

# 2020 China Knowledge Bowl Study Guide

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## SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR THE CHINA KNOWLEDGE BOWL

### I. Sample questions for the written test:

Based on pictures below, answer question 1 and 2.

(a)



Kung Pao Chicken

(b)



Sichuan Hot Pot

(c)



Steamed Fish Head with  
Chopped Chili sauce

(d)



Dongpo Pork

1. Which of the dishes above is typically NOT spicy?
  - A. Kung Pao Chicken
  - B. Sichuan Hot Pot
  - C. Steam Fish Head with Chopped Chili Sauce
  - D. Dongpo Pork
2. Which of the dishes above is a typical dish in Hunan Cuisine?
  - A. Kung Pao Chicken
  - B. Sichuan Hot Pot
  - C. Steam Fish Head with Chopped Chili Sauce
  - D. Dongpo Pork
3. Which of the following statements about the imperial China was correct?
  - A. The first imperial dynasty in China was the Han dynasty.
  - B. As an empire mainly based its power along the inner borders, Chinese rulers never dared to cross the seas and explore the world beyond.
  - C. The non-Han people were always ruled and treated as secondary citizens by the Han people throughout the history of China.
  - D. As an empire, the emperors of China requested submission from rulers of the neighboring countries.
4. Which of the following features is not a part of Confucius's idea about a noble man?
  - A. Who comes from a noble family.
  - B. Who possess inner integrity.
  - C. Who is conscientious toward others.
  - D. Who loves following one's human nature.

(Answers: 1. D; 2. C; 3. D; 4. A)

## II. Sample questions for the oral competition

1. Which one of the following Chinese holidays is celebrated in the 8th month of the lunar calendar?
  - A. Mid-Autumn festival
  - B. Lantern Festival
  - C. Dragon Boat festival
  - D. Chinese New Year
2. Which of the following tradition does NOT belong to the Dragon Boat festival?
  - A. Dragon boat race
  - B. Eating rice dumplings
  - C. Guess riddles on lanterns
  - D. Carrying fragrant bags
3. When will Chinese people put red Spring Couplets on the door of their houses?
  - A. During a funeral
  - B. On the fifth day of the first month of the year
  - C. On the New Year's eve
  - D. At the Spring Equinox
4. The National Party Congress of China is a meeting among 2000+ members of China's Community Party, held:
  - A. Every other year
  - B. Every 5 years
  - C. Every year
  - D. Every 10 years
5. President Donald Trump and Xi Jinping met twice in 2017, the second of which was held in Beijing. Trump's foreign policy goals did not include:
  - A. rolling out the administration's vision for a "free and open Indo-Pacific region."
  - B. strengthening US-led efforts to deter and isolate North Korea and its growing nuclear threat.
  - C. Commencing discussions of environmental sustainability and impacts from global warming.
  - D. laying the foundation for new bilateral trade relationships that reduce the US trade deficit.

(Answers: 1. A; 2. C; 3. C; 4. B; 5. C)

## **Great Leaders in Chinese History**

### **1. Yu the Great Harnesses 大禹治水, and the First Dyanasty Is Founded**

Yu the Great was the chieftain of the legendary Xiahou 夏后 clan. He was originally called Yu or Xiayu. According to legend, the Yellow River flooded during the reign of the reign of Emperor Yao, and the people were forced to abandon their villages, and go to live in trees or on mountaintops. The flood brought great misery to the people. Emperor Yao 尧, the chieftain of the Yan-Huang 炎黄 tribal alliance, appointed Gun 鲧 to harness the flood. Gun built dikes to keep back the water but failed. Shun 舜, who succeeded Yao, killed Gun, and appointed Gun's son Yu to continue with the flood-harnessing work.

Yu adopted the dredging method to lead the flood waters to flow along river courses to the sea. Yu worked very hard. It was said that during the 13 years he spent taming the floods, he passed his home three times, but did not enter until his task was completed. As a result of his successful efforts, the people bestowed on him the title "Yu the Great," and Shun chose Yu as the successor, with the approval of the tribal chieftains.

Following the taming of the floods, vegetation and wild beasts grew rampant, threatening the survival of the people. Yu taught his subjects the art of agriculture, and thus how to dominate the land and feed themselves in a regular and organized way. He also repelled invasion by the Miao tribe and consolidated the Huaxia 华夏 people's supremacy in the Central Plains.

Around 2070 BC, marked by the ascension of Yu to the throne, the legendary first dynasty of Chinese history **Xia (2070 BC? -- 1600 BC?)** began. After Yu's death, his son Qi 启 succeeded to the throne. Crushing an attempt to overthrow him by the Youhu clan, Qi established the system of hereditary succession, which means passing the throne to his descendants, instead of choosing a capable person from the tribes as what happened to the succession from Yao to Shun and then to Yu.

The Xia Dynasty lasted over 400 years. Its last King, Jie 桀, vilified in the ancient records as a tyrant, was overthrown by the leader of the kingdom of Shang 商 on the lower reaches of the Yellow River around 1600 BC.

### **2. King Wu of Zhou, Attacking King Zhou of Shang 武王伐纣**

The last monarch of the **Shang Dynasty (1600BC? -- 1046 BC)**, King Zhou 纣, is said to have been a cruel despot who neglected state affairs and abandoned himself to sensuous pleasures.

In the meantime, a vassal kingdom of the Shang Dynasty called Zhou 周 was growing powerful in the Weishui River valley. The king of Zhou, named Wen 文, was a capable leader who valued agriculture and made good use of talented people.

Assisted by his wise prime minister, Lü Shang 吕尚 (also known as Jiang Ziya), King Wen made his realm rich and powerful.

In the mid-11th century BC, King Wen died, and his son came to the throne as King Wu. The new ruler, assisted by Lü Shang and his own uncle Duke Zhou, led an alliance of tribes against the tottering Shang Dynasty, and toppled King Zhou and the Battle of Muye 牧野 (in today's Henan Province). The victory was aided by a revolt of the Shang army, which consisted mostly of conscripted slaves. King Zhou burnt himself to death, and his throne was taken by King Wu. King Wu founded the **Zhou Dynasty ((1045 BC-256BC))** in 1046 BC and establish its capital in Hao 镐 (southwest of today's Xi'an, Shaanxi Province). This era, until the capital was moved eastward to Luoyang in 770 BC, is known as the **Western Zhou Dynasty (1045-771 BC)**.

### **3. The Five Hegemons of the Spring and Autumn Period 春秋五霸**

In the early **Spring and Autumn period (770-476 BC)** the Zhou kingdom was divided into over 100 vassal states, all squabbling over land and population, Strong states annexed weak ones and contended for hegemony over all the others. During that period, Duke Huan of Qi, Duke Xiang of Song, Duke Wen of Jin, Duke Mu of Qin, and King Zhuang of Chu became the hegemon in succession and were called the “the Five Hegemons of the Spring and Autumn period.” Another saying identifies the “Five Hegemons” as Duke Huan of Qi, Duke Wen of Jin, King Zhuang of Chu, King Helu of Wu and Kong Goujian of Yue.

Qi was a rich state in what is now Shandong province. With the aid of able statesman Guan Zhong 管仲, Duke Huan of Qi carried out a series of political and economic reforms, which helped the state to flourish and greatly enhanced its military power. In 651 BC, Duke Huan convened a meeting of the rulers of all the states, at which envoys from the Son of Heaven of Zhou (the son of Heaven was the titular sovereign and had little real power) were present. A treaty of alliance was concluded, and the period of Qi hegemony commenced.

In 632 BC the state of Jin defeated the state of Chu in a great war and became the dominant state among the Central States. However, the fight for hegemony went on between the two states for 100 years, until King Zhuang of Chu smashed the Jin army in a great war and made himself the hegemon. In the meantime, Duke Mu of Qin was expanding his territory to the west, becoming a hegemony in the West. The state of Yue, located on the lower reaches of the Yangtze River, finally absorbed its long-time rival state of Wu. Gou Jian, King of Yue, led his army north, and made himself the last hegemony of the Spring and Autumn period.

### **4. The First Emperor of Qin 秦始皇**

It was not until 770 BC that the State of Qin came into existence as one of the vassal states in western China. Later, it emerged as one of the seven most powerful

states in the **Warring States Period (475 BCE-221 BCE)**. King Ying Zheng 嬴政 (259-210 BCE), the future First Emperor of Qin, embarked on a campaign of expansion. In the duration of only ten years, from 230 BC, Qin annexed Han, Zhao, Wei, Chu, Yan and Qi one after another, and united the whole China in 221 BC. Ying Zheng gave himself the title “The First Emperor,” establishing imperial system in China.

The first emperor enacted a sweeping series of reforms to consolidate his rule. The government was presided over by a prime minister, the Yushi dafu supervised the bureaucracy, and the Taiwei was Commander-in-Chief of the army. They were all appointed by the emperor himself. The whole country was divided into 36 prefectures (later increases to more than 40), which were further divided into counties. The magistrates of the prefectures and counties were directly appointed by the emperor.

In the Warring States period, measurements differed from state to state. The First Emperor set fixed standards for length, volume, and weight, which propelled the development of the economy. The Qin Dynasty also issued a uniform currency. Round coins with a square hole in the center were used all over China and set the patterns for the coins of later dynasties.

Of great significance for the development of communication and culture was the standardization of Chinese characters. The first reform of the characters resulted in the seal script (*zhuan* 篆). Then, the official script (*lishu* 隶书), a simplified version of the seal script, was devised. Today’s regular script (*kaishu* 楷书) developed from the official script. In 213 BC, the first Emperor’s prime minister, Li Si 李斯, had all books, except for those on medicine and agriculture, burned, in order to strengthen the regime’s ideological control of the people. To further guard against dissent, the emperor had 460 Confucian scholars buried alive.

To curb the incessant invasion of the Hun (Xiongnu) nomads in the north, the Qin Dynasty set about building the Great Wall by linking up already existent defensive walls that had been built by various states. In the south, the First Emperor subdued the Yue people. The first Emperor thus established the first united multi-ethnic empire on Chinese soil.

## **5. Liu Bang 刘邦 and Xiang Yu 项羽**

To the end of the Qin Dynasty, there were uprisings among labors and peasants led by leaders Chen Sheng 陈胜 and Wu Guang 吴广. After their uprising failed, Liu Bang and Xiang Yu continued to lead peasants against the Qin Dynasty. In 207 BC, Xiang Yu with a small force defeated the main body of the Qin army. At the same time, Liu Bang’s peasant pressed on toward the capital of Qin and forced the abdication of the second Qin emperor. Xiang Yu then proclaimed himself King of Western Chu, and made Liu Bang King of Han.

From 206 BC, Xiang Yu and Liu Bang fought with each other for rule of the empire for nearly four years. At the beginning of the war, Xiang Yu had an army of

400,000, whereas Liu Bang's force was in the size of 100,000. But Liu Bang won the support of the commoners by abolishing the draconian laws and decrees of the Qin dynasty, and enforcing strict discipline on his troops. In addition, he had the assistance of capable officials. Occupying the rich and fertile central Shaanxi plain, the Han army led by Liu Bang gradually grew stronger. Xiang Yu, in contrast, was arrogant, and his army was undisciplined. Wherever they went they lost the support of the people.

In 202 BC, the Han army besieged the Chu army in Gaixia 垓下 (in today's Anhui province). Xiang Yu escaped the encirclement with a small force, but he was trapped at the Wujiang 乌江 river and committed suicide. Liu Bang then established the **Han Dynasty (206BC-220AD)**, with Chang'an (in the northwest of today's Xi'an) as the capital. Spanning over four centuries, the Han dynasty is considered a golden age in Chinese history. To this day, China's majority ethnic group refers to themselves as the "Han Chinese" and the Chinese script is referred to as "Han characters".

## **6. Emperor Wu of the Han 汉武帝**

Reigned from 140 BC to 87 BC, Liu Che 刘彻 was known as the Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty. This half century was a period in which Chinese civilization flourished.

Soon after the founded the Han dynasty, Liu Bang granted territories in strategic areas of the country to nobles of his clan, with the title "king." The kings had their own armies, levied their own taxes, issued currency, and appointed and removed officials within their own jurisdictions.

When Emperor Wu ascended to the throne, fearing that the kings were too powerful, he instituted a system whereby the descendants of the kings inherited parts of the kingdoms as marquisates. Thus, the kingdom quickly became divided into smaller and weaker territories, and then came under the direct control of the imperial order. Later, Emperor Wu went even further, deprived many nobles of their titles, and strengthening the central rules.

Emperor Wu also adopted Dong Zhongshu's 董仲舒 ideas of making Confucianism which was his own interpretation of Classics as the state ideology and suppressing all the other schools in the "Hundred School of Thought." He argued this would unify people's minds, which in turn would consolidate political unity.

## **7. Taizong of Tang 唐太宗, The Benign Administration of the Zhengguan Reign Period**

The reign period of the second emperor of the Tang Dynasty (618-907 AD), Emperor Taizong, was known as Zhengguan (627-649AD). Drawing lessons from the downfall of the Sui Dynasty (581-618 AD), which lasted for a very short period of



time, Emperor Taizong of Tang carried out many enlightened policies and measures beneficial to the country and the people, which consolidated the state power of the Tang Dynasty, restored the social stability and boosted the economy. Therefore, Emperor Taizong of Tang was praised in history for the “Benign Administration of the Zhengguan Reign Period.”

Emperor Taizong knew that a well-ordered administration needed capable people and a wide range of expert opinions. So he made good use of capable people no matter what their background were. He once said that,

*Using a bronze mirror, one could tidy one's clothes; using history as a mirror, one could know the way of governing a country; using people as a mirror, one could tell right from wrong.*

Emperor Taizong implemented many measures that won the support of people, such as merging counties and prefectures to reduce expenditure, letting peasants own a certain amount of land; and reducing the burden of corvee labor to ensure that peasants had time to work on their lands. Citing an ancient saying, Emperor Taizong said that,

*The emperor was like a boat and the people were like water; water could carry the boat, but it could also capsize it.*

Emperor Taizong won the support of all minority peoples by adopting relatively enlightened policies toward them. The ethnic groups in the north call him “Great Khan.” The emperor sent princes Wencheng 文成 to the king of Tubo in Tibet, which made the relations between the Han and Tibetan peoples closer and contributed to the stability of China as multi-ethnic country.

