour . Sacrifice are old customers who knows the two owners since they were running The Red Sun.

Most of the customers are NTPU students, and they often visit the shop during lunch time. "I come here every time my friend and I can't figure out what to eat, this is my go-to restaurant," said Johnathan Lin, a freshman majoring in finance. "We usually order a tuna salsa hot press toast and a cup of Alumi, and then we take to classroom where we take our next course."

"When I want a cup of cold drinks, I come to Amour . Sacrifice. Other tea shops around NTPU are too expansive. I usually order a large ice-free sugar-free boba milk tea. It only costs NT\$45," said Emma Huang, a junior from Chinese department.



Within only six years, Amour . Sacrifice has become a close friend to its customers. This cozy little shop near NTPU always welcomes students and residents around this neighborhood with its delectable meals. Supported by the "amour" towards Lafy, Jun and Jerek turned this place into a memorable spot where all kinds of stories took place.

Around the time of year, you can see students discussing their test results in the dining area, while office workers taking lunch breaks, and Jun bustling behind the counter taking orders for the customers. This shop has always been a realm for people who seek relaxation in any busy city. Just as the shop founder Jarek implies in its Brand name, "We should all slow down and think, when the flow of time pushes us forward."



The Charms of Old Place Will Always Prevail



By Tony Lai

Given the eighteen test tubes with a variety of loose tea, every newcomer can choose his or her favorite by smelling its scents. Unlike any other restaurant, whose menu is printed and laminated, the menu in this store is written on the wall.

Stepping inside, customers are suddenly surrounded by soothing music and dim lights, which yield a cozy and relaxing vibe. A small signboard is outside the inconspicuous shop whose name is Old Place. Located near Sanxia Old Street, around ten-minute walk from National Taipei University, it mainly serves black tea instead of coffee.

Janice Lai, the owner of Old Place, has full confidence when talking about her tea. "If someone wants to try the local tea in Sanxia, he or she can try Honey aroma and Bi-Lo-Chung. Maple milk tea and Lychee rose milk tea are better choices for those who are fond of strong taste," she said.

"Old Place can alter regular milk as oat milk if the customer has lactose intolerance," Janice added. "Decaffeinated tea like Rooibos would be the perfect choice for those who are suffering from insomnia."

It was a wonderful experience to have iced maple milk tea and chiffon cake. The tea has a sweet aftertaste, with a hint of maple. The cake has a fluffy and airy texture with whipped cream, which gave a sweeter taste.

If customers order beverage on the menu, they will get a homemade cookie as a treat if they are lucky. The owner also leaves the tea strainer with brewed loose leaf after first steeping so that customers can get a second steeping.

Majoring in electronic engineering in Southern Taiwan University of Science and Technology, Janice used to be a mobile hardware engineer for five years before establishing the store. She worked in Inventec, Taiwan international corporation, located in Jiantan, Taipei. The economic downturn led to massive layoffs in many companies and factories, and so did Janice's.

When she tidied up her belongings, she noticed that there were bags of loose tea and lumped instant coffee powder in her bottom drawer. She realized, instead of coffee, tea was her favorite. She has had a dream of opening a café since she was little.



She came up with many kinds of names at first, including Anonymous, because she wants to keep a low profile. After thorough consideration, the name "Old Place" appears in her mind. "For one thing, Sanxia is the place where I was born and grew up," Janice said. "Second, I wanted to convey an image as an old place where every customer can be familiar with."

When it comes to tea, she has a serious attitude towards the source. For example, she had known local wholesalers to import Honey Aroma and Biluochun, which is a type of green tea. As for specific loose tea, she orders them from their origins, such as A Midsummer Night's Dream tea, and Mixed Berries tea from France.

She also mentioned that there is one thing special in her store, that is, Assam tea. Unlike Assam from India, Janice said that her Assam was from Nantou, Taiwan. "India's Assam is sweeter," Janice said. "However, Nantou Assam is more astringent but more aromatic."

Therefore, Assam tea from Old Place is more suitable to drink exclusively than to drink with milk. It is especially better served in hot drinks, given more flavor.

Janice shared some tips regarding the process of brewing tea. Before brewing a tea, it's essential to warm the teapot to reach the temperature. Besides, every tea has a specific brew interval time. It will ruin once the taste time is over.



During the pandemic, Old Place closed its store for three months. Considering the only staff was the owner herself, the damage of labor cost was less than any other cafés. Nevertheless, Janice needed to pay the security bill, water and electricity bill, Internet bill, and tax, which costed five thousand dollars each month.

The situation did not go well during the level three epidemic alert. The impact of COVID-19 continues as people didn't stop by or take out. Even though Old Place had food delivery, the profit still showed no signs of recovery. "The average income after the level three alert is reduced by 50 percent than before," she said.

While running this store for six years, Janice has met some interesting customers. For instance, there was a lady who always ordered chiffon cake and hot royal milk tea. One day, her friend came to the store and asked what her favorite set was to surprise her on her upcoming birthday.

Normally, the owner won't remember what every customer ordered. However, Janice never forgets what the lady ordered because she always ordered the same set. Therefore, a friend of hers took chiffon cake and hot royal milk tea to celebrate her birthday.

The atmosphere is relaxing. I ordered Ceylan black tea and chiffon cake as a set,” commented Terry Liu, a junior in the department of Foreign Language and Applied Linguistics, NTPU. “The infusion of Ceylan is great, and the taste is not too sweet. I feel refreshed after having it. The cake texture is fluffy, and the whipped cream is delicious.”

Patti Chang, a manicurist, is one of the regular customers who live in Sanxia. She used to go into partnership with Old Place by starting her business at the store. Sometimes, when the customers made an appointment to get a manicure, she would recommend teas and desserts to them.

The customer for tea and dessert could get their nail done as well. Therefore, both nail salon and tea shop had positive impacts on their profit. Some of her customers would buy teas and desserts from Old Place even Patti and Janice ended their partnership.

“It’s really comfortable to stay here, giving a tranquilizing vibe. Unlike another café owner who always gives hard sells, the owner of Old Place would introduce her product to customers kindly and professionally,” she said, “I often take my friends here when we are hanging out.”

There are pros and cons when it comes to running the store alone. The first advantage will be flexible working hours. Janice can determine whenever she wants to close. For instance, it’s her choice if she wants to close at 6:00 p.m. when the business is light. She can decide on public holidays as well. Or, like one time the shop was not open because the owner got vaccination.

However, Janice has been getting through a lot of struggles and challenges to maintain the store.

When the store is full, she cannot handle too many orders at the same time. Moreover, innovation is an essential part of maintaining operation. Yet, she can’t add more items like coffee and light meals because it’s hard for her to expand the choices of products and retain the quality of service simultaneously.

Despite the number of customers may go up and down, Janice remains optimistic about the future, even though some new customers may take off after skimming through the menu for short of coffee. In her opinion, Old Place welcomes those who truly appreciate black tea. Instead of changing items on the menu, she keeps them the way there are.

Even though the store is struggling, Janice still clings to the belief that the people will notice this store, which is a suitable place for visitors to relax in Sanxia.



Local Egg Crepes in Burberry-styled Display



By Jennifer Cheng



Tzai-Shin's crepes are distinctive in a rectangular grid, bestowing the entire meal with more visual excitement by coating the Burberry pattern on them. The name of the vendor, as customers may wonder, delicately incorporates a pun, inferring to become prosperous again. It has been epitomized by the crepes they offer.

Wrapped with fried garlic rice, tempered with a rich flavor of chili sauce highlighted by pungent Chao Tian Pepper, which deepens and enriches the overall taste, those crepes are topped with basil leaves and egg, that also add textual and visual appeals.

