

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 fruit

甜

Pronunciation: *tian* (Putonghua, 2nd tone), *tim* (Cantonese, 4th tone)
Basic meaning: sweet

甜 = 舌 (*she*, tongue) + 甘 (*gan*, good-tasting). 紅豆沙 (*hong dou sha* = red-bean-paste/thick-soup), 湯圓 (*tang yuan* = soup-round-ball-dumplings) are 甜品 (*tian pin* = sweet-opus/dish = desserts). Ports/sherries are 甜酒 (*tian jiu* = sweet-wines).

甜美 (*tian mei* = sweet-pretty) describes looks/voices/girls. Endearing kids make parents 心甜 (*xin tian* = heart-sweet = feel sweet/pleased/comforted). Lovers call each other “甜心!” (*tian xin* = sweet-heart = sweetheart/honey/darling), share 甜蜜回憶 (*tian mi hui yi* = sweet-honey-return-remember = sweet memories).

Cheats use 甜言蜜語 (*tian yan mi yu* = sweet-words-honey-speech = sweet-language) to get 甜頭 (*tian tou* = sweet-tip/head = advantages). 甜酸苦辣 (*tian suan ku la* = sweet-sour-bitter-hot-tasting) describes the tastes of life's experiences.

by Diana Yue