

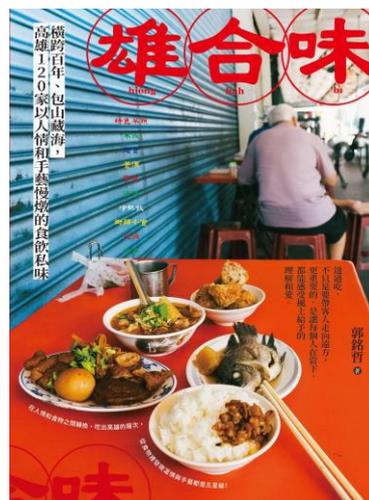
KAOHSIUNG'S SAVORY SOUL

雄合味：橫跨百年，包山藏海，高雄 120 家以人情和手藝慢燉的食飲私味

"Perfectly seasoned" gourmand Roger Kuo regales readers with stories and insights from some of his hometown's top food professionals in his latest work Kaohsiung's Savory Soul. His words and images distill a decade of exploring and experiencing and of listening to stories that effervesce with southern Taiwanese flavor and heritage.

Roger Kuo's first insider's guide to the traditional food scene in Kaohsiung City, *Kaohsiung Good Eats*, propelled the author to national foodie stardom after its 2013 publication. While his first work took 6 years to research, compile and write, his follow up effort, *Kaohsiung's Savory Soul*, took another full decade to do the same. Moreover, as the title implies, this 2023 title spotlights not only Roger's latest culinary discoveries but also digs deeper into the soulful essence of these restaurants, diners, and food stands and of the owners and chefs who make them sing.

This salute to the food professionals behind Kaohsiung's best authentic cuisine uses threads of human warmth, history, and culinary culture to weave a cohesive and compelling narrative. Experience through the author's eyes, ardor, and detailed writing style many of the unique stories and personalities that make this city such an alluring gastronomic adventure. Each of the 120 distinctive food establishments visited in the city, including breakfast shops, restaurants, snack shops, and food gift retailers, is dotingly covered in terms of location, signature dishes, business philosophy, owner's story, and ties to Kaohsiung heritage and history. The result is an up-to-date, one-of-a-kind foodie treasure map of Kaohsiung City.



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bft.fiction.nonfiction@moc.gov.tw

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From deep-fried breakfast wraps to reservation-only gourmet dinners on hilltops overlooking the city, experience in honest pictures and words the stories behind Kaohsiung's most irresistible, most delectable culinary offerings. Each celebrates the culinary professionalism, commitment to customer, and passion for authentic flavors of these establishments. Open to page one and begin your exploration of Kaohsiung City's centuries-old food heritage.

Roger Kuo 郭銘哲

Born in 1982, Kaohsiung native Roger Kuo is a nationally recognized and respected writer on local culinary culture. His gastronomic curiosity and engagingly detailed approach to writing have brought to his readers a delightful stream of stories on the lives and careers of true food professionals. When not writing, Roger regularly works as a culinary tour guide, taking locals and visitors alike on tasteful explorations of the food and beauty on offer down his city's side streets and alleyways.

Kaohsiung's Savory Soul

By Roger Kuo

Translated by Alexander Benninger

CONTENTS

Foreword | Three Flavors in One: From *Kaohsiung Good Eats* to *Kaohsiung's Savory Soul*

100 Years of Kaohsiung Hospitality: A Surprising Pocket Guide to Local Restaurant Tables Born from the Different Ethnic Groups, Time Periods, and Landscapes of Kaohsiung

1. Specialty Breakfast

001 Tang Bo | Pork Liver Rolls

002 Kuan Lai Shun | Leek Dumplings · Fresh Pork Dumplings · Sesame Flatbread with Pickled Vegetables and Egg · Daikon Cake · Sweet *Youtiao* Fried Dough · Salty Soy Milk

003 Chin Feng | Pan-Fried Dumplings

004 A-Chao | *Uánn-kué* Sweet or Savory Steamed Glutinous Rice Cakes · Hakka-Style *Zongzi* Rice Dumplings with Shrimp and Ground Pork