With an intention to create extra layers of texture and silky smoothness to egg pancake crepe, velvety seafood seasoning and chili sauce are extruded on fried crepes and garlic rice.

Shane Peng, owner of Tzai-Shin, used glutinous rice and sushi rice in the testing period, but he found it too monotonous. After experimenting several times, Shane found a formula he was finally satisfied with.

Tossing the savory basil leaves with eggs, serving immediately, with plenty of fried garlic rice soaking up the chili sauce, the recipe creates the comforting food at its best.

With seafood seasoning braised pink commas of dried shrimp gravy, this pretreatment method also increased compounds of desirable soy sauce, which is thicker and sweeter than soy sauce, is better at clinging on to the surface of crepe without getting absorbed.

Tzai-Shin is located on the first floor of U-SHOP. Initially, at the side entrance of NTPU on Gouji 2nd Street in early May 2019, Tzai-Shin was a random street vendor. Later, it acquired a storefront on Gouji 1st Street by the end of August 2019. Now, it has been here for two years.

"Whenever eating egg rice pancake crepes, I feel something is missing without seafood seasoning and chili sauce which boosts the flavor," said Casper Hsieh, an NTPU student. "Tzai-Shin is different. Their fried crepes have a distinct texture, enhanced by the smooth sauce."

The pairing of a sauces demonstrates Shane's understanding of the food, choosing sauces that tend to complement and intensify the flavor.

"The crepes are tricky. They are not that easy to accommodate," said Shane. "I always pay close attention to monitoring the temperature for hot plates and manipulating cooking hacks."

The biggest difficulty Shane has encountered is to guarantee his crepes reign supreme. Apparently, temperature control is literally the most significant component to yield delectable egg pancake crepes, helping get good results every time.

The temperature for the hot plate must be maintained at exactly 130-degree Celsius to fry crepes for two minutes respectively on both sides until the skin is golden. Going too high, they will get burned-on. Going too low, customers will get half-baked ones.



"Prices of these vegetables have gone up since December 2019," said Dora Chen, Shane's wife. "The COVID-19 pandemic is the one primary factor to blame for everything, pushing food prices to vast levels."

zai-Shin used to provide egg vegetable pancake crepe. They have six kinds of organic raw sprouts, including bean sprouts, sunflower sprouts, buckwheat sprouts, fenugreek sprouts, mung bean sprouts, and purple cabbage sprouts. However, it will no longer be sold because the average price of vegetables has been increasing.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, Shane and Dora must reevaluate and realign their restaurant plans. The coronavirus has impacted their financial situation in negative ways. Because the primary customer groups are students, the remote learning and teaching implied that all students returned to their hometowns earlier.

As a result, total revenue declined. The expenditure of all the ingredients has heightened by 40%, compared to the same period the year before. For example, each extruding of sauce costs NT\$ 6 more.

"There is one kind entry on the menu I would come and buy twice a week—egg rice pancake crepe with seaweed," said Mark Chen, an employee of the branch of local bank. "With their special sauce, any bland tasting food can right away be turned into something delicious."

Working in Tzai-Shin is not Shane's initial job. Working in a restaurant for a few years, he took it as getting paid to learn. He originally worked as a cash register in MacDonald's, and later was promoted to the position of manager. After quitting the job in MacDonald's, Shane decided to start his own restaurant.

"I often take my grandson here to buy egg rice pancake crepe and soybean milk for lunch," Mr. Wang said, one of the regulars who lives in Sanxia District. "Because I like to encourage my family to eat in a healthy way."

"Almost all the ingredients available in the Sanxia traditional market are under proprietary quality control," said Dora. "Ensuring all food sources are high-quality can be great for cleansing the colon naturally through diet."

Greasy foods are everywhere around NTPU. However, there are multiple ways to reduce or avoid the intake of greasy foods. Dora's grandfather has a colorectal problem because of his terrible diet, so Tzai-Shin has high standards for food.

"Maintaining healthy eating habits, and awareness of what they put into human bodies is essential for living a full and happy life," said Dora.

Tzai-Shin takes the ingredients and weaves them together to create dishes that will hit every single taste bud. They can put smiles on your face, setting your mouth on fire with their foods to satisfy.

Quick and easy recipes are simple to prepare and fast to cook, making sure customers will not be late for the upcoming activities, especially among students and office workers. "They will be ready in ten minutes or less," Dora said.



"Apps like Foodpanda and Uber Eats are still taking 30 percent commission fees per order," said Dora. "And that these delivery companies are not going to be able to save Tzai-Shin." Even though food deliveries have flourished, their fees are killing restaurants' margins. Dora chose to serve the food in the traditional approach.

"Guests hate waiting, and we hate disappointing them," said Dora. "There are ways to keep things at bay. To keep customers coming back, making efforts to make them happy and offer them a flawless dining experience matters the most. It is more than just the food."

Dora once had a customer complaining about the food served too slow. She handled the dispute quickly by offering free drinks as an apology. Dora's rosy outlook of business builds on an intimate relationship with their customers.

"Appreciation goes a long way. Whenever customers leave Tzai-Shin, make sure to give genuine appreciation with eye contact and a warm smile," said Dora. "I genuinely thank my customers, because they are the reasons we do what we love."

Darling Desserts with Ugly Duckling Stories



By Alice Lin

Every afternoon, a silhouette busy baking lava pancakes can be seen, with a sweet smell scenting in the air. Mandy Huang is the owner of Kaddie Garten, a small dessert stall featuring molten lava egg cakes.

Located at No. 82, Guoxue Street in Sanxia, Kaddie Garten has been in business since October 2019, and Mandy is always ready to serve the first pack of fresh-baked molten lava egg cakes at three o'clock in the afternoon. To taste this enticing dessert, one needs to hurry up, because it's so popular among students and people in the neighborhood that it often sells out in three or four hours.

At first, Mandy's job was selling the Certified Agricultural Standards(CAS) eggs, which are quality eggs recognized by the government, in the community around NTPU. Eggs that looked ugly, though, were not favored by the customers and therefore would be dumped, even though they were still edible.

To avoid food waste, Mandy came up with an idea. If she could not consume these large amount of eggs on her own, why not make them into egg cakes? This is why she started her own business as a street vendor.

Mandy insists on preparing the ingredients herself—from paste to fillings—to make sure the cakes are fresh, tasty, and safe to eat. She cares about whether the dessert is delicious and suitable for everyone.

Using the CAS eggs and making the fillings herself increases the costs, so instead of leasing a store, Mandy chose a small stall with less rent just to serve the best desserts.

"I have many juvenile customers that are still in elementary schools and kindergartens," said Mandy, with a smile on her face. "I can face my conscience only when I can guarantee my products are both healthy and anti-additive."



Unlike other egg cakes, the cakes she makes are soft and fluffy, and the creamy fillings inside the egg pancakes gain popularity among children and teenagers from six years old to eighteen years old. Even college students, youths, adults, or the middle-aged could not resist the temptation of this delectable treat.

Take a bite of the fresh-baked molten lava egg cakes, the cream will melt in your mouth, blending with the puffy pancake, creating a fantastic taste. It is sweet, but it's never too nauseated.

"My favorite flavor is cream. The texture of the egg cake is softer than I expected, and the cream inside is really exploding, pretty satisfying," said Tim Wu, a NTPU student from the Department of Chinese Literature. "I would buy it when I feel hungry in the afternoon."

"Personally, I prefer egg cakes with a crispier crust, but the creamy fillings inside are inviting, so I also like it very much," said Eline Wang, a student from the Department of Public Administration and Policy, NTPU.

"Every day, my husband and I would prepare all the ingredients at home the same day I sell them," Mandy said.

Even if the paste can be preserved for more than a day as long as it is placed in the refrigerator, Mandy still asks her husband to deliver the other four bags of fresh-made paste around 5 p.m. every day before he goes to work. By doing so, she only needs to prepare four bags of the first batch of paste, assuring every cake is tasty and as soft as a cloud.

