

# 文訊

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### 甜酸苦辣

在狹小悶熱的廚房裏，張太太額上冒着豆般大的汗珠，忙着準備晚飯。她從殘舊的電冰箱取出兩根茄子，放在水槽裏洗淨。茄子顏色暗淡，顯然放了好些日子。她麻利地把表皮破損的地方削掉，用“滾刀”切成小段，白白的肉看來還挺新鮮。鍋子裏的油熱了，她放入豆瓣醬，再倒進茄子翻炒，待煮至發軟才倒入炒好的肉末，最後撒上蔥花，一屋子飄着香濃的辣味。

張太太家境清貧，雖不至於缺油斷糧，但可以花在飯菜上的錢實在不多，每天都要為三餐大傷腦筋。這碟肉末茄子的材料都是從慈善機構營辦的“食物銀行”買回來的。對許多貧窮的人來說，“食物銀行”就是平價菜市場，在那裏可以買到各樣食糧，白米、凍肉、蔬菜、水果、罐頭，應有盡有。跟張太太一樣，不少貧苦人家一星期都會到食物銀行三四次，挑一些既便宜、品質又不錯的食材回家，做幾個家常小菜，讓家人飽啖一頓。

香港人生活忙碌，天天為口奔馳，大都無暇下廚做飯，加上百物騰貴，光顧快餐店也要數十元，經濟拮据的人肚子餓了又可以怎辦？原來在這個城市，除了食物銀行外，還有一些老闆不計成本，用愛心經營平價食堂，為生活窘迫的人提供可口的膳食，讓他們不用挨餓。

每到中午，新蒲崗某街市熟食中心一個大牌檔前都會排着長龍。顧客拿着碟子，從十多個金屬盤子挑選食物。盤子裏的菜式五花八門，聽說咕嚕肉最受歡迎，不消一會兒便給拿光，老闆娘看到後會走到火爐前再弄一盤。她把沾滿蛋漿和麵粉的肉塊放入大鍋炸至金黃，放在一旁瀝油備用。然後把蒜粒、青紅椒片煸炒，加入調味料，待醬汁熬至黏稠時，把炸好的肉塊和鳳梨塊下鍋拌炒均勻後上菜。站在大牌檔前，常常有一股酸甜味道撲鼻而來，讓人食指大動。顧客只要花

二十多元便可享用這麼豐富的自助餐，怪不得人們都稱這種食肆為“良心飯堂”。

這家大牌檔的食物每天都差不多吃光，可是有不少其他提供自助餐的食肆天天都有很多剩菜。惟恐食物不新鮮，客人吃了壞肚子，這些食肆大都把剩菜扔掉，十分浪費。

香港有些慈善團體想出辦法，好好利用這些食物。這些機構派人到提供自助餐的食肆回收仍可食用的剩菜，精挑細選後，再由中央廚房烹煮成熱飯餐，免費派發給貧苦大眾。聽說這些飯菜營養均衡，色香味俱全，嚐過的人都讚不絕口。這計劃能宣揚惜食之道，饒富意義，令很多三旬九食的人受惠。

其實，供飯送餐的何止慈善機構？香港人守望相助，為善最樂的精神，早為人稱道。在深水埗、天水圍一帶，除了經常見到“良心飯堂”外排着長長的人龍，還不時看到街上有人推着載滿盒飯的車子。他們並非“送外賣”的餐廳伙計，而是一羣派發“愛心飯盒”的義工。

在幽暗的天橋下、街角裏，義工把熱呼呼的盒飯送到露宿者手上，菜式大多是燒肉、叉燒、青菜，都是香港人愛吃的。露宿者打開盒子，飯香、肉香四溢，混着義工叫喚的聲音，瞬間冷清清的角落變成鬧哄哄的臨時食堂。可能是太餓了，露宿者大吃大嚼，只消一會兒，就吃得乾乾淨淨。

看起來富裕的地方，不一定每個人都吃得飽。偶爾飢腸轆轆，箇中滋味大家都可能嚐過，但真正長期飢餓的痛苦，卻不足為外人道。幸好香港有不少無名英雄，做生意的不怕虧本，當義工的不辭勞苦，默默耕耘，讓三餐不繼的人得以果腹，以甜酸香辣暫時蓋過生活之苦。

# Fancy Something Sweet

In Istanbul, one can watch the dusk fall over the Eminonu Pier with seagulls swirling overhead in a dark lilac sky. And one can do so while having a bite of baklava, a sweet pastry of multiple thin layers that recalls the city's long history and its mixture of Turkic, Islamic and Persian cultures.

