

RESTAURANTS



The pot stickers are a must-try at Mingyue Tangbao.

PHOTO: DAVID CHEN, TAIPEI TIMES

Mingyue Tangbao (明月湯包)

Address: 162-4, Keelung Rd Sec 2, Taipei City

(台北市基隆路二段162之4號)

Telephone: (02) 2736-7192**Open:** Daily from 11am to 2pm and 5pm to 9pm; closed Mondays**Average meal:** NT\$180 per person**Details:** Chinese and Japanese menus; credit cards not accepted

Mention xiaolongbao (小籠包), or steamed dumplings, and the name Din Tai Fung (鼎泰豐) is bound to enter the conversation. But any dumpling aficionado is just as likely to tout a cheaper and even better alternative.

One such place is Mingyue Tangbao (明月湯包, Mingyue Steamed Dumplings), which enjoys a loyal following. During busy times it's not uncommon to find a line of people waiting outside this modest shop near the Tonghua Street (通化街) night market. The interior feels more like the typical Taiwanese noodle joint, sparsely decorated and with room for about 20 people. Wooden blocks on the wall list each menu item, and medals won by the chef hang proudly at the back of the room.

Both connoisseurs and newcomers should try the house specialty, mingyue tangbao (明月湯包, NT\$120 per basket of eight), the shop's name for its xiaolongbao. The marks of a good dumpling were all there: the outer flour wrap was delicate and thin but didn't break when picked up with chopsticks; each dumpling had a good proportion of soup, meat and dough; and the minced pork was lean and tasted fresh.

There are different ways to enjoy xiaolongbao, which is part of the fun. Some like to eat a whole dumpling in one bite and let the broth trapped inside explode in the mouth (let the dumplings cool for a few minutes so you won't burn yourself). A slower method is to savor the flavors separately. Dip a dumpling in soy sauce and vinegar, place it in your spoon, nibble a hole in the wrap and sip the soup that spills out. Finish the rest after adding a few slithers of ginger, which the waiter brings to your table on a tiny sauce plate.

Mingyue's unique pot stickers (鍋貼, NT\$120), also a house specialty, could rekindle affection for their tasty filling. Each serving of 10 dumplings arrives connected together at the bottom by a thin golden sheet of crispy flour and oil. The waiter sets the plate down and quickly separates the dumplings with a fork. The crispy bottom packed a satisfying crunch while a hint of sweetness in the dough was well-balanced by the minced pork's savoriness.

The steamed vegetable dumplings (淨素蒸餃, NT\$130 per basket of eight) also deserve mention for their tasty filling of vegetable greens and bits of tofu. Some heartier choices for winter include the steamed chicken soup (圓盅嫩雞湯, NT\$140) and the stewed beef soup (清燉牛肉湯, NT\$120), both of which come with a side of noodles for an extra NT\$20. Pass on the scallion pancakes (蔥油餅, NT\$50), which were too greasy.

Mingyue also runs a more spacious sit-down restaurant around the corner at 40, Ln 171, Tonghua St. (通化街171巷40號), with a wider range of options, but its faux trendy decor falls short. The plain-Jane shop on Keelung Road has more character, if you can do without the Shanghai grandeur. Both restaurants are a five-minute walk from Liuzhangli (六張犁) MRT Station.

— DAVID CHEN



Eating at Nineting could make you very thirsty.

PHOTO: NOAH BUCHAN, TAIPEI TIMES

Nineting 19

Address: 19 Yunhe St, Taipei City (台北市雲和街19號)**Telephone:** (02) 2362-0019**Open:** Daily from 11am to 10pm**Average meal:** NT\$200**Details:** Chinese and English menu; credit cards not accepted

Nineting is, on last count, the sixth burger joint to open in the Shida neighborhood over the past year, not counting similar restaurants that have recently popped up across Taipei's Da-an District. And it could well be the first casualty of Shida's burger wars. This thought ran through my mind after leaving the restaurant, while on the way to Wellcome to buy a 5-liter bottle of water.

Which is a pity, given the effort that went into designing the place. The front walls are painted in 1960s-style black-and-white psychedelic patterns. There's a deli-style bar complete with stools in alternating white and peacock blue. Large murals of 1950s Hollywood films, pop art and other Americana hang in the back.