While she checks the molten lava egg cakes so carefully to maintain the nice and soothing texture, Mandy serves every customer with a smile and vigorous voice. When walking past the stall, one can always hear her asking, "Good afternoon, which flavor would you like to have today?"

Politely asking the customers to wait for a minute, she, then, would set a timer to make sure the pancakes are perfectly done. After taking the egg cakes out from the bakeware, Mandy uses a fan to cool the temperature of the surface down before putting them into paper bags

This is to prevent the egg cakes from losing their shape and from shrinking. Also, since the egg cakes are put in paper bags, cooling the cakes down can also stop the paper bags from being damp.

Then, before handing over a bag of egg cakes, she always reminds everyone to be cautious of the heat when eating before waving them goodbye.

She not only treats the customers nicely, but she is also a friend of many street vendors and neighbors around NTPU. Sandy, a student majoring in Chinese literature, recalled how she became a regular customer of Kaddie Garten.

"We were asking for patronage for our club's activity around the restaurants and food stands near NTPU. I remember it was a scorching hot afternoon when we stopped at her stand. Usually, the vendors wouldn't give much or would resist the offer, so we were prepared to be rejected, again."



"However, upon hearing our request, she immediately grabbed five hundred dollars from the box and handed the cash to us. She even told us to beware not to get a heatstroke."

An NTPU student, Frank Lin, from the Department of Law once brought his friend to give this dessert a try. Frank's friend came from National Taiwan University. When Mandy used up all the ingredients that day and handed over the last bag of molten lava egg cakes, he thanked her and told her that he had visited Sanxia many times just to get a bite of these fluffy and delicious sweets.

"I rushed to Sanxia after school, but when I got here, the cakes were sold out. After paying so many visits, finally, this is the first time I get a chance to enjoy my dessert," He gave a thumbs-up, and stuffed a piece of cake in his mouth. "Totally worth it."

The owner of Kiddie Garten treats everyone with sincerity. Attracting every customer with both thoughtful service and tasty treats, Mandy also feels thankful for her regular customers.

Being affected by Covid-19, Mandy insisted on selling molten lava egg cakes for the first two weeks. Without the pandemic, Mandy could finish using eight bags of paste, that is nearly fifty bags of molten lava egg pancakes in three and a half hours. She thought that it would not be that bad. However, the results turned out terrible.

Only selling twenty to twenty-five packs of cakes every day, there was still some paste being leftover even if she only made four bags of it. Because of this, Mandy was forced to take a long rest, shutting the food stall down for four months.

Enduring such a long period without the molten lava egg cakes, regular customers were all happy to see Mandy back. The business soon recovered, and without any notification, old customers in the neighborhood and students came to grab a bag of egg cake to indulge themselves in the long-lost treats, heartily welcoming her return.

"I never thought of gaining so much support from the customers. When seeing the students and children enjoy the egg cakes I made, I am



Pâtisserie with Japanese Heart and French Soul



By Sharon You

"Wish Pinede accompanies your sweet times," said Sisi Hsu, the store manager of Pinede in Sanxia. "Two cakes with the same price, flavor, and quality, the one with consideration for customers is more satisfying," she added. Although having no cake-baking experience, Sisi has started the cake store with her passion for providing good services.

Pinede was first established in Nagoya, Japan by Mr. Matsumoto in 1984. Inspired by the cheesecake made by his father, Mr. Matsumoto took baking classes in French to keep the good taste. This experience became a part of the store's brand Pâtisserie, referring to the cake store in France.



"Pinede, located across NTPU on Daxue Road, catches passersby's eyes with its big window displaying the baker's workshop. Decorated with wood furniture and white painting, the interior design provides a relaxing atmosphere for customers to enjoy afternoon tea.

Ranging from Taiwan to Japan, every setting detail in the branches of Pinede has to be aligned. "Pinede hopes to provide the best cake and environment," said Sisi.

Looking at Pinede's menu, people may always find surprises. On the left side of the page displayed classical cakes like "Celebration," a Japanese strawberry sponge cake with fresh whipped cream. White and red symbolize happiness and joy in Japan, so the cake is extremely popular during important events such as birthday, wedding ceremony, and Christmas.

In most Asian countries, strawberries are harvested in the winter. During other seasons, Pinede will adopt costly imports from America or Korea because frozen fruits are never taken into consideration.

"1974" is another signature cheesecake that was named for the year when it was invented by Mr. Matsumoto's father. Consisting of sweet French tart, fresh egg, French cream, and Australian cheese, the cake has remained the same taste for the past 40 years.

"You can enjoy 1974 in two different but both interesting ways," said Sisi. "When taken out from the refrigerator, you will find a stronger smell of cheese and firm texture. While the cake is baked, it tastes so soft and you can find the strong smell of egg," she added.

Other than these classical cakes, the right side displays seasonal cakes. In the summer, Pinede celebrates tropical fruit season. Sweet, juicy, and fresh mangos were topped on fluffy whipped cream, with layers of soft sponge cake beneath, resulting in a moist texture for the hot weather.

Cantaloupe, grape, cherry, chestnuts, and a variety of delicious ingredients will satisfy customers' appetites in different seasons.

Before becoming the store manager of Pinede, Sisi engaged in marketing at a magazine publishing company. "The core value of marketing is delivering value to customers," said Sisi. "At Pinede, we provide and share happiness with our customers."

On an afternoon in September, Pinede received a special call. "I want a birthday cake for my husband, but I will have to stay at home with my four-month-old baby," said Mrs. Yen.



Pinede had never provided delivery service, including other Japan or Taiwan branches. Recalling Pinede's value of providing happiness, Sisi soon delivered the cake to this mother by scooter in 15 minutes. "Pinede looks forward to becoming people's first choice when thinking about having cake for happy moments."

Before the opening of Pinede in Sanxia, Sisi and her team had been to several branches located in the hustle and bustle of the city. According to Sisi's observation, people usually come to these stores for business conversation, they are in suits and briefcases.

However, the visitors to Pinede in Sanxia are much more diversified. "We have students from NTPU, retired elders, parents with children, pregnant mothers, and even pets," said Sisi. Remaining close relationships with the locals becomes one of the most important things.

During COVID-19 lockdown, Pinede was quietly opened at the beginning of June in 2021. The team did not hold celebrations for safety concerns.

"When I drag the front glass door, I am really surprised to see customers lining up along the paving," Sisi said. "It's hard." The unexpected number of visitors had caused bittersweet experiences. Some complained about the waiting time, others questioned Pinede's safety regulation, while others asked the staff for excess demands.

"Sometimes we encounter special requests," said Vivian Chen, Pinede's clerk. For instance, one customer asked for removing a cake layer because he did not like certain fruits. Or there was a child wanting a piece of chocolate cake while the mother disagreed. "Requests may not always make sense. But you can choose to solve them wisely," laughed Sisi.

In an afternoon, a four-year-old boy and mother came to Pinede. Before leaving, the boy cried for a white balloon floating beside the counter. Initially, the mother rejected her son and dragged his arm to leave. After noticing they came by scooter, which may be dangerous to carry a balloon, Sisi patiently promised the boy to give him a balloon at their next visit.

Since the outbreak of pandemic in late December 2019, many unexpected incidents happened. During the peak in May 2021, people were not allowed to dine in restaurants, and students stayed at home for distance learning. The number of permanent restaurant closures in Sanxia is beyond estimate.

"Pinede hopes to become a beam of light through the pandemic darkness," Sisi said. This is the main reason for the opening of Pinede in Sanxia.

