

RESTAURANTS

Mei Wei Eatery (美味小館)

Address: 95, Jinshan S Rd Sec 2, Taipei City (台北市金山南路二段95號)**Telephone:** (02) 2322-5780 **Average meal:** NT\$450**Open:** 11am to 2pm and 5pm to 9pm**Details:** Chinese menu; credit cards not accepted

Precision is required when meeting friends for a meal at Mei Wei Eatery. There are four restaurants operating under the same name in different parts of the capital. Each claims kinship with the original establishment on Shaoxing South Street (紹興南街) that had served Jiangzhe cuisine (江浙菜) for over three decades before being torn down several years ago.

A quick search on the Internet finds myriad comments and fierce debate over which Mei Wei Eatery is the most authentic. But as most foodie bloggers agree, the offshoot run by the eldest son of the original's proprietor on Jinshan South Road (金山南路) doesn't deviate from its precursor's fare, and that was the one my dining companions and I visited on Sunday of last week. Like its forbearer, this eatery is noted for its fish hot pot casserole (砂鍋魚頭, NT\$750) and lion's head meatballs (獅子頭), which can be ordered in a casserole (NT\$750), a pot dish (NT\$300) or individually (NT\$130 each).

For the main course, we tried the fish casserole with two lion's heads and were startled when the waitress delivered the dish. The meatballs were almost as big as a grown man's fist. A giant chub fish head, deep-fried then simmered, was buried underneath layers of tofu, ham, Chinese cabbage, mushrooms and mung bean noodles (粉絲).

More than enough for a party of four, the casserole won unanimous approval. The cabbage, marinated with vinegar and pepper, delivered a sour and spicy tang that gave life to what could have been an overly heavy dish. Usually super-sensitive to the taste of seafood, I gladly found no fishiness in the pot.

The signature lion's head also lived up to its reputation as ubertender.

Other strongly flavored dishes, which go well with cold Taiwan beer, include dry-fried green beans (乾扁四季豆, NT\$160) and garlic squid (蒜香中卷, NT\$260), which is deep-fried, then stir-fried with garlic and spices. For a milder option, there's shredded pork with lapi (肉絲拉皮, NT\$120), which is a popular summer dish made from a mixture of wasabi and sesame paste and lapi, or mung bean flour noodles.

In keeping with its recipes, which adhere to traditional cooking techniques, the restaurant is a plain, family-style affair; while not for aesthetes, Mei Wei Eatery is a reasonable place to eat in the city if a sitting among middle-aged men playing traditional drinking games doesn't grate.

The other three Mei Wei eateries are run by the restaurant founder's daughter, former chef and neighbor.

— HO YI



Mei Wei Eatery's fish hot pot casserole and lion's head meatballs carry on a time-honored tradition.

PHOTO: HO YI, TAIPEI TIMES



Chuck Love plays at 18 Lover tonight.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ROOM 18



Cheer from KbN plays at 2F White tomorrow.

PHOTO: RON BROWNLOW, TAIPEI TIMES

vocals and instrumentation (trumpet, flute, and guitar), all performed by himself.

"I will bring all of my instruments, and sing my tracks. We'll turn the music up and it will be awesome!" he says of tonight's gig. And just in case all that were not entertaining enough, this is going to be an unusual "Live DJ/Video" set with an exclusive mix of interesting and bizarre video footage (collected by Chuck Love from all over the world).

Chuck Love tonight from 10:30pm to 4:30am at 18 Lover, B1, 88, Songren Rd, Taipei City (台北市松仁路88號B1). Admission is NT\$700 before midnight and NT\$900 after.

Tomorrow is a big day for people who like to large it up at massive parties. 2F White is an annual purely trance bash at Taipei World Trade Center Hall 2.

Headlining the event is **Three Drives** and **Cosmic Gate**. The former is a celebrated Dutch duo (Erik de Koning and Ton van Empe) that is credited with creating one of the biggest trance tunes of all time, *Greece 2000*, while the latter, composed of Nic Chagall and DJ Bossi, is an up-and-coming producer duo from Germany, which has remixed for the likes of **Tiesto**, **Ferry Corsten** and **Armin van Buuren**.

