

LIFE

Shaobing stack up as perfect treat even in sultry August

When I think of *shaobing*, the fried flatbread that has become a favorite treat of mine from my



Jocelyn Eikenburg
Second Thoughts

mother-in-law's kitchen in rural Zhejiang province, I often recall a sultry August afternoon a few years back, when, amid the drone of late-summer cicadas, she invited me to sit at a wooden stool beside her well-worn cutting board to teach me how to prepare it from scratch. Making her *shaobing* involves frying with oil at a high tempera-

ture, which might seem an unsuitable thing for the month of August, especially when the "autumn tiger" pounces across the country with its ferocious summer heat that lingers around.

But if you had ever sank your teeth into a piece of my mother-in-law's *shaobing* just fresh from the pan — where the crispy, golden exterior gives way to a savory filling of onion mingled with salted bamboo shoot — you would understand that this irresistible delight inspires cravings that know no season or circumstances.

Besides, preparing her *shaobing* proved easier than expected — something welcome on those muggy

days when you'd prefer to spend less time in the kitchen.

For the filling, mince onion and a pickled or salted vegetable of your choice (such as the salted bamboo shoot my mother-in-law uses), and then combine in equal proportion with just enough oil to bind them together.

The dough comes from a simple mixture of flour and water, adding the latter until you can handle the dough without having it stick to your fingers. You knead it until it becomes elastic, shiny, smooth and lump-free, and then roll into a log that gets cut into rounds. While cradling one of the rounds in the palm of your hand, use your fingers to

shape a crater and then stuff it with the filling and seal the edges.

After placing a round on a cutting board, press down on it with your hands from the center on out, flipping it and repeating until you can roll it out with a rolling pin. Then use the pin instead of your hands to repeat the same process, until the edges become very thin.

Finally, heat up some oil in a wok or pan, and fry the flattened round for one to two minutes on each side, until it is crispy and slightly browned and no longer sticks to the pan.

Depending on how much flour and filling you have, your efforts can yield a significant stack of *shaobing*, the sight of which would surely

draw me to the dinner table with a spring in my step at any time of the year.

Not surprisingly, my affection for the food hasn't gone unnoticed by my mother-in-law. After witnessing the many times I would sigh with much satisfaction over each crispy mouthful during visits, she started sending me and my husband Jun home with a heaping bag of her homemade *shaobing* to freeze and reheat later for lunches or a quick snack. Once, when Jun returned to Beijing after a business trip that included spending a few days at the family home, he lifted out of his suitcase a plastic bag stuffed to the

brim with *shaobing*, and spoke of how his mother stayed up late the evening before to fry them before he left. I nearly shed a tear at the sight of this, her special — and delicious — way of saying "I love you".

Try your hands at *shaobing* sometime, and perhaps you too will find yourself swooning over this treat in your kitchen, even in the heat of summer.

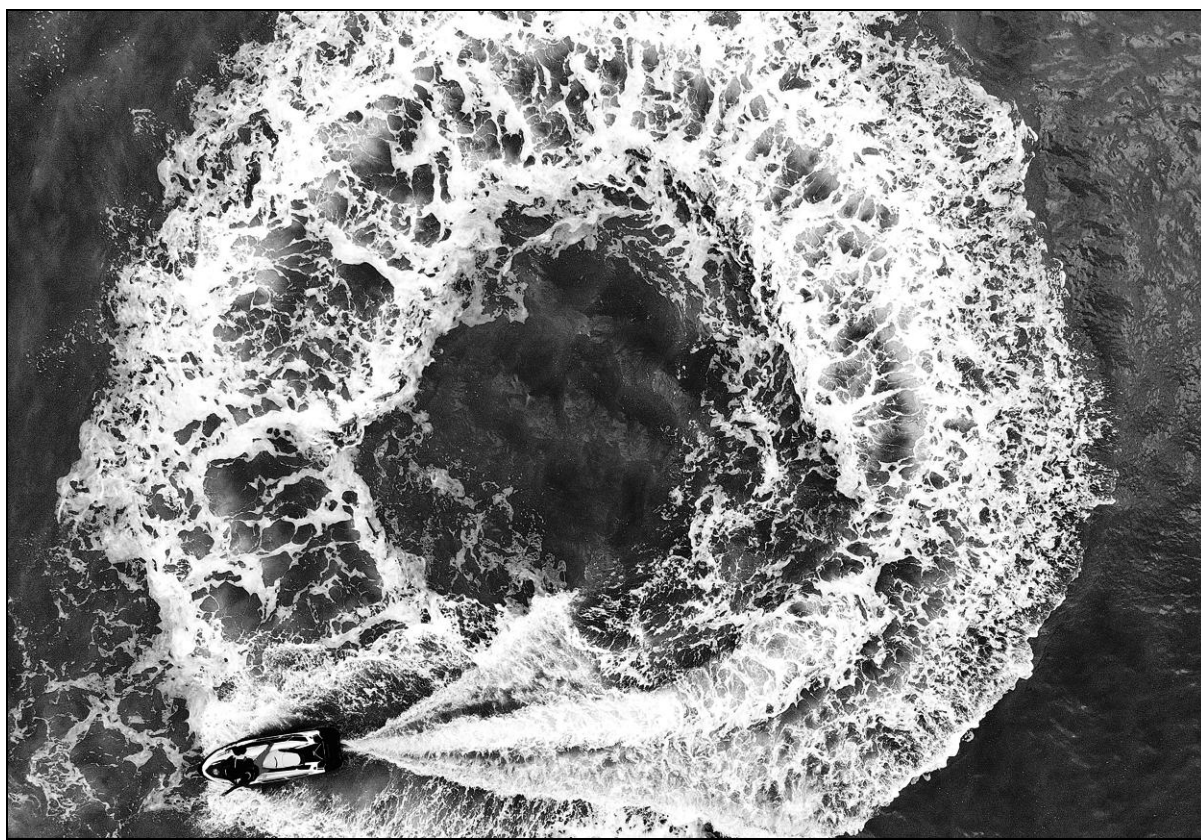
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Online

