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A Guide Book of The Bando Banquets in Taiwan

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BANDO



Image by TOPYS

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A GUIDE BOOK OF THE BANDO BANQUETS IN TAIWAN

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BANDO

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Image by Epochtimes

About Bando

By Sharon Chen

Sitting at the round red tables and enjoying sumptuous dishes at the side of road is the collective memories shared by Taiwanese. This unique Taiwanese culinary culture is called roadside banquet or “bando” in Mandarin. “Ban” means “to hold” and “do” means “tables where the dishes placed on”. Bando develops from the countryside in Taiwan. The locations that people often choose are in the courtyards of their houses or the outer courtyard of a temple.

General speaking, a host holds a banquet and invites guests to dine at the table. In preparing the food, the host will provide ingredients and gives them to a chef (“tsóng-phòo-sai” in Chinese) who is responsible for designing the banquet’s dishes and preparing the foods. The villagers will help by pitching tents and setting up tables and chairs. Then, the meals are prepared and cooked under a big tent at the side of road. However, nowadays, the banquet business has catching up with the times. A sophisticated team led by experts at holding the traditional Taiwanese-style roadside banquets takes care of all banquet catering and service.

In Taiwan, roadside banquets are held on different occasions. Each dish served in these banquets has its special meaning with the main purpose of giving best wishes to the hosts and the guests.

The History of Bando



Image by Taiwan Today

The origin of Bando

Let's go back in time...

The history of roadside banquet in Taiwan can date back to the 17th century. Han Taiwanese from Fujian and Guangdong brought this distinctive banquet culture to Taiwan. In the hope of blessing and protection from deities and spirits, Han Taiwanese customarily offered animal sacrifices, dishes, fruits and wines to them on traditional holidays. These activities of worship are commonly held in the form of roadside banquets.

Roadside banquets are held on different occasions. Some are taken place on religious carnivals in honor of deities. For instance, Zhongyuan Pudu is held during the Ghost month, offering feasts to the spirits. Other are held for important events in a person's life, including wedding, one-month celebration, birthday celebrations for the elderly, funeral, etc. Furthermore, some special occasions such as year-end party (Wei-ya party) and housewarming party are celebrated with roadside banquets.

Therefore, to foreigners, who are the first time to visit Taiwan and attend Taiwanese roadside banquet, it is important for them to take a clear view on cultural implication of Taiwanese roadside banquet and symbolism of the dishes served on table according to different occasions.

Wedding

By Paul Tsai



Image by veryWed.com

"Xi yan" is the Chinese expression of the wedding banquet. Xi yan is held at the end of a wedding day, and it usually begins in the evening. Nowadays, Xi yan has various kinds of the formation. According to the couples' preference and needs, it can be held in "Bando" style on the street, or be served on Chinese style round table in a wedding hall, or be served as modern style buffet in a hotel.

Moreover, Xi yan dishes have some rules and taboos to follow. For instance, the number of the dishes needs to be even because Taiwanese people believe that odd number is referred to single people and alone and is unlucky for an event which is meant to be a union. Besides, duck is not allowed to be a wedding banquet dish, since duck has the same pronunciation as "arbitrary" in Taiwanese, which is believed to be back luck, because people believe it might lead the couple to discord after the wedding.

In conclusion, Xi yan is a meaningful and happy occasion for Taiwanese people, and the most important thing is to make sure that the married couple and every guest would have lovely moments together. However, Taiwanese people can also be susceptible and intolerable to the breaking of the traditional rules and the taboos about Xi Yan. Do follow the rules, mind the restrictions, and enjoy a Taiwanese style of a wedding banquet.



Image by veryWed.com

Wedding Dishes

Fried Rice Balls

Fried rice balls have an interesting Chinese expression called "Hua Hao Yueh Yuan," which presents the image of blossom and full moon and the wish for happiness and reunion.

This dish is usually served as an appetizer. Fried rice balls are made of glutinous rice powder. They are mixed with water and kneaded into the shape of a ball and are fried before covered with peanut powder. The overall texture is soft and crispy. The taste is sweet, which fits the vibe of a celebration.



Image by Happiness express

Longan, Red Jujube and Lotus Seed Sweet Soup

This dish is made of longan, red Jujube, and candied lotus seed served as a dessert. Besides, in Chinese culture, there is a proverb called "tsao sheng kuei tzu" which means a blessing for the newly wedded couple to give birth to their precious child as soon as possible. In this pun, red jujube has the same pronunciation with "Early," longan has the same pronunciation with "precious," and lotus seed has the same pronunciation with "child."



