

Foreign Friends Encounter Traditional Ningbo Food ⑥

Flaky Mooncake & Red Dowry in Ninghai County



Sara, a 19-year-old Iranian girl, has been living in the city for 17 years. She now studies neuroscience in Simon Fraser University, a school in Vancouver, Canada.

Sara, 温哥华西蒙弗雷泽大学神经科学大一学生, 19岁, 在宁波已经居住17年

Symbolizing the moon, mooncake is a traditional Chinese festive bakery product with a flaky crust and crumbly yumminess. The modern Mid-Autumn Festival still embraces the traditions of lunar appreciation, poetry composing and mooncake tasting to celebrate family union.

“小饼如嚼月, 中有酥与饴。”每到中秋, 赏月, 赋诗, 品月饼, 合家团圆, 这一传统习俗流传至今。

Handmade mooncakes in Ningbo are crispy and tasty, especially the ones from Ninghai county. With Mid-Autumn Festival approaching, the streets around Ninghai are already infused with the mouth-watering aroma of mooncakes.

宁波的手工月饼酥松香脆非常好吃, 尤以宁海月饼最为出名。尽管离中秋佳节还有一个多月, 宁海的街头已经飘出了月饼香, 令人垂涎。

Sara came to Ningbo from Iran with her parents at age 2 and grew up as a local girl here. She now studies neuroscience in Simon Fraser University, a school in Vancouver, Canada.

19岁的Sara来自伊朗, 是温哥华西蒙弗雷泽大学神经科学大一学生。两岁时跟着父母亲来到宁波, 是个地道的“宁波小娘”。

In late July, Sara joined us on a drive to Ninghai for the mooncake

exploration.

7月下旬, 我们结伴一起去明朝旅行家徐霞客开游地——宁海探访, 学做、品尝宁海月饼。

As we reached our destination in Yuelong subdistrict, Ninghai County, Sara traced the overflowing fragrance of pastries and stopped at a roadside mooncake deli – the branch store of Caohu Food Company. “Ni Hao!” Sara stepped into the store and greeted the pastry chef in Ningbo dialect, “Can you teach me how to make mooncakes?” Busily kneading the dough, the chef looked up and replied with delight: “Sure!”

在宁海县跃龙街道, 马路边门面小小的草湖食品现烤月饼店, 香气四溢, Sara闻香而去, 推开店门, 大声抛出一句宁波话“你好!”“我可以跟着你学做月饼吗?”正埋头揉面的大姐抬起头来笑答, “好啊!”

Ms Xiang, the chef, has been in the business for 40 years. For her, making Mooncake by hand is “easy peasy, lemon squeezy”. Following Xiang’s instructions, Sara made her own attempt: Combine flour with lard, knead it, form the dough. Press it flat, fold it, roll it, then repeat the three steps until the multi-layer thin crust is ready. Add a large ball of paste fillings in the center of the crust. And close all the sides until it’s sealed tight and no filling is visible.

制作手工月饼40年的项大姐信手拈来, 油皮包酥皮; 摊平、折叠, 几经反复, 做成薄薄的皮子; 然后包入一大块馅料, 皮子几乎要撑破。Sara跟着师傅小心翼翼地细心操作。

Bake the mooncake for 20 minutes. The steaming hot pastries are done!

接下来把饼胚放入烤箱, 20分钟后, 月饼火热出炉。

Cool the pastries for a while. Then break the cake in half and enjoy the rich, penetrating aroma. Inside, large walnut kernels are clearly visible, and the salted duck egg yolk enriches the filling. Outside, the layered thin crust is flaky and tasty. At first bite, Sara could not help whooping with excitement: “Delicious!”

稍微凉凉后, 拗成对半, 香气直往鼻子里钻, 大颗粒的核桃仁清晰可见; 蛋黄馅色泽金黄, 直冒油; 酥皮层层叠叠, 薄如蝉翼。小口尝味后, Sara蹦跳着直呼“好吃”, 忍不住大口咀嚼, 边吃边叫好。

Sara soon became a fan of the Ninghai mooncake. Learning that it’s her first time in Ninghai, Xiang invited Sara to visit a site of the national intangible cultural heritage — the Ten-Mile Red Dowry. The Red Dowry refers to the ancient luxurious wedding customs in Ninghai. When the daughter got married, her parents would offer a large dowry as their blessing towards the bride. The dowry-carrying team could last several miles, namely “Ten-Mile Red Dowry”.

Sara非常喜欢宁海月饼, 听说她第一次来宁海, 项大姐热情邀请她去参观宁海十里红妆, 宁海十里红妆是国家级非遗文化。宁海女子出嫁时, 送嫁妆的队伍蜿蜒十里, 满满的都是对新人的美好祝福。

The rain had just stopped, leaving the sky crystal clear and a loom of mountain in sight. Down the cobblestone path, Sara capered across the red arch bridge. And here we are at the Oriental Art Museum!

雨后, 碧空如洗, 不远处, 青山云雾缭绕。Sara连蹦带跳, 走过鹅卵石铺就的小路, 跨过红色的拱桥, 来到了东方艺术博物馆。

The exhibition hall displays all sorts of dowry, including red furniture painted with golden and cyan lacquer, exquisite Chinese wooden wardrobes as well as dressing tables, and an eye-catching red bridal sedan chair. In ancient eastern Zhejiang, the bridal sedan chair is the traditional vehicle for brides when they get married. Sara was hyped up with amazement and took a seat on the sedan chair, her face beaming with delight.

推门进入展厅, 红色缀以金色、青色的泥金彩漆家具鲜艳夺目, 中式木质衣柜、化妆台都非常精致, 更为吸引眼球的是一顶红色大花轿, 坐花轿是浙东女子出嫁时的传统, Sara颇为好奇, 笑呵呵体验了一把, 坐上花轿, Sara姑娘笑靥如花, 留下动人的倩影。

“So many Rewards!” Full of jollity, we embarked on the way back home.

“今天的逛吃收获满满。”Sara边走边跳, 我们一起踏上了返程的路。

Ningbo in the eyes of Sara

“I have been living here for 17 years, and I have found that Ningbo is a peaceful city with an implicit ethos and a sophisticated civilization. The longer you stay here, the more good things with this city you will unveil.”

我在宁波生活了17年, 深感这是一座宁静的城市, 非常有内涵, 犹如披着神秘的面纱, 生活的时间越长, 你可以发掘更多的美好。