## **8. Wu Zetian 武则天, China's First Female Monarch**

Wu Zetian (624-705AD) was an outstanding stateswoman in Chinese history.

At the age of 14, she was taken into imperial palace by Emperor Taizong as a concubine. After Emperor Taizong died, she was sent to a temple, and became a nun. Emperor Gaozong, son of Emperor Taizong, was fond of Wu Zetian when he was crown prince. Two years after he succeeded to the throne, he had Wu Zetian brought back to the imperial palace. Then he demoted his consort and made Wu Zetian the empress.

Wu Zetian soon became involved in affairs of state and palace intrigue, including getting rid of officials who opposed her. Gaozong, not in good health, often let her handle his duties for him. Emperor Gaozong and Wu Zetian were called the “Two Saints” by the people, which meant they had two rulers.

When Emperor Gaozong died in 683, Wu Zetian administered the country as the Empress Dowager. In 690, Wu Zetian changed the name of the dynasty to Zhou and became empress herself. She carried on the policy of developing production initiated



by Emperor Taizong. She also promoted many talented people in defiance of protocol. She was a devout Buddhist and sponsored the construction of many temples.

Wu Zetian handed over power to her son before she died, and the country returned to be Tang Dynasty.

### **9. First Emperor of Song, Relieving the Generals of the Commands at a Feast**

After the downfall of the Tang Dynasty, China entered a chaotic period of the **Five Dynasty and Ten Kingdoms (907–979)**. In the Latter Zhou Dynasty (951-960AD), Emperor Shizong let Zhao Kuangyin 赵匡胤 control the military leadership. After Emperor Shizong died, his young son succeeded to the throne. Taking this chance, Zhao Kuangyin seized the imperial power and established the Song Dynasty (960–1279) and he was posthumously titled Taizu of Song recognizing his status as the first emperor.

Not long after Zhao Kuangyin came to the throne, two local military governors revolted against the central authority. It took Zhao Kuangyin a lot of energy to suppress the revolt, which upset him very much. Once he talked with Zhao Pu 赵普 who had been with him for many years. He said that since the downfall of the Tang Dynasty there had been many dynasties that were established and destroyed in wars. People had died numerously. What was the reason of all these? Zhao Pu said the reason was very simple. The country would restore to peace as soon as military power returned to the overall control of the central authority. Zhao Kuangyin agreed to this opinion, and it was by controlling the military leadership that he had seized the imperial power. In order to prevent the same thing from happening from local authorities again, Zhao Kuangyin decided to take back military power from local authorities.

In an Autumn evening in 961, Zhao Kuangyin held a banquet in the imperial palace and invited senior generals. The emperor held up the cup and said, “But for your help, I wouldn’t be what I’m like nowadays. But you don’t know it’s very difficult to be an emperor. In fact, it’s happier to be a local military governor than to be an emperor.” Those senior generals were very surprised and asked why. The emperor said, “It’s quite obvious. Who does not want to be emperor?” The generals got the underlying meaning of his words and became flustered. They knelt on the ground hurriedly and said, “We won’t betray you at any time.” The Emperor shook his head and said, “I have confidence in all of you. But I’m afraid your subordinates may be ambitious and hanker after riches and honors. When they wrap the yellow gown (*huangpao*, a symbol for emperor) around you and support you to be the emperor, can you refuse them?” The generals were so frightened that their faces covered with beads of perspiration. The next day they asked to resign and the emperor agreed immediately. He gave them a large amount of money and took back their military power. This was called “relieving the generals of their commands at a feast” in history.

### **10. Zhu Yuanzhuang 朱元璋, the First Emperor of the Ming**

A combination of incompetent rulers and natural disasters led to peasant uprisings that overthrew the **Yuan Dynasty (1279-1368)**. Zhu Yuanzhang (1328-1398) was a leader of one of these peasant uprisings. He was born into a poor peasant's family. Zhu Yuanzhang defeated not only the Yuan armies sent against him but also rival peasant rebel forces. In 1368, Zhu Yuanzhang proclaimed himself emperor, establishing **the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644)** in Nanjing. Zhu Yuanzhang was posthumously called Emperor Taizu of Ming, identifying his status as the first emperor of the dynasty. In the fall of the same year, the Ming army took the capital of the Yuan Empire, putting an end to the rule of the Mongols. However, it took Zhu Yuanzhang nearly 20 more years to consolidate his hold over the whole country.

Taizu's first concern was to restore agricultural production, which had been severely disrupted during the wars. He encouraged peasants who had fled from their homes during the war to return to their fields and open up new land. He advocated the planting of cash crops such as cotton, mulberries and hemp, offering tax exemptions as an incentive. Taizu also extended preferential treatment toward craftsmen. All these measures provided advantageous conditions for the further overall development of the society, economy and culture nationwide.

Taizu abolished the position of prime minister and set up six offices known as "boards" (*bu* 部) in the central government, which were directly responsible to the emperor. This method strengthened the centralization of authority. At the same time, the emperor made a thorough overhaul of the existing laws, increasing the penalties for offenders.

	<b>Ancient Period</b>	c. 1,700,000 years ago-1840 AD
	Paleolithic Period	c. 1, 700,000 years ago-c.10,000 years ago
	Neolithic Period	c.10,000 years ago-4,000 years ago
	Xia Dynasty	c. 21st century BC-16th century BC
夏	Shang Dynasty	c. 16th century BC-11th century BC
商	Western Zhou Dynasty	c. 11th century BC-771 BC
周	Spring and Autumn Period	770 BC-476 BC
	Warring States Period	475 BC-221 BC
	Qin Dynasty	221 BC-206 BC
	Han Dynasty	206 BC-220 AD
	(Western Han and Eastern Han)	
	Three Kingdoms (Wei, Shu, Wu)	220-280 AD
	Jin Dynasty	265-420 AD
	(Western Jin and Eastern Jin)	
	Southern and Northern Dynasties	420-589 AD
	Sui Dynasty	581-618 AD
	Tang Dynasty	618-907 AD
	Five Dynasties	907-960 AD
	Liao Dynasty	907-1125 AD
	Song Dynasty	960-1279 AD
	(Northern Song and Southern Song)	
	Western Xia Dynasty	1038-1227 AD
	Jin Dynasty	1115-1234 AD
	Yuan Dynasty	1271-1368 AD
	Ming Dynasty	1368-1644 AD
	Qing Dynasty	1644-1840 AD
	(before the Opium War of 1840)	
	<b>Modern Period</b>	1840-1949 AD
	Qing Dynasty	1840-1911 AD
	(after the Opium War of 1840)	
	Republic of China	1912-1949 AD
	<b>Contemporary Period</b>	1949 AD-
	People's Republic of China	1949 AD-

## A Brief Chronology of Chinese History

## Chinese Cuisine

Chinese cuisine is an important part of [Chinese culture](#), which includes cuisine originating from the diverse regions of [China](#), as well as from Chinese people in other parts of the world. Because of the [Chinese diaspora](#) and historical power of the country, Chinese cuisine has influenced many other cuisines in [Asia](#), with modifications made to cater to local palates. Chinese food staples such as [rice](#), [soy sauce](#), [noodles](#), [tea](#), and [tofu](#), and utensils such as [chopsticks](#) and the [wok](#), can now be found worldwide.

The preference for [seasoning](#) and [cooking techniques](#) of Chinese provinces depend on differences in [historical background](#) and [ethnic groups](#). Geographic features including mountains, rivers, forests and deserts also have a strong effect on the local available ingredients, considering that the climate of China varies from [tropical](#) in the south to [subarctic](#) in the northeast. [Imperial, royal and noble preference](#) also plays a role in the change of Chinese cuisines. Because of imperial expansion and trading, ingredients and cooking techniques from other cultures are integrated into Chinese cuisines over time.

Color, aroma and taste are the three traditional aspects used to describe Chinese food, as well as the meaning, appearance and nutrition of the food. Cooking should be appraised with respect to the ingredients used, knifework, cooking time and seasoning.

### **History**

Chinese society greatly valued [gastronomy \(the art of preparing food\)](#), and developed an extensive study of the subject based on its [traditional medical beliefs](#). Chinese culture initially centered around the [North China Plain](#) (or Zhongyuan 中原).



The first domesticated crops seem to have been the [foxtail](#) and [broomcorn](#) varieties of [millet](#), while [rice](#) was cultivated in the south. By 2000 BC, wheat had arrived from western Asia. These grains were typically served as warm [noodle](#) soups instead of baked into bread as in Europe. Nobles hunted various wild game and consumed [mutton](#), pork and [dog](#) as these animals were domesticated. Grain was stored against famine and flood and meat was preserved with salt, vinegar, curing, and fermenting. The flavor of the meat was enhanced by cooking it in animal fats though this practice was mostly restricted to the wealthy.

By the time of [Confucius](#) in the [late Zhou](#), gastronomy had become a high art. Confucius discussed the principles of dining: "The rice would never be too white, the meat would never be too finely cut... When it was not cooked right, man would not eat. When it was cooked bad, man would not eat. When the meat was not cut properly, man would not eat. When the food was not prepared with the right sauce, man would not eat. Although there are plenty of meats, they should not be cooked more than staple food. There is no limit for alcohol before a man gets drunk."



(食不厭精，膾不厭細。……失飪不食。……割不正，不食。不得其醬，不食。肉雖多，不使勝食氣。惟酒無量，不及亂。)

During [Shi Huangdi's](#) (秦始皇) [Qin dynasty](#), the empire expanded into the south. By the time of the [Han dynasty](#), the different regions and cuisines of China's people were linked by major [canals](#) and leading to a greater complexity in the different regional cuisines. Not only is food seen as giving "[qi](#)" 气, energy, but food is also about maintaining *yin* and *yang*. The philosophy behind it was rooted in the *I Ching* (易经) and [Chinese traditional medicine](#): food was judged for color, aroma, taste, and texture and a good meal was expected to balance the [Four Natures](#) ('hot', warm, cool, and 'cold') and the [Five Tastes](#) (pungent, sweet, sour, bitter, and salty). [Salt was used as a preservative](#) from early times, but in cooking it was added in the form of soy sauce, and not at the table. The predominance of [chopsticks](#) and spoons as eating utensils also necessitated that most food be prepared in bite-sized pieces or (as with fish) be so tender that it could be easily picked apart.

During the Han dynasty, the Chinese developed methods of food preservation for military rations during campaigns such as drying meat into [jerky](#) and cooking, roasting, and drying grain. Chinese legends claim that the roasted, flat bread [shaobing](#) (烧饼) was brought back from the [Xiyu](#) (西域 the Western Regions, a name for [Central Asia](#)) by the Han dynasty General [Ban Chao](#) (班超), and that it was originally known as *hubing* (胡餅, lit. "barbarian bread"). The *shaobing* is believed to be descended from the *hubing*. [Shaobing](#) is believed to be related to the Persian [nan](#) and Central Asian [nan](#), as well as the Middle Eastern [pita](#). Foreign westerners made and sold sesame cakes in China during the Tang dynasty.



Typical *shaobing*. The round *shaobing* on the right are sweet and filled with sugar and the long *shaobing* on the left are savory and salted.

During the [Southern and Northern Dynasties](#) non-Han people like the [Xianbei](#) (鮮卑) of [Northern Wei](#) introduced their cuisine to northern China, and these influences continued up to the [Tang dynasty](#), popularizing meat like mutton and dairy products like goat milk, and yogurts among even Han people. It was during the Song dynasty that [Han Chinese](#) developed an aversion to dairy products and abandoned the dairy foods introduced earlier.

The great migration of Chinese people south during the invasions preceding and during the [Song dynasty](#) increased the relative importance of [southern Chinese](#) staples such as rice and [congee](#). [Su Dongpo](#) (苏东坡) has improved the red braised pork as [Dongpo pork](#).

The Yuan and Qing dynasties introduced Mongolian and Manchu cuisine, warm northern dishes that popularized hot pot cooking. During the Yuan dynasty many Muslim communities emerged in China, who practiced a porkless cuisine now preserved by Hui (回) restaurants throughout the country. Yunnan (云南) cuisine is unique in China for its cheeses like Rubing (乳饼) and Rushan



Fried *rubing* (乳饼) goat's cheese in Kunming (昆明), Yunnan (云南), China

cheese made by the Bai people (白族), and its yogurt, the yogurt may have been due to a combination of Mongolian influence during the Yuan dynasty, the Central Asian settlement in Yunnan, and the proximity and influence of India and Tibet on Yunnan.

As part of the last leg of the [Columbian Exchange](#), Spanish and Portuguese traders began introducing foods from the New World to China through the port cities of [Canton](#) and [Macau](#). Mexican [chili peppers](#) became essential ingredients in [Sichuan cuisine](#) and calorically-dense potatoes and corn became staple foods across the northern plains.

During the Qing Dynasty, Chinese gastronomes focused upon a primary goal of extracting the maximum flavor of each ingredient. However, the fashions of cuisine at the time were quite varied and in some cases were flamboyantly ostentatious, especially when the display served also a formal ceremonial purpose, as in the case of the [Manchu Han Imperial Feast \(满汉全席\)](#) which consisted of at least 108 unique dishes from the Manchu and Han Chinese culture, and it is only reserved and intended for the emperors. The meal was held for three whole days, across six banquets.



[Manchu Han Imperial Feast](#), simulated in the Tao Heung Museum in Hong Kong.

As the pace of life increases in modern China, fast food like [fried noodles](#), [fried rice](#) and [gaifan](#) (盖饭 dish over rice) become more and more popular.

## The Eight Great Cuisines of China

There are many styles of cooking in China, but Chinese chefs have identified eight culinary traditions as the best. These have set the course of how Chinese cook food, and are looked to as models. Each of these schools has a distinct style and different strengths.



