

## In Italy, 'al dente' is prized. In Taiwan, It's all about food that's 'Q'

As dusk falls at Lehua Night Market, the fluorescent lights **flicker** on and the hungry customers start **trickling in**, anxious for a taste of the local **delicacies** that give the island its reputation as one of Asia's finest **culinary** capitals.

flicker 闪烁; 摇曳

trickling in 鱼贯而入

delicacies 美食

culinary 烹饪的; 厨房的

Neatly arranged pyramids of **plump** fish balls. Bowls **brimming** with tapioca balls bathed in lightly sweetened **syrup**. **Take a bite** of any of these dishes and you'll discover a unique texture. But how exactly do you describe that perfectly **calibrated** "mouth feel"? **Slippery? Chewy?** Globby? Not exactly the most **flattering** adjectives in the culinary world.

plump 丰满的

brimming 盈满的

syrup 糖浆; 果汁

take a bite 吃一口

Calibrate 矫正; 调整

slippery 光滑的

Chewy 难嚼的

flattering 奉承的; 谄媚的

Luckily, the Taiwanese have a word for this texture. Well, actually, it's not a word, it's a letter --- one that even non-Chinese speakers can pronounce. It's "Q".

"It's difficult to explain what Q means exactly," said Liu Yen-ling, a manager at Chun Shui Tang, a popular teahouse chain that claims to have invented tapioca milk tea in Taiwan.

"Basically it means **springy**, soft, **elastic**."

springy 有弹力的

elastic 有弹性的

Q texture is to Taiwanese what umami is to Japanese and al dente is to Italians --- that is, cherished and essential. The texture is found in both **savory** and sweet foods, and is most often

used to describe foods that contain some kind of **starch** like noodles, tapioca pearls and fish balls.  
If something is really chewy or extra Q, then it could be called QQ.

savory 美味的

starch 淀粉

Among Taiwanese, the **appreciation** for Q texture starts at a young age. Asked why Q texture was so **appealing to** Taiwanese, Lu Wei-Chen, the owner of the stand, smiled and said, "It is simple. When you eat it, you will be in a good mood."

appreciation 欣赏；感谢

appeal to 对...有吸引力