

The
Taiwanese

American Table



Recipes with love from

The Robot Book Club

The Taiwanese American Table

*Nostalgic Flavors, Night Market Classics, and Modern
Comfort Food*

The Robot Book Club

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Preface

This book, and The Robot Book Club, is an experiment large scale AI generation. Every page, from layout to images to copy, was generated with zero human review.

The authoring and publishing teams were implemented in the Kaya scripting language. They were given only the input: Taiwanese.

This is the only page authored by a human: Hello there!

— Ted Benson

Prologue

Forget the pristine plates and manufactured exoticism. This isn't that book. This is a culinary dispatch for a specific journey, for those who've walked the lines between two worlds, two kitchens. It's for the Taiwanese American who grew up on suburban cul-de-sacs, navigating school cafeterias and the insistent, comforting aroma of sesame oil and soy sauce wafting from home. They know the quiet hum of a rice cooker is as vital as the roar of a Waffle House grill.

For a generation, the flavors of Taiwan were a birthright, passed down through the profound, wordless wisdom of grandmothers who cooked by instinct, by feel. Now, their children, raising families in a new landscape, find themselves facing a different kind of hunger – not just for a meal, but for connection, for heritage, for the precise taste of a childhood memory. They want to pass down not just a dish, but a legacy, yet without the street-side vendor or the decades of ingrained tradition. Their American kitchens, often equipped with electric ranges and Instant Pots, demand a careful, thoughtful translation of these cherished flavors.

This collection understands that nuanced struggle. It's an act of cultural preservation, a blueprint for bridging those divides, transforming the weekend ritual and the hurried weeknight dinner into something authentically Taiwanese. Here, the deep, unctuous comfort of *Lu Rou Fan* isn't a museum piece; it's a Sunday project,

made achievable on an American stovetop. The vibrant, communal scramble of a Taiwanese breakfast isn't a distant dream, but a *Dan Bing* made from accessible ingredients, ready for your family table. These are the dishes families actually cook, the flavors that define home, adapted for the rhythm of modern life without sacrificing an ounce of their soul.

No apologies, no cultural tourism. Just honest, authentic flavor, calibrated for your kitchen, approved by the toughest critics: the ancestors. It's about making sure that the true taste of Taiwan, in all its humble, delicious glory, finds its permanent home right here, at your table. Let's get to work.



The Weekend Breakfast Ritual (假日早餐)

*Recreating the vibrant, chaotic beauty of Taiwanese morning street food in
an American kitchen.*

In Taiwan, morning is a noisy, beautiful collision of steam, sizzling oil, and the roar of a million scooters. For the Taiwanese American kid visiting home, breakfast wasn't just a meal—it was a visceral education in texture. It was the glorious, bouncy 'Q' of a fresh dan bing, the defiant crunch of you tiao suffocated inside a tightly squeezed fan tuan, and the savory, curdled comfort of a steaming bowl of xian doujiang.

Now, an ocean away from those bustling street stalls, the ritual survives in the quiet hum of an American kitchen. There's no magic trick required to summon these ghosts. Armed with everyday pantry staples, a decent skillet, and a little patience, you can recreate the unapologetic flavors of a Taipei morning on a lazy weekend. No airplane ticket necessary.



Guzaowei Fen Jiang Dan Bing (Old-School Batter Egg Crepe)

古早味粉漿蛋餅

goo-zow-way fun jyahng dahn bing



Before the nineties brought the scourge of the mass-produced, machine-made wrapper, the streets of Taipei smelled like this. The old-school Taiwanese breakfast masters didn't roll dough; they ladled a highly hydrated, starch-laced batter onto hot iron. The result is what the locals affectionately call 'Q'—a bouncing, chewy elasticity that a modern fast-food crepe couldn't dream of. The secret isn't a specialty ingredient, it's time. A good grandmother mixes her batter the night before, letting the starches hydrate in the fridge while she sleeps. Come morning, weekend breakfast is only three minutes away.

