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 fruit

西瓜 (xi gua = west-melon = water-melon), 哈密瓜 (Ha Mi gua = Hami-melon from Xinjiang, China) are juicy fruit.

Chefs use 冬瓜 (dong gua = winter-melon), 南瓜 (nan gua = south-melon = pumpkins), 黄瓜 (huang gua = yellow-gourd = 青瓜 qing gua = green-gourd = cucumbers). Summer soup 冬瓜盅 (dong gua zhong = winter-melon-bain-marie) contains diced winter-melon, meat, shrimps. Dried 瓜子 (gua zi = melon-seeds) are snacks.


by Diana Yue