### 1. Cantonese 广东 Cuisine

**Features: mild, fresh and natural taste; widely use of materials and rich cooking methods**

**Sample of Popular Dishes:**



Braised Abalone



White Cut Chicken



Char Siu  
(Barbecue Pork)



Oyster steamed  
with Ginger

Cantonese or Yue (粤) cuisine originates from Guangdong Province (SE China around Hong Kong), and it is the **most widely served style of Chinese cuisine** in the world. This is because most of the Chinese who immigrated and set up restaurants overseas were from Guangdong (广东). Nevertheless, what's served abroad now has departed from authentic Yue cuisine.

The **wide variety of foodstuffs** used to make Cantonese dishes often surprises foreigners. Though the saying "Cantonese eats everything with four legs except tables and everything that flies except airplanes," might be an exaggeration, Cantonese cuisine incorporates almost all edible meats, including offal, chicken feet, duck's tongue, frog legs, snakes and snails. However, lamb and goat are less commonly used than in the cuisines of northern or western China. Many cooking methods are used, with steaming and stir frying being the most favored due to their convenience and rapidity. Other techniques include [shallow frying](#), [double steaming](#), [braising](#) and [deep frying](#).

An authentic Cantonese chef's goal is to **preserve the food's original flavor**. Unlike other Chinese styles of cooking such as [Sichuan](#) where the cook buries the food in a lot of spices and oil, a Cantonese chef aims to bring out or highlight the original flavor of the vegetable, meat, or fruit. For many traditional Cantonese cooks, the flavors of a dish should be well balanced and not greasy. Apart from that, spices should be used in modest amounts to avoid overwhelming the flavors of the primary ingredients, and these ingredients in turn should be at the peak of their freshness and quality.

There is no widespread use of fresh herbs in Cantonese cooking, although garlic is heavily used in some dishes, especially those in which internal organs, such as entrails, may emit unpleasant odors. [Ginger](#), [chili peppers](#), [five-spice powder](#), powdered [black pepper](#), [star anise](#) and a few other spices are also used, but often sparingly. The result of this cooking technique is to produce food that might seem **bland or insipid** to foreigners who are used to the overseas style of Chinese food where a lot more sugar and spice is used.

There is also another important style of Cantonese dishes that is generally called "**Dim Sum**". It is prepared as small bite-size portions of



Dim sum served in  
traditional bamboo-  
basket containers



food served in small steamer baskets or on a small plate. Dim sum dishes are usually served with tea and together form a [full tea brunch](#). Due to the Cantonese tradition of enjoying tea with this cuisine, [yum cha](#) (饮茶), which means "drink tea" in Cantonese, is also synonymous with dim sum. Dim sum traditionally is fully cooked and ready-to-serve. In some Cantonese teahouses, carts with dim sum are pushed around in the restaurant. It is a common practice for [Dim sum](#) restaurants to stop serving [bamboo](#)-basket dishes after the [yum cha](#) period (equivalent to [afternoon tea](#)) and begin offering an entirely different menu in the evening which might be standard of the region. Some might be customized for marriage or banquet.

A traditional dim sum [brunch](#) includes various types of steamed buns such as [chashaobao](#) (a steamed bun filled with barbecue pork), [rice](#) or [wheat dumplings](#) and [rice noodle rolls](#), which contain a range of [ingredients](#), including [beef](#), chicken, pork, [prawns](#), and [vegetarian](#) options. Many dim sum restaurants also offer plates of steamed green vegetables, roasted meats, [congee](#) and other soups. Dessert dim sum is also available and many places offer the customary [egg tart](#). Dim sum is usually eaten as breakfast or brunch.



Dim sum restaurant  
in Hong Kong

Dim sum can be cooked by [steaming](#) or [frying](#), among other methods. The serving sizes are usually small and normally served as three or four pieces in one dish. It is customary to order family style, sharing dishes among all members of the dining party. Because of the small portions, people can try a wide variety of food.

## 2. Sichuan 四川 Cuisine

**Features: hot and spicy, mouth-numbing; using a lot of pepper, chili, garlic, and Pixian bean chili paste.**

**Samples of the popular dishes:**



Sichuan Hot Pot



Kung Pao Chicken



Ma Po Tofu



Stir Fried Green Beans

Sichuan is colloquially known as the "heavenly country" due to its abundance of food and natural resources. One ancient Chinese account declared that the "people of Sichuan uphold good flavor, and they are fond of hot and spicy taste." Most Sichuan dishes are spicy, although a typical meal includes non-spicy dishes to cool the palate. Sichuan cuisine is composed of seven basic flavors: sour, pungent, hot, sweet, bitter, aromatic and salty. Sichuan province is the birthplace of many dishes that are well-received globally. Sichuan food, originated from the Southwestern region of China, is the most widely served cuisine in China itself.

Abundant rice and vegetables are produced from the fertile Sichuan Basin, whereas a wide variety of herbs, mushrooms and other fungi prosper in the highland regions. Pork is overwhelmingly the most common type of meat consumed. Beef is somewhat more common in Sichuan cuisine than it is in other Chinese cuisines, perhaps due to the prevalence of oxen in the region. Sichuan cuisine also uses various [bovine](#) and [porcine](#) organs as ingredients, such as intestine, arteries, head, tongue, skin and liver, in addition to other commonly used portions of the meat. [Rabbit meat](#) is also much more popular in Sichuan than elsewhere in China. It is estimated that the Sichuan Basin and Chongqing area are responsible for about 70 percent of China's total rabbit meat consumption. Yoghurt, which probably spread from India through Tibet in medieval times, is consumed among the [Han Chinese](#). This is an unusual custom in other parts of the country. The salt produced from Sichuan [salt springs and wells](#), unlike sea salt, does not contain iodine, which led to goiter problems before the 20th century.

Sichuan cuisine often contains food preserved through [pickling](#), [salting](#) and [drying](#). Preserved dishes are generally served as spicy dishes with heavy application of chili oil.

The most unique and important spice in Sichuan cuisine is the [Sichuan pepper](#) (花椒; *huājiāo*; 'flower pepper'). Sichuan peppercorn has an intense fragrant, citrus-like flavor and produces a "tingly-numbing" (麻; *má*) sensation in the mouth. Other commonly used spices in Sichuan cuisine are [garlic](#), [chili peppers](#), [ginger](#) and [star anise](#).

[Broad bean chili paste](#) (豆瓣酱; 豆瓣醬; *dòubànjiàng*) is one of the most important seasonings. It is an essential component to famous dishes such as Mapo tofu and double-cooked pork slices (回锅肉). Sichuan cuisine is the origin of several prominent sauces/flavors widely used in modern [Chinese cuisine](#), including:

[Yuxiang](#) (魚香)

[Mala](#) (麻辣)

[Guaiwei](#) (怪味)

Common preparation techniques in Sichuan cuisine include [stir frying](#), [steaming](#) and [braising](#), but a complete list would include more than 20 distinct techniques.

### 3. Jiangsu 江苏 Cuisine

**Features:** umami, mild, slightly sweet, and natural; exquisite cuttings and precise control of heat; delicate dish appearance

Samples of the popular dishes:



Sweet &amp; Sour Mandarin Fish

Lotus with sweet rice filling

Braised Meat Balls

Chinese carp soup &  
Xiaolongpao

Jiangsu cuisine,

also known as Su cuisine, is one of the lesser known of the Eight Great Cuisines of China among foreigners. Jiangsu Province has the highest per capita income. Probably for this reason, the food is more gourmet style. It is **very refined and presented colorfully and artistically**.

In Qin Dynasty and [Han Dynasty](#) (202 BC - 220 AD), Yangzhou in Jiangsu became an administrative region and the economy boomed and many exquisite and delicious food like Braised Meat Balls were created. In [Sui Dynasty](#) (581 - 618 AD), some northern cooking methods spread to Yangzhou since the Emperor of Sui built the Grand Canal which connected the North and South of China thus promoted the development of distinctive cooking techniques in the South. In [Tang Dynasty](#) (618 - 907 AD), Yangzhou had become the economic center of east China and Persia (the old name of Iran) and Arabic businessmen brought Muslim flavors and cooking methods to Jiangsu cuisine dishes. In [Song Dynasty](#) (960 - 1279 AD), Jiangsu food became sweeter. In later years, the communication between North and South helped improve the cooking skills of Jiangsu cuisine. Now it is known for its pleasing appearance and umami, light, mild, fresh and natural taste.

In general, Jiangsu cuisine's texture is characterized as soft, but not to the point of mushy or falling apart. In addition, Jiangsu cuisine also focuses on heating temperature. For example, the meat tastes quite soft but would not separate from the bone when picked up. As the style of Jiangsu cuisine is typically practiced near the sea, fish is a very common ingredient in cooking. Jiangsu cuisine chefs also focus on the art of cutting. The food carvings and cuttings are extremely exquisite and changeable. Skillful Jiangsu chefs can even cut tofu 2cm wide into 30 slices, and the finished shredded tofu is like a single hair and can go through the needle eye. Other characteristics include the strict selection of ingredients according to the seasons, with emphasis on the matching color and shape of each dish and using soup to improve flavor. The municipality of [Shanghai](#) was formerly a part of Jiangsu thus the great deal of similarity between Jiangsu and Shanghai cuisine. Shanghai cuisine is sometimes classified as a part of Jiangsu cuisine.

The common cooking method typically is by the addition of sugar and soy sauce to many savory dishes often in the form of *hongshao* (红烧; *hóngshāo*; 'red braised'). This often results in a fragrant, caramelized flavor. Besides, the chefs are especially good at simmering, braising, and stewing.

#### 4. Zhejiang 浙江 Cuisine

**Features: light and fresh, crisp and tender; good at controlling fire heat; prefer yellow wine as special seasoning**

**Samples of the popular dishes:**



Braised West Lake Fish  
with Vinegar



Dongpo Pork



Shrimp Meat with  
Longjing Tea



West Lake Beef Soup

Zhejiang cuisine, also known as Zhe cuisine, is originated and popular in Zhejiang Province of China. Zhejiang is a beautiful place with rich products. It is saying: “there is a paradise in the sky; there are Suzhou and Hangzhou on the ground” (上有天堂 下有苏杭). Zhejiang Province is located on the East coast of China Sea, known as the land of fish and rice (鱼米之乡). The southwest of Zhejiang are hills with rich mountain delicacies. The eastern coastal fisheries are with abundant aquatic resources. There are more than 500 kinds of economic fish and shellfish products, with the total output value ranking first in the country. The products are rich in resources and unique in their characteristics.

Since Zhejiang geologically is in south of Jiangsu and bordered on Shanghai, their style is similar to each other. In comparison, Zhe cuisine is less elaborately prepared and focused more on serving food fresh. The food is often served raw or almost raw and is **fresh and crispy and seasonal** more like Japanese food. Most Zhejiang cuisine dishes taste fresh and light and maintain the original flavor of ingredients. Fresh seafood, river food and seasonal ingredients are widely used. Seafood and fishes are usually killed just before cooking to pursue the fresh and pure taste.

To make the dishes have a better taste, some seasonings are used in Zhejiang cuisine recipes, like shallots, ginger, garlics, vinegar, and Shaoxing yellow wine, which can achieve the effect of reducing unwanted smell and promoting the flavor. In particular, Shaoxing yellow wine, the specialty in Shaoxing, is a unique condiment of Zhejiang food, making it have a style of its own. The famous Zhejiang food Dongpo Pork is cooked with Shaoxing yellow wine instead of water.

To cook Zhejiang cuisine dishes, the ingredients are usually cut with adept slicing skills to have an appealing appearance. Among more than 30 common cooking techniques of Zhe cuisine, there are six most frequently used ones: stir-frying, deep-frying, quick-frying, steaming and braising.

Zhejiang cuisine is well-known for its rich cultural characteristics. Many dishes in Zhejiang cuisine are full of beautiful legends. In addition to Dongpo Pork, other dishes like “Braised West Lake Fish with Vinegar” (西湖醋鱼) and “Shrimp meat with Longjing tea” (龙井虾仁) have all been carefully cultivated by local people and gradually formed a unique quality and became a tribute to the cuisine since Qing dynasty. Almost all restaurants in Hangzhou (capital city of Zhejiang) serve these dishes in promoting local histories.

## 5. Fujian 福建 Cuisine

**Features: light, fresh, sweet and sour; special condiment red vinasse; woodland delicacies and sea food widely used for ingredients**

**Samples of the popular dishes:**



Broiled Shrimps with salt



Stir Fried Sea Clams



Oyster Nuggets



Buddha Jumps Over the Wall

Fujian cuisine, also known as Min (闽) cuisine, is one of the native Chinese cuisines derived from the native cooking style of [China's Fujian Province](#), most notably from the provincial capital, [Fuzhou](#). Fujian cuisine is known to be light but flavorful, soft, and tender, with particular emphasis on [umami](#) taste, known in Chinese cooking as *xianwei* (鲜味; *xiān wèi*), as well as retaining the original flavor of the main ingredients instead of masking them.

As there were more than one important harbors for international trade, Quanzhou in Fujian became the starting point of Maritime Silk Road in the Song Dynasty (960 - 1279 AD), Fujian food, absorbing the cooking techniques of other places, developed quickly. The overseas trade also introduced some new seasonings to Fujian dishes, like satay, mustard and curry, which became important condiments of Min cuisine later.

Fujian dishes use many diverse seafood and woodland delicacies, including a myriad variety of local fish, shellfish and turtles, or indigenous [edible mushrooms](#) and [bamboo shoots](#), provided by the coastal and mountainous regions of Fujian. The most commonly employed [cooking techniques](#) in the region's cuisine include [braising](#), stewing, steaming and boiling.

Fujian chefs also pay particular attention to the finesse of knife skills and cooking technique, which is used to enhance the flavor, aroma and texture of seafood and other foods. Strong emphasis is put on the making and utilizing of broth and soups. There are sayings in the region's cuisine: "One broth can be changed into numerous (ten) forms" (一汤十变) and "It is unacceptable for a meal to not have soup" (不汤不行).