Turkish confections are famous for their richness and diversity, ranging from the traditional to the exotic, made with such delicacies as wheat berries and an abundance of dried fruits—crisp pancakes drizzled with syrup, custards sprinkled with rose water, flaky crunchy homemade halva with pistachios, and strings of walnuts coated in molasses. They are all tasty.

For the Turks, sweet foods are both a significant facet of daily life and a deep-seated feature of religious rituals. In the past, two popular sayings—"The love of sweets springs from faith" and "True believers are sweet"—were often seen on the walls of Turkish confectionery shops. During the month-long Ramadan, nothing can be drunk or eaten from dawn to dusk. When the fast is broken, relatives and friends are invited for a supper known as *iftar*. During the meal, *börek*, an alluring dough with sesame seeds atop, is generously served.

When it comes to sweets, many cultures have made their mark. Some people believe that the French are blessed; once upon a time, the gods and goddesses of pastries and desserts descended on earth and settled down in France. With their magic spoons and ladles, they taught the locals how to make the most delicious desserts in the world: soft meringues and mousses, mouthwatering cakes, and heavenly *crème brûlées*, just to name a few. No matter how apocryphal this "sweet" story is, France is renowned for its delectable desserts and pastry concoctions.

The word "dessert" comes from the French word "*desservir*" which means "to clear the table." What began as a custom of serving sweets such as fruits and cheese at the end of a meal eventually became a full-blown art form. Over the centuries, the French created a whole collection of sweet treats—exquisite and tempting tarts, cakes, and pies—and captured the hearts of those with a sweet tooth. France is a country where eating is seen as pleasure rather than just nourishing the body, and French desserts are something to be savoured slowly.

In Japan, the concept of sweet food is philosophical. *Wagashi*, traditional Japanese sweets, are intensely sweet and often served with tea. Tasting them is like tasting life. The sugar in them is tamed and subsumed by a tinge of bitterness of the tea, so that every bite is a mix of "bittersweetness".

*Wagashi* are edible works of art, delicately created to reflect the essence of every season—blooming blossoms, green fields, harvest moon and snowy mountains. With an incredible sensitivity to aesthetics, *wagashi* artisans create sweets that appeal not only to the palate, but also to the nose, the eye and the ear. The ear? Yes, the ear. "River of heaven", "Young grass waiting under snow", "Wind in the distance"—these beautifully sounding phrases are actually the names of *wagashi*, each representing the beauty of nature.

*Wagashi* are also symbols of tradition and history. In the ninth century, Emperor Ninmyo offered rice cakes to the gods to celebrate finding a white tortoise, an omen of good luck. This ceremonial offering later morphed into a ritual during which the shogun bestowed confections on his feudal lords as they pledged loyalty. In the past, *tsubaki mochi*, rice cakes pressed between camellia leaves, were savoured by the aristocrats during *hanami*, the traditional custom of enjoying the transient beauty of cherry blossoms. Even today, *wagashi* still play an important role in Japan's endless calendar of special occasions.

In China, many festivals are also celebrated with tasty sweet foods. The consumption of such goodies is no random occurrence, as each snack is essentially symbolic of a meaningful purpose. The celebration of Chinese New Year sees myriad baked treats and savoury delights being served and consumed. One of them is *nian gao*, or Chinese New Year cake. This dessert—steamed sticky-and-chewy cakes crafted with glutinous rice flour, mixed with coconut milk and brown sugar—is thought to bring good luck to those who eat it. *Nian gao* sounds like "higher year" in Chinese, meaning bringing a more prosperous life in the new year.

In Mid-Autumn Festival, mooncakes are served in honour of the brightest full moon of the year. The small round cakes not only represent the shape of the moon, but also symbolise the unity, harmony and completeness of the family. Traditionally, mooncakes have a dense filling made from lotus seed paste or red bean paste, with a bright orange salted duck egg yolk. On the evening of the fifteenth day of the eighth month of the Chinese calendar, family and friends gather to appreciate the moonlight, and to enjoy the mooncakes and each other's company.