005 Hsiao Ti Cafe | Old Fashioned Siphon Coffee · Local Breakfast Favorites (Limited Order)

006 Wan Kuo Chih | Traditional *Uánn-kué* Steamed Glutinous Rice Cakes

007 Jianxing Market | Steamed *Bah-uân*

008 Mei Lao Wu (Fifth Sister's Breakfast Shop) | Egg Sandwiches

009 Non-Descript Shop on Chung Kung Rd. Meinong District | Papaya Pancakes *Bàn-tsian-kué* · Hakka-style Battered Egg Pancakes · Hakka Vegetable Dumplings

010 Non-Descript Shop Kitty-corner to the old Hechun Movie Theatre | Fried Pork Chop with Noodles

011 Non-Descript Shop in Qishan District | Minced Pork in Red Vinasse Sauce · Homemade Chitlins · Rice Noodles · *Oo-péh-tshiat* Appetizers Made to Order

012 Lee & Daughters | Western Brunch/ Breakfast Platters

2. Over Rice

013 Chang Sheng 29 | Classic Taiwanese Cuisine with No Menu · Mackerel with Stewed Rice · Claypot Rice · Claypot Soups · Lou Fo Tang Cantonese-style Herbal Broth

014 Ben's Duck | Duck with Rice · Braised Minced Pork Rice · Duck Blood Rice · Duck Meat Platter · *Hā-suí-thng* Haslet Soup

- 015 Wang Yi | Chicken Rice · Cold Chicken Platters (Limited Order) · Milkfish Belly Meatball Soup
- 016 Ah Tu Po | Garlic Rice · Milkfish Oysters & Seafood
- 017 Ah Ying | Pork Chop with Rice
- 018 Tsui Chi Restaurant | Egg Drop Beef Rice, Egg Drop Char Siu Pork Rice · Char Siu Pork with Fried Eggs · Cha Chaan Teng Diner-Style Hong Kong Dishes · Hong Kong-style Chef's Table (Book in Advance)
- 019 (Authentic) Neiwei Liu Chia | Southern Style *Zongzi* Hot Off The Traditional Markets · Stewed Lamb with Chinese Herbs
- 020 Beigang Tsai | Bamboo Rice Tube · Steamed Eggs in Broth · Steamed Eggs · Taiwanese Style Soup Bowls
- 021 Jou Tsung Po | Traditional Savory Zongzi (Meat) · Traditional Zongzi (Vegetarian)
- 022 Chin Chieh | Mackerel Congee · Milkfish Congee · Secret Milkfish Belly Meatball Congee · Mined Pork Rice with Mushrooms · *Youtiao* Fried Dough with Minced Pork
- 023 Ruiji | Hainan Chicken Rice · Southeast Asian Seafood Tossed in Rice Noodles · Mixed Curry · Caramel Kaya Toast
- 024 Uben | Taiwanese-style Steamed Sticky Rice · Sesame Oil Chicken and Rice · Taiwanese Seafood Soup

3. With Noodles

- 025 Hsi Shu Jung Chang Sichuanese Cuisine | Beef Noodle Soup, Pork Knuckle Noodles · Pickled Cowpeas · House Tofu Tossed in Mala Sichuan Peper Sauce
- 026 Cheng Chia | tshik-a Mixed Noodles · Rice Noodle Soup · Chopped Noodle Toppings · Clear Broth Chicken
- 027 Chiang Hsi Chuan Yi | Homestyle Chinese Noodles · Beef Noodles · Braised Food Platter
- 028 Xi'an Noodle Shop | Red Braised Beef with Thick Noodles, Chicken and Kelp · Noodles with Stir Fried Vegetables · Stir Fried Noodles with Cumin · Stir Fried Rice with Braised Pork Chop · Xinjiang Style Quick Fry · Fresh Appetizers
- 029 Lao Beijing | *Zhajangmian* Noodles with Bean Sauce · Specialty Fried Pork Chop with Noodles · Spicy Red Braised Pork Chop with Noodles · Lionshead Meatballs with Noodles
- 030 Takizawakenn | Pork Bone Miso Ramen · Chicken Stock Ramen · Japanese Chashu Pork Cutlet Rice
- 031 Nice Cold Noodle | Cold Noodles Tossed With Shredded Chicken · Cold Noodles Tossed with Nuts · Cold Noodles Tossd With Homemade Yogurt Sauce · Braised Eggs Three Ways