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Candid camera: Water art



A powerboat churns the water to create a swirl at Dashawan amusement park on Liandao Island, Lianyungang, Jiangsu province, on Tuesday. The city is holding a tourism festival featuring music, drama, a night market and beach carnivals. It is scheduled to last through late October. WANG CHUN / FOR CHINA DAILY



Online

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China's fight against COVID-19 pandemic inspires Yemeni student

TIANJIN — Although it's summer vacation, Moohialding Saleh Mohammed al-Kahtani, a Yemeni PhD student, has immersed himself in research materials in his university campus in North China's Tianjin.

The 32-year-old civil engineering major at Tianjin University says he feels the need to accelerate his research work that was delayed in the first half of the year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Following the outbreak, the university campus was closed and studies were moved online.

The school has remained open throughout the summer to help students catch up with their academic work.

Al-Kahtani's family of five stayed in China during the epidemic. On Feb 20, he went to a local police station in Tianjin and left a handwritten letter in Chinese along with 500 yuan (\$72).

"China is my second home. I know this little money may not make much difference to the anti-epidemic fight, but I do hope you can accept it and contribute the amount to help my dear Wuhan. Let's overcome the difficulties together," he wrote in the letter.

"My wife and I met and fell in love in China. All my three kids were born in China," al-Kahtani says.

He has been living in China since 2009, and his family is accustomed to life here.

"No matter what, we will face and overcome difficulties together with the Chinese people," he says.

Al-Kahtani says his family, like thousands of other families in Tianjin, have complied with the city's epidemic control and prevention guidelines.

"Chinese medics and other front-line 'warriors' have worked extensively to ensure our safety. I cannot be a silent bystander," al-Kahtani says.

The man with a 1-year-old daughter said he was in tears when he saw the photograph of a medical worker wearing a protective suit and holding a baby infected with COVID-19 in her arms.

He recalls how his Chinese friends promptly raised 300,000 yuan through the internet for his surgery after he had a car accident in 2016 in Southwest China's Sichuan province.

"I did not know the names of the donors, but I know they are Chinese," he says. It has always been in his mind to reciprocate the favor.

He shot videos to chronicle all that transpired during China's anti-epidemic fight. He filmed people screening temperatures in markets and sterilizing car tires before entering into the community, and personnel disinfecting elevators. He uploaded the clips on social media platforms.

"I want to record everything so that more people across the world could learn about China's contribution to the global anti-epidemic fight," al-Kahtani says. One of his videos garnered over 700 reposts and more than 1,200 likes.

In one of the videos, his 8-year-old son and 4-year-old daughter extended their blessings and expressed solidarity with China, speaking in fluent Chinese. "We were born and brought up in China, let us overcome the difficulties together. Stay strong, Wuhan. Stay strong, China."

"During the epidemic control period, the university teachers visited my home once a month, and brought me face masks and hand sanitizers," he says.

Al-Kahtani hopes other countries can learn from China's disease control efforts and eradicate the pandemic as soon as possible.

Since the pandemic has not yet ended, al-Kahtani suggested that overseas students in China follow local anti-epidemic guidelines. "Protecting ourselves would be our best support to China's epidemic prevention efforts."

"China loves us, and we love China. The feeling is mutual. As an international student, I am willing to make my humble contribution to the anti-epidemic fight. In the future, I aspire to be an outstanding engineer and live a better life in China with my family," al-Kahtani says.

XINHUA



Ancient Great Wall in northwest put into clear focus

YINCHUAN — It all happened in a series of clicks. Holding his breath, Li Peng squatted down and pressed the shutter button successively as he focused his camera on a beacon tower at the ancient Great Wall, standing beneath a starry sky.

