

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.

In Putonghua (the spoken form of Modern Standard Chinese) each *zi* is pronounced in one of four tones:

1st tone: 1 = diacritical mark — pitch: 5 to 5, highest prolonged

2nd tone: 2 = diacritical mark / pitch: 3 to 5, middle to high

3rd tone: 3 = diacritical mark U pitch: 2 to 1 to 4, low to lowest to high

4th tone: 4 = diacritical mark \ pitch: 5 to 1, highest to lowest)

To pronounce each *zi* below, follow its pinyin and the given tone number. Light-sound words, which have no definite pitch, carry no diacritical mark and are marked by 0.

This week: Words about Chinese recipes

雞

Putonghua pronunciation: *ji1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *gai1*

Meanings: Chicken

白切雞 (*bai2 qie4 ji1* = white/plain-cut/sliced~chicken): Use 走地雞 (*zou3 di4 ji1* = run-ground-chicken = free range chicken).

Plunge cleaned whole chicken, several 薑片 (*jiang1 pian4* = ginger~slices) into pot of 滾水 (*gun2 shui3* = boiling~water). On 高火 (*gao1 huo3* = high~fire), return water to boil. Simmer 5 minutes on 中火 (*zhong1 huo3* = medium~fire). 熄火 (*xi1 huo3* = turn-off~fire, leave to 冷卻 (*leng3 que4* = cold-become).

Take out chicken, 切 (*qie4*, cut/slice) into bite-size pieces. 熱吃 (*ri4 chi4* = hot/warm~eat) or 冷吃 (*leng3 chi4* = cold~eat = eat cold), dipping in chopped 薑蔥 (*jiang1 cong1* = ginger~spring-onion) mixed with 油鹽 (*you2 yan2* = oil-salt). Water in pot is 雞湯 (*ji1 tang1* = chicken~broth).