Image by Xiuchufang.com



Image by Mansui

Steamed Crab with Glutinous Rice

Steamed crab with glutinous rice is the staple dish in Bando. The red color of the crab has the symbolic meaning of joy and glutinous rice functions as a substitute for rice. This dish is meant to satiate the guests.



Image by Happiness express

A Cold Dish of Lobster, Abalone, and Mullet Roes

Taiwan is an island which owns a lot of ocean resources. Therefore, serving seafood on the table is something difficult to avoid in Bando culture. Moreover, serving expensive seafood like lobster, abalone and mullet roes can be a manner of ostentation and a way for the host to show off in Taiwanese culture.



極品佛跳牆

Image by Happiness express

Buddha Jumps Over the Wall (佛跳牆)

Buddha Jumps Over the Wall (佛跳牆) is one very classic and famous Chinese dish. Overall speaking, it is a stew made of many kinds of ingredients.

Usually, it would contain taro, mushrooms, bamboo shoot, chestnut and sea cucumber, but sometimes it could have shark's fin, chicken, and scallop in it. The specific ingredients in Buddha Jumps Over the Wall(佛跳牆) can be very different from different suppliers. However, with the hot soup and various ingredients, it is a well-received dish in Taiwanese culture.



Q: Taiwanese people have the culture of taking the "gift money" as wedding gifts, and this thing means a lot to the newly wedded couple. Is there a minimum of the gift money? How much money should the guests put in the "red envelope" to give to the couple without being rude?

A: Technically, there is a minimum of the gift money, and the minimum depends on how close the relationship between the guests and the couple is; the number would be 600 NT dollars if the guests are just the least familiar friends, but if the guests are close friends of the couple, then the gift money could go up to 3000 to 4000 NT dollars as a way to value their friendship.

Besides, the quality of the food and the environment of the wedding banquet would also be in consideration of the gift money. But the tricky part is that it never has an open standard to quantify those features of a wedding banquet. The price of the meals would not be shown directly on the table, and it is also hard to price a relationship.

To put it briefly, if the guests genuinely care about the couple, it is recommended that the gift money be much as possible. Taiwanese people usually take this kind of generosity as an expression of sincere blessing and respect. On the contrary, if the couple is regular friends to the guests, then do not feel obligated to fulfill the expectation of Taiwanese wedding culture. Just putting the amount of money that is comfortable for the guests, since the main point of a wedding banquet is to celebrate a delightful event, instead of joining a competition about giving the most prominent "red envelope" in the wedding.

Note Area

Newborn's One Month Celebration

By Sharon Chen



Image by Eve Studio

In Taiwan, there is a traditional custom which celebrates for newborn baby's first full month of life. A ceremony will be held to celebrate a baby's one-month-old birthday party which is also called "mun yuet" banquet. The Chinese term "mun yuet" means full month. The banquet originates from an old Chinese tradition. In the past, newborn child death rates were high, so when a baby survives his/her chief month of life, this was a milestone of his/her birth worth celebrating.

Therefore, according to Chinese custom, a ceremony is held to celebrate the newborn child's birth and the end of the new mother's confinement period. At the same time, it is a chance that both the fully recuperated mother and the newborn are officially introduced to families and friends. In this baby's first month banquet, symbolic rituals and meals served to people are also made to worship good health, happiness, and success in life for the child.