032 You Chia | Fried Egg Noodle Soup · Thin Fried Noodles Tossed with Shredded Chicken and Scallion Oil

033 Mahjong Hall Sesame Noodles | Sesame Noodles

034 Non-Descript Family Owned Noodle Stall in Front of Diyu Temple (Flagship Restaurant)/ Luchuan Noodle Restaurant (Formerly, Tin Roof Noodle Franchise) | *Yangchun* Noodles (3-Generation Family Recipe) · Steamed Eggs in Broth · Blood Pudding

035 Ho Sheng | Handmade Japanese Buckwheat Noodles · Buckwheat Udon Noodles (Limited Order) · Chinese Style Cold Noodles · Thin, Cold Udon Noodles

4. Wheat Noodle Dishes & Rice Noodle Dishes · Recommendations

036 Yi He Ju | Northern Jiangsu Style *Sanzi* Fried Dough · Beef/ Pork Roll-Up · Yangtze Style *Shaguo* Congee

037 Hsu Chi | Specialty Dumplings · Vegetable Stew · Pork Chop Soup with Dough Balls · Royal Milk Tea

038 Ah Cheng | Homemade *Tsāi-lâi-bí* Rice Noodles (Towel-Pressed Hakka Style Rice Noodles) · Braised Pork Knuckle · Homestyle Hakka Stir Fry

039 Yancheng Yung-he | *Xiaolongbao* Soup Dumplings

040 Ji Pin | *Bah-uân* (Original / Dried Bamboo / Crispy Taiwanese Basil)

041 Beaming Farm | Brown Rice Japanese Cheesecake · Black Soybean Flour Longan Brownies · Handmade Brown Rice Cookies · Secret KTV Quick Fry Menu

042 Lou Chi | *Mantou* · House Special Mantou with Chopped Daikon

043 He-Chun Tangyuan | Homemade Savory *Tangyuan* Rice Balls · Sweet Fried Wheat Flour with Water, Shaved Ice Topped with Sweet Fried Wheat Flour, Sweet Fried Wheat Flour Shaved Ice with *Tangyuan* (Hot or Cold) · *Kim-á* Golden Nougat with Sweet Fried Wheat Flour and Peanut Powder · Specialty Extra Large *Ningyuan* Rice Balls

044 Fengshan (Authentic) Taipei Rice Noodle Soup | Thick Rice Noodle Soup · Oyster Noodles in Chili Pepper or Garlic Sauce · *Oo-péh-tshiat* Appetizers Made to Order · Braised Tofu

045 Ching Kung Community Lee Chia | Homemade Yunnan Rice Noodles · Smoked Pork · Roasted Chicken in Sweet Osmanthus Sauce · Roasted Pork Rinds with Pickled Vegetables

046 TST | Specialty Bread · Dim sum · Homemade Cookies

5. Seafood

047 Chang's Seafood Congee | Traditional Seafood Congee · Fresh Seafood Congee Made to Order

- 048 Ah Chung | Thick Rice Noodle Soup with Squid · Fried Milkfish Bones · Fried Milkfish Intestines
- 049 Hamasen Blue Marlon Fish Ball King | Specialty Blue Marlon Fish Ball, Shrimp Ball, and Pork Meatball Soup · Bamboo Tube Rice Pudding · Braised Pork Rice · Braised Minced Pork Rice · *Koah-pau* Pork Belly Buns
- 050 Chiao Tou Granny | Tuna Curry Soup · Secret Braised Minced Pork Rice
- 051 Chi Lin Seafood Restaurant | Steamed Crab Congee · Steamed Crab · Baby Watermelon Grouper Fish Stew · Assorted Seafood
- 052 Seashore Seafood | Catch of the Day · Fresh Seafood Soup with Pickled Cabbage · Black Tuna Skins Tossed with Pickled Vegetables (Limited Order) · Fried Shrimp Balls with Tenpounder Paste
- 053 Non-Descript Shop on Sihwei Rd. | Tuna Seafood Congee · Fresh Fish Soup · Fresh Fish Flown in From Penghu · Secret Quick Fry Menu