Dated back to late December in 2020, Sisi and her team started preparing for the cake store. For brand alignment with other branches, each store has to follow strict regulations. Ranging from interior decoration, staff training, manufacturing to package processing, they spent time and effort to maintain Japan quality—defined as perfection, absence of defects in every detail.



"Every ribbon tie and cake box follows the same wrapping guideline," said Vivian Chen. "In the cake box, we put paper rolls to avoid possible damage." Pinede hopes customers can enjoy the same happiness no matter where they taste the cakes.

After the pandemic conditions in Taiwan gets better, customers are allowed to dine in. Social distance floor stickers, transparent dividers, disinfectant sprayers, and temperature scanners are set to provide safety.

Standing in the checkout line, customers can see delicate cakes displayed in the glass cabinet. Before the payment, Pinede's staff will open the packing box and make a final check on the cake. "We expect to provide the best experience to our customers, and avoid any possible mistake," said Vivian.

Compared to other branches located in Taipei, the store was pressured with achieving business goals in the beginning. "Good news relies on word of mouth, and cakes do so," Sisi said.



Pinede is looking forward to becoming the top cake store choice in Sanxia. During festivals like Christmas and New Year's Eve, Pinede wants to share these happy moments with customers. Besides, they are planning to hold cake DIY workshops for children. "Having a lot of lovely parents and children living in the district, we are glad to see their smiles," she added.

Cake draws a close connection between Pinede and its customers. In addition to providing consoling desserts, the cozy atmosphere and great service allow people to enjoy great time in the store. By passing down happy moments in life, Pinede shares precious moments with every visitor and wishes to "Make happiness with sweets".



A Café for Chatters Who Love Rock Music



By Eden Huang

In a quiet corner of a residential district of Da-Yi Road settles an aquamarine blue coffee shop. With its unique decoration, it features itself there. In the exclusively designed display window elegantly lays a classic electronic guitar. "I used to be a guitar instructor, so I collected a couple of guitars," said Kaniel Wang, owner of Charla Coffee. "I use those guitars as the key music elements in this café."

"Charla stands for 'chat' in Spanish, and I hope my coffee shop to become a place filled with people's chattering," said Kaniel. Endeavoring to initiate this intention of making a snug chatting atmosphere, Kaniel began to put two elements—music and plants—into the shop.

The hall on the first floor has an electronic guitar—Gibson Les Paul classic—on the rack, and two Amplifiers—Marshall Woburn—piling up against the dark grey sofa, will catch one's attention. Under the fine illumination, guitar and amplifiers appear outstandingly exquisite. Out of the amplifier plays a series of 80s to 90s rock band songs.

"There is no need to change the music tone for different types of customers," Kaniel said. He believes that the only classic and eternal pop songs are the rock band songs. Far different from the other coffee shops in the neighborhood targeting younger customers, with the background music playing mostly pop songs, Charla Coffee insists playing rock music as the background music instead.

"Even though all the songs are like rock songs, these songs are incredibly relaxing for listening, and just for reading or chatting. This totally reverses the stereotype of the hard rock music which is usually louder and stronger," said Peter Lin, a NTPU student, dining with his friends at a table by the window.

"May I listen to some rock metal music in this coffee shop?" said Michael Ho, a 25-years-old office staff. He popped a request to Kaniel. Judging from Michael's tone, he seemed to be a frequent visitor.

"The on-site music seems to be too 'country' for you, I will play a bunch of metal classics until there comes other new customers," said Kaniel. All at a sudden, with simply two guests dining, the near-empty space on the second floor turned into a tiny metal music paradise. Michael then rocked himself, shaking his legs as he immersed in his own world.

Along the stairs to the second floor, there are a Gibson Les Paul electronic guitar, wooden guitar and a few of gramophone records in the display cabinet fastened on the wall. These decorations become whole new fine arts for those who are going upstairs, as if they were invited to an instrument exhibition.

"The fact that I was a guitar instructor, I definitely collected some classic electronic guitars. They are all in my shop. My favorite rock style is hard rock and metal," said Kaniel. "My admired electronic player Slash in Guns N' Roses have one Gibson's electronic guitar as well."

He continued, "For every fantastic hard rock fan, it is undoubtedly for them to have at least one Gibson Les Paul electric guitar on hand. One most competitive amplifier for a Gibson's electric guitar is Marshall's amplifier."

"When going upstairs, suddenly I noticed that the atmosphere within the stairs turned isolated from the first floor as if I entered a whole new dimension which was so artistic and charming," said Alice Wen, a 19-years-old resident living nearby. "I couldn't stop slowing down my pace in order to stay for a longer moment."

With fewer opportunities being close to the nature for people living in urban areas, Kaniel decided to integrate green plants into his coffee shop. Indoors, the shop is surrounded by four green plants, all of them foliage plants, specifically cultivated for viewing purpose. Those foliage plants play an important role in sight relaxation, preventing eyes from exposing too much 3C blue light.



"Most coffee shops use fake scenic plants for fear that they would accidentally neglect watering. However, I believe that using the lively plants is like an indispensable puzzle enriching my coffee shop," added Kaniel. "They make my coffee shop more complete and vivid."

Opening from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., Charla Coffee mainly serves teas, coffees, and desserts. As for tea, Charla has four major kinds of teas—Earl Grey, Honey Flavored Black Tea, Alishan Oolong Tea, and Darjeeling Black Tea.

Rather than importing tea leaf randomly, Kaniel tried every kinds of tea leaves himself, and eventually decided which flavors should be added on the menu. Kaniel is unwilling to offer customers foods or drinks, which don't meet his anticipation and satisfaction.

In the toilet, by the stool is a tiny table with a handy sterilized machine for immediate cleaning. There is also a pile of prepared female panty liners in case any female customers would be in need.

All containers, even narrowly-designed cup has its own special role. The distinctive aroma, spreading out from one specific coffee bean or tea leaf, could be concentrated when sipping from the edge of this certain cup. Even though the design of the cup makes the latte art harder to do, sometimes, having conquered the technical problems, Kaniel uses the cups for the purpose of providing the best drinking experience for each customer.

"Until the day I can guarantee the best quality of roasted coffee beans, I rather seek help from the experts even though the costs would be raised," Kaniel said.

Having a bit of twists on the menu since earlier November, for coffee products, Charla Coffee now provides four regular basic and one surprised espresso coffee. Instead of roasting the coffee beans on his own, yet conquering the technical problems, Charla directly commissions reliable roasting professional to do it.

Coffee bean from Yirgacheffe, under natural-dried process, is a light and medium roasted one. Espresso brewed from Yirgacheffe coffee beans has a unique acidity in its flavor, mixed with exotic fruity aroma. Compared with other deeply roasted coffee beans, the overall flavor is milder.

Although many people prefer bitterer and thicker flavored coffee, Charla Coffee establishes its marketing position, segmenting target market from chained coffee shops, and insists on providing the originality of coffee beans which are lighter and more acid. Different from traditional customer-based operation, Kaniel conserves the classic spirit in his shop.

That is not only an insistence to give customers the best and most typical experience, but as a coffee and music enthusiast himself, the owner shares the joy and beauty in life to whoever enters his shop.



Homey Breakfast Bistro Beams Southern Warmth



By Jenny Gao

"My dream is to open a breakfast restaurant, and also I think it is hard for me to find another job because I have been a housewife for several years," Lisa Yuan said, explaining why she wanted to open this restaurant.

Now she is the owner of Shinshin Brunch, a restaurant she runs with her cousin, Gigi Chang. It is located on Daguan Road, which is a few blocks away from NTPU, but it still attracts many customers to enjoy the food. Some customers even become friends with Lisa.

Shinshin opens from Monday to Sunday, from six a.m. to half past one p.m. Lisa said that if there is no customer at twelve forty, then they would close the restaurant earlier so they can tidy up the restaurant at two.