J-Six, theLOOP Production's former music director and the only local DJ to have played at every 2F White party, opens proceedings with a set that features live performances from Chinese pop songwriters/singers **J&S** and **Cheer** from indie band KbN.

"I'm definitely thankful for the opportunity," J-Six said. "Even though I'm no longer working as the organizer this year, it looks like the new people who took over have put in a lot of effort and new ideas so there should be many surprises this time."

2F White is at Taipei World Trade Center Hall 2 (台北世貿二館), 3 Songlian Rd, Taipei City (台北市松廉路3號), from 9pm to 5am. Admission is NT\$1,000 at the door if you're wearing something white, otherwise it's NT\$1,500.

— QUEEN BEE

FESTIVAL NOTES:

WHAT: The 9th Taipei International Choral Festival

WHEN: From Sunday to Aug. 2

WHERE: All performances are at the National Concert Hall, Taipei City

ADMISSION: Tickets are available from www.artsticket.com.tw or by calling (02) 3393-9888

► SUNDAY

Ateneo Chamber Singers from the Philippines
Taipei Philharmonic Chorus

► MONDAY

Ateneo Chamber Singers

▼ TUESDAY

Philomela from Finland



► THURSDAY

Club for Five from Finland

▼ July 31

Choir of King's College, Cambridge, UK



▼ Aug. 1

The University of North Texas A Cappella Choir, US



► Aug. 2

The University of North Texas A Cappella Choir
Club for Five
Festival Choir
Taipei Philharmonic Youth Orchestra

Swell the mighty chorus

It comes as no surprise that Taiwan is once again holding its annual festival of choral music, the ninth in the series. Not only has the country the money to host such a large-scale event, it also excels in its own top-ranking, home-grown choirs.

The Taipei Philharmonic Chorus, for instance, prominent in next week's schedules and in some sense the festival's host organization, amazes most listeners encountering it for the first time. Its never-to-be-forgotten rendition last year of Bach's *B Minor Mass* under Helmuth Rilling [reviewed in *Taipei Times* March 31, 2008] and vigorous participation in Wagner's opera *Götterdämmerung* in 2006, when the chorus' members marched singing down the aisles bearing flashlights, announcing a new strength and direction to the music at its most dense and intractable point, should mark it out as an international presence. And the Taipei Male Choir, though not appearing in next week's schedule, was ranked number one in the world by the prestigious Interkultur Foundation.

The Taipei Philharmonic Chorus open proceedings on Sunday with a large-scale concert in combination with the Taipei Philharmonic Youth Orchestra and the Ateneo Chamber Singers from the Philippines, originally



Guest conductor Gabor Hollerung.

PHOTO COURTESY OF TAIPEI PHILHARMONIC FOUNDATION

formed out of a college glee club. The other guest lineups take their bow through the week, and then just about everyone joins together for a massive closing concert on Aug. 2.

In addition, workshops and master classes in conducting and choral singing are scheduled to be held daily throughout the festival. The choral workshop participants will later constitute the Festival Choir in the final concert.

Variety marks the visiting groups. This is no festival consisting only of choruses from Handel's oratorios or Bach's cantatas. Instead, there's a cappella, an all-female lineup from Finland, and a five-person team, also from Finland, that combines jazz, pop, rock and (according to their advance publicity) "even classical."

One of the most celebrated choruses due in Taipei next week is the UK's Choir of King's College, Cambridge under Stephen Cleobury. One hopes they won't mind too much the somewhat disparaging review of their DVD of Bach's *St Matthew Passion* that appeared in the *Taipei Times* last year. The point about this choir is that it represents a particular Anglican tradition that stands in marked contrast to the more operatic styles often heard on the European continent. At worst it sounds merely quaint, at best it's ethereal. But, love it or loathe it, the King's College forces quite simply perform it better than anyone else on earth.