Minutes later, Li scrolled through the photos he just took, picked out one of his most satisfying clicks and jotted down a caption for the picture — "looking into the star-studded sky".

"The images of the Great Wall in different seasons and at varied times provide people an opportunity to reach out to its long history," the 46-year-old says.

The Great Wall, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, consists of many interconnected walls. Regarded as the largest and greatest fortification system in China's history, the Great Wall was built across the country during different dynasties to protect its territories and resist invasion from various nomadic groups.

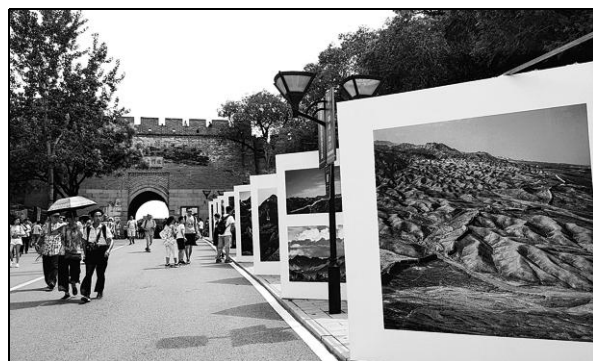
However, few people know that aside from the famous Great Wall in Beijing, Northwest China's Ningxia Hui autonomous region is also home to many ruins of the Great Wall and is dubbed as the "museum of the Great Wall".

Research shows there is 1,038 kilometers of the Great Wall remaining in Ningxia.

As a researcher from the Ningxia Museum and a voracious photographer, Li has been taking photos of the Great Wall for the past 20 years.

Li's odyssey with the camera started around 1998 when he began documenting a section of the ancient Great Wall in Qingtongxia city, his hometown. At that time, he was working with the city's cultural relics administration department.

"Back then, in my spare time, I often got up in the middle of the night and tramped over mountains and through ravines for hours to photograph the ancient Great



Tourists walk past exhibits of the 2019 China Great Wall International Foto Week at Badaling, Beijing, in August last year. More than 300 photographers, including those from Ningxia Hui autonomous region, showcased some 1,500 photos of the wall. SHI YONGPING / FOR CHINA DAILY

“Ningxia not only has a wide range of architectural remains of the ancient Great Wall, including the remaining walls, beacon towers, trenches and passes, but also has abundant natural features alongside.”

Li Peng, photographer and researcher, Ningxia Museum

Wall," he says.

Li can't remember exactly how many pictures he had taken of the ancient Great Wall.

However, what he does remember is the general condition and details

about the Great Wall through his more than 20 years of researching and photographing experience.

"Ningxia not only has a wide range of architectural remains of the ancient Great Wall, including the remaining walls, beacon towers, trenches and passes, but also has abundant natural features alongside, covering high mountains, deserts and grasslands," Li notes.

Shutterbugs, like Li, deem capturing the views of the Great Wall as a way of preserving its heritage.

Chen Jing, 50, is another avid photographer. She is a teacher at a vocational school and initially began her rendezvous with the Great Wall through a borrowed camera. Now, she has purchased a professional camera and various lenses. Chen has even obtained a commercial drone license to nurture her hobby better.

"I'm a native of Yanchi county. My father has authored books on the 260-km section of the ancient Great Wall in the county. At first, I just wanted to bring back the photos of Great Wall to him as he is too old to

conduct an on-site investigation," Chen says.

Chen adds that the more photos she took, the more duty-bound she felt to document the section.

Last year, Chen and her husband published a collection of pictures taken over the past nearly 10 years with financial support from the county government.

"It was arduous but worthwhile," she says, recalling the grueling days when she and her husband had to sleep in a tent during their frequent outings.

Li says that mining activities alongside a section of the Great Wall at the eastern foot of the Helan Mountains used to pose threats to its historical features. However, in recent years, Ningxia has ramped up efforts to protect the Great Wall by shutting down mines and restoring remains of the Great Wall.

Last year, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the National Cultural Heritage Administration jointly released a comprehensive conservation plan for the preservation and utilization of the Great Wall.

When Li was transferred to the Ningxia Museum in 2018, he launched a campaign to solicit pictures of the ancient Great Wall in Ningxia. More than 200 shutterbugs from across the region contributed some 1,800 photographs.

He then hosted an exhibition based on the works he collected. So far, more than 100,000 people have visited the exhibition that has spanned for more than a year and a half.

"It is of great significance to unfold the cultural landscapes of the Great Wall and to pass on and carry forward the connotations of the 'Great Wall spirit' like grit and persistence," says Li.

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Top: Moohialding Saleh Mohammed al-Kahtani, a Yemeni student at Tianjin University, holds a calligraphy piece encouraging China and Wuhan. Above: Al-Kahtani and his three children. PHOTOS BY XINHUA