

Character Builder 您好學? 呀

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 barbecues

烤

Putonghua pronunciation: *kao1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *haau2*

Meanings: grill, roast, bake, broil, parch, toast

烤 (火 *huo3*, fire + 考 *kao3*, test/torture) means heat/warm/cook in hot air. Drenched clothes are put near fire to 烤火 (*kao3 huo3* = warm-with-fire), 烤乾 (*kao3 gan1* = warm-till-dry). Desert sun 烤炙 (*kao3 zhi4* = heats-scorches) earth.

烤箱 (*kao3 xiang1* = baking-box = 烤爐 *kao3 lu2* = baking/grilling-oven) can 烘烤 (*hong2 kao3* = bake-roast/grill) bread/potatoes. 蒙古烤肉 (*Meng2 Gu3 kao3 rou4* = "Mongol"-transliterated-grill-meat) = Mongolian barbecue. Gourmets love 北京烤鴨 (*Bei3 Jing1 kao3 ya1* = north-capital-roast-duck = Beijing duck, aka Peking duck), 烤全羊 (*kao3 quan2 yang2* = roast-whole-lamb).

Picnickers prepare 燒烤 (*shao1 kao3* = burn-roast/grill = barbecue). Food placed over 烤架 (*kao3 jia4* = grilling-rack) is easily 烤熟 (*kao3 shou2* = grilled-cooked/done).

by Diana Yue