As for the condiments, red vinasse, sugar and vinegar are the mostly used condiments in Fujian cuisine recipes. Red vinasse is the vinasse of rice wine or yellow wine fermented with red yeast, which is highly nutritive. The using of red vinasse is a unique feature of Fujian cuisine, making the dishes have a wine aroma and beautiful red color. Sugar is used to remove unwanted bad smell; vinegar is used to make food



have a refreshing taste. Thus, Fujian food receive a good reputation of sweet but not cloying, and light but not tasteless.

[Fermented fish sauce](#), known locally as "**shrimp oil**" (虾油), is also commonly used in the cuisine, along with [oyster](#), crab and shrimp. [Peanuts](#) (utilized for both savory dishes and desserts) are also prevalent, and can be boiled, fried, roasted, crushed, ground or even turned into a paste. Peanuts can be used as a garnish, feature in soups and even be added to braised or stir-fried dishes.

Fujian cuisine has had a profound impact on [Taiwanese cuisine](#) and on the [overseas Chinese](#) cuisines found in Southeast Asia as the majority of Taiwanese and Southeast Asian Chinese people have ancestral roots in Fujian province.

## 6. Hunan 湖南 Cuisine

**Features: spicy, hot, salty; preference for chili and fermented soya beans; dark dish color**

**Samples of the popular dishes:**



Tasty Lobster



Changsha Stinky Tofu



Steamed Fish Head with  
Chopped Chili sauce



Hunan Rice Noodle

Hunan cuisine's history is pretty long and had been quite rich and different. Hunan food was often cooked for different occasions, like those for birthday, wedding, funeral and promotion and had a wide influence across China. However, it is not until [Ming](#) (1368 - 1644 AD) and [Qing](#) (1644 - 1911 AD) dynasties, as the pepper was introduced into China, the spicy flavor of Hunan cuisine was confirmed.

Hunan cuisine dishes have a general flavor of spicy, in particular aromatic and spicy (*xiangla* 香辣) and sour and spicy (*suānlà* 酸辣), which are their well-known flavor. The raw materials are well matched, so that different tastes of ingredients influence each other to achieve a perfect flavor of a whole dish. These food items are usually cooked with more oil and appears to be dark comparing with other cuisines.

In Hunan cuisine recipes, the ingredients cover a wide range of products, from plants, to land animals and seafood. People there like to make pickles and preserved food with vegetables and meat in season, too; which are also widely used as ingredients.

**Hunan food is actually hotter than Sichuan food.** The Sichuanese use pepper corn that numbs your mouth so the food all starts tasting the same. Instead, the

Hunanese use vinegar with the pepper. It serves to stimulate the taste buds and make them tingle, so you can better perceive the wide range of flavors and the rich variety of ingredients and spices.

The numbing [Sichuan food](#) might give you a higher blood pressure/pulse rate so that you'll need to drink something cold or go out for a walk to cool down. Hunan food does the opposite. Vinegar lowers blood pressure and cholesterol levels too. So it is **good for those with high blood pressure**.

**Common saying:** 四川人不怕辣，湖南人辣不怕，贵州人怕不辣！ It means: "Sichuan people don't fear hot food, Hunan people don't fear any degree of spiciness at all, and Guizhou people fear to eat food that isn't spicy."

Perhaps the wet hot summers and chilly wet winters drive the people to eat sour hot foods. The Chinese think that **extra heat** (*yang*) of peppers and other hot spices balances out the excessive cold and wet (*yin*).

**Vinegar** also packs *yang*, and along with helping with digestion, you'll find that it helps cool your body on hot days. In traditional Chinese medicine, vinegar is used to help people be more comfortable in the heat of summer and stay healthy. It also kills parasites and bacteria that grow in hot weather.

Hunan people love chili very much, and most Hunan cuisine recipes include chili, either dried one or fresh one. They also invent a great variety of methods to cook chili with different flavors. For example, sour and spicy taste by fermenting chili in pickle jars; numb and spicy taste by cooking chili with Sichuan pepper and garlicks. Fermented soya beans, tastes a little bitter, is another important condiment in Hunan cuisine. Also, although noodles are cooked similarly to other northern Chinese cuisines, Henan cuisine is unique in that it uses [rice vermicelli](#) (*mifen* 米粉), which is mostly used in Southern Chinese and [Southeast Asian](#) cuisines.

## 7. Anhui 安徽 Cuisine

**Features:** salty and fresh, light, preserving the original flavor of ingredients; preference for hams; light cooking methods including braising, stewing and steaming

**Samples of the popular dishes:**







(徽帮菜), Anhuicai (安徽菜), and Huizhou fengwei (徽州风味).



Anhui (安徽) cuisine is also called Huibang cai



Stewed Bamboo  
Shoot with ham

Pickled (Stinky) Mandarin Fish

Li Hongzhang Stew or  
Chop Suey

Mao (Stinky) Tofu

### The Anhui cuisine

originated in Southern Song dynasty, it was a local specialty. Its unique geography and humanistic environment give Anhui cuisine unique taste. In fact, Anhui cuisine is not the most delicious or unique in all the Chinese cuisines. They are not as popular as [Sichuan Cuisine](#), [Hunan Cuisine](#), [Shandong Cuisine](#), or [Guangdong Cuisine](#) which has already spread all over the world. The reason why Anhui cuisine becomes one of the Chinese famous major cuisines because it played a very important role in the Chinese history.

**Huizhou merchants are one of the famous merchants' groups in the history of China.** Anhui located in the poor mountainous areas and cannot survive by farming in the old days. Huizhou merchants began to be active in the Song Dynasty, and their heyday was in the late Ming Dynasty and early Qing Dynasty. Huizhou merchants were almost everywhere and sold almost everything at that time. They were hard-working, diligent, and thrift, gradually grown from small businesses into large capitalists. The Ming and Qing Dynasties was a time when China's commodity economy was more developed. Capitalism had sprouted in the Ming and Qing dynasties. This was when Huizhou merchants peaked.

While Huizhou merchants were doing their businesses, they also brought their hometown flavor to almost every corner of China. Anhui cuisine became a famous major cuisine since then.

There are two sayings about how the Huizhou merchants helped the propagation and development of Anhui cuisine: The first is that at that time, the Huizhou merchants always talked about business, entertaining, or gathering with friends while put on a Huizhou style dinner to show their respect for the guests. The second is that Huizhou merchants were all over the country and kept their own tastes. So Anhui cuisine restaurants were all over the country in order to meet their requirements. From the late Ming Dynasty to the end of the Qianlong reign of the Qing Dynasty, Huizhou merchants had the No.1 strength among the top 10 business groups in China. Huizhou people had established thousands of Anhui cuisine restaurants across the country. There were more than 140 Anhui cuisine restaurants in Shanghai, which shows that the Huizhou merchants had a wide range of influence at that time.

**Anhui cuisine is mainly good at stew, braise, steam, and not focus on stir-fry or other cooking methods. Most dishes of Anhui cuisine are greasy and deep color.** Unlike Shandong cuisine, Anhui cuisine does not pay much attention to cooking methods or technique, but **heat**. Because Huizhou merchants were traveling all around China, in the old days, local produce could not be found

somewhere else easily. Anhui cuisine cooks had to choose raw materials from the local produce of where they went instead of their hometown foods. Due to the differences in the raw materials, chefs have to adjust heat very carefully in order to fully cook all the ingredients evenly. The diverse dishes use various fire control techniques which are the key factor in cooking accomplishments of the chefs, as well as the basic means by which the crisp, tender, fragrant and fresh characteristics of Anhui Cuisine are obtained. The skills of smooth frying, braising in light soup and fresh smoking are highly prized.

The Huizhou region is a mountainous area and is rich in wild fresh river fish and fowl. It has a mild climate and moderate rainfall and four distinct seasons as well as high-quality grains, oil, vegetables, and fruit. The mountainous areas of south Anhui and the Dabieshan (大别山) Mountains abound in tea, bamboo shoots, mushrooms, agarics, Chinese chestnut, yam, partridge, and soft-shelled turtle. Use local fresh ingredients make Anhui dishes full of local characteristics.

Anhui cuisine focuses on natural, healthy food. **Anhui cuisine has inherited the thought of traditional Chinese herbal medicine that food can also be medicine and sometimes emphasizes food as a kind of drug supplements.** This is a major feature of Anhui cuisine.

## 8. Shandong 山东 Cuisine

**Features: umami, salty, sweet and sour flavors; using much soup, scallion, ginger and garlic; good at cooking sea food**

**Samples of the popular dishes:**



Braised Intestines in Brown Souce



Braised Sea Cucumbers



Sweet and Sour Carp



De Zhou Chicken  
(whole chicken off bone)

Shandong cuisine, also known as Lucai (鲁菜 Lǔcài), originated in Shandong province, China, has a long history for about 2,500 years. Unlike [Sichuan cuisine](#) or [Hunan cuisine](#) focus on seasoning and flavor, Shandong cuisine is famous for its exquisite cutting technique and cooking method.

As early as the Spring and Autumn Period (770–476BC), Shandong dishes already started to show up prominently in the royal court. The main ingredients were cattle, sheep and pigs. They were also good at making poultry and seafood at that time. During the Spring and Autumn period, Shandong was a territory of the Qi and Lu states. Both states, with mountains and fertile plains, were economically and

culturally developed and had abundant aquatic products, grains, and sea salt. Some of the earliest known descriptions of Chinese culinary methods come from these states.

During the Han, Wei and Six Dynasties Periods (202BC-589), Shandong cuisine evolved rapidly. Famous roast duck, roast suckling pig, has been widely spread in this area at that time.

Shandong cuisine has gradually become the representative of northern Chinese cuisine. During Yuan, Ming, and Qing Dynasties (1271-1912), Shandong cuisine maintained the ancient charm and started to absorb the strengths of other cuisines. At that time, a large number of Shandong cuisine entered the palace, becoming the delicacies of imperial cuisine, and widely used in China's north and northeast regions ever since.

Over hundreds of years' development, many exquisite cooking and cutting techniques popped up in Shandong cuisine which are well inherited by current Lu cuisine chefs.

Shandong cuisine usually chooses good quality raw materials. Flavor and seasonings are not very complicated. Soup in Shandong dishes is very important. Before cook, the Shandong chefs usually already made a bowl of soup or broth for later use. While cooking, chefs use soup or broth with salt to make the dishes. Shandong dishes are mainly rich and salty and use green onion, ginger, and garlic to enhance the flavor.

Many cities in Shandong are close to the sea and is rich in seafood which plays a crucial role in Shandong cuisine. Shandong sea food dishes pay attention to the quality of the raw materials, and the soup worked as a seasoning to strengthen the umami flavor and highlight the natural taste of food materials.

The cutting skill of Shandong chefs is second to none. All bones of a whole chicken can be taken out without cutting any pieces off. The slices they cut is extremely thin that you can see the bright light from the other side, and the shreds they cut can be thread into a needle. The cutting skills also give Shandong dishes the appealing appearance.

Shandong people are hospitable and generous. The bowls are usually big with a large number of foods. They also pay attention to quality because Shandong cuisine was widely used in the palace. Influenced by Confucius' thought of food, Shandong cuisine pays lots of attention to diet courtesy as well. When you have dinner in Shandong, you'd better know the [Chinese dinner manner](#).

## **CHINESE FESTIVALS AND CUSTOMS**

The tradition still lives in the current Chinese culture, especially in the form of festivals. In China, the most celebrated three festivals are the Spring Festival (or the Chinese New Year), the Dragon Boat (*duanwu*) Festival and the Mid-Autumn Festival. The dates of these traditional festivals are still based on the traditional Chinese lunar

calendar, which is different from the Gregorian Calendar that is commonly adopted in the public life of current China and also around the world.

## I. Chinese New Year

The Chinese New Year is known also as the Spring Festivals 春节. Before 1912, the Spring Festival was celebrated on the Beginning of Spring, *lichun* 立春. After 1912, with an official change to mark the first day of a Gregorian year as the beginning of a new year, Chinese people started to celebrate the Spring Festival on the first day of a traditional lunar year, which is February 5 in the Gregorian Calendar for 2019.

There are slight variations of customs and celebrations; generally, the spring festival lasts from the first day of the first month until the 15<sup>th</sup> day, the day of the lantern festival 元宵节. The Spring Festival is a bit like the American Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's Eve and the New Year's day all combined. It is an opportunity for the family members and friends to gather, enjoy each other, and celebrate the completion of a full year.

### A. Food for Chinese New Year 中国新年

#### 1. Preparation



The preparation for New Year usually starts a month before the Spring Festival. Since the Chinese people relied heavily on farming for a living before the modern times, many customs and festivals are scheduled around the planting and cultivating cycles. In the winter, when there is not much to do in the fields, families have extra time to repair or enhance their homes, make new clothes and prepare food for celebration.

Food preparation is a high priority during this time. Since most of the shops and stores are closed during the spring festivals, even if you have money, you might not be able to find anything to purchase during the festival. All the shopping will need to be completed before the start of the spring festivals. Enough supplies and groceries need to be acquired to feed the entire family and any additional guests. A popular phrase "Get New Year stuff" (Ban Nian Huo 办年货), designates the shopping activities. Shopping for the New Year Stuff can cost a lot of money and sometimes a financial burden for families that are not wealthy.

#### 2. Popular dishes

There are some popular dishes for the new year celebration. Many of them have good meanings and carries blessings.

##### 1) Dumplings (*jiaozi* 饺子)

A New Year food staple is the dumplings. It is especially popular in the northern part of China. People used to make the dumplings from scratch. The shape of the dumpling is like the shape of a gold ingot. Therefore, people interpret dumplings as a lucky food that will bring prosperity.

### 2) Ten vegetable delights 素十锦

In northern China, another popular food for the new year is a stir-fry dish called the “ten vegetable delights” 素十锦, made from ten different types of vegetables. This dish represents perfection, since the number 10 means perfect.

### 3) Whole fish

A whole fish, including the head and the tail, is another must have for the New Year feast. However, this dish cannot be eaten during the New Year’s Eve dinner. In Chinese, the pronunciation of the word “fish 鱼” and the word “Extra 余” is the same. Therefore, if you save the fish you will have extra every year.