It is said that happiness hides in desserts. Many people love to make desserts, and love to eat desserts. When you feel down and out, you need a pick-me-up. Nothing makes you feel better than a friend bringing a plate of freshly baked chocolate chip cookies. Fancy a bite now?

Every sweet has its sour; every evil its good.  
Ralph Waldo Emerson



# 良露家之味

得到食神寵幸的人是有福的，倘若同時有兩個食神眷顧，那就更是幸福滿溢，一輩子注定與美食為伴。在《良露家之味》裏，台灣作家兼美食家韓良露常提到自己八字命中有兩個食神坐命，一個是她叫阿嬤的外婆，另一個是她的父親。阿嬤是台南人，最愛烹調閩菜；父親祖籍江蘇，擅長江浙家鄉菜。從小到大，良露周旋於各種美食中，對食物有濃厚感情。可是，天下沒有不散的筵席，盛宴過後，留下的只有點點回憶。隨着阿嬤、爸爸先後離世，貫穿良露記憶的，是與他們共享美食的時刻，還有他們炮製的小吃和家常菜。

良露兒時嗜甜，年紀小小已對甜食講究。當同學大都只懂嚼口香糖時，她已常常把肉桂棒當零嘴吃。才上小學三年級的她，只要有足夠零用錢，便會在上學途中，獨個兒走進西餐廳吃早點，點一杯熱可可。她盯着店內阿姨細心沖泡，漸漸悟出道理：美食必須慢慢細味才有意思，所以她品嚐可可時必定小口小口地啜飲，珍而重之。

每逢大年初一，韓爸爸會為孩子準備甜湯。所謂甜湯，其實是紅棗桂圓蓮子湯。他秉承祖母的傳統，在初一前幾天便着手準備，把乾蓮子挑心去苦味，把桂圓剝皮，小心翼翼把紅棗去籽。天還未亮，他已起來烹煮，為的是要子女下牀前可以在被窩裏喝一大碗，聽說這能保他們一年平安。良露長大了，才曉得願意做這件事的人，不僅要有閒情逸致，還要有堅持把傳統留給孩子的那顆心。那碗湯滿載父親對子女的愛，甜甜的味道教小妮子回味無窮。對韓爸爸來說，那是親情之味，也是異鄉遊子思念江蘇老家過年的味道。

在韓家，爸爸經常與阿嬤在廚房裏鬥法角力，讓良露嚐遍百般美食。她既愛爸爸的年味，也愛阿嬤的年味。大年初一早上吃過爸爸弄的紅棗桂圓蓮子湯，晚上便吃阿嬤做的米酒煮桂圓糯

米粥，雖然米酒的氣味有點嗆人，但是阿嬤說吃過糯米粥後整年都會香香甜甜，良露自然喜歡。

令這位美食家懷念的還有父親每年舉辦的暖爐會。過年前，韓爸爸定會邀請鄉親小敘，一邊吃火鍋，一邊說說家鄉往事。暖爐會上叔伯們大塊的吃，大口的喝，笑聲滿堂，但談到傷心激動處，他們又涕泗縱橫。年少的良露無法理解這些聚會的意義。不過，隨着時間流逝，叔伯相繼身故，參加的人愈來愈少，加上赴會的長輩連高粱酒也不能喝了，只能吃清淡的火鍋，她才明白為何爸爸年年堅持要辦暖爐會。雖然歲月不居，但良露體會到爸爸與友儕間那份珍貴的情誼。後來，她到倫敦生活，可能因為受到父親的薰陶，也不時廣邀好友回家吃火鍋。這又是韓家的飲食文化傳承。

在良露的記憶中，阿嬤只挑最上乘的食材做菜。她烹調用料毫不吝嗇，手藝極佳，家中永遠不乏紅燒鰻羹、佛跳牆、烏骨清湯這些佳餚。就連魚鬆和烏魚子，阿嬤也絕不馬虎，由選料至醃製都親力親為。

為了孫女開心，阿嬤常常親自下廚，弄不同的食物讓她品嚐。小時候，良露只愛吃甜，但阿嬤要令她的味蕾更敏銳，於是叫她嚐嚐“鹹酸甜”。“鹹酸甜”原來是蜜餞，小妮子初嚐時一點也不喜歡，抱怨的說：“好好的蜜餞幹嘛又鹹又酸呢？”當時她還不明白食物猶如人生，五味雜陳。

