

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 confections and sweets

奶

Pronunciation: *nai* (Putonghua, 3rd tone), *naai* (Cantonese, 5th tone)
Basic meaning: milk

奶 = 乳 (*ru* = milk): 乳牛 (*ru niu* = milk/dairy-cattle), 鮮奶 (*xian nai* = fresh~milk), 奶粉 (*nai fen* = milk~powder = powdered milk), 豆奶 (*dou nai* = soybean-milk). 乳酪 (*ru lao* = milk~curd) is made from 牛奶 (*niu nai* = cow~milk), 羊奶 (*yang nai* = goat~milk). Nomadic people drink 馬奶茶 (*ma nai cha* = horse-milk~tea).

乳房 (*ru fang* = milk~room/compartment) = 奶子 (*nai zi* = milk~diminutive) = woman's breasts/tits. 乳罩 (*ru zhao* = breast~cover) = bra. Mothers breastfeed babies with 人奶 (*ren nai* = human~milk). 乳娘 (*ru niang* = milk~mother) = wet-nurse.

“有奶便是娘” (you nai bian shi niang = has~milk~thus~is~mother) describes unprincipled persons who worship/obey anyone with money/power.

by Diana Yue