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

果 (guo yuan = fruit~gardens = orchards) contain 果樹 (guo shu = fruit~trees). 蘋果 (ping guo = apples), 橙 (cheng = oranges), 桃 (tao = peaches), 芒果 (mang guo = mangoes), 蕉 (jiao = bananas), 葡萄 (pu tao = grapes) are 水果 (shui guo = water~fruit = table fruit). 合桃 (he tao = combined~peach = walnuts) are 硬殼果 (ying he guo = hard~shell~fruits = nuts).

Chefs make 果撻 (guo ta = fruit~tarts-transliterated), 果醬 (guo jiang = fruit~mesh/paste = jams).

Hard work yields 勞動的果實 (lao dong de guo shi = toil~move~’s~fruit~grain = labor’s reward). Buddhism preaches 因果報應 (yin guo bao ying = cause~fruit~result~repay~echo/reply = cause~effect~repay/karma = good/evil acts lead to good/bad fates).

by Diana Yue