自幼已嗜慣佳餚美饌的良露，似乎對苦味開竅得較慢。兒時阿嬤曾對她說：“苦可清心，消逝前會回甘。”這話她似懂非懂，心裏暗忖苦中滲甘究竟會是什麼味道。她長大後，閱歷多了，才體會到：“從酸甜苦辣鹹的五味，來看歷史、人生、世界的滋味，才不枉費吃進口裏的東西。”

五味不同物而能和。

《管子·宙合》



# Dear or Dearly

**Dear** is both an adjective and an adverb. As an adverb, it means “at a high cost”: *They bought the house cheaply but sold dear. The unstable political situation costs investors dear.* **Dearly** is an adverb and means “with great affection” (*My mother loves me dearly*) and “with great eagerness” (*I would dearly love to go*). It can also be used in the same manner as the adverb **dear**: *This jade bracelet is dearly priced. She paid dearly for her mistake.*

Can you tell **uninterested** and **disinterested** apart? If you are uninterested in someone or something, you are not interested in them: *I was so uninterested in the result that I didn't even bother to look at it.* Traditionally, **disinterested** only means “having no personal involvement or receiving no personal advantage, and therefore free to act fairly”: *A lawyer should provide disinterested advice.* In modern English, **disinterested**, however, also means “not interested”. This use, though still not generally accepted as standard English, is widespread. So, if you use **disinterested** in its traditional sense, people will misunderstand you as they may think you mean **uninterested**: *I am disinterested in this matter.* It is probably better to use a word like “unbiased”, “objective” or “unprejudiced” when you mean “impartial”.

Both **repairable** and **reparable** are adjectives meaning “able to be fixed.” But there is a slight difference in their usages.

**Repairable** is usually used when we talk about solid objects: *If the goods are faulty but repairable, haggle for a further discount.* **Reparable** is used for abstract things, especially of an injury or loss: *The faults of the system are for the most part reparable.*

Which is correct—**half the class, half the people** etc., or **half of the class, half of the people** etc.? Both are correct. What verb should you use after **half**—singular or plural? It depends on the noun. If it is plural, use a plural verb: *Half of the people here are Chinese.* If it is singular, use a singular verb: *Half of the room was brightly lit.* You can either say *a mile and a half, a kilo and a half* etc., or *one and a half miles, one and a half kilos* etc. Both are acceptable. You can also use *half a dozen* or *a half dozen*. But *a half a dozen* is not standard English.

We use **each other** and **one another** when “each person in a group of two or more people does something to the others”: *Paul and Mary never liked each other. They gave one another a hug.* Traditionally, **each other** refers to two people and **one another** refers to more than two people, but this distinction is disappearing in modern English. The possessive forms of these two reciprocal pronouns are **each other's** and **one another's**: *We enjoyed each other's company. They hurt one another's feelings in the quarrel.*



## 疑問逐一解(六)

### 1. 問：“鍛煉”還是“鍛鍊”？

答：在解作“用火燒或高溫加熱等方法，使物質去除雜質，變得精純或堅硬”及“用火久熬，炮製藥石”時，“煉”與“鍊”相通。“鍛煉”有“鍛造冶煉”的意思，引伸指“進行體育運動，增強體質”，以及“在社會活動或工作中磨煉，增長經驗”，亦可寫作“鍛鍊”。不過，教育局編製的《香港小學學習字詞表》及大部分辭書只收錄“鍛煉”。

### 2. 問：“信號”還是“訊號”？

答：“信號”是用來傳遞消息或命令的光、電波、聲音或動作等的統稱，亦指電路中用來控制其他部分的電流、電壓或無線電發射機發射出的電波。

“訊號”有相近的詞義，指為傳達某一訊息而作出的特定表示、標誌、符號等，或通過電磁波發出的信號。

在這兩個義項上，內地習慣上多用“信號”，少用“訊號”，香港則“信號”、“訊號”兼用。

### 3. 問：“年輕”還是“年青”？

答：根據辭書，“年輕”和“年青”都是形容詞，均可解作年紀不大。有辭書指“年青”等同“年輕”，都有歲數不大的意思。《漢語大詞典》以“年輕”為主詞條，註明亦作“年青”。《現代漢語規範詞典》則指在表示人年紀不大這個義項上，現在一般寫作“年輕”。台灣《重編國語辭典修訂本》不收“年青”，只收“年輕”一詞。在語料使用上，“年輕”遠較“年青”多。

