



The Cool Cheap Eating _ By Gerardo Paniagua

I will never forget the first time I went to a night market with my Taiwanese classmates. It was a normal night with nice weather. I and 5 of my Taiwanese friends decided to have dinner at the nearest night market from our school. It was located next to the Chung Yuan University in Chung-Li. That evening, we waited for some of our friends who were finishing their last class. After that, one of my friends lent me a helmet & gave me a ride on his motorcycle to the night market. Of course, we were all hungry, and I was the only one excited for this first-time experience. It was amazing. There were a lot of lights, smells, and people everywhere. The place was alive, and I was feeling alive too being part of the whole crowd. And the best part was A Lot of Food Everywhere!

It doesn't matter what you like, sweet, salty, spicy, meat, or smelly. You will always find many options worth to try in there. I couldn't wait to try my first bite. As soon as we arrived, I and my friends bought a set of 'tacoyaki'. My friends told me that it was some kind of Japanese tacos; however, the taste and look was totally different from the tacos I was used to in Latin America. Anyway, it tasted really good. Later I chose a snack by myself. I believe that one shall become one of my favorite snacks in Asia. It was a Hong Kongese bread called 'polo mianbao', or polo bread. It was a peculiar bread with a slice of butter in the middle; it was hot on the outside and cold inside. Now, every time I go to that night market I always buy that bread from the same store.

After that, I and my friends tried several different kind of local Taiwanese food, snacks, and drinks. They were dumplings, steamed buns, bubble teas, egg pies, chicken sausage, etc... really a lot of food. I think that my Taiwanese friends were experts on knowing all the local food. They always explained to me the content of every dish, which ones were the best, and which ones were their favorites.

I realized that the night market was not only a good place to find a huge variety of cheap food, but also to have a good time with your friends. The atmosphere there was de-stressing and dynamic. Beside of the food, in different night markets in Taiwan, you can find different stuff to buy, such as clothes, electronics, toys, and cosmetics.

Whoever comes to Taiwan whether for study, travelling or business purposes, it is a must to visit the variety of night markets in every city. Each of them is unique and perfect to immerse yourself into the Taiwanese gastronomy and culture.