INGREDIENTS

1 cup	all-purpose flour	4 large	large eggs
1/4 cup	tapioca starch	1/4 tsp	fine sea salt
1 1/2 cup	cold water	2 tbsp	neutral cooking oil
1/2 tsp	fine sea salt	3 tbsp	Taiwanese thick soy paste
1/4 tsp	white pepper	1 tbsp	water
3 med	scallions <i>finely chopped</i>	1 small	garlic
1 tbsp	neutral cooking oil	1 clove	<i>finely grated or crushed to a paste</i>
		1 tsp	toasted sesame oil

INSTRUCTIONS

1 **Mix the batter the night before.**

Whisk the all-purpose flour, tapioca starch, half-teaspoon of salt, and white pepper in a large bowl, then gradually whisk in the cold water until perfectly smooth. Stir in the chopped scallions and one tablespoon of neutral oil, cover tightly, and let it rest in the refrigerator overnight to fully hydrate the starches.

2 **Whisk the garlic soy paste.**

Stir the thick soy paste, tablespoon of water, grated garlic, and toasted sesame oil together in a small bowl until perfectly smooth. This pungent, sticky sauce is non-negotiable for the authentic breakfast shop flavor and will keep in the fridge for a week.

3 **Swirl the batter in a warm pan.**

The next morning, give the rested batter a good stir. Heat a ten-inch non-stick skillet over medium-low heat, wipe lightly with oil, and pour in about a half cup of the batter. Immediately swirl the pan to spread the batter into a thin, even circle before the starches can set.

4 **Sear until translucent.**

Let the crepe cook undisturbed for two to three minutes until the edges curl away from the pan and the batter turns translucent. Flip it, cook for one more minute until lightly golden, and briefly remove it to a plate.

1 Lamine the crepe to the egg.

Add a drizzle of oil to the skillet, pour in one lightly beaten egg seasoned with a pinch of salt, and immediately press the cooked crepe directly onto the wet egg. Let them cook together for thirty seconds until the egg is set and lightly browned, acting as a glue.

2 Fill, roll, and serve.

Flip the whole assembly over so the egg faces up, add any optional fillings in a line slightly off-center, and roll the crepe tightly into a cylinder. Let it sear seam-side down for fifteen seconds to seal, cut into bite-sized segments, and serve immediately drenched in the garlic soy paste.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Build a freezer stash for weekday mornings.**

The true beauty of this batter method is the make-ahead potential. Cook a batch of the crepe wrappers without the egg, let them cool, stack them between sheets of parchment paper, and freeze in a zip-top bag for up to two months. On a busy Tuesday, drop a frozen wrapper directly onto a wet, beaten egg in the skillet—no thawing required.

Xian Doujiang (Savory Curdled Soy Milk)

鹹豆漿

shyan doh jyahng



In the pre-dawn hours of Taipei, the rhythmic chopping of scallions and the hiss of deep-fryers signal the resurrection of the city's workforce. Xian Doujiang is the savory, chaotic heart of that breakfast ritual, a dish where culinary magic happens not in the kitchen, but right in the serving bowl. By crashing near-boiling, unadulterated soy milk into a precise mix of black vinegar and soy sauce, the milk instantly shatters into silken, custardy clouds. It is an intoxicating, umami-laden masterpiece of texture and acidity that requires no special equipment—just a watchful eye, pure ingredients, and the discipline to let the bowl sit entirely undisturbed while the chemistry does its work.

INGREDIENTS

2 1/2 cup	unsweetened soy milk	1 large	youtiao <i>cut into 1-inch rings</i>
1 tbsp	rice vinegar	2 tbsp	cai pu <i>rinsed, squeezed completely dry, and finely minced</i>
1 tbsp	Taiwanese black vinegar	1 tbsp	xia pi
2 tsp	light soy sauce	1 med	scallion <i>finely sliced</i>
1/2 tsp	toasted sesame oil	2 tbsp	rou song
1 tbsp	chili oil with crisp		

PREPARATION

- **Crisp the youtiao.**

If using frozen youtiao, toast the pieces in a 350°F oven or air fryer for 5 to 8 minutes until shatteringly crisp.

- **Awaken the aromatics.**

Heat a dry skillet over medium-low. Add the minced dried radish and papery shrimp, toasting gently for 1 to 2 minutes until the shrimp become deeply fragrant and the radish is slightly dry.