### 4. 問：“備注”還是“備註”？

答：兩者皆可。“註”或“注”兩字有部分意思相通，如指“用文字解釋字句”或“解釋字句的文字”，寫作“註”或“注”都屬正確，因此寫“備註”或“備注”均可。以政府文件來說，“備註”的寫法較常見。

### 5. 問：“指摘”與“指責”有何分別？

答：根據辭書，“指摘”和“指責”都有指出錯誤，加以批評的意思。部分辭書“指摘”與“指責”兼收，註明“指責”解作“指摘；責備”。如嚴格區分，兩者語氣稍有分別。“指摘”強調指出缺點、錯誤，並加以批評，語氣較輕；“指責”重點在於斥責、怪罪，語氣較重。不過，在實際應用上，兩詞的含義分別不大。



# 廚師夢

小宏拿着剛派發的文憑試成績單，垂頭喪氣地在街上走着，經過住家附近的高級中餐館，從透明窗子看到客人檯上的美食，心情才輕鬆點。他從小愛烹飪，夢想開一家餐館，自己當廚師，但媽媽一直希望他考上大學，畢業後踏實地當一個白領。

太陽高高掛在天空，小宏站在店外發呆，盯着餐館招牌上“萬福樓”三個字，心中暗道：“我文憑試成績平平，考上大學的機會很微。如果能在這裏當廚師也挺不錯。”夢想歸夢想，原來要當這店的學徒，先要拿到廚藝學校的證書。為了實現夢想，小宏決心報讀廚藝班。

在廚藝學校裏，小宏每天努力學習，一面牢記飲食理論，一面練習各種技巧；刀法、火候、調味都大有學問，並非想像般容易。導師要求嚴格，學員的制服皺了一點也會教訓一頓，幸好同學大都年紀相近，說話投契，他才沒感到太大壓力。經過一番苦功，小宏的廚藝扎實多了。他的拿手菜是炸子雞，色香味俱全，連導師也誇他有天分。

轉瞬間兩年過去，小宏畢業後獲廚藝學校推薦到萬福樓當助理廚師。到餐館打工的頭一天，他換上雪白整齊的制服走進廚房，躊躇滿志，對前途充滿憧憬。飯館的主廚叫雄哥，三十出頭已在多個廚藝大賽中摘冠，為人嚴肅，不苟言笑，廚房裏人人對他又敬又畏。

雄哥看了小宏一眼，冷冷地說：“你就是新來的嗎？以後你就跟着副廚阿偉，有什麼不懂便問他。今天就先把那邊的紅蘿蔔、洋蔥切絲。不要以為在廚藝學校學過幾年就什麼都會。”小宏點點頭，心裏涼了一截。阿偉拍拍小宏的膀子，輕聲說：“不要給主廚嚇怕，他平時說話都是這樣子的。”

那天餐館打烊後，小宏還要收拾廚房，回到家裏已是凌晨。在暗淡的燈光下，他坐在牀邊揉着痠痛的腰和腿，媽媽看到就關心問道：“很辛苦嗎？”他回答說：“沒事。媽，你去睡吧。”

萬福樓的食客大都是有錢的老饕，對食物要求很高。有一天，雄哥突然在廚房裏喝罵小宏：“來了都快半年了，連單子都不會看。陳先生要的清蒸龍躉，不是說明薑絲要特幼嗎？看看你切的薑絲，比麵條還

要粗，再切一遍！”然後把薑絲全掉進垃圾桶裏，大步走開。

小宏滿面通紅，慌張的走到砧板前。他平時刀工不錯，但愈急便愈亂。沒多久，廚房的人聽到他大叫一聲，原來他不小心把指頭給削了一大道口子，血流如注，砧板上的薑絲都染了一片紅。阿偉立即走過來，站在不遠的雄哥見狀便說：“幫他處理傷口，讓他休息一會兒吧。”

忙碌的日子總是過得特別快，小宏當助理廚師差不多一年了。有一天，客人點了一道豉油皇大蝦，阿偉叫小宏負責調味。小宏拿着茶匙，小心翼翼的按着分量，把調料放入碗子，然後拿給大廚試味。雄哥試了一口後，面無表情，只是叫小宏自己再試一遍，接着問道：“味道怎麼樣？”

小宏答道：“好像有點兒甜。”