Generally, restaurants in Sanxia serving breakfast is off on Sunday or Monday, making it more convenient for students and residents to find the restaurant to enjoy the meal.

The kitchen is separate from the counter, with its furnishing different from other restaurants, so the whole room would have good ventilation.

There are several tables for customers to dine in and the space isn't so crowded that people can have more space to enjoy the meal. The decoration is simple, with some pictures hanging on the wall, making the atmosphere warmer.

Lisa comes from Chiayi City. "People from southern Taiwan are more passionate," said Lisa. Her positive and pleasant personality makes people enjoy conversations with her, who always wears a smile and cares about the customers' daily life.

When the weather gets colder, she even reminds customers of wearing heavy clothes in order not to catch a cold. Because she is always nice to people around her, so customers are willing to visit this restaurant several times.

The first time stepping into Shinshin, the atmosphere was totally different from other eateries, because the atmosphere felt like home. Lisa and Gigi were so kind that they would ask all the customers whether the food is good or not.

One think special about Shinshin is that some of the beverage can be refilled, such as black tea and milk tea. Their food are all freshly prepared when ordered. Although you need to wait for a while, it is still worth waiting for.



The name of Shinshin came with a short story, in which a fortune teller and a local temple were involved.

Before Lisa Yuan opened this restaurant in 2020, she worked in other breakfast diners. "My boss treated me well, considering that I needed to take care of my little children," said Lisa. "So he allowed me to go to work at seven in the morning."

However, she still felt too stressful, having to keep a balance between work and home. "The most important reason is that I was low in stress resistance," she said.

She has not considered joining a branded franchise. "The franchise fee is so high that I cannot afford it," she said, smiling wryly.

The egg pancake roll made by pho is the special meal at Shinshin. Lisa said why she made this meal is she wanted to make a difference with other restaurants, since some special and interesting food can make the customers want to give it a try.

"In my opinion, I think I made a great decision because every time you come here, you and your friends order this food all the time," said Lisa, laughing heartily.

The first step to cook the egg pancake roll made by pho is to take the pho from the refrigerator, and then wash it with edible water, which will be cleaner for the customer, without hygiene issues. Then the pho has to be fried with oil, and the main point is not to fry too much. When the pho is fried to a certain point, it will become more delicious.

The taste of the egg pancake roll made by pho is different from the original egg pancake roll, which is creepy but oily, if the breakfast owner didn't cook it well. However, the one made by pho is softer and healthier. The calories of egg pancake roll with pho are lower, so you won't be sick and tired of eating it every day.

For most people, running a breakfast restaurant means waking up early because one needs to prepare the food first. However, Lisa said that their lead time is not too long for them. Their principle is when the customers ordered, then they started to prepare.

They also mentioned that their ingredients are delivered twice a week, because they don't want to purchase too many ingredients, lest the food stored in the refrigerator is not fresh.



The price and the taste are the main points why I visit the restaurant again and again,” Lily Lin, a NTPU student said, “The price is really good value for the food, and the quantity is enough for the students. Then the food is made freshly, and drinks can be refilled.”

“The female boss is so kind that I am willing to visit here for many times,” Issa Chen, a NTPU student said. “My mother also opens a breakfast restaurant in my hometown, and the female boss makes me feel like home.”

“I think I am lucky that I can open the restaurant with my cousin, which is more comfortable than working outside,” Gigi said. “Because of my job, every day my children come home at one o’clock that I can make meal for them. Also it is happy to see that the customers like to eat the food we prepare for them.”



“The restaurant is so clean that when I finished the meal, they would come and use alcohol to disinfect the surface. Also, they would not rush the customer, saying that we can have our time even though we’ve finished our meal,” said Christine Lin, a NTPU student. “Also the air is clean in the restaurant, so not smell would stick on my clothes. Some restaurants may have the problem of poor ventilation with oily smoke.”

At Shinshin, you can enjoy delicious meal and feel the warm atmosphere that it brings to you. Once you step into the restaurant, Lisa, with a smile, will treat you and make you feel like at home.



Wheel Pies Made with Savvy and Pride



By Ann Cheng

People getting off work or school seek for food comfort every day at around 5 p.m. On the way back home, the aroma spreads through the steam out of the stand and restaurant, triggering the appetite of passersby.

Miss Joey is one of the food stands located at Guoxue Street near the side entrance of NTPU, selling wheel pies—a kind of bun with red bean or butter stuffing originated from Japan, or so-called imagawayaki.

Liang An-Yuan, the owner, has started the business since March 2020. The stand facing the sidewalk is placed inside a store without a door. Pedestrians passing by can see the minimalist inner design of the store and smell the delicious odor of the baked batter.

According to Liang, the reason he did not install a glass door like the other stores is that he wants to shorten the distance between the stand and the customers.

The name of the stand can be seen upon the plastic signboard. "While I was thinking of the name for my stand, my daughter was just born," said Liang. "So, I picked a word from her name, Joey, and the stand name means that my daughter is mouth-watering."

Speaking of his daughter, Liang did not hide his pleasure. The inner design of the store is so simple that customers cannot ignore the photos of his daughter on the wall, telling the love and pride from him being a father.

The stove with a baking pan on it is the life and the soul of the store occupied a quarter of the space and wrapped with a board that has dark wood grain. On the front of the stove, the menu is carved on ten bronze planks, including red bean, cream, taro, sesame, milky filling, corn with cheese, and pickled radish.

The names of the favor are in black, and the prices are in red. Without further decoration, wheel pies on the baking pan can attract the eyesight from the customers, which become the best advertisement to promote this tasty snack.

As the owner of the stand, Liang must manage everything on his own. Ninety-nine percent of the time, he stands behind the stove making wheel pies and chats with the customers. For the rest of the time, he goes to the larder to refill the batter or the other stuffing.

At the age of thirty-four, Liang does not look his age. A crew-cut hairstyle and his twinkled eyes make him look like a new graduate. However, before he started his own business, he had been working as a salesman in the textile industry for more than ten years. The previous working experience makes him feel exhausted.

"Being a salesman, I must face a lot of people, such as the clients, the colleagues, and the boss. I need to put on a different mask to disguise myself," said Liang. "That is not the way I want to live my life. I don't want to work in such a complex place. I want to be honest and simply kind to people."

The spirit of being honest and kind reflects on the way how Liang makes wheel pies. He starts to make seven kinds of stuffing at 11 a.m. every day in the morning and insists on using the fresh ingredients brought from the market.

Although the milk powder used to make cream can be replaced by other cheaper choices, he insists on using Anchor, a big brand that provides quality dairy products. In addition, he was careful about the food safety. "The batter has to be cooked before adding the stuffing," said Liang. "Or customers might get a stomachache."

He earns recognition and a sense of achievement whenever he receives appreciation and compliments. When talking about the most impressive memory, he stated a heartwarming story about grandparents and their grandson.

He remembered that an old couple came to Miss Joey in the summer. Although they were living in the neighborhood, they chose to sit in front of the stand enjoying their snacks. Shortly after they finished eating and went back home, the old lady went back to buy more wheel pies, making Liang curious about the reason.

She said that earlier she brought some wheel pies back home for her grandson and surprisingly noticed that he ate up all of them at once. "He is a picky eater," said the lady. "I have never seen him so satisfied with the food brought from outside, so I decided to buy some more."

Despite of the quality of the ingredient, the wheel pie itself tastes delicious. The process of making wheel pies begins with making two crust by the batter. The crust looks like a round bowl but with a flat base. After the batter is cooked, add the stuffing into the crust and cover it with another crust. The crack between two crust needs to stick together by using batter, and a wheel pie is done.



