

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 banquets

酒

Pronunciation: *jiu* (Putonghua, 1st tone), *jau* (Cantonese 2nd tone)
Basic meaning: alcohol, wine, liquor

酒 has the radical 氵 (= 水 = water). Brandy is 洋酒 (*yang jiu* = foreign~liquor). 茅台 (*Mao Tai*, very strong), 紹興 (*Shao Xing*, sweet) are 土酒 (*tu jiu* = indigenous/Chinese~liquor). There are 紅 (*hong* = red) and 白 (*bai* = white) 葡萄酒 (*pu tao jiu* = grape~wines).

祝酒 (*zhu jiu* = congratulate~wine) means proposing a toast. Connoisseurs 品酒 (*pin jiu* = assess~wine) = sample wine. Alcoholics 酗酒 (*xu jiu* = over-drink~alcohol). Bar waitresses are 陪酒女 (*pei jiu nu* = accompany~wine-drinking~ women). 酒店 (*jiu dian* = wine~shops) means hotels, not pubs. 敬酒不吃吃罰酒 (*jing jiu bu chi chi fa jiu* = courtesy~wine~no~eat~eat~punishment~wine) means with some people pressure/penalty is more effective than polite requests.

by Diana Yue