

Foreign Friends Encounter Traditional Ningbo Food ⑦ Edible Lotus Roots in Zoumatang — the Ancient Village of Scholars



Zoumatang is a village in Jiangshan Town, located in the Ningbo's Yinzhou District. Surrounded by well-connected waterways, the village grows rich edible lotus roots.

宁波市鄞州区姜山镇走马塘村一带，河网交错，水系发达，盛产莲藕。

In recent days, lotus roots in Zoumatang are ready for harvesting. On August 9, Timothy Charles Salisbury—an Australian working at Georgia School Ningbo—joined us on a trip there to taste lotus root soup with pork ribs.

今年的新藕已经开挖，8月9日，宁波乔治亚外籍人员子女学校幼儿园教师 Timothy 应邀前往千年古镇走马塘村品尝进士莲藕汤。

Lotus grows in ponds and lakes. To cultivate its long and sausage-like root, diggers have to get into the muddy water and wash away half a meter of thick sludge with a pressurized hose. Hard as it looked, Timothy was raring to try. Following the instructions of local villager Mr. Shao, he put on a work overall and stepped into the planting pool.

村外田野间的荷塘里，藕农跋涉淤泥中，拖着高压水枪，冲散半米厚的淤泥，半米多长的莲藕就会浮出水面。挖藕场面非常艰辛，Timothy 老师也想试试身手，藕农老邵让 Timothy 老师换上渔夫服，一起下塘，“踢藕野泥中”。

Finally, Timothy got something. “Here!” He lifted the root with excitement. After collecting another root, we set out to the village center of Zoumatang.

终于采挖到了，Timothy 老师兴奋地高高举起，“采藕不洗泥”，带上两支，出发，去走马塘！

Zoumatang is honored as “China's No.1 Jinshi village” (with 76 scholars being crowned “Jinshi”)—the highest and final degree in the imperial examinations of China). Built in the northern Song dynasty (960-1127), the village was inaugurated by Chen Jin who moved there in 988 to make a living. Chen Libo, the local guide, is the family's 33rd generation. She has been waiting in the village to welcome our friend from Australia.

走马塘村素有“中国进士第一村”的美誉，该村始祖陈矜于北宋端拱元年（公元 988 年）迁于此，村里导游陈丽波小姐姐，是陈氏 33 世后人，早就在村里等候 Timothy 老师。

Flourishing in the pond at the village entrance, lotus is the symbol flower of Chen's family and is held dear by the villagers.

村口荷花池荷叶田田，这是陈氏族花，备受村民爱惜。

By the pond, several kids were sketching. With the help of gestures, they had a joyful chat with Timothy in Chinese and English.

荷花池旁，三五小孩写生画荷，中英文双语并用，再结合手势，Timothy 老师和大家相聊甚欢。

A long stone bridge over the lotus-covered pool leads us to “Yizhong Hall”, Chen's ancestral hall, or family temple, which represents the history and culture of the family.

According to the genealogy, the Chen family cultivated 76 “Jinshi” under its culture of farming while reading. In honor of their contribution, the Emperor Huizong of the Northern Song Dynasty granted Zoumatang village “Zhongxiaoli”—a place of fidelity and filial piety. Since then, civilian officials and military officers had to walk instead of sitting in a sedan chair or riding on their horse to cross the bridge over the pond. That is why the village is called Zoumatang—a basic English translation being ‘walk horse pond’.

张开双臂，走过荷叶掩映的长长的石板桥，Timothy 老师轻叩陈家宗祠厚重的木门，陈家耕读文化徐徐打开。这里共培育了 76 名进士。宋徽宗钦赐“忠孝里”，此后地方官员凡经此地，文官下轿，武官下马，牵马而过河塘，因此得名走马塘。

Along the riverside path, Timothy took a wander. In sight, the ancient stone windows, the Chinese-style cornices, and the white walls decorated with dark tiles give visitors a sense of the history.

沿着河塘，漫步街巷，Timothy 老师畅游古镇。石窗、飞檐、黑白瓦墙映入眼帘，仿佛时空流转。

At noon, Chen Libo took us to a local agritainment restaurant for lunch. Its owner Chen Feng—the 34th generation of the family—was preparing ingredients for a meal. “Jinshi lotus root soup is a traditional delicacy here,” he explained, “it manifests a good result in exams. Many villagers would make it for their kids before any test.”

不知不觉，已到中午，进士莲

藕汤在哪里呢？陈丽波带着大家，走进荷花池旁的农家乐“走马人家”，老板陈丰是陈氏 34 世后人，正在庭院里切藕备菜，“进士莲藕汤是村里一道传统佳肴，家有考生的村民会在考前炖给孩子喝，寓意金榜题名。”

Timothy was rushing here holding a lotus leaf overhead.

Timothy 老师携一片荷叶匆匆而来。

Cut up the off-white lotus roots. Simmer them with pork ribs and corn as well as other ingredients in the stock for extra depth of aromatic flavor. “It tastes mild yet pleasantly sweet with watery freshness.” Timothy was amazed by the soup.

嚓嚓切开象牙色的藕段，丝丝相连。和排骨、玉米等食材放入炖锅，藕片浸润了多种食材的味，鲜美无比，“很好吃，在澳大利亚没吃过藕呢。”Timothy 老师品尝后，赞不绝口。

“I should try the stew.” He can't wait to share the lotus roots he dug up with his family back home.

他自己采挖的两根莲藕，非常愉快地带回家，可以炖汤分享给家人。

Ningbo in the eyes of Timothy

Timothy, along with his family, has been living in Ningbo for 8 years. “It's pleasant to reside in an accessible and comfortable city like this.” He smiled and added: “To be frank, I prefer Ningbo's winter.”

Timothy 一家三口来宁波已有 8 年。宁波非常舒适，他抹了抹汗，笑说，更爱宁波的冬天。