### 4) Year Cake 年糕

The Year Cake is steamed sweet rice flour cake. There are varieties of recipes. Some are sweet, like “red bean year cake 红豆年糕” and some are salty, like “turnip cake 萝卜糕”. The Chinese words “cake 糕” and “higher 高” are homophonic. Therefore, the Year Cake symbolizes yearly promotion to high position or rank. Or for children to grow taller and taller every year.



< red bean year cake 红豆年糕 >



< turnip cake 萝卜糕 >

## 6. Dinner at the New Year Eve 年夜饭

The dinner at the New Year Eve is a special occasion. Regardless of a family’s wealth, the most bountiful meal is prepared for this occasion. It is an opportunity to thank the ancestors for their annual blessings. In addition, it is a treasured event for the entire family to get together for a reunion meal. Family members, regardless of how near or far, come home together and sit around the hot pot for the last meal of the year. In the event, a person is not able to come home; a place at the table is still set for the absentee. The entire family takes their time to enjoy all the wonderful delicious dishes and catch up on each other’s news for the year. The meal usually starts around sunset and could last well into the night.

## B. New Year Customs

### 1. Guarding the Age 守岁



At the New Year Eve, after meal most families will stay up past midnight before going to bed. Regardless of how tired they are, they stay awake to “guard the age”. This custom of guarding the age has a couple of interpretations. For the elder parents, it is to treasure time. For the children, it is to help their parents prolong life. Families that have parents still living and in good health, will usually celebrate this. Parents will prepare fruits and snacks for the family to enjoy. While guarding the age, time is spent playing games like cards or mahjong, chatting, or even gambling. Although gambling is not allowed normally, an exception is made during this time. At midnight, the families in the neighborhood, will light their strings of firecrackers. The joyous crowds festively welcome the New Year in the loud noise of the sparking firecrackers.

## 2. Spring Couplets 春联

Chinese people write auspicious couplets on red paper and paste them on the door of the house as good blessings to the family. To greet the new year, the head of the family will remove the old couplets from last year and paste a set of new couplets there. This signifies removing the old and welcoming the new. Because the Chinese character “upside down 倒” and the character “come 到” have the same sound, some regions will put the single character “spring” or “fortune” upside down to represent that spring or good fortune is coming.



## 3. Lucky Money 红包

Lucky money is also called Red Packet. Originally, it is only given during the New Year, although many other festivities and celebrations now also use red packages to represent the gift of luck and joy. The custom of giving the red packets is still a strong tradition during the New Year. Some families will do this after New Year eve dinner or at the beginning of the New Year's day. The elders will hand out these red packets to the younger generation, wishing them to study hard and be good persons. Some families will wait until the children are sound asleep and slip the red packets under their pillows. Larger families may have the grandchildren line up, wish grandparents and parents a happy and prosperous new year, and then they will hand the kids the red packets.

## 4. New Year Visits 拜年

Throughout the Chinese agricultural era, everyone, young or old, is busily working the fields during the year, especially when cultivating and harvesting. Friends and families do not have time to visit. They rarely get together, except for important events like weddings and funerals. During the Spring Festivals, however, they take the time to visit and catch up. The modern people are also busy and rarely have time for their parents and relatives. In China, the central government orders 7-day official break for the Spring Festival continuing this Chinese tradition. People took the time to

go back to their hometowns and visit their parents and grandparents from wherever they live and work. Therefore, the airplanes, trains and the high ways are very crowded before and after the Spring Break.

Starting with the first day of the Spring Festivals, friends and family will invite each other to meals. Sometimes, one may attend many meals during the same day. If the guest family brings children, the host will give a red packet to each child. The guest family will return the gesture for the host family's children. Strangers and acquaintances alike greet each other and congratulate each other saying, "Gongxi! Gongxi! 恭喜! 恭喜!" wishing each other another peaceful and safe year.

### C. New Year Taboo 新年的忌讳

During the New year days, there are things one should avoid as taboos and superstitions to follow to avoid bad luck. The most feared taboo during the New Year is if a child speaks of something unlucky. If this happens, a parent will wipe the offending child's mouth quickly with a piece of red cloth and then pronounce: "no offense at the child's words 童言无忌"! This superstition is to guard off bad luck that the unlucky words may bring. Another superstitious practice is if someone breaks something, people will quickly say "peaceful and safe every year" 岁岁平安. This is because the Chinese word for "broken 碎" is the same sound as the word for "year of age 岁". Since the item is already broken, might as well take advantage of the occasion to ask for some luck. During the New Year, you'd better not sweep the floor. People are worried that this might sweep out the prosperous atmosphere (*chi* 气). If the sweeping is unavoidable, the sweeping strokes must be directed towards the inside of the house. Knives, scissors and needles are also considered unlucky and must be avoided during this period.

## II. The Dragon Boat Festival 端午节



The fifth day of May in the Chinese Lunar calendar is the Dragon Boat Festival – one of the three major traditional Chinese holidays. The joyful atmosphere of the festival can always be felt through the tempting smell of the rice dumplings that lingers in the air and through the noise of the dragon boat race.



The Dragon Boat Festival has a history of more than 2,000 years and is believed to have originated in the Warring States period. There are several versions of the origin stories for the Dragon Boat Festival, among which the legend about its relation to Qu Yuan is the most widely accepted one.



## A. Origin Story: Commemorating Qu Yuan

Qu Yuan 屈原 (340–278 BC) was a patriotic poet and a loyal official of the state of Chu 楚 during the Warring States Period. Qu Yuan was born in an aristocratic family and became the number one advisor for the King of Chu. Qu Yuan dedicated his whole life to assisting the king to build the State of Chu stronger against the growing power of the Qin. He advised the King to ally with the State of Qi 齐 to fight against the ambitious Qin. However, he was slandered by jealous officials and accused of treason. The King dismissed his advice and sent him on exile.

During his exile, Qu Yuan wrote a great deal of poems expressing his love and passion for his state, some of which are still famous in China today. In 278 BC, the Qin army overthrew the capital of Chu. On hearing of the defeat, Qu Yuan, in great despair, committed suicide by drowning himself in the Miluo River on the 5th day of the 5th lunar month.

The legend told us that, when the local people heard of Qu Yuan's death, they were very sad. They rowed out on the river to search for his body, but they were unable to find it. To look for his body, the locals paddled their boats up and down the river, hitting the water with their paddles and beating drums to scare evil spirits away. They threw lumps of rice into the river to feed the fish, so that they would not eat Qu Yuan's body.

### *Resulting Tradition*

Since then, people in the Miluo River area (about 50 km north of Changsha in central China's Hunan Province) have followed similar practices to commemorate Qu Yuan on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month. Gradually, rowing boats developed into dragon boat racing, the lumps of rice became sticky rice dumplings (*zongzi* 粽子) traditionally eaten during the festival. They become national tradition and an important part of the celebration for the fifth day of the fifth month.

## B. The Tradition of the Dragon Boat Festival

Eating steamed rice dumplings and taking part in the dragon boat race are the most popular ways to celebrate this festival in China.

### 1. Steamed Rice Dumpling



The steam rice dumping, *zongzi*, is a very popular snack in the Chinese cuisine. It is made by wrapping the sticky rice with lotus (or bamboo) leaves to the shape of a three-dimensional triangle, which is then cooked in a steamer.

The fillings inside the sticky rice vary according to the tradition of the local regions. Rice dumplings with a salty

flavor can be mixed with pork, mushroom, chestnuts or shrimp. Those of sweet flavor may include bean paste or jujube paste. A delicate fragrance of lotus or bamboo leaves enhances the already tempting smell of the rice dumplings. The combination of the fine quality of color, smell and taste makes this delicacy hard to resist. If anyone were to look at the steamed dumplings they would, as the Chinese saying goes, “drip saliva three feet long.”

## 2. Dragon Boat Race

The dragon boat race is a kind of sport that many Chinese folk like. Universally respected, the dragon in the Chinese folklore is valiant and spirited. The animated dragon boats reflect how people are inspired by the imaginary animal. In some region, the construction of a dragon boat is not finished until it is blessed by the ceremony of Painting the Dragon Eyeballs. This ceremony can only be held at the first day of the fifth month of the Chinese lunar calendar. With the painted eyeballs, people believe the dragon boat will become courageous and vigorous. In the race each boat can hold fifteen to twenty people. Two of the them sit on the bow with the responsibility of beating drums and grab the flag at the end of the racecourse. One person sits at the helm to control the direction. All others row the boat together following the beat of the drum. Whichever team gets the flag at the end of the race course is the winner. This is a marvelous team sport.



## 3. Evil repelling rituals

After the Dragon Boat Festival is the beginning of summer, which is the season that infectious disease spread more easily. Therefore, there were several preventive actions the ancient Chinese take to avoid diseases and then became part of the tradition for the Dragon Boat Festival. A thorough house-cleaning is part of the tradition. By hanging calamus, Chinese mugwort, or some plants with pungent flavor over the door, people believe disease can be driven away from the house. Moreover, in order to avoid evil influence, adults should drink realgar wine and children should carry fragrance bags.



Some families put the poster of Zhong Kui 钟馗 on the door during the festival. Extremely ugly, Zhong is an expert in catching devils according to folklores. No devil would dare to approach the door with Zhong as the door guard.



### III. The Mid-Autumn Festival 中秋节



The 15<sup>th</sup> day of the 8<sup>th</sup> month on the lunar calendar is Mid-autumn Festival. Mid-autumn Festival is also very important among Chinese festivals. Along with the Chinese New Year, Dragon Boat Festival, they made the three most important of the Chinese Festivals.

The distance between the Moon and the Earth is the closest in the evening of the Mid-autumn Festival. If one looks up from Earth, the Moon appears to be the biggest, the roundest and brightest on this night. To the Chinese people, the round Moon symbolizes reunion and completion, therefore, a day very much worthy celebrating.

On this day, much like during Chinese New Year, members of the family try their best to return home for reunion. People eat moon cake as they admire the bright big Moon.

#### A. Folklores related to the moon

As tradition has it, most of the festival's customs are related to stories about the moon, some of which are told briefly below.

#### 1. Cháng'é (嫦娥) Flying to the Moon



Long, long ago, there were ten suns in the sky. The suns burnt all the plants and people were dying on Earth, until one day an excellent archer Hòu Yì (后羿) shot down nine of the suns with his bow and arrows. Earth was saved and people flocked to learn archery from Hòu Yì.

The Western Queen Mother gave Hòu Yì a bottle of elixir that could make a person immortal. Although Hòu Yì did want to become immortal, he hesitated to stay longer with his wife Cháng'é. Therefore, he just kept the elixir at home.

Páng Méng (逢蒙), one of his students, tried to seize the elixir when Hòu Yì wasn't at home. Faced with greedy Páng Méng, Cháng'é decided to drink the elixir. It made her fly to the moon where she would stay forever.

To remember her and pray to her, *Hòu Yì* and others started to worship the moon with many offerings.

### Alternate Version of the Myth

*Handbook of Chinese Mythology* also tells an alternate version of the story. After the hero Hòu Yì shot down nine of the ten suns, he was pronounced as king by the thankful people. However, he soon became a conceited and tyrannical ruler. In order to live long without death, he asked for the elixir from the Western Queen Mother. But his wife, Cháng'é, stole it on the fifteenth of August because she did not want the cruel king to live long and hurt more people.

She took the magic potion to prevent her husband from becoming immortal. Hòu Yì was so angry when discovered that Cháng'é took the elixir, he shot at his wife as she flew toward the moon, though he missed. Cháng'é fled to the moon and became the spirit of the moon. Hòu Yì helplessly looked at his wife Chang'e flying off to the moon after she drank the elixir. Hòu Yì died soon after because he was overcome with great anger. Thereafter, people offer a sacrifice to Cháng'é on every lunar fifteenth of August to commemorate Cháng'é's action.

Cháng'é image usually appears on Mid-Autumn Festival pictures. Children in China are told that Cháng'é were still living on the moon. And on the night of the Mid-Autumn Festival, when the moon is bright, children try their best to find the shape of Cháng'é on the moon.

## 2. Wú Gāng (吴刚) Chopping the Cherry Bay



Besides the story about Cháng'é flying to the moon, Chinese people also created other legend about the life on the moon based on their observation of the shadow in the moon. The story about Wú Gāng Chopping the Cherry Bay is one of them.

Wú Gāng the woodman wanted immortality, but he didn't try hard enough to learn the necessary magic. The Emperor of Heaven got angry with him because of his laziness. In order to punish him, the Emperor of Heaven put a huge cherry bay tree, 1,665 meters (about a mile) high, on the moon and told Wú Gāng to cut the tree. The Emperor of Heaven said that if Wú Gāng could cut down the tree, he could become immortal.

Wú Gāng thought this was his chance to try hard to gain immortality. However, the Emperor of Heaven had made it so that the cherry bay healed itself every time Wú Gāng chopped it!



Today, people still believe an obvious shadow on the moon belongs to the huge cherry bay.



### 3. The story about the Jade Rabbit 玉兔

The old Chinese people believe that there was a rabbit living on the moon based on the shadow they see on the moon. They called it the Jade Rabbit.

One of the stories about the Rabbit goes like this: once upon a time, there were three animals living in a forest: a fox, a rabbit, and a monkey. Three immortals, pretending to be beggars, went through the forest asking for food. The fox and the monkey quickly offered them food. The rabbit, who was less resourceful but very pious, felt guilty. She said, "I'm so sorry I couldn't offer any food to help you, but I can give you myself." Then the rabbit jumped into the fire. The three immortals were moved by the rabbit's sacrifice, and decided to make it an immortal, sending her to live in the Moon Palace.

### C. The Customs of Mid-autumn Festival

Chinese people take the full Moon as a symbol for good things on the human world. From olden times till now, many writers wrote numerous beautiful poems in praise of the beauty of the full moon. In many ways, the festival celebrates three fundamental concepts that are closely connected: 1) **Gathering**, such as family and friends coming together. It's said the moon is the brightest and roundest on this day which means family reunion. Consequently, this is the main reason why the festival is thought to be important. 2) **Thanksgiving**, to give thanks for the harvest in the fall, or for harmonious unions. 3) **Praying occasion** (asking for conceptual or material satisfaction), for babies, a partner, beauty, longevity, or for a good future.

