

Chi-Lin Li Brings History to the Table with “Hsinchu Banquet,” Reviving a Century of Urban Memory

Campus focus

Tamkang University's USR project, “Engaging Tamsui, Reaching the World: Promoting Taiwan's Most Influential Classic Tours and Signature Banquets” (「走進淡水、面向國際：推廣台灣最具影響力的經典遊程與特色餐宴」) held the

“Hsinchu Banquet Launch Event” at 12:00 p.m. on December 6 at the Sheraton Hsinchu Hotel. The event brought together more than 170 participants from industry, government, academia, and alumni circles, including Academic Vice President Hui-Huang Hsu, Board Trustee Wan-Chin Tai, Golden Eagle Club President Chien-Hsiang Lin, and Chuang Tzu-Hua, President of the Tamkang University Alumni Association Headquarters, to jointly experience a feast blending history and culinary culture.

The launch event began with a guzheng performance by the Dongfeng Guzheng Ensemble, featuring pieces such as "Fisherman's Song at Dusk," classical medleys, and well-known Mandarin songs, which created an elegant and culturally rich atmosphere. In his remarks, Vice President Hsu noted that the “Hsinchu Banquet” is deeply rooted in local history and is associated with notable historical figures. He praised the banquet's designer, Dr. Chi-Lin Li, Chair of the Department of History, for creatively incorporating local ingredients into the menu, and expressed hope that guests would gain a deeper understanding of Hsinchu through both taste and storytelling.

Li explained that the “Hsinchu Hobe Banquet” is the seventh themed banquet developed by the USR project team, following earlier banquets such as the Tamsui War of Sino-French War Banquet, Taoyuan Banquet, Yimin Banquet, Mackay Banquet, Kaohsiung Banquet, and Shennong Banquet. Unlike conventional banquet designs, the Hsinchu Banquet emphasizes “telling history through cuisine,” with each dish carrying specific historical meaning and cultural symbolism, transforming food into a medium of storytelling.

The banquet features ten courses, titled: Dawn over Zhuchian (「竹塹迎曦」), Miracles Spreading Afar (「神蹟遠播」), Historic Landmarks (「名勝古蹟」), Ethnic Integration (「族群融合」), Smangus (「司馬庫斯」), Enduring Heritage (「源遠流長」), Rising Prosperity (「風生水起」), Flourishing Culture (「文風鼎盛」), Grass Jelly and Taro Chicken Soup (「仙草芋雞湯」), and Science Park (「科學園區」). Each dish distills elements of Hsinchu's history, geography, ethnic diversity, and industrial development onto the dining table. As the courses were served, they immediately captured the guests' attention. Mobile phones were raised to photograph the beautifully presented dishes, followed by attentive listening as Li explained the historical stories behind each course. Guided by taste, visuals, and narrative, guests were led on a journey back through history, leaving a lasting impression.

Among the highlights, the opening dish Dawn over Zhuchian used crispy rice noodles to evoke the imagery of the ancient city gate. Historic Landmarks employed Japanese-style fried prawns to reflect the Japanese-era architecture of Hsinchu Park. Flourishing Culture featured pork balls, truffles, and chestnuts to symbolize prosperity and the flourishing of talent. Rising Prosperity wrapped Hakka preserved-vegetable braised pork in Hsinchu's signature shui-run bing, representing Minnan-Hakka cultural integration. The braised sea bream dish Miracles Spreading Afar symbolized temple incense traditions. Smangus conveyed indigenous heritage. And the finale, Science Park, showcased desserts shaped like silicon wafers and circuit boards, celebrating Hsinchu's status as a high-tech hub. Altogether, the "Hsinchu Banquet" was not only a culinary experience but also a vivid presentation of Hsinchu's cultural heritage, ethnic diversity, and local industries, all conveyed through the language of food.