We ordered fried chicken wings (NT\$150) as one of two appetizers. Perhaps the idea behind the wings was lost in translation because the flavor was more night market xiansuji (鹹酥雞) than aromatic spiciness. Honey mustard or blue cheese sauce for dipping might have compensated for the chicken's greasiness, but none was provided. The half-finished plate spoke for itself. The calamari (NT\$150) was slightly tastier, if only because it came before the wings and was served with tartar sauce. Yet it, too, was very salty.

Our main course, the combo burger (NT\$270), a double beef patty with double cheese and double bacon, was served with a handful of fries and a potato salad sweet enough to make dessert irrelevant. Although the ingredients tasted fresh, we couldn't finish the burger because the amount of oil that emerged from the undercooked patty and the sauce, which tasted like a combination of relish and barbeque sauce, made it difficult to eat. Again, the half-finished plate spoke for itself.

In addition to the combo burger, Nineting offers 16 other burgers, including a spicy burger (NT\$210) with cheese and salsa, a fish burger and three kinds of chicken burger (NT\$210 to NT\$260), and four pork cutlet burgers (NT\$190 to NT\$250). Pasta, sandwiches and hot dogs complete the dinner options in a menu that features an extensive selection of floats, shakes and smoothies (NT\$110 to NT\$140).

A certain degree of grease and salt comes with the territory when dining at burger joints. But the meal we ate at Nineting left us bloated and parched.

— NOAH BUCHAN

X marks the spot



Kylie Minogue brings her flamboyant tour to Taipei this Thursday.

PHOTO COURTESY OF BROKERS BROTHERS HERALD



Another new bar? Suspend the eye roll and pause for thought, as this members-only joint is being opened tomorrow by one of Taipei's longest-serving and most successful foreign DJs, **Saucey**.

Called Pause, "because life is too hectic," as Saucey puts it, this is a new pet project for bringing music to its lovers. "[The bar] is a nice small space to work with where we could do some live acts, as well as continue the trend of some different-sounding DJ nights to include alternative genres like deep house, trip hop and drum 'n' bass."

Rewind a dozen years and Saucey was starting his promotion group ESPDJs with humble basement origins on Elm Street, in Vancouver, where "we used to put mattresses on the windows, disco balls on the ceiling and throw two-room parties into late Sunday afternoon," he recalls.

From there Saucey opened up an illegal after-hours club in the basement of a friend's video shop that, although successful, came to the attention of local law-enforcement authorities. Sick of the difficulties of organizing legal late-night parties, Saucey left Canada, ending up in Taiwan.

"I arrived in 2004 and the music scene was happening, but it wasn't really my style," Saucey says.

Luckily house came in 2004, "and it came huge ... I would play funky house to a completely packed room on Wednesday nights at Catwalk."

Around the same time Saucey started the well-received deep house nights at Eden with **SL**. After much success at Eden, Saucey was picked up by Luxy and has remained at the top of the DJ tree ever since.

With Pause, Saucey's goal is to create a relaxed and homely environment. "This venue will hopefully be an extension of my living room. We have comfy sofas, two outdoor patios, a video screening area, a mahjong table, a dart board and low lights."

As far as the clientele goes "this bar will act as a stepping stone to other activities. We are not a 12am-to-7am dance-your-ass-off club," he says, "but a place [where] you can come early, meet up with your friends and either go home early or bounce somewhere else."

The initial membership has begun with invitations sent out on Facebook to a lucky few who can then bring a couple of friends to the night to be signed up, thereby creating an intimate family tree of partygoers, which is a modern take on ESPDJs word-of-mouth advertising approach.

With a 100-person or so capacity, "the venue is too small to hold a large crowd so the special events, international DJs and live shows will be members-only," Saucey says. "There is no point in cramming 200 people into a small venue and have everyone upset about having to line up or not having a seat."

Tomorrow night sees **Doi Moi**, aka Toby Garrod from 9pm to 10:30pm, **Mark Thorne** on trip-hop from 10:30pm to midnight and Saucey playing out. This will be Garrod's second set after playing his first last Friday at Copa with his own style of psycho pop, "catchy, edgy, well-produced rock 'n' pop," says the new DJ in town, who started mixing vinyl in his dad's nightclub at the mature age of 8.

There will be an open bar between 9pm until 11pm and, "we will be signing members up with our new biometric fingerprint scanner which opens the door," Saucey says.

The Vinyl Word took a sneak preview on Wednesday evening and can report that Pause is sumptuous. There's warm lighting and picture frames containing candles as you walk in, which bathe the space in a welcoming glow. The bar is roomy yet with plenty of separate areas for groups to break off and mingle.