The University of North Texas has an astonishing record in music education, and its A Cappella Choir is its premier choral unit. We can expect the unexpected from these voices — in the past they've even, despite their name, performed in Mozart's *Requiem*, so just about anything is possible.

It's hard to say which concerts are the ones to watch out for because they all hold out great promise. The sheer variety means that the greatest pleasure would ideally come from experiencing all of them, one after another.

For more information, visit www.tifc.tw/index_en.html or call (02) 2773-3691.

— BRADLEY WINTERTON

【EVENTS & ENTERTAINMENT】

Tonight at **Underworld (地下社會)** it's post-rock electronica from **Lily et Coco** and indie-rock veterans **La Petite Nurse** (小護士樂團).

Tomorrow **Picks** (痞客四) opens up for punk group **Children Sucker** (表兒). On Wednesday up-and-coming bands **Posh Inverse** (優雅逆轉) and **Radicalo** split the bill.

► 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 run from 9:30pm to 11:30pm on Fridays and Saturdays and 9pm to 11pm on Wednesdays. Underworld is open daily from 9pm, closed on Mondays. Happy Hour on Tuesdays and Thursdays before midnight

► Entrance is NT\$300 tonight and tomorrow and includes one drink, NT\$100 on Wednesday

Jazz Your Mind plays acid jazz and cool jazz tonight at **Sappho de Base**. New Orleans funk group

Kenyatta Trio plays tomorrow night. **Sea Journey Jazz Combo** (海洋知音爵士樂團), a four-piece with vibraphone, bass, drums and guitar, appears on Tuesday. On Wednesday it's **Emo Jazz Trio**, a group with a pianist, bass and drums, while **T and**

T Jazz Trio and Friends play on Thursday.

► 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. Sappho is closed on Sundays and Mondays

► No entrance fee

Every Wednesday night at the **Cosmopolitan Grill** there's an open mic hosted by Jake Stanley of the acoustic duo Stoked Pokey. All are welcome to participate, and participants receive 20 percent off drinks.

► 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

► 8:30pm to 11pm every Wednesday

► No entrance fee

EZ5 Live House hosts Mando-pop singers backed by a live band every night. Highlights this week include male crooners **Su Tzu** (蘇子) and **Huang Chung-yuan** (黃中原), who both appear tomorrow. Pub legend and songstress **Tiger Huang** (黃小

琥) performs every Monday. **Julia Peng** (彭佳慧), another major draw, appears every Tuesday.

► Music shows run from 9:45pm to 12:30am

► Entrance fee (including two drinks) ranges from NT\$600 to NT\$850, depending on the performer

Franz and Friends (城市舞台藝文沙龍), an upscale restaurant and performance space in Taipei's East District, hosts music shows every night. Weekly highlights include

Denise Juan (阮丹青), a former pop singer turned piano teacher and television presenter, and her band **Sunshine Costa**. They play tonight. Tomorrow it's **Buona Sera**, a group featuring soprano **Chang Hsiao-ni** (張曉倪).

► 25, Bade Rd Sec 3, Taipei City (台北市八德路三段25號B1). Call (02) 2579-0558 for reservations, or visit www.franzandfriends.com.tw for more information

► Minimum charge of NT\$300 on Fridays and Saturdays, on other nights there's a one-drink minimum

Exhibitions

More than 200 jade objects dating

from as far back as the Ming Dynasty are displayed in **The Shiny Gem: A Jade Exhibition of Jay Arts' Collection** (光氣琳琅 — 久藝雅齋玉

器展). The exhibit provides a solid overview of the various delicately carved motifs — including human figures, flowers and animals, as well as auspicious words and phrases — revealing how jade was intertwined with daily life.

► National Museum of History (國立歷史博物館), 49 Nanhai Rd, Taipei City (台北市南海路49號). Open Tuesdays through Sundays from 10am to 6pm. Tel: (02) 2361-0270

► Until Aug. 9

The Collected Dialogues (對話錄) is a solo exhibit by Taiwanese photographer Chang Li-hao (張禮豪). Chang's haunting black-and-white images document the architecture and public spaces of contemporary society.