Newborn's One Month Celebration Dishes

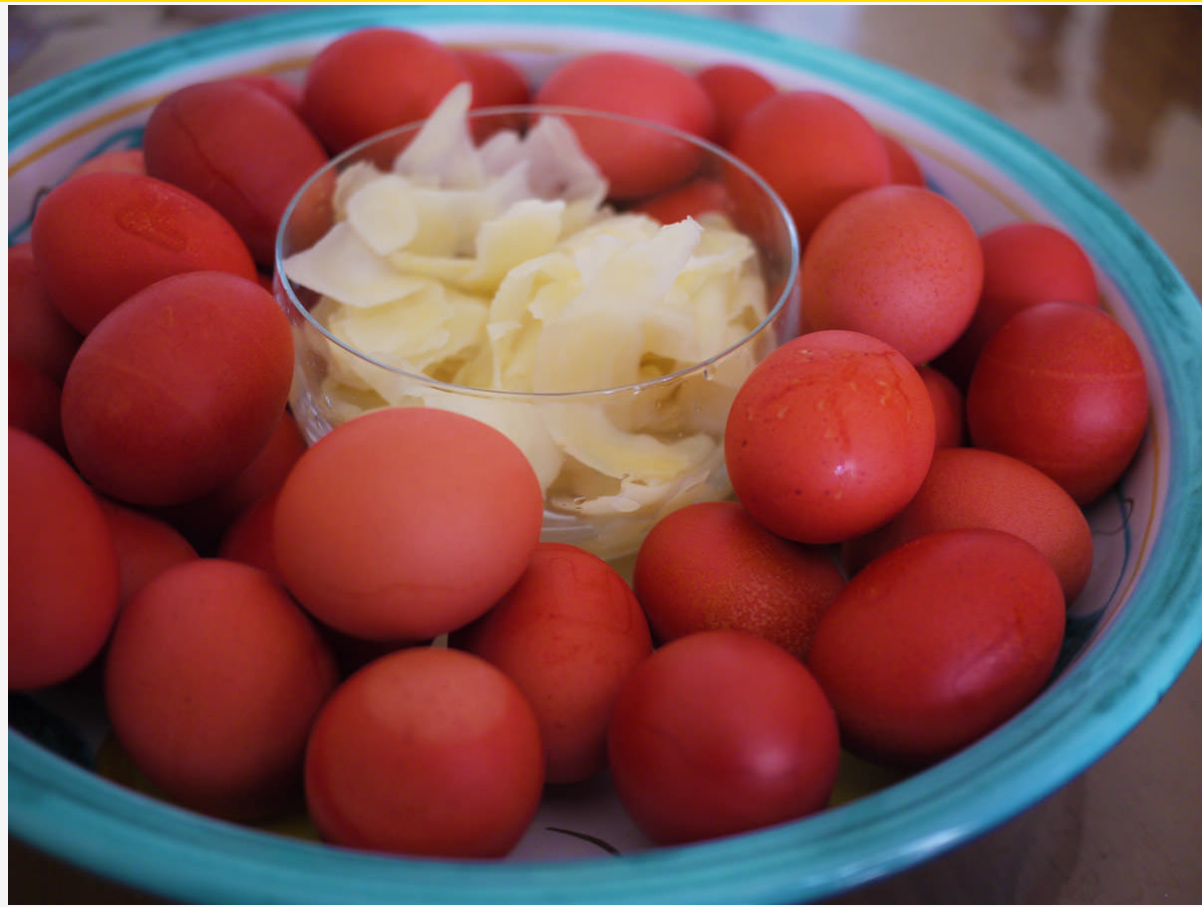


Image by redeggandgingerparty.com

Red Eggs & Pickled Ginger

When celebrating the birth of a baby, parents will give their friends, families, and relatives the red eggs to announce the newborn's first month of life. It is believed that red eggs symbolize happiness and the renewal of life. Eggs represent fertility, the shapes of eggs represent harmony, and red represents good luck and fortune. According to Chinese custom, if parents have a newborn who is a boy, they should give out an odd number of eggs; if parents have a newborn who is a girl, they should give out an even number of eggs.

Pickled ginger is pronounced as "xun" in Cantonese which has the same pronunciation as a grandson. Thus, it is said that pickled ginger represents grandchildren and fertility.



Image by Bestfood美食

Ang Ku Kueh

The literal meaning of Ang Ku Kueh is red tortoise cake. Ang Ku Kueh is originated from Hokkien. The shape of the cake and its imprint are made like a turtle. The skin of the cake is made from sticky glutinous rice whereas the filling of the cakes is sweet pre-cooked ingredients like peanuts and mung bean. Since turtles are known to long lives, Chinese people believe giving out Ang Ku Kueh can wish for sustained longevity and blessing for their children.

According to Hokkien custom, the design of Ang Ku Kueh represents the sex of a newborn baby. If a newborn baby is a boy, a turtle with two marbles is a sign of a boy. If a newborn baby is a girl, a turtle with two peaches is a sign of a girl. Nowadays, the design is simpler. A pointed Ang Ku Kueh represents a boy while a flat Ang Ku Kueh represents a girl.



Image by 皇權

Oil Rice

Oil rice is also called youfan in Taiwanese. It is a common food in Taiwan which also can be saved for a long time. According to Taiwanese tradition, giving out oil rice means a newborn baby is a boy, and giving out cakes means a newborn baby is a girl.

Chinese Traditional Cakes

Cakes are sweet, so Chinese people believe that eating sweets can wish for good luck and happiness. Besides, people usually take cakes to celebrate the birth of a girl.