In Miss Joey, the unique selling point is the crispy crust. When Liang pours the batter to the baking pan from an iron funnel, he will use a wooden pestle to make the batter evenly spread in the mold. Adding less batter to shape the crust gives it a crispy texture, which is the main difference between Miss Joey and other wheel pies stands.

"I especially like the crust. It is very crispy," said Lan He, a student at National Taipei University, who came to buy wheel pies on his way back home. "The wheel pies in Miss Joey tastes very different from ones in other stores."

Managing a stand is like taking part in an obstacle race. The owners never know what they would face the next day. On May 15, 2021, Miss Joey faced the biggest challenge since the business was started.

The nationwide three-level alert began as the pandemic became severe in Taiwan. The cruel reality not only blocked the way of revenue but also hindered the customers to notice the stand.



To increase the clientele, Liang cooperates with Foodpanda. The online platform provides delivery services, allowing customers to have wheel pies at home. It makes the user group extend from people in Sanxia to those in Shulin.

However, the revenue declines anyway. "Ninety percent of the revenue still depends on the physical store, and only one percent from the online platform," said Liang.

Liang tends to be quiet when making wheel pies. However, when a customer comes to the front of the stand, he would greet with a cheerful voice, naming the favors he can provide at that time. The pressure from reality does not erase his smile and spirit to be kind to others.

"The owner is a kind and warm person," said Cynthia Liu, a member who often goes to church next to Miss Joey. "I have gone to buy wheel pies many times, so the owner recognizes me. One time, Liang even told me not to eat wheel pies since I have suffered from stomachache."

In fact, on June 6, when the nationwide three-level alert was extended for the third time, he sent thirty wheel pies to En Chu Kong Hospital, hoping that those snacks can make healthcare workers cheer up.

In the future, like other store owners, Liang hopes to extend his business and earn more money for his family. However, on Guoxue Street, pedestrians walking through can see an earnest owner who wants to send a positive message through delicious wheel pies.

Rice Burritos to Devour at a Mouthful



By Teresa Lin

Just across the side gate of NTPU, a store with a long line always grabs people's attention. That particular store is named, literally, Mouthful of Rice Burrito, which is one of the students' first choices for a quick lunch.

During lunchtime, students line up scrolling their phones and waiting for their turn to get a lunch in their palms. The staff spread out the combination of sticky rice and black rice skillfully, putting all the ingredients on the rice. Then comes the difficult part — rolling the rice and transforming it into a big rice burrito. With that, a burrito that makes students energetic for the whole afternoon is done.

Rice burrito is a traditional Taiwanese cuisine that has a variety of flavors. Taiwanese mostly take it for breakfast or a lunch. It is popular because of its convenience and satiety. The stuffing is usually contained with radish, pickled mustard green, fried breadstick, and egg. The flavor can be sweet or salty, and all kinds of fillings can be put into the rice burrito.

The store is owned by Lu Hong-Yi and his family, together with his wife and his parents. Lu's family started with a small stand in 2018. In the beginning, they only offered three flavors. Now they have seven different choices for all the eaters.

Thanks to the perfect location that students will often pass by, they got their reputation and have more customers eager to have a taste of their rice burrito. In 2020, a nice chance came for them that the storefront behind the stand was vacant. Therefore, they decided to move to a bigger base to offer more Taiwanese rice burritos for their customers.

The choices of rice burritos have seven flavors, and each has its supporters. Talking about the ingredients, Hong-Yi only follows two rules, fresh and safe. They have cooperated with certain suppliers in Sanxia traditional market to make sure they can get the best quality goods.

All of the ingredients are from Taiwan, except the oil, which Hong-Yi chose the olive oil from Spain. It is from Kirkland, known for its affordable price with high quality.

To make sure all the elements of rice burrito are fresh enough, Hong-Yi starts his day from 3 a.m. and prepares soymilk, sticky rice, and all the ingredients in the rice burrito.

"We make our own soymilk every day," said Hong-Yi. "It is quite tiring to prepare one more item. We once stopped providing it, but now we decide to keep serving the drink. Maybe we will stop again one day."

The soymilk only contains water, black soybean, and a little sugar. The store offers black soymilk instead of regular soymilk. Hong-Yi chose it in the first place because he believes that the black soymilk contains great nutrients, including anthocyanin, vitamin A, and vitamin B (complex) with the features of high protein and low calories.

One of the most memorable times for Hong-Yi is coming up with the sauce for sha-cha flavor. They were so happy and even decided to name the particular flavor of rice burrito as Happy Sha-Cha.

"The ingredients in the sauce are top secret," said Hong-Yi, who keeps it as his own baby. Another flavor that is named special is Hunk Rice Burrito. It contains a piece of pork, which is warm meat delivered to the store every day. They have to keep pounding the meat to make it tender and seasoned with their special sauce.

"It is not difficult to prepare ingredients. The most essential part is to be patient and focus on all the tasks," said Hong-Yi. "One tiny mistake would make the flavor go wrong."

Once he put too much salt into the dried radish, and some customers told them the next day, which made him feel sorry and also grateful that even they made mistakes, the customers are still willing to come back. Hong-Yi has great confidence in the ingredients he picks.

The most challenging part is time control and multitasking since there are nine different ingredients to be prepared daily. "We have to get ingredients ready before 6 a.m., the time we open, and make sure the quality is good enough."

Hung-Yi takes the off-peak time to prepare the second round to make sure the food is fresh when students are still taking courses. "It may seem like we can take a break after 2 p.m., or earlier if we sold out all our rice burritos, but we have to come back to the store to wash the rice and start to check ingredients after we had dinner," said Hung-Yi.

"It is right beside the school and makes it convenient to grab a rice burrito and go," said Lauren Hung, a student from NTPU, who comes to order the rice burrito twice a week. She ordered a Smart Rice Burrito, which contains scallion and pork floss. "The scallion is a little spicy, which makes the rice burrito special."

"I suffered from indigestion so I could not eat sticky rice so often. But at Mouthful of Rice Burrito, I never have a stomachache," said Tommy Huang, another NTPU student who is also a fan of the shop.

Speaking of his favorite flavor, he recommends a combination, which is Sweet Rice Burrito with a fried egg. "I like the sweet and salty taste combined together. Adding an egg seems to be healthier. The rice is chewy and blend the ingredients perfectly."

"Some small changes for customers are actually a big deal for us because we took every single decision carefully," said Hung-Yi, with his hand keeping stir-frying the reddish. "When we changed to this bigger store, we tried to serve more than rice burritos. But we end up focusing on our expertise. Those who have tasted our special menu must be our loyal customers."

Due to the pandemic, the store also made changes to adjust. Almost no students stayed on the campus since May because of the outbreak.

It has been a harsh time for these kinds of shop located next to the campus. What they can do is reduce the preparation of ingredients. Within the time, they close the place of dining in and transform into a shop only offering take-outs.

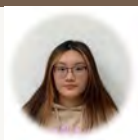
Also, they introduced new equipment and a new system. With the help of the label machine and online ordering system, Lu's family can prepare the meal more systematically.

"We are very busy and have no time to communicate with our customers. This is why we share some details on our Facebook pages. We hope that people can understand how much effort we made on the rice burrito," said Hung-Yi.

Mouthful of Rice Burrito uses their culinary art to deliver messages to their customers and prove that even simple ingredients can turn into delicious dishes.



Spotless Beef Noodle Bistro to Reflect Sunshine on the Floor



By Sonia Lo

USBEEF is located near National Taipei university's side door, about three-minute walk. The owner of USBEEF is Zhi-Wei Song, who came from Beitou. USBEEF has been opened since 2018.

The menu is conveniently placed outside the restaurant, so customers know what to eat. Zhi-Wei wrote his aspiration on the left-hand side of the menu as a way to communicate with his customers. "I want customers to feel like they've come back home," he said. "We serve them with delicious beef noodle soup in a vibe which is relaxing for them."

