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 staple foods

Signifying abundance, 豐 is 禾 (feng = grain) + 豆 (dou = bean). 豐年 (feng nian = abundant-year) means year of good harvest, praised by folksongs titled “慶豐收” (qing feng shou = rejoice/celebrate-abundant-retrieve/harvest).

A hero’s 豐功偉績 (feng gong wei ji = abundant-achievements-great-records) are eulogized. 豐富 (feng fu = abundant-rich) describes meals/nutrition/gifts/legacies. 豐盛 (feng sheng = abundant-prosperous) describes God’s grace/banquets. 豐厚 (feng hou = abundant-thick-solid) describes pay/reward. 豐滿 (feng man = abundant-full) describes a woman’s big busts or a plump/fat woman’s figure. Breast implant plastic surgery is 豐胸 (feng xiong = abundant/enrich breasts) = 隆胸 (long xiong = raise-breasts).

匯豐銀行 (hui feng yin hang = foreign-exchange-abundant-silver-company = foreign-exchange-abundant-bank) is the Chinese name of HSBC.

Pronunciation: feng (Putonghua, 1st tone), fung (Cantonese 1st tone)
Basic meaning: abundant

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