6. Traditional Beverages

- 054 Chishan *Kiat-á* King (Calamansi King) | Hot Calamansi Tea · Iced Lemonade with Calamansi Juice
- 055 Po Po Ice | Four Candied-Fruit Shaved Ice · *Li Hsien* Plum Shaved Ice · Old Fashioned Tomato Juice · Sliced Tomatoes
- 056 Shan Ming Tea Shop | Specialty Milk Tea · Assorted Premium Teas · Tea Flavored Sorbet
- 057 Chen Mama | Homemade Candied Winter Melon Ribbon Shaved Ice · Hakka Style Rice Desserts
- 058 Tien Chi | Star Fruit Slush · Mango Slush · Pineapple Slush
- 059 Top1 Café Tea | Pour Over Coffee · Sun Moon Lake Black Tea Au Lait · Iced Coffee · Jasmine Green Tea
- 060 Baolai 36 | Aiyu Grass Jelly Pudding (Red Bean/Pineapple/Berries/Plums)
- 061 Yun Chia Lemonade King | Lemonade with Sour Calamansi Juice · Green Tea with Lemon
- 062 Chao Lin Ice-Cold Juice and Fruit Cocktail | Almond Tofu with Special Star Fruit Juice
- 063 Chen Hsiang | Fresh Juice · Lotus Root Tea · Winter Melon Tea with Soy Milk
- 064 Charng Mei Shaved Ice and Gelateria / Ciao Lucia Gelato | Traditional Shaved Ice · Artisan Sundaes · Old Fashioned Popsicles · Gelato
- 065 Happy Lane (Almond Shop) | Old Fashioned Almond Tea · Almond Tofu · Shaved Ice with Roasted Flour and Scallion Oil · Science Noodles Shaved Ice
- 066 Aunty A Bao | Assorted Old-Fashioned Teas

7. Snacks/Eat as you go...

- 067 Jingzhou Guokui | Jingzhou Style Sesame Buns Filled with Pork Shoulder and Pickled Vegetables · (Guaiwei/ Red Beans and Brown Sugar/ Toffee)
- 068 Lao Pai | *Péh-thâng kué* Taiwanese Rice Doughnuts
- 069 Chun Lan | *Koah-pau* Pork Belly Buns · Eight Treasure Mung Bean Noodles
- 070 Dashe Chiayi-Style Sausage | Smoked Sausage · Sticky Rice Sausage with Lima Bean
- 071 San Lun Che | Taiwanese-style Pork and Scallion Pancakes
- 072 Ah Hsin Po Beside Sheng Jun Gong in Meinong | Oden
- 073 Non-Descript Shop on Sanmin St. | Old Fashioned Sponge Cake
- 074 Hsiang Ssu Hai | Marlin Tempura Omelette · Squid or Burdock Tempura · Shrimp Rolls · Haddock Rolls with Cheese
- 075 Tu Chi | Pepper Buns
- 076 Chuang Sao | *Ô-á teh* Fried Oyster Cake · Old Fashioned Taiwanese Fried Vegetable Platter (With Fried Rice Cake and Fried Vegetable Special)

8. Hot Pots

- 077 Dong Xiang Kitchen | Liaoning Seafood and Sauerkraut Hot Pot · Pork and Sauerkraut Hot Pot · Delicacies From a Ching Dynasty Kitchen
- 078 Non-Descript Chicken Farm on Meinong Mountain | Aged “White Jade” Dried Daikon
- 079 Hung Shih Fu | Ginger Duck Hot Pot (Original/Mud Crabs) · House Special Hot Pot (Limited Order)
- 080 Owl Hot Pot | Old Fashioned Hot Pot · Laksa Hot Pot · House Special Mala and Milk Hot Pot · Butterbeer Hot Pot
- 081 Ming Chia | Shantou Satay Hot Pot
- 082 Lemon-grass Restaurant | Lemongrass Chicken Bone Broth Hot Pot · Thai-style Sour and Spicy Hot Pot · Mala Hot Pot with Cumin
- 083 Man Fu | Stewed Lamb · Whole Lamb
- 084 Chi Po | Assorted Taiwanese-style Chicken Hot Pot · Chicken Platters
- 085 Taishan | Shantou Hot Pot