Inside USBEEF, the surroundings are neat and cozy, with the floor reflecting the light of sunshine during the day. There are nine dining tables and tableware are placed beside the refrigerator. The owner uses tableware boxes to prevent dust from defiling the tableware. There is also hot pickled mustard tuber placed on the table, next to the refrigerator.

The menu on the wall is hand-written by the owner. He has also drawn some food graffiti on the blackboard. On the left-hand side of the wall, there are scrap papers with encouraging words written by customers.

The kitchen was translucent so that customers can see the kitchen directly and can talk to the chef if they want to. There are only 20 cuisines on the menu, chosen by Zhi-Wei.

Charles is a student from NTPU, who visited USBEEF for the first time. When he stepped into the restaurant, the sweet-smelling of the soup flowed out. He felt ravenous after smelling the fragrant. The owner received Charles with a big smile. "The cuisine on the menu all represents classic entries," said Zhi-Wei. "We only make high-quality food. Just feel relieved and order what you want."

When Charles decided to order beef tendon noodle soup, Zhi-Wei asked him what kind of noodles he likes. "We have sliced noodles, ramen, plain noodles, and thin ramen. The reason why we had four types of noodles is that we expect customers can choose their favorite noodles," Zhi-Wei said. He put himself in customers' shoes, always caring about their feelings and place them on the first priority.

"I can feel that the beef noodle soup is made with heart," said Charles. "Actually customers know the differences between a portion of natural food and processed food. Although the price of a bowl of beef noodle soup here is more expensive than elsewhere, it is worth the price. I was also impressed by his attitude, which is always respectful."



Zhi-Wei's self-imposed standard is high, and he really cares about the tidiness, no matter in the kitchen or dining area. The floor is always clean, as Zhi-Wei will clean it if he sees the floor is dirty. "What if a dining area is not neat, the dining table is oily and dirty? Customers would not want to step into the restaurant, right?"

So he believes that having a clean and efficient dining space is important. It is a basic condition to treat others. "Besides, I treat every customer as my family, so I want to make them feel comfortable while eating here," he said.

The price of the beef noodle soup is higher than other restaurants, because they use US beef. They do not want customers to worry about the quality of the beef, so they bought high-quality beef. The costs made the price of beef noodle soup expensive. "It is worth to order high-quality beef from the US. We hope that customers will like our dishes and service," said Zhi-Wei.

Zhi-Wei uses fine ingredients, such as imported US beef, good condition tomatoes, and noodles without preservatives. He persists in preparing ingredients every morning by himself, making sure the ingredients are fresh and readily available.

He used 15 kinds of ingredients to boil the soup, which includes cabbage, apples, beef bones, carrot, beef tendon, Japanese daikon, onions, tomatoes, corns, bok choy, green onions, coriander, garlic shoot, ginger, and beef ribs. This procedure for making the broth takes 12 hours to 24 hours to complete.

As Zhi-Wei wants his customers to eat healthy food, he does not add any monosodium glutamate in the meals. The formula of USBEEF's beef noodle soup is green vegetables, tomatoes, and customized noodles.

"I have many customers who have kids, so if I make the soup oily and spicy, then it is not eatable for them," he said. "I want everyone to enjoy delicious beef noodle soup here. I have prepared some hot pickled mustard tuber and Worcestershire sauce for people who want to add extra flavors." Therefore, there are high chairs and children's tableware inside the restaurant.



Also, he put all the sauce in the refrigerator to make sure the flavor of condiments is regular and prevent kids from eventually knocking down the condiments. He thought that satisfying customers and considering customers' needs as much as possible is important.

Not only the beef noodle soup is delicious, their braised dish is also remarkable. They make four species, which are dried bean curd, seaweed, quail eggs, and *Pleurotus Eryngii*, each of them tasty and fresh. As they use fresh ingredients, so the quality of the food is excellent. "I really insist to use fresh ingredients, no matter sold out or not. I prepare new ingredients for the next day," he continued.

Zhi-Wei treats everyone kindly and sincerely, treating customers like families. He said, "If you cooked something stale and unhealthy, would you give it to your family? Of course not. So being honest and attentive to customers is the most important thing for me. Not to take advantage of others or cheat on your customers is my motto."

"Whenever I came to USBEEF, the owner remembers that I have a kid so he will prepare the high chair for us and treat us with care. He will also serve me an extra dish if I ask for take-out," said phoebe, a housewife who lives in Sanxia. "I really like this restaurant, not only the meals but also how the owner treats us."

"Our customers are polite and with a good education. Once, a mother brought a kid here to eat noodle soup, and the kid overthrew a bowl of soup accidentally," said Zhi-Wei. "The mother was so sorry and helped us clean the floor. What an adorable scene."



"We make friends with customers and they become our friends now. Once, a married couple went to Kaosiung for a trip," he noted. "After their trip, they rushed to our restaurant and just wanted to give us a special souvenir before going back to Taipei."

"We felt amazed because we never thought that customers will remember us, not to mention buying a souvenir for us. Their action was really heart-warming and touching," he said. "That is the reason why I treat my customers like my family or friends, and they make you feel the same way."

"I will never give up to this business, because USBEEF is my soul, my strength, and my hope. I want to persist in my dream and prove that my decision of opening this restaurant is right in the very beginning," said Zhi-Wei.

Milk Latte and Honey Toast Served with Blessings



By Leo Huang

Share & Culture & Creative Café is located on Daxue Rd., about three minutes' walk from the main gate of NTPU. What makes it different from other coffee shops is that it is operated by a church, Top Church, right next to it. Share & Cultural & Creative Café has served their distinctive coffee for six years, since 2015.

"The founding of Share is to serve as a gathering place for fellows at Top Church," said Felix Liu, a clerk of Share. "Therefore, most of the frequent customers are fellows of the church and students from NTPU."

Thus, sound of chatting is often heard because most customers of Share are familiar with each other, making the whole atmosphere cozy and friendly.

Entering the café, there is a large television on the wall, displaying the image of burning fire. In the dining area, more than 50 seats are set, and most of them are around tables for six or more.

Previously, the setting was designed especially for gathering, but now it becomes a convenient setting for group of friends chatting and relaxing, while sometimes it is still used as the gathering site for the church. "We usually hold our routine gatherings with our fellows here," said Jane Shu, one of the members of Top Church.

With the wooden tone furniture and fire displaying on the television, the whole café gives customers the feeling as if they are at home. According to Felix, that is the feeling they want to give to their customers.

In the afternoon during weekdays, because most of people are working, there are usually fewer customers. However, Felix is still busy with the cleaning, not only because Share closes earlier than other cafés, but because he wants his customers to feel comfortable with the environment.

Hanging on the wall, there are quite a large amount of different cups, set individually on the box in the color of walnut wood, and each of them are different from one another. "Those cups are owned by the group leaders in our church," said Felix. "Each cup has its owner."



"There are more than 200 customers setting their cups here," Felix added. "Actually the number is still increasing although we don't have enough space to place them." Thus, group leaders, frequently coming to Share, can use their cups set in the café.

"The most important thing in Christianity is relationship," said Felix. "No matter the relationship between human beings or relationship with Jesus."

The reason why a church would run a café is to build up more relations and connections among humans and God, so as to share their concerns with everyone and to the whole society. That is also the primary reason Top Church started running the café six years ago.

On the menu, various food and desert entries are provided. Drinks include juice, sparkling water, tea, and coffee, while deserts include bagel, croissant, cake, and hot-pressed sandwich.



Besides, commercial lunch is served on weekdays. Over all, there are more than 50 kinds of food and drinks for customers to choose from. "Coffee is our best-selling beverage," said Felix. "While hot-pressed sandwich is our best-selling cuisine."

