

Idiom by Lon Yan

蕩氣迴腸

dang4 qi4 hui2 chang2

A popular New Territories noodle shop has opened a new branch in the city. It was featured in a food page article, which wrote about its many well-loved dishes. One of these was the marinated pig intestine, a snack the writer found so delicious that it was described as “蕩氣迴腸” (*dang4 qi4 hui2 chang2*).

“蕩” (*dang4*) is a variant of “盪” (*dang4*) meaning “to swing,” “to sway,” or “震盪” (*zhen4 dang4*) “to shake,” “to shock,” “to rock.” “氣” (*qi4*) refers to “心氣” (*xin1 qi4*) “frame of mind,” “state of mind,” “the heart,” “迴” (*hui2*) “to wind,” “to rotate,” “to revolve,” and “腸” (*chang2*) “the intestines.” Literally, “蕩氣迴腸” (*dang4 qi4 hui2 chang2*) is “shakes the heart and revolves in your intestines.”

The idiom describes music, poetry or films

that are “soul-stirring,” “heartrending,” “very touching,” “to deeply affect one’s emotions.”

“蕩氣迴腸” (*dang4 qi4 hui2 chang2*) is often used to describe epic classic romance movies, like “Love is a many splendored thing,” or “Doctor Zhivago,” as well as their theme songs and music.

Using it to describe food is rather unusual. But who are we to say food can’t be “蕩氣迴腸” (*dang4 qi4 hui2 chang2*)?

The “黯然銷魂飯” (*an4 ran2 xiao1 hun2 fan4*) – Overwhelmingly Sad Rice - in Stephen Chow’s movie God of Cookery (食神), made with roasted pork and fried egg, is so imbued with the chef’s deep sorrow that it actually brought tears to the eyes of the cooking competition judge!

Terms containing the character “腸” (*chang2*) include:

大腸 (*da4 chang2*) – the large intestine

小腸 (*xiao3 chang2*) – small intestines

盲腸 (*mang2 chang2*) – the appendix

盲腸炎 (*mang2 chang2 yan2*) – appendicitis