Outside at the back is a long viewing area with a huge projector screen. The drinks are reasonably priced with beers at NT\$150, high balls for NT\$180 and well-made cocktails just NT\$200. Perhaps most importantly, the sound system is, as you would expect from Saucey, aurally delicious.

Pause opens tomorrow. 9pm until late. 1F, 5, Alley 4, Ln 345, Renai Rd Sec 4, Taipei City (台北市仁愛路4段345巷4弄5號1樓).

Invite only with new membership being rolled out in the near future. Watch this space for details.

On the Net: check out Saucey's latest mix at www.espdjs.com.

— TOM LEEMING



Even when Pause-ing, Saucey still moves with the times.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SAUCEY

[EVENTS & ENTERTAINMENT]

Jazz sounds swing **Riverside Cafe (河岸留聲)** tonight with saxophonist **Dong Shun-wen (董舜文)** and his band: guitarist **Eric Chuang (莊智淵)**, bassist **Yohei Yamada (山田洋平)**, pianist **Nathan Tu (杜迺通)** and **Lin Wei-zhong (林偉中)**. Taking to the stage tomorrow is a new band, **The Fen-Fens (紛紛樂團)**. The group is billing their show as a "Friends First!" party, which means two or more people that exhibit their friendship by wearing the same clothes or jewelry receive a free souvenir bookmark.

► B1, 2, Ln 244, Roosevelt Rd Sec 3, Taipei City (台北市羅斯福路三段244巷2號B1), next to Taipower Building (台電大樓). Call (02) 2368-7310 or visit www.riverside.com.tw for more information

► Shows start at 9:30pm tonight and 9pm tomorrow

► NT\$400 tonight and tomorrow

The owners of **Riverside Cafe** recently opened **Riverside Live House (西門紅樓展演館)**, a new venue in Ximending's historic Red House Theater (西門紅樓). Tonight there's a presentation of classic Western rock covers of the 1990s sung by **JS** and **Z-Chen (張智成)**.

► 177 Xining S Rd, Taipei City (台北市西寧南路177號). Call (02) 2370-8805 or visit www.riverside.com.tw for more information

► Show starts at 8:30pm

► NT\$450 entrance includes one drink

Jazz Your Mind appears tonight at **Sappho de Base**, while New Orleans native **Nbugu Kenyatta** and his band **The Kenyatta Trio** funks up the house tomorrow. [See story on

Page 14.] Next week is full of jazz: on Tuesday night the **Sappho Jazz Band** performs, with an open jam afterwards; the **Chris Stiles Jazz Trio** appears on Wednesday; and the **Dafu Jazz Trio** takes to the stage on Thursday night.

► B1, 1, Ln 102, Anhe Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市安和路一段102巷1號B1). Call (02) 2700-5411 (after 9pm) or visit www.sappho102.biz for more information

► Performances begin at 10:30pm on weekends, 10pm on weekdays

► No admission fee

New Orleans funk band **The Kenyatta Trio** appears tonight at **Tone 56 Live Bar**. [See story on Page 14.] Tomorrow it's house band **Loaded**, which plays everything from "rock classics to today's hits." Taking to the stage on Sunday is **Stud**, which plays dance music and 1960s pop.

► 1F, 56, Minquan E Rd Sec 3, Taipei City (台北市民權東路三段56號1樓), near the corner of Fuxing North (復興北) and Minquan East (民權東) roads Call (02) 2517-3869 for more information

► Music shows go from 9:30pm to 12:30am tonight and tomorrow, and 7:30pm to 9:30pm on Sundays

► No admission fee

Taking to the stage tonight at **Bliss** is **Gross Fugue**, an expat duo that combines loud guitars, double bass, electronica and sensationalist video footage. Early tomorrow evening is the duo **T-Bone and Yasu**, who play funky rock music on acoustic guitar and *cajon*, a boxed shaped drum with African-Peruvian roots.