"The reason why our hot-pressed sandwich sells well is because of the price," added Felix. "It is cheap, cost-effective, and stuffing-filled."



The main stuffing of the hot-pressed sandwich includes ham, tuna, or combo of both. "However, none of them are the most impressive and distinctive filling," said Jane, one of the frequent customers of Share. "I like their cheese instead."

Taking a bite on the hot-pressed and tearing it toward the mouth, the cheese stretches and shines like a thin stream of golden line, as if being able to extend for a distance flexibly, and not likely to break easily.

According to Felix, around sixty percent of customers would order drinks or coffee, and most of them order latte or Americano. "Our coffee is stronger than other coffee shops," said Felix. "However, I think our coffee is a better choice for making latte, because a weak coffee would make a cup taste like water."

Except for the flavor of the coffee bean itself, maker's seasoning is also an important factor for coffee's flavor. "Even coffee beans are all from one makers and one batch, the flavor and taste would be different each time," said Felix. "So it is important for coffee maker to know the quality of each batch of coffee beans."

Other than coffee and hot-pressed sandwiches, the other feature of Share is their milk foam. "The procedure of making milk foam is to beat the cream until it becomes foamy," said Felix. "So milk foam needs to be made in advance."



According to Felix, beating the milk foam takes around 15 minutes, so it cannot be made immediately whenever customers order a drink with milk foam. If you are a milk foam lover, Share serves various kind of drinks and deserts with milk foam.

For those who do not like the taste of coffee, Share serves a special drink— Sparkling Rye with Coffee, composing coffee, rye, sparking water, and milk foam, the most important ingredient. Because of the rye and sparking water, the drink tastes like beers rather than coffee, while the milk foam encloses the flavor with a silky texture as if a cloud in milky color, floating on a cup of coffee-alike beer.

If you assumed that milk foam can only be used on drinks, then one special desert will broaden your horizon. Honey Toast is a roasted thick-slide toast, covered with a few small berries, cranberry sauce, and a piece of quilt-like heavy milk foam.

Whenever taking a bite, the quilt-like milk foam would flow down from the thick toast — in the color of golden wheat field in the vibrant summer — as if it were the snow melted, flowing down from the hill in the color of white in early spring.

As for the taste and texture, it tastes like a freshly-baked biscuit, wrapped in a half-melted ice cream in berry flavor.

Share & Cultural & Creative Café insists to serve the best-quality food and drink with warm hospitality and humanity to their customers. "This is the soul of Share," said Felix.

When next time you pass by, keep in mind that there is a warm and friendly coffee shop located next to the church. "No matter you are a Christian or not, just come and refresh yourself with a cup of coffee," said Felix. "A warm cup of coffee may become the starting point of blessings from Jesus."



Hearty Curry Meals Served in Japanese Family Style



By Tz-Yan HSU

On Daguan Road, there are a variety of restaurants, from Italian to Vietnamese, from Taiwanese to American, all dazzling options all over. However, there is one restaurant which looks unique in its own right. It looks in Japanese style—not a sushi house or a ramen place—but is a traditional Japanese family restaurant.

A Rilakkuma bear sits lazily with an old Japanese man in the front, who keeps writing things on the notebook with a half-finished cigarette on the ashtray. When walking past him, entering the restaurant, you hear a loud and clear 'Ohiyo' bursting out from this old man, who is the owner of the restaurant, Mutsuhiro Ishii. That kind of greeting makes you feel welcomed and taken care of.



This is a Japanese-style family restaurant, Curry House, which is owned by a married couple who live nearby. The owner, Mr. Ishii, and his wife, who prefers to stay anonymous, win the hearts of the neighborhood with their hospitality and delicious meals.

They mainly sell curry with different kinds of fried food as side dishes, such as fried pork chop, fried oyster, and fried chicken. Besides the main dishes, there are always fresh greens with a boiled egg put at the side for extra freshness and nutrients.

The menu is an epitome of the modest nature of this eatery. "I am just good at cooking, and my husband asked me to come up with something nice and easy to prepare—so here comes the curry," said Mrs. Ishii. "But nobody eats curry every day, right? That is why we try to enrich our menu by adding some fried food."

This shows the personality and the philosophy of life of the cook, who is cool with everything and treats cooking as something she enjoys. If she has the talent to cook, then she must share it with others.

Mrs. Ishii's friendliness and straightforwardness attract many people, including her customers as well as other store owners in the neighborhood. Everyone knows her and likes to chat with her.

"We have a lot of regular customers who come at least once a week just to chat with her," said Miss Chen, a NTPU student who has been working here for almost three years. She was one of the old customers when she was a freshman and has since then started to work here.

"She knows everything about us. From a hard breakup to a new girlfriend, we told her everything," said a boy who has been here for a few months.

The bond of the staff seems strong, and Mrs. Ishii takes care of her staff as her children. She feeds them, cares about them, also relies on them. Mrs. Ishii is not good with technology, so she has Miss Chen to run the Fanclub on Facebook. When Mrs. Ishii's staff is helping with the decoration of the restaurant, she cooks for them and asks about their updates.

Other restaurant owners may have started the business for making a living, Mr. Ishii and his wife has some more romance added in their story: They met each other from a trip to Japan.

At the very beginning, Mr. Ishii is one of the friends of his wife's Japanese friends and they were introduced to each other in a gathering. However, they did not know each other any deeper until they met each other again in Xiamen. Their relationship had since grown deeper and eventually Mr. Ishii decided to move to Taiwan with his loved one.

After his retirement, he moved to Taiwan and started a business together. They chosen Sanxia as their home because of the peaceful environment and started to run a restaurant. Why restaurant? It is because Mrs. Ishii has been familiar with every routine of running a restaurant. So the husband oversees decision-making and money, and the wife has he rest all covered.

From purchasing to cooking, Mrs. Ishii starts her day at 7 a.m. to prepare everything. In the beginning, she did go to the Sanxia traditional market and pick up fresh ingredients herself. But now she has become familiar with the vendors, and the ingredients will be delivered directly to the restaurant every day. "The service of delivery literally saves my life," she laughed.

Furthermore, the food delivery platform such as Foodpanda and Uber Eats also saves them during the pandemic. During that specific period, nobody came out of the house to buy food, so they could not even earn a thousand dollars a day. Luckily because of the food delivery platform, they finally got to survive from the most difficult time.

In the first few months of opening, Curry House had its popularity. They had customers lining up before the opening hours without any promotions. "We could sell 100 meals at our highest," said the owner of the restaurant proudly in Japanese. People were crazy about the famous curry rice with beef brisket and keep coming for it for the rich flavor and reasonable price.

The reason that the beef brisket curry always occupies at the top of the sale is the tenderness of the meat, and how it melts with curry sauce. The sweetness of the meat is covered with rich flavor of curry, which is like a perfect duo, dancing perfectly with each other in harmony. The sauce is thick but also light enough not to block the taste of other ingredients.

When tired of the flavor of curry, customers can eat some of the freshly cooked water-boiled greens at the side, which helps to clean the mouth and brings out another level of sweetness. "Don't underestimate the tastiness of those vegetables," said the cook. "The simpler the way they are cooked, the easier to see the freshness of the food."

Mrs. Ishii did not make the menu in complete Japanese style, because the flavor of curry would be too sweet and too savory for local clients. To make the curry fit better into the Taiwanese market, Mrs. Ishii modified the recipe many times to come up with the last version, which truly become famous in the neighborhood.

The cook proudly said that there were a group of Japanese customers coming from Beitou to try their curry. Even though they do not have the popularity of the old days, they still have many regulars coming back from time to time, not just for the conversation with Mrs. Ishii, but to enjoy the hot and heart-warming meal served by the sincerest staff.

