

Sunday March 30, 2014 (con't)

Jenny then drove Colin, Andy and me back into the city and we had her drop us off on Dihua Street. Dihua Street is considered the most important and oldest street in Taipei. It goes back to the mid-1800s and was the center of commerce, particularly for medicinal herbs, fabrics, incense, spices, dried fruit and tea – all of which are still sold here today. The street is much like a living museum. It is lined with shops some over a century old. We were fascinated as we walked around trying to identify the different traditional herbs.



We did stop and ask some shopkeepers what we were looking at, as often it was hard to identify. One shopkeeper used his translator on his iPhone to tell us what things were, like shark fin, Birdsnest, ginseng, deer tails. We saw many dried flowers, dried sea cucumbers, dried jellyfish, and I have no idea what else.





The old buildings were beautiful although old. It looked like they are starting to renovate the district, which in some ways is shame as it will lose its traditional oldness.



As happens all over Taiwan, in the middle of all these shops there was a Buddhist temple. One always expects to see older (read old) people praying at the temples. And you do. But one of the very interesting and surprising things about these temples, is that many of the people you see praying are young. There was a sign that said, "the Buddha blesses visitors to have wisdom, peaceful minds and good fortune." And once again there were tables full of food offerings to Buddha.





We walked for a while and then decided it was time to head back to the subway. We were a good 10 to 15 blocks away so slowly strolled looking in shop windows and watching the people. We ran into the Ningxia Night Market, so we detoured a bit to walk through it. It was all food stalls and packed with people. While it smelled good, we were not about to eat on the street. Speaking of smells, we did pass several stalls with stinky tofu – that was not a good smell. There were also some very interesting cakes, with different flavor icing, in the shape of male parts. That was something we had never seen before (sorry this is becoming x-rated).



We left the night market and kept walking towards the subway. The sun had set, the street lights were on, dusk was descending. We were getting hungry. We passed one window and inside saw the cook chopping food and cooking on teppanyaki table. And the name of the restaurant was Tepanyaky! It was like Benihana's but fast food style. So we went in. Seating was only at a counter, surrounding the hot table. We were given a checklist to fill out. The prices were amazingly cheap. They placed a piece of foil on the hot table, in front of each of us and then starting cooking up the food and placing it on the foil. We each had a bowl of rice so we could take food off the foil and put it in the bowl. You could help yourself to soup from a big pot sitting on the side. Every meal came with cooked cabbage, rice and bean sprouts. It was fun, entertaining, and delicious. One of the better, and more interesting, meals we had.



When we got off the subway there was another night market going on. This one less food and more clothes and tchotchkes. And then we saw something worthy of Shark Tank.

