

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 Dragon Boat Festival

粽

Putonghua pronunciation: *zong4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *jung2*

Meanings: leaf-wrapped rice-pudding

粽 (radical 米 *mi3*, raw rice grain) = 粽子 (*zong4 zi0* = rice-puddings~diminutive) are eaten at 端午節 (*duan1 wu3 jie2* = begin~noon~festival = fifth day of fifth lunar month = Dragon Boat Festival).

裹粽子 (*guo3 zong4 zi0* = wrap~rice-pudding = make these puddings) recipe: Spread 肉 (*rou4*, meat/pork), soaked 豆 (*dou4*, beans), soaked 糯米 (*nuo4 mi3*, glutinous~rice) on 竹葉 (*zhu2 ye4* = bamboo~leaf) or 荷葉 (*he2 ye4* = lotus~leaf), 包起來 (*bao1 qi3 lai2* = wrap~up~come = wrap it up), 煲 (*bao1*, boil) until soft.

Ancients threw 裹蒸粽 (*guo3 zheng1 zong4* = wrapped~steamed~puddings with meat) and 蓮蓉粽 (*lian2 rong2 zong4* = sweetened~lotus~paste~puddings) into sea/river to commemorate 屈原 (*Qü1 Yüan2*)'s death. I'd rather eat them.