

Foreign Friends Encounter Traditional Ningbo Food ⑧ Brown Glutinous Rice Ball in Yinjiang

Upon the arrival of September in Ningbo, the early-season rice harvest produces the freshest ingredients for the making of rice pastry.

八月底、九月初,宁波各地的早稻刚刚收获,正是做米食点心的好时节。

Located in Haishu District, Yinjiang Town is a historic cultural town aged over 1,600 years. On August 31st, Loko joined us on a trip there to explore a traditional Ningbo food—the brown glutinous rice ball.

8月31日,邀约来自加拿大的网站设计师、网红Loko、玉米先生一起去宁波海曙区鄞江镇打卡,这座建镇一千六百余年的历史文化名镇,有一道传统小点心——灰汁团,闻名甬城。

En route, we stopped by at Tuoshan Weir. The ancient dam was erected in 833 A.D. during the Tang Dynasty (618- 907 A.D.) and is now part of a large-scale irrigation system serving Ningbo City. In 2015, the infrastructure was listed as “World Heritage Irrigation Structures”.

途中,经过我国古代著名水利工程、世界灌溉工程遗产它山堰,历经千年,依旧发挥水利功能。

Within the vicinity, a small pastry store of local popularity, named “Big-Headed Vegetable” – after the white-rooted turnip – rests in the small lane of Tuoshan West Road. Its owner, Zhou Jinglong, is the inheritor of the Yinjiang-flavor brown glutinous rice ball legacy (N.B.: Yinjiang is a town of Haishu District, Ningbo City).

不远处,鄞江它山西路小弄堂里,私藏一家名为“大头菜”的小店,老板周静龙是海曙区鄞江灰汁团制作技艺的传承人。

The first meeting between Loko and Zhou was also a “green” encounter between their nicknames—the “Maize” and “the Big-Headed Vegetable”. While Zhou was expertly kneading, cutting, and forming balls, Loko started his learning by watching and following step by step.

“玉米”碰到“大头菜”,分外亲切,周静龙正熟练地揉捏,切块,搓团,玉米认真观摩,然后一招一式拜师学技。

This store is small but runs a big business which covers the whole of Ningbo. For Zhou, the typical working day begins between 3 to 4 am. During



peak selling seasons, the store copes with daily orders requiring tens of thousands of handmade brown rice balls.

店铺虽小,生意却做到了宁波各地,每天凌晨三四点钟开始劳作,生意忙时,一天要手作上万只灰汁团。

Zhou was born and raised in Yinjiang by a native local family. His family inherited the making of the brown rice ball from his great grandparents and have been in the business for at least 80 years.

“大头菜”周静龙娓娓道来,他是地道鄞江人,从小住在它山堰边,做灰汁团是家传三代的手艺,至少已传承80年。

Thanks to the irrigation brought by Tuoshan Weir, the ancient town of Yinjiang has always been a land of milk and honey (hence traditional pastry and the brown glutinous rice ball in particular). The brown glutinous rice ball is also known by its local name “Huizhi Ball”, meaning “the ball made with straw-ash liquid”. Back in the day, making the ball was a household summertime activity—local residents burnt straws into ash, soaked it with water, stirred the brown filtered liquid with rice flour, and formed it into balls for steaming. Later, people adapted the recipe and employed an edible alkaline liquid to replace the straw-ash liquid as the key ingredient.

However, the name “Huizhi” remains. Filling, heat-relieving and easy to preserve – the rice balls were a welcome afternoon refreshment for the farmers during the hot summer. Today, it is a popular snack for all types of consumers.

倚靠它山堰,鄞江是鱼米之乡,传统小点心灰汁团特别优秀。旧时夏季,很多家庭都会制作。先把稻草烧成灰,浸泡清水中,榨出的汁水滤清后拌入米粉,做成团子,蒸煮后自带清香,因此称之为“灰汁团”。后来,食用碱水替代了灰汁,而灰汁团的名称一直流传下来。灰汁团耐饥,不易变质,适合冷吃,以前,是夏季农忙时很接地气的下午点心,而现在,地道的传统味成了消费者喜欢的小可爱。

An hour later, the steaming hot brown rice balls started to give off fragrance. They are ready for a bite! Loko had a taste: “It’s sweet and bouncy, and not too sticky.” He soon wolfed down another: “Yum yum, it’s a treat!”

蒸足一个小时后,灰汁团火热出炉。正好到了午饭时间,肚子已饿,玉米迫不及待地品尝,一口一个,边说边点评,这个小点心甜香、脆爽,不粘牙,连说“好吃”。

After lunch, Loko took a slow walk along the river. Accompanied by the blue sky with white clouds, he visited the well-arranged traditional Ma Tau Wall complex, the antique Yinjiang

Bridge, and the graceful Guangxi Bridge of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 A.D.).

午后继续打卡,玉米沿河慢行。古建筑群的马头墙错落有致;廊桥鄞江桥古风犹存;始建于明朝的光溪桥,是它山堰的配套工程,蓝天白云下风姿绰约。

“Daddy...”, the cheerful voice of a boy passed through the ancient town, penetrating the quiet afternoon. Loko’s family came for a surprise visit! And his wife took a casual but warm picture of “Loko junior” playing a ball game with his dad.

“爸爸……”脆生生的童声,打破了古镇静谧的午后,妈妈带着小玉米前来探班,和爸爸玩起了拍皮球……妈妈随手拍摄一家人在古镇打卡的温馨镜头……

Ningbo in the eyes of Loko

Loko – “Maize” is actually his nickname – has been dwelling in Ningbo for 12 years. During that time, he met his wife, got married, and now he raises a 4-year-old son. Through the eyes of Loko, Ningbo is an inclusive city, open for innovation and creation.

Loko, 玉米先生,在宁波工作、生活了12年,遇到爱人,成家并创业,儿子已4周岁。他深感,宁波是一座包容、开放的城市,非常适合创新、创造。

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