雄哥語重心長的說：“這個醬汁是我們特製的。你弄的味道，你猜客人會來吃嗎？要當出色的廚師，調味一定要到家。”

大廚這話倒沒說錯，可是除了調味技巧外，烹煮工夫也要精煉。萬福樓的炸子雞是用古法炮製的，遠近馳名，廚師要把一勺勺的燙油澆在雞皮上，雞才會皮脆肉嫩。某天，小宏在鍋前練習把油澆在雞上，過了半句鐘，手腕有點痠軟，一不小心燙油濺到手背上，但他沒有停下來。不一會兒，炸雞出鍋了，一股酥脆香味撲鼻，令人垂涎。雄哥剛巧走過，看到金黃色的炸子雞，一句話都沒說便走開。這時，小宏才偷偷拿點燙火膏來擦。

每逢佳節，萬福樓總是門庭若市，廚房裏人人忙到不可開交。可是某年冬至，阿偉得了重感冒，不能跟伙伴一起上陣。那一晚，有幾桌客人都點了炸子雞。小宏忽然聽見雄哥叫他代阿偉炸雞，心裏又驚又喜。

萬福樓的廚房好像戰場，下菜單的叫聲此起彼伏，人人都分秒必爭，洗菜的洗菜，切肉的切肉，連頭都沒空抬起來。小宏整理一下制服，走到油鍋前去。不久，一陣清脆劈啪聲響起，雄哥回頭望一下，嘴角一揚，露出淡淡的微笑。

甜酸苦辣宜嚐遍，是非好惡總由人。

曾國藩



# MY BROTHER'S HOT CHILLIES

*Kevin Lam  
Department of Health*

“Look, there’re a lot of chillies!” my teen brother, two years my senior, shouted with joy.

I remember we were in the undergrowth of an abandoned orchard on the edge of our village. Abandoned orchards were not uncommon in the 1970s when villagers were ushered from farming into the bustling city life. Those orchards were like gems to us—our new playgrounds besides hillsides, fields and rivers. One of our favourite activities in the summertime was to scour the orchards for ripe fruits, such as lychee, longan, papaya and plum. Our luck brought us chillies that day. Having been around the village since we were born, we knew every species of plant there. The peppers my brother found were “facing heaven chillies,” and Mum, we believed, would love to supplement her cooking with them.

It was no small number. The shrub was completely covered with bright red crescent-shaped peppers, a beacon standing out against the shady green background. Like children hearing jingles blaring from an ice-cream van, we were upon it in no time.

My brother picked up handfuls of chillies and stuffed as many as possible into his shorts’ pockets. I, though an able picker, couldn’t offer much help as my clothes were “pocketless”—to be honest, they were in tatters, barely holding themselves together. So I handed my chillies over to my brother.

With his pockets bulging, my brother, sated with the spoils, smiled contentedly at me. “Let’s go round the other side and play!” he said. Always eager to get on with new adventures, we left our sorry-looking shaved poodle behind.

A bit of taxonomy—a branch of science which gives every animal or plant a fancy, romantic-sounding Latin name. “Facing heaven chilli” is scientifically known as *Capsicum frutescens*, rich in capsaicin which gives a distinctive pungent smell to our nose and a hot taste to our tongue. Among the 3,000 different types of chillies, “facing heaven chilli” fares modestly on the Scoville scale, with only 50,000 to 100,000 SHU (Scoville Heat Units), which is, however, hot enough to send your heart racing, increase perspiration and stimulate the release of endorphins. Capsaicin can be used in producing pepper sprays and green pesticides. Also, it has long been used in Western and Chinese medicines to relieve muscle and joint pains through a rubefacient effect—literally meaning causing redness—by dilating the blood vessels of the skin.

Little did we know then. And our ignorance hit my brother hard!

My brother squirmed, complaining of a tingling sensation around the groin after we had had enough of play and tree climbing. It then quickly turned into a sharp pain and a burning sensation all over his upper legs. Frightened and embarrassed, he pulled down his shorts, and two mighty rosy pink patches appeared on his inner thighs.

We made a beeline home, shouting for Mum all the way.

Mum came soon after, looking profoundly worried. She was no stranger to our mishaps and wounds, and nothing could faze her. But it was different this time. Her look made us more worried.

“Have you been bitten by a snake or something?” Mum asked, like a professional nurse.

“No, Mummy...” Our trembling voices were trailing off.