INSTRUCTIONS

1 Build the flavor bowls.

Divide the rice vinegar, black vinegar, soy sauce, sesame oil, chili oil, toasted radish and shrimp mixture, and sliced scallions equally between two deep, heat-proof serving bowls.

2 Heat the soy milk with precision.

Pour the soy milk into a saucepan over medium heat and watch it closely. Heat it to just about 185°F to 195°F, removing it from the heat the moment it steams vigorously and forms small, aggressive bubbles around the edges—do not let it reach a rolling boil.

3 Execute the crash pour.

Lift the saucepan and pour the hot soy milk quickly and aggressively from a few inches above the prepared bowls. This mechanical agitation ensures the milk crashes into the vinegar and mixes perfectly without the need for a spoon.

4 Step back and let the chemistry work.

Do not stir the bowls. Allow them to sit completely undisturbed for 60 to 90 seconds while the acid and heat gently coagulate the proteins into silken clouds of tofu.

1 Garnish and serve immediately.

Crown the set custard with a generous handful of the crispy youtiao and a pinch of pork floss.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **The soy milk must be completely pure.**

If your soy milk contains gellan gum, carrageenan, or added sugars, it will not curdle. You must use a brand containing solely soybeans and water, such as WestLife Organic Plain.

- **Troubleshoot failed curds.**

If your soup remains a hot, uncoagulated liquid, either your milk contained stabilizers, it wasn't heated close enough to boiling, or you stirred the bowl and shattered the delicate protein bonds forming the curds.

- **Embrace weeknight substitutions.**

If you cannot find youtiao, a torn and toasted French baguette makes a fine textural stand-in. Japanese takuan can replace the dried radish in a pinch.

Zi Mi Fan Tuan (Purple Sticky Rice Roll)

紫米飯糰

tzee-mee fahn-twahn



The Taiwanese breakfast cart is a masterclass in controlled chaos, but the fan tuan is a masterpiece of structure. This isn't just a rice ball; it's a meticulously compressed cylinder of aggressive textures. The secret your grandmother knew—the difference between a salty imitation and the real street-cart deal—lies entirely in how you treat the pickles. You don't just dump them from the package; you wash them, wring them mercilessly, and fry them with garlic and sugar until they sing. Armed with a standard rice cooker, the proper ratio of purple to white sweet rice, and a few smart grocery store hacks, you can conjure the exact, unyielding crunch of Taipei mornings right in an Ohio kitchen.

INGREDIENTS

1 cup	purple glutinous sweet rice	1 small	Thai chili pepper <i>minced</i>
2 cup	long-grain white glutinous rice	1 tbsp	granulated sugar
2 1/8 cup	water	1/4 tsp	white pepper
1 tsp	toasted sesame oil	1 large	frozen youtiao <i>baked at 350°F until shatteringly crisp</i>
1/2 cup	preserved radish <i>finely chopped</i>	1/2 cup	pork floss
1/2 cup	pickled mustard greens <i>finely chopped, tough leaves discarded</i>	2 tbsp	sweetened peanut powder
1 tbsp	neutral cooking oil	2 large	eggs
2 small clove	garlic <i>finely minced</i>	1 med	scallion <i>finely chopped</i>
		1/8 tsp	salt

PREPARATION

- **Prepare your rolling station in advance.**

Before the rice finishes, lay a clean, thick kitchen towel flat on the counter and place a large square of heat-safe plastic wrap or a cut-open gallon ziplock bag directly on top. You need the towel to protect your hands from the scalding rice while you aggressively compress the roll.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 **Cook the glutinous rice.**

Combine the purple and white rice in a rice cooker, wash until the water runs mostly clear, and add exactly 2 1/8 cups of water. Set to the sweet or white rice setting, and let sit 10 minutes after it finishes to let the starches set before gently folding in the sesame oil.

- 2 **Wring the pickles mercilessly dry.**

Soak the chopped radish and mustard greens in separate bowls of cold water for 10 minutes to draw out the industrial brine, then squeeze them in paper towels until they are aggressively dry.

- 3 **Temper the preserved radish and mustard greens.**

Dry-fry the radish in a skillet over medium heat for 2 minutes to cook off raw moisture, push it aside, and sauté half the oil, garlic, and sugar until lightly caramelized before mixing it all together and setting aside; repeat this exact process for the mustard greens using the chili.

