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Night Markets in Taiwan

Night markets are a recent - and popular -- development in Taiwanese nightlife

Wednesday, February 15th, 2012 12:00 PM

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By David Hammond

Night markets are a fairly recent development in Taiwan, coming into existence in only the past forty years or so. They have proven to be highly popular, and the ones I visited in Taiwan were quite busy well into the night.

An hour after landing in Taipei after 16 hours in the air, I sought out what could be eaten at the night market nearest our hotel.

"Go left at the first McDonald's," the man at the desk said, "Then go to the next McDonald's, and take a right." No kidding.

Unfamiliar with night market foodways, I picked a stand that looked like it served some good stuff, watched a

local go through the ordering routine, and then followed his lead, monkey see-monkey do: I took a small plastic basket, filled it with skewers, and handed it to young lady. Then I watched as she dipped skewers in sauce, gently grilled each one, then snipped the food into edible-sized pieces.

I selected skewers of smoky bacon-wrapped scallions/enoki mushrooms; green pepper; tofu. After cooking, all these pieces went into an adorable takeaway box.

No way I was hauling this back to the hotel. I perched on a empty store platform and street-grunted it, mindful of careening motorbikes and taxis.

Each skewer was dipped in a different sauce, lightly grilled, very fresh tasting with lots of dimension offered by the smoky bacon. It was really good, made more so by the ambiance. Total cost: \$100 NT (about three bucks American, box included).

These markets are a lot like our own local [Maxwell Street Market](#), except that they serve only Asian food, are open every night, and you must walk gingerly through it to avoid being flattened by lawless, insouciant scooter pilots (the sense of danger may heighten appetite).

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