The typical ways of celebration for Mid-Autumn Festival include the following:

#### 1. Moon Worshipping and Gazing

People make worship to the Moon Goddess on the Mid-autumn day. Customarily, people offer an array of moon cakes, fruit and melons, and burn incenses to pay respect to the moon. Because the Moon Goddess is *Cháng'é* and the Chinese people regard the female gender of being *yin*<sup>1</sup> (阴) as opposed to the *yang*<sup>3</sup> (阳), therefore the ritual of Moon worshipping is normally performed by women. After the worship ritual, the whole family would sit around a table and drink wine while also looking up and admiring the moon. As the custom evolved over the years, admiring the moon became a focus in the moon worshipping.

#### 2. Moon Cake Eating

The history of moon cakes has not been long. It is said that in the Yuan Dynasty (1271 – 1368) the ruling Mongols had been cruel to the Han people. Over time, many a rebellion and revolt incident occurred. Among these revolt forces, one headed by Zhu<sup>1</sup> Yuan<sup>3</sup>zhang<sup>1</sup> (朱元璋), the future first emperor of the Ming dynasty, was the

strongest. Once Zhu adopted the strategy of General Liu Bowen to hide a piece of message slip at the bottom of the moon cakes to pass on a plan of a revolt. At the appointed moment, people gathered to fight against the Mongol army and they successfully defeated the army. To commemorate this event, people started the custom of eating moon cakes.



Moon cakes come in many different shapes and flavors: round ones, square ones, with sweet stuffing like dates paste, lotus paste, or bean paste as well as salty stuffing containing meat. Some Moon Cakes contain sweet stuffing with salty egg yolk to give a special taste of sweet and salty mix.

### 3. Lanterns and Riddle Guessing

A notable part of celebrating the holiday is the brightly lit lanterns. People light lanterns on towers, or send off air lanterns to the sky. Another tradition involving lanterns is to write riddles on the lanterns and have people guess the answers. On the night of Mid-autumn Festival, some stores would host riddle guessing sessions by writing the riddles on lanterns and award prizes for people who offer correct answers to the riddles.

It is difficult to discern the original purpose of lanterns in connection to the festival, but it is certain that lanterns were not used in conjunction with moon-worship prior to the Tang dynasty. Traditionally, the lantern has been used to symbolize fertility. It was functioned mainly as decorated lighting sources. But today the lantern has come to symbolize the festival itself.



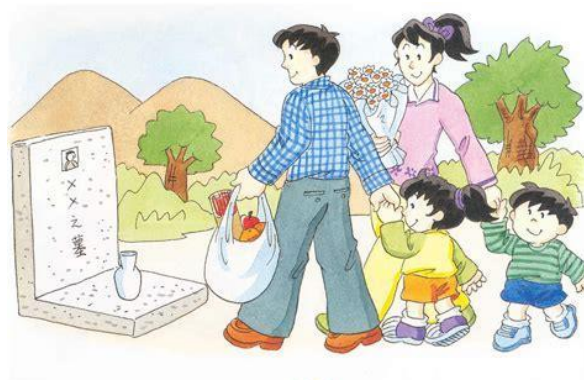
Festival lanterns in Chinatown, Singapore  
Festival lanterns at a shop in Hong Kong



### 4. Courtship and Matchmaking

The Mid-Autumn moon has traditionally been a choice occasion to celebrate marriages. Girls would pray to Moon Gooddness *Cháng'é* to help fulfill their romantic wishes. In some parts of China, dances are held for young men and women to find partners. For example, young women are encouraged to throw their handkerchiefs to the crowd, and the young man who catches and returns the handkerchief has a chance at further relation.

## IV.. Clear and Bright Day (*Qingming* 清明节)



April fifth on the Gregorian calendar is the day the Chinese people worship their ancestors. This day is called Qingming (清明), meaning clear and bright. During the Qingming festival, families will pay their respect to ancestors by visiting their graves. They will tidy up the tomb by removing weeds and sweeping away leaves and provide offerings of fresh flowers and fruits. This is why the Qingming day is also known as Grave Sweeping Day. The Chinese believe that since one's life comes from the ancestors, it is the responsibility of the descendants to take care of the ancestors after life. Therefore, every time during the Qingming festival, families will attentively visit gravesites to memorize their ancestors. In a way it is similar to the American's Memorial Day. However, the focus of Qingming is on ancestors instead of soldiers who died in wars. Nevertheless, both of these holidays serve to remind us not to forget the people who have contributed to our country and our society.

### **Rituals of the Qingming Festival**

Worshiping ancestors has a long tradition in China. The custom started as early as the Zhou Dynasty (1122 B.C.). The Zhou Emperor and his noble court will set a date annually to visit the ancestral temple of the ruling house and pay the respect. The general population started to imitate this ritual. They began to visit their ancestor's burial grounds. During the Tang Dynasty, the custom became common practice.

According to the tradition, Qingming day is the 15<sup>th</sup> day after the Vernal Equinox (春分) on the Chinese Lunar Calendar. However, people have flexibility to visit ancestors' burial ground 2-3 days before after 15<sup>th</sup>. After China adopted the use of the Gregorian calendar Qingming day was set as April 5th. It also became known as the National Grave Sweeping Day.

Qingming Festival is a time of many different activities, among which the main ones are tomb sweeping, stepping on green, and flying kites. Some other lost customs like wearing willow branches on the head and riding on swings have added infinite joy in past days. It is a combination of sadness and happiness.

### **Tomb Sweeping**

Tomb sweeping is regarded as the most important custom in the Qingming Festival from which the name of Tomb-sweeping Day is got. Cleaning the tomb and paying respect to the dead person with offerings are the two important parts of remembering



the past relatives. Weeds around the tomb are cleared away and fresh soil is added to show care of the dead. The dead person's favorite food and wine are taken to sacrifice to them, along with paper resembling money. This is all burned in the hope that the deceased are not lacking food and money. Kowtow before the tablets set up for the dead are made.

Today, with cremation taking over from burying, the custom has been extremely simplified in cities. Only flowers are presented to the dead relatives and revolutionary martyrs. No matter how respect is shown, good prayers for the deceased are expressed.

### **The Origin of the “Gua Zhi” Ritual (挂纸)**

On the morning of Qingming day, the usually quiet cemeteries will be bustling with visiting families from far and close. After weeding and clearing the gravesites, some families will decorate the tombs with vibrant rectangular pieces of paper to brighten up the place. This ritual has a special name, called, “Gua Zhi,” meaning hanging paper. One folklore story claims that the Gua Zhi tradition originated from a famous Chinese Emperor, Liu Bang(刘邦).

In the ending years of the Qin Dynasty, Xiang Yu (项羽) was a general and leader of the rebel forces that overthrew the Qin dynasty (221-207 B.C.) The Han people led by Liu Bang challenged General Xiang Yu and his army. Liu Bang and Xiang Yu fought for the control of China. After years of many bloody and grueling battles, Liu Bang's army won. Liu Bang established the Han dynasty (202 B.C. – 220 A.D.) and became the first emperor of the Han dynasty. He was called posthumously Emperor Han Gaozu (汉高祖).

After the war, Emperor Han Gaozu Liu Bang returns to his birthplace to find his relatives and share his glory and good fortunes. He was anxious to visit his parents' gravesites and let them know he is now the Emperor of China. He believes his parents would be very proud of him.

However, when he arrived at his parents' burial ground, he was shocked to find broken and overturn headstones hidden in thick and tall weeds. He was shaken and heartbroken, “Heaven! What has become of the cemetery? Why is it in such miserable desolate condition? Where are my parents' tombs?” Since the war began, people escaping from war torn battlegrounds, only had time to worry about survival. No one had the energy to worry about their ancestors' resting places. “Someone come quickly! Help me look for my parents' headstones!” Liu Bang declared worriedly. He nervously directs the soldiers to hack the weeds and turn over downed headstones. He was anxious to find his parents' from the faded carving on the stones.

Seconds, minutes and hours passed, the sun was about to set. However, Liu Bang still cannot find his parents. He desperately kneels to the ground, turns his head skyward and urgently prays, “Dear Heavenly Father! Please help me! Please tell me where my father and mother's graves are. Dear Father and Mother, please guide your son to you. Where are you?” When he finished, he took out a piece of paper and tore it into many pieces, holding them tightly in his hands. He turned skyward and said, “Heavenly

Father, I sincerely beg you to guide me. When I release these pieces of paper, please blow them to where my parents are. Point me to my parents by where the paper falls. Dear Father and Mother, please lead me to where you are!” He bowed a few times, then threw the pieces of paper in the air and watched the wind blow them all over until the pieces disappeared.

“Emperor, Emperor, look! A few pieces landed over there!” Excitedly, a soldier exclaimed. Liu Bang rushed over to where the soldier pointed. He anxiously turned over the headstone and was joyful to see his parents’ names. “That’s incredible! Heavenly Father thank you for your help! Mother and Father thank you for guiding me to you.” Liu Bang knelt before his parents’ graves bowing and repeating his thanks to the Heavenly Father.

According to legend, this is how the Gua paper hanging ritual started. It represents visitation by the family.



Zhi

### Stepping on Green (踏青)

Qingming is not just a day of remembrance. It is also a day to celebrate the coming of spring. With the coming of spring, nature wakes up, dressing the world in green. All is new, clean and fresh. Trees are budding, flowers blooming and grass turning green. It is a good opportunity for families to leave the crowded cities and towns and have an outing in the country. People started **calling this activity as Ta Qing, meaning stepping on green**. During the Tang dynasty, every Qingming day, Chang An (长安), the capital, will be deserted. Everyone is out in the country enjoying the countryside and paying respect to ancestors. The festival continued to be popular during the Song dynasty until the Yuan dynasty when people’s schedules were regulated by the government. Since then, Ta Qing lost some of its excitement. During the Ming and Qing dynasties and now, the focus of Qingming is solely on visiting the cemetery.

This custom can be traced back to the Tang Dynasty (618 - 907) and followed by each dynasty later till today. Stepping on Green not only add joy to life but also promote a healthy body and mind. So visitors can be seen everywhere during the month of the festival.

### Flying Kites

Flying kites is an activity favored by many people during the Qingming Festival. Kites are not only flown during the day time but also in the evening. Little lanterns are tied to the kite or to the string that holds the kite. And when the kite is flying in the sky, the lanterns look like twinkling stars that add unique scenery to the sky during the night. What makes flying kites during this day special is that people cut the string while the kite is in the sky to let it fly free. It is said this brings good luck and that diseases can be eliminated by doing this.

All in all, the Qingming Festival is an occasion of unique characteristics, integrating sorrowful tears to the dead with the continuous laughter from the spring outing.

### **“Life along the River at Qingming” (清明上河图)**

The welcome transition from winter to spring represented by Qingming was an inspiration for a famous Song Dynasty painting. The famous painter, Zhang Zeduan (张择端), produced one of China’s most prominent works of art-- “Qingming Shanghetu” (清明上河图) or “Life along the River at Qingming”. It is almost five and a half meters long and a quarter of a meter wide. The painting starts with portrayal of lively spring landscape in the countryside with trees just starting to bud. It shows hurried travelers on horseback. Leading to an increasing bustling scenery along the riverside, workers loading and unloading cargos, lively village, noisy city street crowded with all kinds of people; officials, merchants, soldiers, scholars, porters, men and women, young and old. The painting shows clear details of people wearing different clothes, unlike facial expressions and different movements. There are hundreds of people in the painting, as well as scores of different animals like ox, horse and even camel, carriages and sedans, bridges and boats. It is a dramatic record of the festivities and hustle and bustle of the special time of Qingming. Looking at this painting is like watching a short film clip. Details of the Sung dynasty’s way of life are vividly presented in this painting. The “Qingming Shanghetu” was an instant hit when it was painted. In fact, many artists through history have imitated this painting. Emperor Qianlong (乾隆) commissioned another version during the Qing dynasty. The Qing version represented characters and activities of the Ming and Qing dynasties. (Sources: *Chinese Children’s Encyclopedia* 1983; *Chinese Art History*, 1999, 7<sup>th</sup> Edition)

### **V.. Double Seventh Festival (Qixi 七夕)**



Falling on the seventh day of seventh lunar month, the Qixi Festival, also known as Double Seventh Festival, is what Valentine's Day is to the western countries. As it is a day of great importance to girls, the event is also called Young Girls' Festival (女儿节) and Qiqiao Festival (乞巧节), literally meaning the Ingenuity-Begging Festival. Because of the beautiful legend about Cowherd Boy (Niulang) and Weaver Girl (Zhinu), the festival has been endowed with the meaning of great romance. This story of “Weaver Girl and Cowherd Boy” is romanticization of the operation of two star constellations, Niulang (Constellation Altair) and Zhinu (Constellation Vega), which come closest together on the Qixi Festival when the Milky Way is most visible. Altair

is the middle of three stars to the east of the Milky Way. Vega is in a cluster of six just to the west.

The earliest-known reference to this famous myth dates back to over 2600 years ago, which was told in a poem from the [Classic of Poetry](#) (诗经). The tale of the Cowherd and the Weaver Girl has been celebrated in the [Qixi Festival](#) in China since the [Han dynasty](#). It has also been celebrated in the [Tanabata](#) festival in Japan, and in the [Chilseok](#) festival in Korea.

The legend of “The Cowherd Boy and the Weaver Girl” is considered one of the Four Great Folktales, the others being “The Legend of the White Snake”(白蛇传), “Lady Meng Jiang”(孟姜女) and “Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai”(梁山伯与祝英台).