1 Fry the scallion egg.

Beat the eggs with the scallion, salt, and a pinch of white pepper, fry in a lightly oiled skillet to create a thin omelet, and slice into long strips.

2 Build and compress the roll.

Lay a sheet of plastic wrap over a thick towel, press roughly three-quarters of a cup of rice into a flat rectangle, and tightly layer the egg, pork floss, tempered pickles, peanut powder, and youtiao in the lower third. Use the towel underneath to roll the rice over the filling, twisting the plastic ends like a candy wrapper to compress the fan tuan into a tight, dense log.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **The golden hydration ratio.**

Standard rice-to-water ratios will turn sweet rice to mush. The 1 to 0.7 ratio is non-negotiable for electric cookers to achieve the authentic bouncy, "Q" texture without overnight soaking.

● **Chasing the youtiao crunch.**

If your local Asian market lacks frozen youtiao (Chinese fried dough), do not attempt a from-scratch batter on a Saturday morning. Deep-fry store-bought wonton strips or use thick-cut potato chips instead.



Biandang: The Taiwanese Bento Box (便當)

Portable, perfectly portioned meals inspired by Taiwan's railway and school lunches, designed to taste like home wherever you eat them.

There is a profound, utilitarian beauty in the Taiwanese biandang. Born out of necessity and perfected on the roaring railway lines and in the crowded school cafeterias of the island, these are meals engineered for transit. A mammoth, five-spice scented fried pork chop resting on a bed of steamed rice, flanked by a mahogany soy-marinated egg and the sharp, palate-clearing bite of pickled mustard greens. This isn't precious food. It is working-class fuel designed to

survive the commute and taste like absolute comfort, whether scarfed down at room temperature on a train platform or resurrected in a bleak office microwave.

The biandang is a masterclass in uncompromising balance—fat, acid, salt, and starch packed neatly into a simple box. The recipes that follow are the genuine article: the unapologetic marinades, the precise techniques, and the vital pickles that make up the anatomy of Taiwan's greatest lunch.



Fan Qie Chao Dan

番茄炒蛋

fahn chyeh chow dahn



This is the undisputed king of the Taiwanese bento box, an unapologetically sweet, tangy comfort food that tastes exactly like home. Where mainland variations lean deeply savory, the true Taiwanese iteration relies on a pragmatic pantry secret—a squeeze of ketchup—to mimic the tartness of the island's indigenous green-skinned tomatoes. Finished with a light starch slurry, the glossy gravy clings to fluffy egg curds and perfectly coats steamed rice without ever turning the bottom of a packed lunchbox to soup.

INGREDIENTS

5 large	large eggs <i>beaten vigorously with a pinch of salt</i>	1 tsp	sugar
3 med	tomatoes <i>cut into 1-inch wedges, unpeeled</i>	1 tsp	soy sauce
2 med	scallions <i>thinly sliced, white and green parts separated</i>	1/4 tsp	sea salt
3 tbsp	neutral cooking oil <i>divided</i>	1 dash	white pepper
1 tbsp	ketchup	1 tbsp	cornstarch
		2 tbsp	cold water <i>mixed with the cornstarch to create a slurry</i>
		1/2 tsp	toasted sesame oil

PREPARATION

- **The golden rule of tomato and egg.**

You must cook the eggs and tomatoes separately. Overcooking the eggs in the tomato juices from the start will result in a tough, rubbery texture.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Scramble the eggs in hot oil to seventy percent doneness, then remove them from the pan.**

Heat a wok or large non-stick skillet over medium-high heat with two tablespoons of oil. Pour in the eggs, push the edges toward the center to let the raw egg flow, and pull them off the heat while the tops are still wet and runny—about 30 to 45 seconds.

1 Fry the scallion whites until fragrant.

Wipe the pan clean if necessary, add the remaining tablespoon of oil, and stir-fry the white parts of the scallions over medium heat for about 15 seconds to build the aromatic base.

2 Cook the tomatoes until they collapse and release their juices.

Toss in the tomato wedges and cook for a minute or two. If your supermarket tomatoes are dry, add a splash of water to help them break down into a chunky sauce.

