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 (jiu) 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 釀酒 (hong = red) and 白 (bai = white) 葡萄酒 (pu tao jiu = grape-wines).


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.