### **Legend of the festival**

The Festival has been celebrated in China since the Han Dynasty (202 BC – 220 AD). Based on the legend of “The Cowherd Boy and the Weaver Girl” (Niulang and Zhinu 牛郎织女), the day is celebrated at the time of years when the stars Vega and Altair become bridged together across the Milky Way by a third star. There are several different versions of the story about “The Cowherd and the Weaver Girl.” One version goes like this:

The Cowherd Boy (Niulang 牛郎), with the help of his ox (the demoted cattle god), married a fairy, the Weaver Girl (Zhinu 织女), who became a weaver girl. They lived on earth happily. A few years later they had a son and a daughter.

But life was getting too comfortable and the couple began to slack off. Cowherd Boy did not tend to his farm and as a result the harvest was not good. Weaver Girl did not knit the way she had been and the crafts she made were rough with low quality. The Emperor of God (玉皇大帝) warned the couple to be responsible for their work. But they didn’t seem to follow through with their work and they just couldn’t keep up with what Emperor of God asked them to do.

At last, the Emperor of God decided that they were out of control and deserved punishment. He called up the magpies to notify the couple and tell them that from now on they are to work hard separately and can only meet each other every seven days. “This would be the last chance I would provide to them to see if they will ever improve again,” the Emperor said.

The flock of magpies flew to the couple’s house. By the time they reach the front door they had forgotten the detail of their assignment. “Is it once every seven days or is it seven times a day?” They were totally not sure what the Emperor of God has required them to carry out.

They discussed among themselves without results and decided to go with the seven times a day so that they don’t need to go back to the Emperor for another instruction. Who knows they may be demoted or punished! When Weaver Girl learned of the new

order she was thrilled. The Emperor of God allows them to meet many times a day meaning they don't need to work that hard anymore.

The Emperor of God was furious when he saw the couple had now spent even more time together instead of working hard as he had hoped for. He thought they were deliberately ignoring his order. Little did he know that it was his messengers who made the mistake. The Emperor of God sent the Fairy Mother (王母娘娘) to bring The Cowherd Boy and Weaver Girl back to live with him.

When Fairy Mother arrived at the couple's house, she did not provide much explanation to them. She grabbed Weaver Girl by the arm and forced her to go with Fairy Mother. Cowherd Boy and the children were frantic and scared. Cowherd Boy put the children in baskets and carried them on his back and shoulders. He began chasing the Fairy Mother and the Weaver Girl.

Love and anxiety made him strong and he was able to follow closely. When once he almost reached them, the Fairy Mother pulled out a magic hair pin and drew an arch in the sky that formed a wide silver band in between them and forever separated the couple. The Cowherd Boy and the children watched Weaver Girl taken away unwillingly and went further and further away.....

When Weaver Girl was taken to the palace, The Emperor of God realized that his order was not delivered correctly and the couple did not deliberately disobey him. The Emperor of God then announced a remedy order: Cowherd Boy and Weaver Girl are allowed to meet each other once a year. It would be on the evening of July 7<sup>th</sup> of the Chinese Lunar Year. Since Magpies made the mistake, it would be their responsibility to make the reunion possible.

Magpies recognized that it was their fault in causing such a tragedy that they would always remember to do their job to bring the family together once a year. From that moment on, on the evening of every July 7<sup>th</sup>, a flock of magpies would fly up to the sky to form a bridge across the Milky Way so Cowherd Boy and Weaver Girl come together and meet each other on the bridge. It was said that the sky would drizzle with little rain drops because the couple are so happy to meet each other that the tears will fall through the sky.

### **How to celebrate?**

In ancient China, to celebrate Qixi, girls took part in worshiping the celestials (拜仙) during rituals. Under the moonlight, they prayed to Weaver Girl for dexterity in needlework which symbolized the traditional talents of a good wife. Today, Qixi has evolved to become the festival of romance. It is often called the Chinese Valentine's Day.

In days gone by, the Qixi Festival was an occasion for girls to demonstrate the domestic skills necessary for marriage. These days, the holiday has gone the way of the Western Valentine's Day, a largely commercial opportunity for couples to buy chocolates, flowers and other gifts.





**Spot the Lovers in the Night Sky**



**Create Something Handmade**

Weaver Girl was a weaver and traditionally girls would pray for needlework and sewing skills, symbolizing the talents of a good spouse. With the return of knitting and crafting as popular contemporary hobbies, handmade scarves and hats are great personalized gifts.



**Plan a Special Date**

The Qixi Festival is ultimately about celebrating true love, so it's difficult to argue with romantic gestures. Home cooked meals, gifts and romantic movies always win, just don't forget The Cowherd Boy and Weaver Girl as you settle in.

## **VI.. Chongyang Festival (重阳节)**



Held on the 9th day of the 9th lunar month, Double Ninth Festival is also called Chongyang Festival. In Chinese, nine is regarded as the number of Yang (which means masculine as opposed to Yin which is feminine). The ninth day of the ninth month is the day that has two Yang numbers, and 'chong' in Chinese means double which is how the name Chongyang was created. It is a day for people to eat Chongyang cake, drink chrysanthemum wine, climb mountains, pay homage to chrysanthemums, and show respect to the elderly.

### **Origin of the Festival**

The Double Ninth Festival is thought to have originated from a worship ceremony of the bright star "Antares", which was also known as "Dahuo" in ancient times. People found an astronomical rule in the spring and autumn period, as Antares usually appeared in the sky at the beginning of spring, and after that, it would be brighter and hung in the southern direction on the day of Summer Solstice. As a sign of seasonal change, Antares moved forward towards the west after July until it was below the

horizon in September. With Antares being considered as a god, ancient people were frightened by the star's disappearance from the sky which made them lose its time reference for farming. Therefore, people held a ceremony to keep safe. In a word, the festival is a result of China's agricultural civilization.

The festival has long history of two thousand years. It can be traced back to the Spring and Autumn Period and was not taken seriously until the Warring States Period, when it was only celebrated among royal families. Legend has it that a concubine of an emperor Gaozu of the Han Dynasty (202-220 B.C.) was framed by the Queen, and her maid was expelled from the palace. After marrying a civilian, the maid told others that everyone in the palace wore the Zhuyu plant (a kind of herb) and drank chrysanthemum wine to pray for longevity on the Double Ninth Day. Therefore, the activities gradually became a part of folklore.

### **Festival Legend**

Just as other Chinese festivals have their own unique story, so does the Double Ninth Festival. It is said that, during the Eastern Han Dynasty (25 - 220), a devil inhabited the Nu River which caused disease in the neighboring people. The parent of a young man, named Hengjing, died because of the devil's magic. In order to rid the people of the devil, Hengjing went through extraordinary lengths to find an immortal to teach him swordsmanship in order to expel the devil.

On the eighth day of the ninth lunar month, the immortal told Hengjing that the next day the devil would appear and he was to go back to get rid of the devil and the disease. Taking a bag of dogwood and some chrysanthemum wine, Hengjing returned to his hometown. In the morning of the ninth day of the ninth lunar month, Hengjing led all the villagers who were each holding a piece of dogwood leaf and a cup of Chrysanthemum to the nearest mountain. At noon, when the devil came out from the Nu River, the devil suddenly stopped because of the fragrance emitted from the dogwood and the chrysanthemum wine. At that moment Hengjing used the sword to battle the devil for a few rounds and won.

Since then the custom of climbing mountains, drinking chrysanthemum wine and holding onto dogwood on the ninth day of the ninth month have become popular.

### **Double Ninth Festival Activities**

Climbing mountains and admiring beautiful chrysanthemums are interesting activities that add to the Chongyang Festival creating a joyous atmosphere.

It is said that by ascending to a high mountain, diseases could be prevented. Many widely-known poems were created by poets in the Tang Dynasty (618 - 907) describing the scene and feeling of mountain climbing. Now, family relatives or good friends gather to climb mountains to enjoy the beautiful scenery and share happiness of the holiday with each other.

As chrysanthemums blossom during the festival, it is a pleasure to admire the various chrysanthemums in parks. Grand chrysanthemum exhibitions are held in big parks that attract numerous visitors.

The custom as wear dogwood - a kind of plant that can dispel the disaster in people's values – was popular in the old days. Women and children like to wear a fragrant pouch with dogwood sewed in. However, this custom is currently not very popular at all. During the festival, Chongyang cake and chrysanthemum wine is the traditional cuisine.

### **Double Ninth Festival Food**

Chongyang Cake is a kind of steamed cake having two layers with nuts and jujube sandwiched between them. Since cake in Chinese is pronounced 'gao' meaning high, people consider climbing a high mountain to be the same as eating cake. Also personal progress is thought to be made in the following days after eating the cake, for 'high' means that one makes improvements moving to a higher level.

Drinking Chrysanthemum wine is an indispensable part of the festival. Chrysanthemums are regarded as a kind of flower having the function of an antitoxin and can drive the evil away. People often think that by drinking chrysanthemum wine, all kinds of diseases and disasters can be cured and prevented.

### **New Meaning of Double Ninth Festival**

As nine is pronounced 'jiu' meaning long in Chinese, so people endow the word 'jiu' with the meaning of longevity with a person's life. In the year of 1989, Double Ninth Festival was designated as Senior's Day - a day to respect the elderly and to let them enjoy themselves. Many companies organize groups where retired people can go out to climb mountains or on other outings. Members of a family also accompany their elders to have a relaxing day in a natural setting while wishing health and happiness upon them.

## **Chinese Clothing**

As a vital part of the civilization, traditional costumes play an important role in the Chinese history and culture. Their basic features are cross-collar, wrapping the right lapel over the left, tying with sash and a form of blouse plus skirt or long gown. These features have been preserved for thousands of years till the time of the Republic of China (1912), when Chinese Tunic Suit and cheongsam prevailed. Nowadays, however, most Chinese wear modern clothes in their daily lives, not much different from their western counterparts. Traditional attires are only worn for certain



festivals, ceremonies or religious occasions. However, they are often seen in Chinese television serials and movies. Many of the ethnic minorities in China also wear their traditional costumes in their daily lives.

**Clothing manufacture in China dates back to prehistoric times, at least 7,000 years ago.** Archaeological findings of 18,000 year-old artifacts such as bone sewing needles and stone beads and shells with holes bored in them attest to the existence of ornamentation and of sewing extremely early in Chinese civilization.

**The idea of fashion reached a new height during the Spring and Autumn and the Warring States periods,** when wars broke out frequently and the various states spared no effort to enhance their strength. The different styles of clothes showed the positions and the states that people belonged to.



**The Qin and Han dynasties (221 B.C. - A.D. 220) witnessed the unification of territory as well as written language.** Qin Shihuang, the First Emperor of the Qin Dynasty, established many social systems, including one for uniforms to distinguish people's ranks and social positions. China's complete code of costume and trappings was established in the Han Dynasty (206BC-220AD). The yarn-dyeing, embroidering and metal-processing technologies developed rapidly in that period, spurring changes in costume and adornment.

**There were specific stipulations on colors of court garments** in the Han Dynasty. Officers must wear garments according to the five time periods, i.e. cyan garments in the spring, red in the first two months of the summer, yellow in the last month of the summer, white in the autumn and black in the winter.

Chinese clothing experienced a rapid development during the Wei, Jin, and South- North dynasties (220-589). Before 265, the cultures and esthetic views of the peoples in north and south China merged because of the moves initiated by frequent wars. Many philosophical schools of thought influenced both people's lives and the conceptions of clothing design.





The Tang Dynasty (618-907) wrote the most brilliant page in the history of Chinese clothing. People's clothes were more varied than before because the state was more open to the outside world and people became more cosmopolitan in their thinking. The clothes for women could be called fashionable because they changed rapidly and were showy. Once only a new style came out, many people would be willing to take it. The dresses were mainly made of silk, so they were famous for softness and lightness. The dresses boldly adopted the features of foreign garments in terms of forms and adornments; i.e. they mainly referred to the garments of other countries (such as the Central-Asia countries, India, Iran, Persia, northern countries and the Western Regions) and used them to improve the habilitary culture of the Tang Dynasty.

Women's dress and personal adornments of the Tang Dynasty were outstanding in entire China's history. The clothing materials were exquisite, the structure was natural, graceful and elegant, and adornments were splendid. Though the forms of garments were still the continuation of the Han Dynasty (206BC-220AD) and the Sui Dynasty (581-618), they were influenced by cultures and arts of the Western Regions. The trades and cultural exchanges with Korea, Vietnam, Japan, Persia and other countries gradually became frequent, and they mutually dispatched emissaries and accepted students of other countries. In this way, a special open and romantic style of dress and personal adornments for women was formed.





**Because of communication with the Western Regions**, the influence of dressing culture of other minorities on the Tang court also reflected the change of thoughts and concepts. Chinese women were seriously restricted by the old Confucian or feudal ethical code. Some females had rebel spirit in the Tang Dynasty liked to climb or jump over the walls and went to the nature to view the beautiful sight; some of them also rode horses and played balls. Just as recorded by many historical materials, some girls therefore dressed as boys in order to go out or for sports.

**The garments in the Tang Dynasty greatly affected the garments of neighboring countries.** For instance, Japanese kimono adopted the elites of the dresses of the Tang Dynasty in terms of colors; the Hanbok (traditional Korean clothing) also adopted the advantages of the dresses of the Tang Dynasty.

**Casual wear appeared during the Song Dynasty (960-1279)**, and clothes were simple and elegant.

**During the Yuan Dynasty (1206-1368)**, the Mongolian ethnic group, known as the People on Horseback, was in power. The style of clothing **was** mainly a combination of **Mongolian and Han**. Clothes were luxurious for upper class yet simple and unadorned in design.

**Dramatic changes took place during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644).** A new conception came into being in clothing design, with no limitation to one style and advocating natural beauty, thus bringing vigor and vitality to the clothing culture.



**During the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), clothes became elegant, poised, and glorious.** During the 200 years of the Qing Empire, the entire world witnessed dramatic changes such as the Renaissance in Italy and Columbus's discovery of the Americas, but the changes did not affect traditional Chinese clothing because China had a closed-door policy. People still wore clothes showing rank and lifestyle. The retreat from outside cultures has left a precious heritage for traditional Chinese clothes.



## Well-known Fashion

Although the fashion trend changes over time, there are several types that are popular till today both at home and abroad.