“Are you sure?” Mum pressed for a true answer.

“Yes, sure,” we answered hesitantly.

“What is the stuff in your pockets?” She noticed the bulging pockets.

“Facing heaven chillies we found in the orchard.”

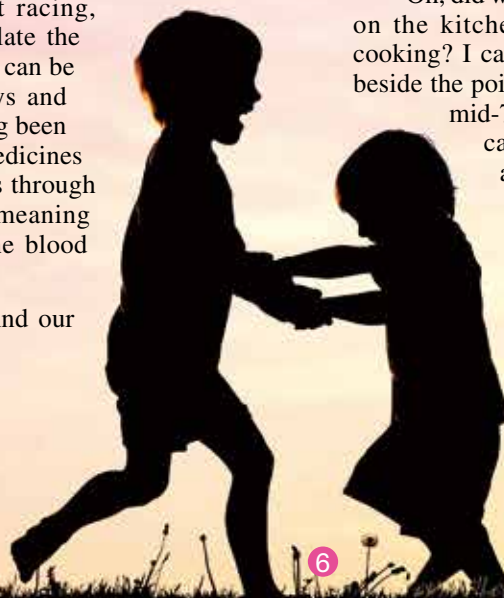
My brother was in tears now. He fished in his pockets and pulled out some mashed chillies. Mum took a look at them and let out a relieving laugh.

In the old days when resources and accessibility were limited, you needed to learn the art of self-sufficiency and create your own resources. On top of her obvious talents in mothering, cooking, hair-dressing and mending clothes, Mum was also good at diagnosing and dispensing medicines. She made quick work at addressing my brother’s agony—dousing the affected skin with ample cool water to lessen the pain and restore the normal skin colour, and completing the job by dabbing some soothing potion profusely around the areas.

My brother was soon a happy soul again!

Oh, did we later use those chillies, which were discarded on the kitchen floor, part-whole and part-mashed, for cooking? I can’t remember. Maybe; maybe not. But that’s beside the point. After the chilli incident, Mum, now in her mid-70s, went through many more anxious moments caused by her two mischievous sons, and has also, I hope in no lesser quantity, celebrated many joyous occasions with us. A knowing smile always emerges on her creased face whenever we recall this funny episode of our childhood.

Memory is a wonderful thing, especially those good and spicy ones.





# With Bold Knife and Fork

“What is a beautiful sentence to you?” When asked this funny question by one of her teachers, famous American food writer M.F.K. Fisher, then a little girl, blurted out, “Soup of the evening, Beautiful Soup.” This phrase, sung by the Mock Turtle in *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, still sounded in her ears after she grew up. This was not only because the words sounded poetic, but also because she always wanted to have a sip of hot broth when she was tired and hungry.

In *With Bold Knife and Fork*, Fisher shares with the reader her passion for food. In the chapter “Especially of the Evening,” she describes the excitement and satisfaction of making tasty soups from usually unwanted ingredients—celery stalks, parsley stems, animal bones and fowl skeletons—and praises the pleasure of having soup for a simple meal alone or with good friends. Eating a plain soup served with some bread or toast before bed would make people sleep well, she says. And creamy tomato soup with a sprinkle of cinnamon is one of her favourites.

Of all the soups Fisher has ever eaten, the most memorable is the bowl of soup she ate when she was 13. One day in the late spring of 1921, after lying sick in bed for five days with nothing to consume but fruit juice, she feels terribly lonely and hungry. A big bowl of beef soup prepared by her mother, of a colour as strong as tea with vapour rising, comes as a huge delight. Holding the bowl in both hands, the recovering child sucks every drop of the dark broth slowly, noisily and blissfully. “It was the most beautiful soup I had ever seen and smelled,” she utters.

Do you have a strong craving for a particular kind of food from time to time? Fisher does, especially for those forbidden to eat. In “Once a Tramp, Always...”, she, like an alcoholic abstaining from liquor, recalls foods she has once enjoyed with indulgence. Simply fantasising these cravings can make her happy. Years after, she can still “taste-smell-hear-see” the potato chips she ate one November morning in a hotel when she was a teenager. As far as she can remember, the chips, uneven in thickness and colour and with a faint aroma of chicken or fish, were divine. As for caviar and macadamia nuts, she, though hooked on them, thinks she can cultivate constraint if she knows they are available in the stores just streets away.