3 Season the sauce and stir in the cornstarch slurry to thicken.

Stir in the ketchup, sugar, soy sauce, salt, and white pepper. Give the slurry a quick mix to lift the starch from the bottom, pour it in, and stir constantly for 30 seconds as the watery runoff transforms into a rich, glossy gravy.

4 Fold the soft eggs back into the wok for a final brief simmer.

Slide the eggs back into the pan, using a spatula to break the large curds into bite-sized pieces. Let everything bubble together for just 30 seconds so the eggs absorb the flavor without turning rubbery.

5 Finish with sesame oil and the reserved scallion greens.

Turn off the heat, drizzle with the toasted sesame oil, scatter the scallion greens over the top, and serve immediately with steamed white rice.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Embrace the ketchup.**

For first-generation Americans, ketchup might feel like a Western bastardization, but it is a cornerstone of the Taiwanese bento shop pantry. It acts as a standardized baseline, ensuring that even pale winter supermarket tomatoes yield the bright crimson color and deep umami required of the canonical dish.

- **The science of the slurry.**

Adding a cornstarch slurry is functionally imperative for a bento box. Without it, the tomato juice acts as a solvent, deteriorating the structural integrity of the rice beneath it over a period of hours.

San Bei Ji (Three-Cup Chicken) Biandang Edition

三杯雞

sahn bay jee



If there is one smell that instantly teleports a first-generation kid back to their mother's kitchen, it is the sharp bite of ginger hitting hot sesame oil followed by an intoxicating cloud of rice wine and soy sauce. The name implies a rigid, equal-parts ratio of those three liquids, but any grandmother will tell you that's a culinary myth guaranteed to yield a bitter, greasy mess. This biandang-optimized version swaps bone-in chops for boneless thighs to save you from desk-lunch bone splinters, and introduces king oyster mushrooms that act like little sponges for the sticky, lacquered glaze. It is the unapologetic, soul-warming punch of Taiwan, dialed in for your weeknight reality.

INGREDIENTS

1 1/2 lb	boneless skinless chicken thighs <i>cut into 1 1/2-inch bite-sized pieces</i>	10 med clove	garlic <i>peeled but left whole</i>
3 med	king oyster mushrooms <i>cut into 1-inch rolling wedges</i>	2 small	dried red chilies <i>left whole</i>
2 tbsp	neutral oil	1/3 cup	rice wine
2 tbsp	toasted sesame oil <i>divided</i>	1/4 cup	soy sauce
1 med piece	old ginger <i>unpeeled and cut into 12 thin slices</i>	1 tbsp	dark soy sauce
		1 1/2 tbsp	rock sugar
		2 cup	Thai basil leaves <i>loosely packed</i>

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Whisk together the rice wine, soy sauce, dark soy sauce, and sugar in a small bowl.**

Set this aside so it is ready to pour when the cooking moves fast.

- 2 Dry-toast the mushrooms in a large wok or skillet over medium-high heat.**

Cook them undisturbed for two minutes until they squeak and begin to brown, then toss and cook two more minutes until they shrink and expel their surface moisture. This prevents them from watering down your sauce later.

- 3 Lower the heat to medium-low and fry the ginger slices in the neutral oil and just one tablespoon of the sesame oil.**

We use neutral oil here because pure sesame oil burns and turns bitter at high heat. Let the ginger sizzle for 3 to 4 minutes until the edges curl and look noticeably dried out.

- 4 Toss in the whole garlic cloves and dried chilies.**

Sauté for another 1 to 2 minutes until the garlic turns golden and blistered.

- 5 Push the aromatics to the edges of the pan, turn the heat to medium-high, and sear the chicken in a single layer.**

Let the meat sear undisturbed for 3 minutes to develop a golden-brown crust, then toss and brown the remaining sides.

- 6 Return the mushrooms to the pan and pour in the reserved sauce mixture.**

The liquid will bubble furiously; take this opportunity to scrape the bottom of the pan to release any browned bits.

- 1 Reduce the heat to medium and let the mixture boil vigorously uncovered for 8 to 12 minutes.**

Watch closely as the watery liquid evaporates completely, leaving behind a thick, sticky syrup that tightly coats the chicken and mushrooms like a mahogany glaze.