▶ **Traditional Han Chinese Clothing (Han Fu):** It refers to the attire worn by the [Han people](#) from the enthronement of the Yellow Emperor (about 2698 BC) till the late Ming Dynasty (1368 - 1644 AD). It became known as the Han Fu ("fu" means "clothes" in Chinese) because the fashion was improved and popularized during the Han Dynasty. It is usually in the form of long gown, cross collar, wrapping the

right lapel over the left, loose wide sleeves and no buttons but a sash.

▶ **Chinese Suit (Tang Zhuang):** It is a combination of the Manchu male jacket of the Qing Dynasty and the western style suit. It is usually straight collared, with coiled buttons down the front. Its color and design are in traditional Chinese style but tailoring is western.



▶ **Chinese Tunic Suit (Zhongshan Zhuang):** Also called the Yat-sen Suit, it is designed by Dr. Sun Yat-sen by combining the western-style suit and Chinese attire. It has a turn-down collar and four pockets with flaps. As Chairman Mao Zedong worn it quite frequently, it is also called the Mao Suit by westerners. It is the main attire from the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 till 1980's. The country's leaders still wear it today when attending important occasions, such as military parades.

### ▶ Other Types



▶ (Mongolian costume)

#### **Traditional Clothing of the Other Ethnic**

**Minorities:** In addition to Manchu, the country has 54 ethnic minorities and each of them has their own unique costumes. Unlike the traditional Han Chinese costumes, these costumes are still widely worn today. Basically, they can be divided into two types: long gown and short coat with pants or skirt. They usually wear long gowns with hats and boots; others prefer short coat and generally wrap their head with cloth and wear shoes. People wearing the same type of clothes can be further distinguished by the costume details like the structure, craft and style, etc. Take the long gown for

instance. The [Mongolian](#) and [Tu](#) nationalities prefer high collared gown with buttons down the front; the [Tibet](#) and [Monba](#) groups wear collarless gown with buttons on one side and the [Uygur](#) love those with buttons on the right.



▶ **Dragon Robe:** It is so named because of the embroidered [dragons](#) on it. It can only be worn by the emperor, who was considered a dragon from heaven in the ancient times. Other characteristics of a dragon robe are round collar, buttons on the right and most of the time in bright yellow.

▶ **Officials' Uniform:** Unlike modern China, almost all kinds of officials in ancient times had uniforms. They are strictly distinguished by colors, embroidered patterns and hats, etc. For instance, in



the Ming Dynasty, the embroidered pattern on a first rank civil officer's uniform was a crane, second rank a golden pheasant, third rank a peacock, fourth rank a wild goose, fifth rank a silver pheasant, sixth rank an egret, seventh rank a "purple mandarin duck", eighth rank an oriole and ninth rank a quail.



**Traditional Wedding Costumes:** Chinese traditional wedding costumes vary in different dynasties and time periods. However, they are red most of the time as red is considered lucky, happy and auspicious in the country's culture. The most well-known are red chaplet and official robes, which are still widely worn today by newly wed in traditional style wedding ceremonies or for taking wedding photos.

## CURRENT AFFAIRS

### 2019

#### **1. U.S.-China Trade War**

While the US-China trade dispute started the year before, in 2019 it transformed from a short-term conflict with the potential for a quick remedy into an entrenched standoff.

At the start of 2019, investors and financial markets closely monitored trade talks, hoping for the two sides to strike a deal. Throughout the year, however, American and Chinese trade negotiators frequently expressed optimism for a trade deal that was seemingly close at hand, only to be inevitably followed by backsliding days later.

Now, with the trade war lasting over 500 days and counting, tariffs and trade tensions are increasingly being priced in as a given in the US-China relationship. Trade negotiators have apparently become less ambitious; at the end of the year, what were once negotiations for a comprehensive trade deal devolved into talks for a "Phase One" deal leaving fundamental disagreements unresolved.

So far, the US has slapped tariffs on US\$550 billion worth of Chinese products. China, in turn, has set tariffs on US\$185 billion worth of US goods.

#### **1) Hong Kong Social Unrest**

Hong Kong has been shaken by months of protests in 2019. The first protests in April were triggered by a proposed new bill to allow the extradition of individuals from the region to mainland China. They have since morphed into a wider campaign to preserve Hong Kong's autonomy and freedoms. The withdrawal of the extradition bill has not ended the protests and clashes between police and activists have become increasingly violent.

The government and the police have received the lowest approval ratings since the 1997 handover in public opinion polls. Their performance contributed to the unprecedented landslide victory of the pro-democratic bloc in the District Council election, which was widely viewed as a de facto referendum on the protest movement. The Central People's Government has characterized the protests as the "worst crisis in Hong Kong" since the handover in 1997. The protests, which have continued through to December, have been largely described as "leaderless", though the Beijing government alleged that foreign powers were instigating the conflict. The United States passed the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act on 27 November to support the protest movement; solidarity rallies were held in dozens of cities abroad. Counter-protesters have held several pro-police rallies.

## **2) Military Parade of 70<sup>th</sup> National Day of China**

China held a grand celebration with a military parade on October 1, the National Day, to mark the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949. The parade features 59 formations and a military band, including more than 160 aircraft and 580 pieces of equipment. Among the most closely watched military hardware in the parade were the Dongfeng 41, a nuclear-capable intercontinental ballistic missile believed capable of hitting almost anywhere in the United States, and the Dongfeng 17 hypersonic missile.

## **2018**

### **1. U.S.-China Trade Dispute**

March 22, 2018

Trump Tariffs Target China

The Trump administration announces sweeping tariffs on Chinese imports, worth at least \$50 billion, in response to what the White House alleges is Chinese theft of U.S. technology and intellectual property. Coming on the heels of tariffs on steel and aluminum imports, the measures target goods including clothing, shoes, and electronics and restrict some Chinese investment in the United States. China imposes retaliatory measures in early April on a range of U.S. products, stoking concerns of a trade war between the world's largest economies. The move marks a hardening of President Trump's approach to China after high-profile summits with President Xi in April and November 2017.

July 6, 2018

U.S.-China Trade War Escalates



The Trump administration imposes fresh tariffs totaling \$34 billion worth of Chinese goods. More than eight hundred Chinese products in the industrial and transport sectors, as well as goods such as televisions and medical devices, will face a 25 percent import tax. China retaliates with its own tariffs on more than five hundred U.S. products. The reprisal, also valued around \$34 billion, targets commodities such as beef, dairy, seafood, and soybeans. President Trump and members of his administration believe that China is “ripping off” the United States, taking advantage of free trade rules to the detriment of U.S. firms operating in China. Beijing criticizes the Trump administration’s moves as “trade bullying” and cautions that tariffs could trigger global market unrest.

December 2, 2018

US and China agree to temporary truce

The US and China agree to a temporary truce to deescalate trade tensions, following a working dinner at the G20 Summit in Buenos Aires on December 1, 2018. According to the agreement, both the US and China will refrain from increasing tariffs or imposing new tariffs for 90 days (until March 1, 2019), as the two sides work towards a larger trade deal.

More specifically, the US will refrain from increasing the tariffs described in List 3 that were slated to increase from 10 percent to 25 percent on January 1, 2019, and will not impose previously threatened tariffs on an additional US\$267 worth of Chinese goods. For its part, China will purchase more US products – especially agricultural and energy products – and will crack down on the production and distribution of Fentanyl, a synthetic opioid produced primarily in China.

Before the truce, total US tariffs applied exclusively to China is US\$250 billion; and total Chinese tariffs applied exclusively to US: US\$110 billion.

## **2. World's longest sea-crossing bridge opens between Hong Kong and Mainland China**

A \$20-billion bridge connecting Hong Kong and Macau to the mainland Chinese city of Zhuhai finally opened in October 2018, marking the completion of the longest sea-crossing bridge ever built, nine years after construction began. Built to withstand a magnitude 8 earthquake, a super typhoon and strikes by super-sized cargo vessels, the bridge incorporates 400,000 tons of steel -- 4.5 times the amount in San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge. It also includes a 6.7-kilometer (4-mile) submerged tunnel to help it avoid the busy shipping paths over the Pearl River Delta. The tunnel runs between two artificial islands, each measuring 100,000 square meters (1 million square feet) and situated in relatively shallow waters.

## **3. Jin Yong, Chinese martial arts author and cultural icon, dies aged 94 (金庸)**

Louis Cha, the Chinese martial arts novel grandmaster said to have sold more books than "Harry Potter" author J K Rowling, died in Hong Kong on October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2018, after a long illness. He was 94. The death of Cha -- better known by his pen name Jin Yong -- is being mourned across the Chinese-speaking world, where generations have come to regard his repertoire as essential reading. Full of noble heroes and pitched battles, Cha's stories were epic, featuring not just

fantastical kung fu swordsmen who can fly and walk on water, but also complex characters and plots woven into dramatic historical events. Starting out as a newspaper journalist, his 15 novels have been adapted into more than 150 popular movies and television series, starring many of the most famous Chinese actors. Although he wrote only in his native language, and just a fraction of works have been translated into English, his loyal fans dot the entire world, earning him the reputation as the most widely read Chinese writer of modern times.

#### **4. Peter Wang, A JROTC Freshman Sacrificed Himself to Help Classmates Escape During Florida Shooting (王孟杰)**

When an expelled former student opened fire at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, on Feb. 14, 2018, Peter Wang used the last minutes of his life to help save his fellow students. Wang was one of several JROTC students who worked to protect their classmates during the shooting. Peter Wang was wearing his grey JROTC uniform with black stripes as he held the door to his study hall open, helping "dozens" of his fellow classmates escape, before he was shot multiple times and killed, according to multiple reports. Peter's heroics have been honored in many ways. A week after the school shooting, the Army recognized Wang and two fellow student cadets, Martin Duque and Alaina Petty, who were 14, with the Medal of Heroism for their acts of bravery during the school shooting. On the day of his funeral, the U.S. Military Academy at West Point also posthumously admitted Peter Wang to the academy. Peter, who enjoyed playing basketball and listening to hip hop music, could have been a member of the class of 2025.

A petition has been started in December 2018 to the White House to bury Wang with full military honors. Wang's "selfless and heroic actions have led to the survival of dozens in the area. Wang died a hero, and deserves to be treated as such, and deserves a full honors military burial," the petition reads.

### **2017**

#### **1. 19th National Congress of the Communist party of China**

Party Congress of China is a meeting held every five years among 2,000+ members of China's all-powerful Communist Party delivered critical implication of political and economic policies and development of the stemming from the Congress. The latest one, 19<sup>th</sup> Party Congress, was held in Beijing in November 2017. The most important development is that President Xi Jinping has consolidated his control over the machinery of the Chinese government. The Party Congress approved the amendment of the official Communist Party Constitution to include "Xi Jinping Thought of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics in the New Era", his vision for China's future; Xi joins revered party legends Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping as the only leaders to have their official Thought enshrined in the Party's Constitution while still in office. To go along with the tremendous symbolic import of this action, Xi's ascension will have concrete policymaking

consequences. While the highest-level Communist Party decision making has recently been characterized by consensus building, Xi is now empowered to go it alone to some extent, or as one academic put it Xi will have a “larger individual role” in the consensus.

In addition to an affirmation of the current course on the “new normal” of higher quality, but slower, economic growth, President Xi announced the institutionalization of the anti-corruption campaign, improving relations between the central and provincial governments, and addressing corporate and provincial debt among his policy priorities. Importantly, Xi also highlighted pollution reduction as a major goal. In fact, he used the word “environment” in his speech even more times than “economic”.

## **2. China and U.S. Leaders’ Visits**

In April 2017, President Donald J. Trump welcomes China’s Xi Jinping for a two-day summit at the Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida, where bilateral trade and North Korea top the agenda. Afterward, Trump touts “tremendous progress” in the U.S.-China relationship and Xi cites a deepened understanding and greater trust building. In mid-May, U.S. Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross unveils a ten-part agreement between Beijing and Washington to expand trade of products and services like beef, poultry, and electronic payments. Ross describes the bilateral relationship as “hitting a new high,” though the countries do not address more contentious trade issues including aluminum, car parts, and steel.

In November 2017, President Donald J. Trump paid a state-visit to China in his 12-day Asian trip. Trump is the first foreign leader since the founding of modern China in 1949 to have an official dinner within the Forbidden City, the historic palace in Beijing that housed Chinese emperors for almost half a millennium. Following his consolidation of power during 19th Party Congress and with the rise of China on the world stage, President Xi Jinping exuded a notable confidence in extending this unprecedented reception to the U.S. president. Trump’s Asian tour was aimed at meeting three concrete foreign policy goals: (1) strengthening U.S.-led efforts to deter and isolate North Korea and its growing nuclear threat; (2) laying the foundation for new bilateral trade relationships that reduce the U.S. trade deficit; and (3) rolling out the administration’s vision for a “free and open Indo-Pacific region.” Given record low approval ratings, discord with Congressional Republicans, and ongoing Russia-related investigations, the foreign trip also provided an opportunity for the president to temporarily escape domestic challenges and establish a fresh political narrative. U.S. companies, from chip giant Qualcomm to aircraft maker Boeing, announced a slew of deals during U.S. President Donald Trump’s visit to Beijing. The deals could be valued as much as \$250 billion, though some have been long in the pipeline and many are non-binding.

## **3. Nobel laureate Liu Xiaobo Died Aged 61 (刘晓波)**

Liu Xiaobo is China's most prominent human rights and democracy advocate, has died aged 61. He won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2010 for his "long and non-violent struggle for fundamental human rights in China", but he was not

permitted to travel to Norway to accept it. He was the second person to receive the award while in prison - the other was the German pacifist Carl von Ossietzky, who won in 1935 while incarcerated in a Nazi concentration camp. The activist had been serving an 11-year prison term for "subversion" and was moved to a hospital for treatment for terminal liver before he died there. A university professor turned tireless rights campaigner, Mr Liu was branded a criminal by authorities. The campaigner was repeatedly jailed throughout his life. When not in prison, he was subject to severe restrictions while his wife, Liu Xia, was placed under house arrest.

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