9. Wine & Dine · Innovative Fusion Food

- 086 Foodie Small Café | Creative Cuisine
- 087 Laboratoire de douceurs | Creative Desserts · Desserts à l'assiette
- 088 Marc L³ | Creative Cuisine
- 089 Gien Jia | Creative Cuisine
- 090 Creative Cuisine at Le Bon Marche | Creative Cuisine

10. Midnight Snacks

- 091 Su Kou Tian Mala Soup and Hotpot | Assorted Mala Hot Pot · Steamed Stinky Tofu

- 092 A-Ba Kingdom | Soft-Boiled Eggs · Assorted Smoked Luwei Braises · Duck Blood Cake
 093 Lin-Jen Ma | Vegetarian Cold “Chicken” Platter (Food Truck)
 094 Hsiao Hsien | Cold Chicken Platter
 095 Focus PUB | Hand Tossed Three Treasure Beef Noodles · Fried Dumplings Stuffed with Shredded Beef and Cucumber · Scallion Pancakes · Mama’s Secret Quick-Fry

11. Uncategorized

- 096 Jin Ye Taiwan Roadside Banquets / Neimen *Pān-toh* Roadside Banquet by Jin Ye Catering | Traditional Taiwanese *Pān-toh* Roadside Banquet
 097 Lee's Second Chapter | Taiwanese and Western Fusion Food (Chef’s Table Booked in Advance)
 098 Ching Kung Community Burmese Style *Hsiao Chi* Snacks | Burmese Style *Hsiao Chi* Snacks · Special Yunnan Menu · Peacock Chef’s Table (Booked in Advance)
 099 Huang Tu Fan Dian | Taiwanese Fried Chicken in Soy Milk Batter with Plum Sauce · Stir-fried Pig Intestines with Pickled Bamboo Shoots · Braised Pork with Bamboo Shoots · Steamed Pork Spare Ribs with Taro · Bone Broth Soup with Taro Scapes and Peanuts
 100 A-De’s Dinning Pub | Smoked Chicken with Plum Sauce (Book in Advance) · Thick-cut Steak
 101 Cianjin Temple Danzai Platters | House Special Taiwanese Food Platters · Danzai Platters · *Oo-péh-tshiat* dishes made to order
 102 Shih Shan Peppercorn Orchard | Taiwan Black and White Peppercorns · Farmer-to-Table Menu with Homegrown Pepper
 103 Homelanie | Homestyle Set Meals · Brunch · Stew
 104 Sun, Moon and Stars (Ri Yue Hsing) Chicken House | Fried Chicken · Fried Chicken in Fermented Tofu
 105 Indigenous Kitchen | Assorted Traditional Dishes
 106 Chiu-Mei *Danzai* Platters | Mama’s Homestyle Cooking · Drinks and Appetizers

12. Food Gifts

- 107 Nan Tou He Sesame Oil | Black Sesame Oil · Clear Sesame Oil · Black Sesame Paste
 108 Mama MiYa | XO Scallop Sauce · Canned Scallops · Homemade Savory Mooncakes with Scallop Paste and Salted Egg Yolk · Spicy Nut Butters
 109 YaYaSu Homemade | Homemade Malt Sugar Syrup with Peanut Powder · Hakka Salt and Pepper Crackers with Malt or Nougat · Nougat · QQ Chewy Crackers
 110 San Lang Bakery | Dinner Rolls · Chocolate Dipped Viennese Whirls · Walnut Pancakes · Grissini Breadsticks

- 111 Yong Feng | Salted Peanut Candy · Almond Cakes
- 112 Shan Zhu Ai Chia | Homemade Roasted Brown Sugar
- 113 FAXIAN SHAN CHA | Indigenous Taiwanese Mountain Tea
- 114 Wish | Local Fugui Mooncakes · Swiss Roll with Mountain Tea Custard · Savory Swiss Roll with Dried Daikon
- 115 Ching Kan Tang | Pancakes with Mung Bean Paste · Old Fashion Garlic Cakes (Comb Cakes)
- 116 Wang Mama | Fragrant Pork Rolls
- 117 Liu Lao Lao | Grade A Sichuan Pepper Oil · Safflower Oil · Sichuan Pepper Plant Oil
- 118 Chin Hwa Ham | Chin Hwa Cured Ham · Homestyle Cured Meats · Cantonese Sausage / Intestines · Gift Boxes
- 119 Meinong Hakka Food Shop (Pan Mama) | Red Bean Cake · Green Mung Bean Cake · Hakka Green Glutenous Rice Cake · Sweet and Savory Taro Cake
- 120 Cheng Wei Chen | Wild Karasumi

