

Character Builder 您好嗎？

The basic unit of the Chinese language is the *zi* (字), i.e. a Chinese word. Each *zi* has a written form (called a character, made up of strokes), a sound (made up of consonant and vowel) and a meaning (or multiple meanings). When we speak or write Chinese, we string *zi* together to form terms, phrases and sentences.

This week: Words about Chinese cuisine

炸

Pronunciation: *zha* (Putonghua, 4th tone), *ja* (Cantonese, 3rd tone)
Basic meaning: explode, deep-fry

炸 (radical 火 *huo* = fire) means explode: 炸藥 (*zha yao* = explode~medicine = explosives), 炸彈 (*zha dan* = explode~ball = bomb).

炸 uses more oil than 煎 (*jian* = shallow-fry). Ingredients coated with 炸漿 (*zha jiang* = deep-frying~batter) are plunged into 油鑊 (*you huo* = oil-filled-wok). 炸油條 (*zha you tiao* = deep-fried~oil-strips = Cantonese 油炸鬼 *you zha gui* = oil~deep-fried~ghosts) are deep-fried dough-strips eaten with congee. 炸薯條 (*zha shu tiao* = deep-fried~potato~chips) = French fries. 天婦羅 (*tian fu luo*) is kanji for Japanese “tempura”.

In WWII Chinese restaurants served “轟炸東京” (*hong zha Dong Jing* = “bang”~explode~East~Capital = bombing Tokyo): hot soup/prawns/bamboo-shoots are poured over deep-fried rice biscuits, making a sizzling sound.

by Diana Yue