

# ChinaNews

## EAT, EAT, EAT ...

### Smiling buns of Shandong

*Bobo* are wheat buns that are traditional food in Shandong for the Spring Festival, especially in the eastern part of the province.

People also steam *bobo* to celebrate a daughter's marriage, since the word for "steam" is pronounced "zheng" in Chinese, a word that also indicates that life's fortune will rise for the new couple. The buns are also used for ancestor worship, when the forefathers are remembered during the Spring Festival.

When making *bobo*, the secret to success is the dough, which has to be turned onto a floured board and kneaded until very smooth. Then it is shaped.

If the dough is prepared properly, the buns will split naturally during the process, like a wide smile.

The equipment used for steaming the *bobo* is a large steamer-oven that is heated by wood and corncobs. It is positioned on the mud and brick stove-top or *zaotai*, a necessary part of every village home.



A smiling girl with a smiling bun, or *bobo*.



YU ZHONGHUA / FOR CHINA DAILY

Strips of shiny salted bacon attract customers at a fair in Nanyun, Sichuan province.

### Taste of home in a sausage

Sichuan sausages and the salted bacon are the two basic items on the Spring Festival banquet table.

The bacon is made from fresh belly pork that is laid down under layers of salt in a large container. After several days, the strips of meat are taken out and hung to air-

dry for several more days in windy, sunny weather. It is ready to eat soon after.

The process of sausage production is more complicated. Sichuan sausage is made from minced pork that has a good percentage of fat in it. It is then marinated in a pickling mix of dried red chili, cooking starch, soy

### Eating to a promotion

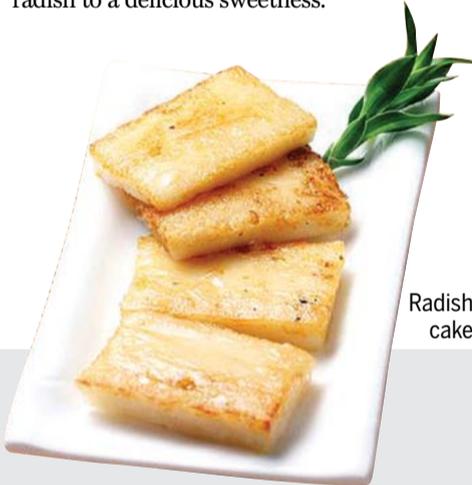
*Luobo gao* (radish cake) is homophonic to *gaosheng* as in *bubu gaosheng* or "every step brings a promotion".

The savory dim sum with the auspicious name is typically eaten in Guangdong province and in the Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions during the lunar new year.

Nutritionally, radishes contain reasonable amounts of vitamin C, folic acid and potassium, which like most other vegetables, make them heart-healthy. It is a simple recipe, but it is time consuming, since the grated radish has to be steamed with rice flour slurry for about two hours until it is set.

Chinese sausages and salted strips of meat are first steamed, then diced and sliced before they are stir-fried with sliced mushroom, peanuts and roughly minced dried shrimps. When the steaming cake is almost done, this delicious topping is scattered on the cake, and steamed just a little while more to finish up.

Radish cakes can also be sliced and fried again for a crispy edge that caramelizes the radish to a delicious sweetness.



Radish cake

sauce, wild peppercorns, green cabbage seed oil, salt, liquor, old ginger and star anise.

The ingredients are carefully blended and then stuffed into pig's intestines, and then air-dried rather than dried in the sun. The sausages are typically blanched, then sliced into filmy wafers and served as in cold dish.

### Old Fuzhou and the color purple

Like any authentic eatery you will find in the Chinatowns, it has the most crowded environment, the most impatient waitresses and the most delicious dishes at the Lao Fu Zhou (Old Fuzhou Folks) restaurant in Fuzhou, capital of Fujian province.

Fist-sized fish balls, sesame-buttered noodles and sweet-and-sour litchi meat are some of the tantalizing names you will find on the menu, but it's a deceptively plain-looking dessert simply called *yuni* (taro paste) that keeps the customers returning.

The grey-tinged purple paste is made

of pureed taro, a mauve-colored yam. It is served on a flat plate and topped with a thin layer of toasted sesame seeds, sometimes with candied ginkgo, red dates or melon seeds added. It is a must-have on the New Year Eve's reunion dinner table.

Steamed taro is skinned and sliced. The taro slices are then mashed with sugar, lard and some spices and cooked in a hot pan until velvety smooth. The paste is finished with a thin layer of melted lard to keep the heat in. You cannot be impatient as the puree is piping hot under that layer of oil.



*Yuni*, or taro paste, is the signature dessert of Fuzhou and is a delicious treat in spite of its deceptively plain looks.

### DEPARTURE GATE

Your passport to the latest destinations and festival celebrations

#### Traditional culture in Tianjin

A historic town imbued with traditional Chinese culture, Yangliuqing in Tianjin began a Spring Festival gala of paintings on Jan 23 that is set to run for nearly a month.

With vibrant folk arts and crafts such as kites, paper cuts and sculptures, it is also the best-known town in China for Spring Festival paintings.

For more than 400 years, Yangliuqing has specialized in the vividly-colored New Year woodcuts depicting traditional scenes of children's games.

The festival will feature exhibitions including rare and ancient paintings as well as forums on protecting the legacy of abundant buildings from the Ming and Qing dynasties in the town.

#### 'Ice flowers' in Jiuzhaigou reserve

The Jiuzhaigou nature reserve in the north of Sichuan province kicked off its 6th Ice Fall Tourism Festival on Jan 18. It will continue until Feb 28.

The tourist destination is home to high-altitude karst formations and famed for its undisturbed natural beauty.

At this time of the year, cold weather turns the trees and plants into "ice flowers" while waterfalls turn into natural ice carvings. The valleys are transformed into a silent picture of pure sapphire and white dotted with bright colors formed by minerals.

Visitors can ski through forests, roast food in the wild, relax in hot springs and cross mountains on horseback.

#### Chongqing dragon lantern festival

Tongliang county northwest of Chongqing will hold its Dragon Lantern Festival from Jan 28 to Feb 17.

The county has a long history of making the lanterns — dating back to the Sui Dynasty (AD 581-618) — and now exports the exquisite products overseas.

It is also famous for its local version of the dragon dance, now listed among China's intangible cultural heritage. Performed on a large stage with exaggerated movements accompanied by folk wind and percussion instruments, it includes a fire-drake dance with simultaneous fireworks. The festival's exhibitions and activities are held in a large park in the county, with dragon dance performances on Feb 3, Feb 7 and Feb 17.

#### Confucius customs at home

Qufu, the hometown of Confucius in East China's Shandong province, is offering visitors a culture-intensive Spring Festival experience.

Visitors from home and abroad can learn 26 forms of etiquette and ritual including Spring Festival and sacrifice ceremonies in the Confucius family, demonstration of household rituals between elder and younger family members, the role of the lecturer in the Confucius family mansion and making Chinese dumplings.

Exhibitions of folk crafts and local intangible culture heritage performances will also be shown to visitors.