

Tuguozi Cuisine in Tengchong

By Sun Chao

It was in 2012 when I got to know Tengchong in West Yunnan, due to the TV series *Beijing Love Story*. And I started to desire a visit to this place, after reading many reports on it on the Internet. By sheer fluke, I went to study in Yunnan from Jiangsu in East China, and one of my roommates was from Tengchong. Therefore, we went to Tengchong in the winter of 2013. There my roommate hosted a family banquet for me and served a local delicacy named *Tuguozi*, which was so impressive.

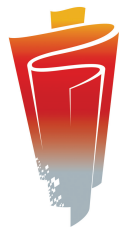
Those days were chilly, and I suddenly felt warm when taking a bite of *Tuguozi*. Even now I recall it, as if it is still in my mouth. *Tuguozi* is a major course of local family banquets and served in a clay pot. At the very beginning of the banquet, no one paid

any attention to it; however, the first bite overwhelmed me, with its appetizing bone broth that had a strong flavor.

The origin of *Tuguozi* is an interesting story. It is told that in the late Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368), the Central Government sent a general to Tengchong to guard the frontier areas, and he found all soldiers still ate cold food even in cold winters. He was moved with compassion, and came up with the idea of keeping food warm in a clay pot, which got passed on from generation to generation. Now it is a classic delicacy of Tengchong cuisine.

Generally speaking, *Tuguozi* is prepared based on local seasonal vegetables. These vegetables are put into a clay pot in a certain order, and garnished with egg rolls or ham. It

looks plain but tastes special. In addition, the unique pot is made from the clay found at Manyi Village in a Tengchong suburb. Cooks put firewood into the hollow protrusion of a hot pot, and leave it simmering very gently for a couple of hours. Such a pot and the cooking way can seal in all the flavor of vegetables. This nutritious food smells sweet and tastes delicious.



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West Lake in Eryuan, a Paradise for Birdwatchers in Winter

By Qin Menglin

In early winter, the West Lake, a national wetland park located in Eryuan County, Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture, turns itself into a paradise for tens of thousand of migrant birds. They sport in reeds and grasses, and enjoy the sunshine where you can see blue sky, clear water and green hills. Local farmers go out at leisure and paddle a boat to the islets scattered on the lake for farming. Every scene is amazing, just like a dream.

The wetland park of the West Lake is located in Yousuo Town, with a catchment area of 119 sq kilometers. The lake measures 4.7 sq kilometers in area and 10.3 kilometers in circumference. It boasts a unique diversity in eco-system, with natural and man-made environment complementing each other. Here various landscapes combine together, including a forest, village, farmland, marsh, water and islet. Geothermal hot spring, ethnic customs, culture,

fishermen village and backwater merge into a panorama of this paradise.

Six villages and seven islets scatter on the lake, forming a picturesque landscape with villages and lake mixing together. The West Lake is in the headwater area of the Erhai Lake and belongs to the Lancang River system. It is a faulted plateau lake and serves as an important defense of ecological safety for Dali and its surrounding region. In Yunnan, the West Lake is the only habitat of the rare Purple Swamp-hen, also China's most important habitat of this bird with the largest number. Moreover, it is a major place for migrant birds to rest and feed.

Visitors to the West Lake can sojourn in local hostels, where they are simply exposed to the landscapes of endless farmland and the wetland, as well as various species of migrant birds. And local cuisine deserves a taste, such as stewed fish in spicy-sour source, fried cheese and various preserved plums.