Appendix : Eatery QR CODE

Complete Map of Kaohsiung City

Secret Map to Culinary Delights

Foreword | Three Flavors in One: From Kaohsiung Good Eats to Kaohsiung's Savory Soul Locality, Fraternity, Hospitality

Everyone who lives in Tainan, whether for a short stay or long term, quickly learns to the importance of learning and using key Taiwanese words and phrases when going out on the town. It's a tool, but even more a medium that helps me more quickly dedicate myself to this city, and grounds me, truly grounds me at the center of my life. This is especially true if you listen closely at any snack stall. You'll almost never hear a Kaohsiunger say, *hó-tsiah* "good food". More than half of Tainan locals describe a good meal in just two words: *hah-bī*, "good taste". I've noticed over the years that *hah-bī* has evolved beyond describing something the diner thinks tastes good to now conveying a meaning something like, "I don't care what anyone else thinks tastes good. This is the life I want, and the most important thing is that everything is done according to my tastes." That includes both satisfying my hunger and nourishing my soul.

Some people may never know the sort of individual thoughts, feelings, trials or tribulations that are reflected in our food. I eat, therefore, I am. In that moment, everyone is eating to preserve their quiet existence in search of their own creature comforts built up amidst daily routines. It doesn't matter at all what different culinary aesthetics deem an exceptional flavor; but rather the subtle aspects of these dishes that come to be understood as the tacit emotions we share with shopkeepers when we're operating on the same frequency. I mean, honestly, it's a local

identity that's taken shape from the collective memory created together over so many years; a confidence born from local freshness, the spice of life, and the sweetness of people. There will always be a meal, but the point isn't to wonder whether visitors will like it. It's more important to be yourself; and being yourself doesn't mean catering to the crowd. You're always welcome at my table, but you'll eat what we're having.

The cook should feel very much the same way, and focus on the course they've set for themselves. As the seasons change and generations pass, we find those with similar tastes who continue to tweak our recipes until some become celebrated "house specials". Once the family's secret ingredient steps out of the kitchen, the confidence of regular customers helps everything take root in local cuisine. Years ago, when I first decided on *Kaohsiung Good Eats* as the title of this book, I'd already started to formulate a clear definition of the word "good". "It doesn't necessarily mean the 'best' because subjective feelings differ widely from one person to the next. It's more of an invitation, 'Kaohsiung welcomes you!'" Ten years later, I named my book *Kaohsiung's Savory Soul* because most of us can agree it is the flavor that wins you over. Whenever a first timer takes up an invitation to visit my city, it is my sincerest hope that they cultivate a more complex relationship with Kaohsiung. A relationship with greater understanding and more meaningful interactions. No matter where you're from or when you got here; the many different ethnic groups that arrived in Kaohsiung at various points in time are waiting to share the personal histories and origin stories infused into their culinary techniques.

Kaohsiung's Savory Soul can be considered an evolution of my previous work, *Kaohsiung Good Eats*. The former weaves the culinary stories of 120 all-new restaurants into the complex tapestry of life in Kaohsiung. Reading both books will paint a much clearer picture of the cityscape. *Kaohsiung Good Eats* came out in 2013 when my focus was more on spotlighting and explaining the culinary trajectories various that have left their mark on this city over the past one hundred years. That six-year field study (2007-2013) was a lengthy screening and recording process, the goal of which was to show visitors the best of Kaohsiung and to show locals the best of themselves. *Kaohsiung's Savory Soul* took even longer, requiring almost ten years from my initial investigation to its final publication (2013-2023). This period included the three challenging years of the coronavirus pandemic that gripped the entire world. Things got a little rocky for me as well as for several of these restaurants. The good thing is that we've all come out the other side. Looking back, we're much like the spirit of *Kaohsiung's Savory Soul*, infused with the resolute persistence and robust strength of the city.