► 148, Xinyi Rd Sec 4, Taipei City (台北市信義路四段148號), one block east of Dunhua South Road (敦化南路). Call Bliss at (02) 2702-1855 or log on at www.bliss-taipei.com. For more information on live performances at Bliss, visit www.myspace.com/blisslivehouse

► Tonight at 10pm and tomorrow at 8pm. Bar/kitchen open from 7pm daily. Ladies night Fridays; women get one free cocktail of their choice

► No cover for the bar; entrance fee for music shows tonight and tomorrow is NT\$200

Tonight **Underworld (地下社會)** hosts punk groups **Black Channel** and **Beright**. There's thrash tomorrow night with **Bazooka (鐵拳火箭)**, which plays "old school killer metal." Also appearing is **Blair Witch**, which might be just as scary as the movie. They describe themselves on their MySpace site as "4 girls who loves [sic] metal music so f-cking much."

► B1, 45 Shida Rd, Taipei City (台北市師大路45號B1). Call (02) 2369-0103 or visit www.upsaid.com/underworld for more information

► Music shows tonight and tomorrow are from 9:30pm to 11:30pm

► Entrance fee for music shows is NT\$300 tonight and tomorrow and includes one drink

Every Wednesday night at the **Cosmopolitan Grill** there's a blues open mic, held by the Blues Society on Taiwan and hosted by Torch Pratt. All are welcome to bring their instruments and sit in on guitar, bass, or drums.

► 1F, 218 Changchun Rd, Taipei City

(台北市長春路218號1樓). Call (02) 2508-0304 or visit www.cosmo.com.tw for more information

► 8pm to 11pm every Wednesday

► No admission fee

Exhibitions

A Heartbeat of Time: Group Exhibition of Glenfiddich Artists From Taiwan (時間的— 次心跳: 格蘭菲迪駐村藝術家聯展) presents works by Yuan Goang-ming (袁廣鳴), Yao Jui-chung (姚瑞中), Wu Chi-tung (吳季璠) and Chen Hui-chiao (陳慧鵬), all of whom have participated in the Glenfiddich Artists in Residence program. [See story on Page 15 of the Nov. 12 edition of the *Taipei Times*.] The works on display were produced during each of the artist's residency periods in cottages on the site of the company's distillery in Scotland.

► VT Artsalon (非常蘭藝文空間), B1, 45 and 47 Yitong St, Taipei City (台北市伊通街45, 47號B1). Open Sundays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 2pm to 11pm; Fridays and Saturdays from 2pm to 1am. Tel: (02) 2516-1060

► Until Dec. 6

Su Wong-shen Solo Exhibition (蘇旺伸個展). Taking acrobatics as the theme of this exhibition, Su uses images of animals, balloons and zeppelins and a healthy dose of black humor to satirize Taiwan's political scene.

► Eslite Gallery (誠品畫廊), B2, 245, Dunhua S Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市敦化南路一段245號B2). Open Tuesdays through Sundays from 11am to 7pm. Tel: (02) 2775-5977 X588

► Until Dec. 7

Immobile — Chuang Kun-gu Solo Exhibition (不動 — 莊坤儒攝影展). The photo exhibition attempts to capture the life and death of plants and challenges the human notions of mobility and immobility.

► Hung Chong Gallery (恆昶藝廊), 396-1, Renai Rd Sec 4, Taipei City (台北市仁愛路四段396-1號). Open Tuesdays through Sundays from 9am to 6pm. Tel: (02) 2706-6466

► Until Dec. 4

Cocoon — Lai Tang-ya's Solo Exhibition (蛹 — 賴唐雅2008陶藝創作展). Using mud from the Shihmen Reservoir (石門水庫) to create this series of cocoon-shaped ceramic works, Lai shows us the affinity between soil, habitats and artistic inspirations.

► Taipei County Yingge Ceramics Museum (台北縣鶯歌陶瓷博物館), 200, Wenhua Rd, Yingge Township, Taipei County (台北縣鶯歌鎮文化路200號). Open Tuesdays through Fridays from 9:30am to 5pm; Saturdays and Sundays from 9:30 to 6pm. Tel: (02) 8677-2727

► Until Dec. 21

Sino-French War and Tamsui 1884 — 1885 (滬尾砲臺 清法印記 — 西仔反特展) aims to take visitors back in time to the Sino-French War, known as "Hsitzefan" (西仔反) to Taiwanese of the period, during which France fought to wrest control of northern Vietnam from Qing Dynasty suzerainty.

► Tamsui Historic Sites (台北縣立淡水古蹟博物館), 1, Ln 28, Zhongzheng Rd, Tamsui Township, Taipei County (台北縣淡水鎮中正路28巷1號). Open Tuesdays through Sundays from 9:30am to 6pm. Tel: (02) 2623-1001 X229

► Until Oct. 25, 2009