Image by 婷兒旅行札記



Image by Yahoo

FAQ

Q: In return, what gifts do you bring to Newborn's one-month celebration?

A: According to Chinese custom, friends and relatives receive gifts such as red eggs, oil rice, or cakes from newborn's parents. During Newborn's one month celebration, friends and relatives will also return some presents. Therefore, what gifts do you prepare for the newborn baby? You can bring presents which the child may use like daily materials and foods, or you can send money wrapped in a red envelope to the newborn's parents.

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Image by 淘寶



Image by 嘉義市政府

Religious Carnival

By Pearl Yang

Taiwan is a place with many different religions, everyone has their rights to choose their own beliefs. Among all of the religions booming in Taiwan, Taoism is the most influential and common one. Therefore, there are always different kinds of religious activities in Taiwan to please the gods. Mostly, a religious carnival costs less than other kinds of outside catering, and the price is around 5000~6000 NTD.

Moreover, due to the demands of labor during religious activities, religious carnivals pay more emphasis on the quantity instead of the quality of the food to maintain the disciples' stamina. Religious carnivals are always free for everyone. Also, during the preparation of a religious carnival, the male staffs cannot have sexual behaviors three days prior the carnival, and female staffs should not be working while they are in their periods. The tableware has to be brand new and clean, or the gods may feel disrespected.

Religious Carnival Dishes

Gods should decide the dishes of the religious carnivals, therefore before the event, the staff of the temple will cast moon blocks to ask what kind of dishes have to be on the table. However, most of the time the style of the dishes depend on the temples' locations, such as in Miaoli County, the Hakka religious carnivals always have four fried dishes and four stew dishes as their tradition and Fried duck blood with Chinese chives and pork chop soup are two of them.

Fried Duck Blood with Chinese Chives



Pork Chop Soup



Buddha Jumps over the Wall (佛跳牆)

In other regions, rice cake, Buddha jumps over the wall (佛跳牆) and fried rice noodles are the most common ones.



Image by 大廚網

Fried Rice Noodles

A classic Taiwanese dish composed of dried mushroom, dried shrimp and pork. It was a dish that only appeared in special occasions since rice noodles were expensive, but now it's a very common in Taiwan.



Image by 史靈生

According to tradition, while serving the dishes, the wine should be served every three minutes, and the dishes have to be served per eight minutes. The legend has it that, after the gods finishing their dining, the dishes and wines on the religious carnivals will lose their tastes since they are eaten by the gods.

FAQ



Image by 好房網

1.

Q: Do I have to bring anything along with me to a religious carnival?

A: No, you don't have to bring anything to a religious carnival. Some disciples may bring money to support the temples, but basically, a religious carnival is free.

2.

Q: Will there be any performance on a religious carnival?

A: Yes. Some religious carnivals will have dancers to dance for gods, and some will have Taiwanese opera to perform stories about the gods.

Girls Dancing to Celebrate the Birthday of the God



Image by 鋼管辣妹

Wei-ya Party

By Pearl Yang



Image by 大紀元

There are two possible origins of Wei-ya. One is about the generals would have a feast with the soldiers to pray for the victory of the war, and they called the feast "ya" in ancient times. Another one is that the shop owners would hold a feast to pray to the village god for safety and prosperous business on the second and sixteenth day of the month. The first feast is called "Tou-ya", and it is held on the second day of February. The last feast, which takes place on December sixteenth, is called "Wei-ya", and the owners often use it as an opportunity to show gratitude to the employees for their hard working. Also, after Wei-ya, people can start to prepare for Chinese New Year.

Since Wei-ya party is a way to thank the employees, on some occasion, it will also be a way to fire them. If the chicken's head is facing toward someone, then it is telling him or her that the employer doesn't want him or her to stay in the company anymore. It is a much milder way to discharge the employees.

However, people nowadays don't have this tradition anymore. Wei-ya becomes a large-scale social function for the employers and their employees as well as their important business associates to have a year-end party.

Wei-ya Party Dishes

Chinese Burger

Chinese burgers will be on the menu of Wei-ya party. People believe that because the shape of the bun is like the mouth of a tiger and they stuffed pork in it, making it a term "tiger bites pig," which means "bag things are eaten."



Image by WenZai

Spring Rolls

Since it is a dish Chinese people usually eat during Chinese New Year, the employers will prepare this dish to celebrate it with the employees in advance.



Image by 天下雜誌

FAQ

Q: What kinds of activities are held in a Wei-ya?

A: The employers will invite some singers to perform at the event, and they will hold prize-lot to let the employees have a chance to get presents.

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