

# AROUND JIANGSU



## THE YANGCHENG LAKE HAIRY CRABS OF SUZHOU

Tourists have long been attracted to Suzhou, Jiangsu province, because of its gardens, but the area is also famous for a different kind of beauty: the Yangcheng Lake hairy crabs.

Yangcheng Lake is a part of Taihu Lake, one of the most important freshwater lakes in the province, and is home to the Chinese hairy crab, which is prized for its tender meat and nutritional value. The crustacean gets its name for the mossy and brown hair that hangs from its claws.

In the fall, the crabs reach maturity and are harvested by Suzhou's restaurants and hotels. Large quantities of the crab are sent by air to major cities across China, including Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan, as well as to countries in Southeast Asia.

Locals believe the hairy crabs acquire their unique meaty flavor from the lake. The hard clay at the bottom of the 2-meter-deep lake is believed to give the crabs their distinct flavor.

## A BITE of JIANGSU



## THE VINEGAR OF ZHENJIANG

The vinegar from Zhenjiang, Jiangsu province, is unique for its color, fragrance, acidity and density compared to other vinegars in China. Locals believe the longer you store it, the more the flavors expand.

Zhenjiang Hengshun Vinegar Factory, founded in the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), is the cradle of China's vinegar industry and is listed as a National Intangible Cultural Heritage.

One of Zhenjiang's typical vinegars is the black rice vinegar, which processes high-quality glutinous rice through three principal movements (distillation, fermentation and rinsing). The whole process takes 50 to 60 days. Black rice vinegar is famous worldwide for being acidic but not pucker, fragrant and slightly sweet. It is also believed to have health benefits, such as eliminating fatigue, controlling the acid-base balance, helping with digestion, improving the liver's functions and protecting the skin.



## HUAI'AN'S WENLOU TANGBAO

Wenlou *tangbao*, which is a steamed bun filled with juicy minced meat, is a famous snack in Huai'an, Jiangsu province, and originates from the period of Emperor Dao Guang, the eighth ruler of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). It has three prominent features: its large size and paper-thin wrapper; the complex stuffing of various ingredients such as ground chicken, crab-roe and shrimps; and its unique cooking method.

Emperor Dao Guang reportedly hailed the Wenlou *tangbao* as "the freshest dish in China" after eating it. It also deeply impressed then premier Zhou Enlai in 1964, when he welcomed the leaders of the Qing Dynasty. According to local media reports, the Wenlou *tangbao* was labeled one of the "famous snacks in China" by the China Cuisine Association in 1997. In 2002, a patent was registered for the Wenlou *tangbao*.



## THE HUANGQIAO SESAME CAKE OF TAIXING

The Huangqiao sesame cake originates from the Huangqiao town in Taixing and is said to be one of the oldest cakes in Taizhou, Jiangsu province.

Shapes vary from round cakes to elongated, square, oval, bevel-shaped or triangular ones. Shops generally sell Huangqiao sesame cakes in circular and oval forms, and they are made with both sweet and salty fillings. Basic ingredients include flour, salt, yeast, caramel, pork loin fat, onion, sesame and lard. The liberal use of sesame seeds provides crunchiness and crispness. The cakes include a variety of fillings, from sugar, pork flakes, sweet osmanthus, crab roe, jujube paste and shrimp meat.

The Huangqiao sesame cake reportedly gained in popularity during the Battle of Rugao-Huangqiao in 1946 during the Chinese Civil War. It is believed the Communist armies owed their victory in that battle to the locals who provided the sesame cakes.