The scope of this new investigation expanded beyond the busy Kaohsiung neighborhoods readers will remember from my last book. I crossed old county lines into the townships that existed before the city's incorporation as a municipality to explore different ethnic groups and time periods across mountains, vast seas, and ocean straits. My goal in publishing *Kaohsiung's Savory Soul* is to bring everyone closer to the tastes of local life to experience a deeper, wider, and more diverse Kaohsiung. My last book mostly focused on bustling neighborhoods and didn't really shine a spotlight beyond classic restaurants. This time, I've written a broader exposé on the exquisite tastes to be found in Kaohsiung's outlying townships. If I had to sum up the process of

writing both of these books from investigation to publication, it would be that in the blink of an eye, I've gone from a curious young man to your friendly neighborhood uncle. At least my passion has never wavered. I have to thank the palates and culinary techniques of these professionals hidden in every corner of my city for always helping me recapture the flavors of my youth.

We're living in an age of fast food that's largely being caught on camera. I've definitely used several snapshot techniques to capture certain elements of my story, but it's hard to fully express the joy and sorrow behind these stories left behind in the sands of time. I very often still need to put everything into words before the book is good enough for my tastes. *Kaohsiung's Savory Soul* isn't just a dependable local food guide. Each chapter is also a brief attempt to discover the complex interplay among eras, landscapes, neighborhoods, techniques, and personalities. Once published, if readers mistake this text for my detective notes or a secret menu of local restaurants, I won't mind at all. Actually, this book is meant to be an extension of our shared tastes. Take a look around the world and you'll see that this is essentially true of many immigrant cities where folks rely on, embrace, and even repel each other on a journey that we never seem prepared to finish. I don't mean to brag, but here in Kaohsiung, the city is much like its people. It doesn't matter if you're short, tall, fat, or thin; we can all discover what makes us look our best. It's been ten years. Believe me, Kaohsiung can proudly say, "It's okay, you can come closer...don't be shy."

Tang Bo | Pork Liver Rolls

Offering up rich, nostalgia-sating snacks in a lonely Gangshan market.

Gangshan District fell right between my journey south from Tainan to Kaohsiung. From the start, the township seemed to have a life of its own. Ping An Market, the first public market in Kaohsiung, was built beside the Provincial Highway during the Japanese colonial era in what many still call the "old city" of Gangshan. The market once boasted over 100 stalls with a sizzling hot atmosphere to help locals find exactly what they're looking for and was one of the best places in town to eat and drink. Despite the fact that many of the stalls have moved on over the years, the market can still be found between the hustle and bustle of Weiren Road and Wunsian Market, which opened in 1951. Thankfully, the entire vacant lot is safeguarded by a smattering of dedicated shopkeepers, of which Tang Bo Pork Liver Rolls is a clear standout. Tang Bo is a third-generation stall hidden deep in Ping An that remains committed to frying up beautiful, fragrant morsels representing the best of Taiwanese fried food. They shine amidst the nostalgic atmosphere of this abandoned market.

Wu Man-Tang, known as Uncle Tang, mans the stall and feeds the hungry crowds. He was just fourteen when he started making a living selling *oo-péh tshiat*, dishes made to order with whatever was on hand, and other snacks before setting himself up at Ping An Market. Like most people of his generation, Uncle Tang worked hard to make a name for himself by making whatever would sell. It wasn't until the 1970s that Uncle Tang landed on his signature dish. His daughters-

in-law were eventually more than happy to take over the family business to help see the happy bustle continue along that old market street. Every morning, customers young and old stop by for breakfast. They come, again and again, to sit down in what feels like their own *tsàu-kha* – home kitchen. A bird’s eye view of the red sign and yellow characters looks almost like an advertisement for Tien Fu Na Shou cakes. From a distance, you’ll note the many hungry customers waiting and taking selfies, but move in and all you’ll see are the ladies firmly in charge of this well-oiled multigenerational operation. The shop has been around since the 70s, 80s, 90s, early 2000s and beyond. Before you know it, we’ll be celebrating their hundredth anniversary.