- 2 Turn the heat off completely before finishing the dish.**

Drizzle the remaining tablespoon of raw toasted sesame oil over the chicken, dump in the Thai basil, and toss continuously for 15 seconds. The residual heat will instantly wilt the basil and release its essential oils without turning the delicate leaves bitter.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Authentic San Bei Ji never uses water.**

Resist the urge to thin out the sauce. The braising liquid should be pure wine, soy sauce, and the natural juices expelled by the chicken.

- **Patience with the ginger is non-negotiable.**

You must slowly fry the slices until they look wrinkled and dry around the edges, effectively infusing the oil while removing the root's harsh bite.

Zha Ji Tui (Taiwanese Night Market-Style Chicken Cutlet)

炸雞腿

jah jee tway



If you grew up in a Taiwanese immigrant household, you already know the smell: the intoxicating, earthy hit of five-spice and white pepper hitting hot oil. In Taiwan, night markets are famous for giant fried chicken breasts, but the humble bento box stars the richer, juicier chicken leg. This recipe marries the two, applying the craggy, unapologetically loud crunch of the night market cutlet to a weeknight-friendly boneless thigh. The secret to that precise, grandmother-approved flavor comes down to three non-negotiable rules: violently squeezing your aromatics, insisting on coarse sweet potato starch, and mastering the high-heat flash-fry to force the grease out.

INGREDIENTS

1 1/2 lb	boneless skin-on chicken thighs <i>butterflied and pounded to 1/2-inch thickness</i>	1 tbsp	Taiwanese rice wine or dry sherry
3 med cloves	garlic <i>roughly smashed</i>	1 tsp	granulated sugar
3 med slices	fresh ginger <i>roughly smashed</i>	1 1/2 tsp	Chinese five-spice powder <i>divided</i>
2 med	scallions <i>cut into 2-inch segments and smashed</i>	1 tsp	ground white pepper <i>divided</i>
2 tbsp	light soy sauce	1 tsp	kosher salt <i>divided</i>
		1 1/2 cup	coarse sweet potato starch
		4 cup	neutral cooking oil

PREPARATION

- **Prepare the finishing dust.**

Whisk together the remaining 1/2 teaspoon each of five-spice powder, white pepper, and salt in a small bowl and set aside.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 **Extract the aromatic juices.**

In a large mixing bowl, aggressively massage and squeeze the smashed garlic, ginger, and scallions into the soy sauce, rice wine, sugar, and 1 teaspoon of the five-spice, 1/2 teaspoon of the white pepper, and 1/2 teaspoon of the salt for thirty seconds.

- 2 **Marinate the chicken.**

Toss the pounded chicken thighs into the liquid, coat thoroughly, and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes, picking off any solid aromatic bits before dredging so they do not burn in the fryer.

- 3 **Dredge the meat.**

Spread the coarse sweet potato starch onto a wide plate, pull a thigh from the marinade without shaking off too much liquid, and press it firmly into the starch until every crevice is packed.

- 4 **Rest the chicken to hydrate the crust.**

Transfer the coated chicken to a wire rack and let it sit for five to ten minutes until the dry starch absorbs the meat's juices and turns slightly gummy, a vital resting process known as fan chao.

1 Execute the first fry.

Heat an inch and a half of neutral oil in a heavy skillet or Dutch oven to 325°F, carefully lowering the chicken in to fry for four to five minutes until pale gold and cooked through, then remove to a clean rack.

2 Force out the oil with a flash fry.

Crank the heat until the oil reaches 375°F and plunge the chicken back in for thirty to forty-five seconds to force the residual grease out of the crust—a thermodynamic trick called *bi you*—before transferring back to the rack.

3 Season and serve.

Generously sprinkle the hot, crackling cutlets with the reserved finishing dust and serve immediately.

CHEF'S NOTES

• **Source the right starch.**

Coarse sweet potato starch (粗地瓜粉) is non-negotiable for that authentic night market crunch. If you can only find fine sweet potato starch, flick a teaspoon of water into the powder and rub it between your fingers to create coarse little pebbles before dredging.