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

► Until Aug. 15

Heart — In Between — Being

and Transformation (心・之間・存在與變化) is a solo exhibit by Taiwanese artist Jun T. Lai (賴純純). Lai installed several dozen colorful plastic hearts in rows along the exhibition space as a means of expressing the ability of the individual to change.

► Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei (MOCA, Taipei), 39 Chang'an W Rd, Taipei City (台北市長安西路39號). Open Tuesdays to Sundays from 10am to 6pm. Tel: (02) 2552-3721

► Until Aug. 30

Seventy-one oil paintings and 16 pastels and sketches make up **The Rhythms of Forms and Colors (形色音韻)**, a retrospective exhibit of Chen Yin-huei's (陳銀輝) art. Divided into four sections, the exhibit surveys Chen's entire career, from representational works based on direct observation to more conceptual works following the modernist experiments of Surrealism, Expressionism and Fauvism.

► Taipei Fine Arts Museum (TFAM), 181, Zhongshan N Rd Sec 3, Taipei City (台北市中山北路三段181號). Open Tuesdays to Sundays from 9:30am to 5:30pm, open until 8:30pm on Saturdays. Tel: (02) 2595-7656

► Until Sept. 27

Located near the intersection of Dunhua South (敦化南)

and Zhongxiao East (忠孝東)

roads, O'Sweet resembles

the trendy bars in the area

— but with a twist. Instead of

cocktails, it serves "caketails,"

martini glasses filled with a

combination of chiffon cake,

custard, syrup, whipped

cream, fruit and/or ice cream.

The cafe opened last month,

and there are some service

teething troubles. But O'Sweet's

cute concept and sleekly appointed

(but also cute) interior make it a

good place for gatherings with

friends who would rather gorge on

sugar than guzzle alcohol.

On my first visit last weekend, my

companion and I first ordered

from O'Sweet's menu of "light

food," or cafe basics. Like meals

in many dessert bars, O'Sweet's

sandwiches and salads are not

particularly memorable. My

comate was disappointment

with his Italian salad (NT\$180),

slices of salami and prosciutto

on butter lettuce leaves with a

cream dressing. Even though it

came attractively plated with two

pieces of toasted French baguette

arranged to form a heart, the

prosciutto was too dry and the

sauce too light to flavor the interminable

mound of lettuce.

My chicken chabattinni (that's

how they spell it) (NT\$150) was

better, but still nothing worth

raving about. It was two slices

of toasted French bread stuffed

with cheese sauce, lettuce, chicken

slices and a sauce that was a

too heavy on minced onions. It

came with a little cup of salsa

and toasted corn chips, which

were probably the best part of

the meal. On a separate visit, I

had the chicken focaccia (NT\$140),

which was more successful. Despite

having the same basic ingredients

as the chabattinni, it tasted

better, probably because it was

lighter on the onions.

While O'Sweet's savory food is

lackluster, its caketails are

worth the extra calories. They can

be customized from a selection

of various flavors of chiffon

cake base, fruit and sauce to

drizzle the confection in, or

chosen from the menu.

One of the cafe's most popular

desserts is the First Kiss of

Fresh Strawberry (NT\$140). I

ordered this after our lunch on

a busy Sunday. My companion

and I watched the staff make

other customers' caketails for

nearly half an hour until we

realized they had lost our

order. They quickly turned out

my dessert once I informed

them of the mistake, despite

the painstaking attention they

pay to placing each dollop of

cream and each morsel of

fruit just so in the glasses.

It was delicious. The tangy

strawberry sauce drizzled over

the fresh-whipped cream, the

combination of kiwi and

strawberry slices, vanilla

chiffon cake and the light

berry-flavored jelly at the

bottom of the glass nearly

made up for the long wait.

On my next visit, I had

another popular item, the

Hawaii Fall in Love

(NT\$130), a combination

of pineapple and

strawberry chunks,

custard, vanilla

chiffon cake, whipped

cream and berry

sauce. It was

also yummy

and beautifully

presented.