Cooking a tasty meal for someone you like is romantic. But it will be a different story if the admired one has an insensitive palate and a bit of arrogance. Fisher knows it only too well. Hoping to win the heart of her suitor through his belly, she invites him and his friends to her ranch for a gastronomic frolic. For their first meal, a simple three-course dinner, they will eat chilled marinated green beans and tomatoes to titillate the palate for the meat to follow. After the meat, which is lamb, a wonderful compote of summer fruits will be served.

The menu seems perfect. What goes wrong then? The sauce. The lamb is to be eaten with a curry sauce, light with good consistency. The meat is succulent, the sauce superb and every detail meticulously arranged, at least in Fisher’s eyes. The admired one, however, thinks differently. Haughtily, he storms into Fisher’s kitchen, quizzing her about the dishes to be served. He then picks up a big spoon and sips some of the curry sauce, murmuring perfunctorily, “You don’t mind, do you?” Without the host’s permission, he mixes a raw curry powder and stirs it into the beautiful sauce she has prepared. Guess what is the end of the story? As expected, what is supposed to be a potential romance comes to a “quiet finale.”

Have you ever noticed that there is always someone around you who seems to have an uncanny power over food? Every dish they cook tastes just wonderfully good. Some of these cooks, however, vigilantly defend the “secrets” of their recipes. As described by Fisher, “they manage to keep to themselves whatever it is that makes their creations subtly and definitely better than any attempts to approximate them.” Fisher’s friend Bertie is one such chef. Even after she has given Fisher a recipe for her dumplings, Fisher does not know how the dish should be properly prepared as the measurements of ingredients can range from “some” to “a lot”. And yet Fisher still likes her friend Bertie, believing that something nice can always be created out of the old themes, even if one doesn’t know all the secret ingredients.

Fisher has a strong passion for cooking, which has made her life enjoyable. Writing in a simple and succinct style, she knows how to spin an interesting story. *With Bold Knife and Fork* is a collection of food articles with over 140 recipes, including the simple, sophisticated and esoteric. Definitely a good read for cooks and gourmets.

The nectar of life is sweet only when shared with others.  
Adam Mickiewicz

We have to eat; we like to eat; and eating makes us feel good. No wonder George Bernard Shaw says, "There is no sincerer love than the love of food." Thanks to God, there are a variety of tasty foods in this world, be they sweet or bitter, sour or spicy. Read the following descriptions which are clues to some of the foods eaten in different cultures, and see if you know any of them.

- This rice-like dish, made from durum wheat, is a staple of North Africa.
- A meat dish made from raw ground beef served with onions, capers, seasonings and a raw egg yolk. It first appeared in French restaurants at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- This soup, a popular street food in Vietnam, consists of rice noodles, herbs and meat, primarily beef or chicken.
- This is a famous Salvadoran dish—a thick, griddled corn cake stuffed with a savoury filling, usually accompanied by a spicy cabbage slaw.
- The national dish of Scotland, a savoury pudding containing meat, oatmeal, spices, and salt, mixed with stock, traditionally cooked in a sheep's stomach.
- A Korean side dish made from fermented and salted vegetables, most commonly cabbage and radishes.
- An avocado-based spread or dip first developed in Mexico.
- This popular Italian dessert, literally translated as "pick me up", consists of cheese, cake, coffee and sometimes alcohol.
- This spice comes from the inner bark of various laurel trees, used mainly as an aromatic condiment and flavouring additive in a wide variety of cuisines, sweet and savoury dishes. Sri Lanka is the principal source of this spice.
- A dessert originating from medieval Europe, made of fruit stewed with sugar or in syrup.

Please send your entry to the Editorial Board of *Word Power*, Official Languages Division, Civil Service Bureau, Room 2310, High Block, Queensway Government Offices, 66 Queensway, Hong Kong before 14 February 2018. Watch out for our coming issue to see if you get all the answers right, and better still, if you are one of the lucky five to win a prize. The Editorial Board will have the final say on the answers.

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- 雁宕山／雁盪山／雁蕩山
- 曹雪芹
- 七夕
- 卓文君、司馬相如

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Issue No. 71 (March 2018) : New and Old

二零一八年三月第七十一期主題：新與舊

Issue No. 72 (June 2018) : Competition

二零一八年六月第七十二期主題：競賽

Contributions from colleagues are welcome. Please refer to Issue No. 42 for details.

歡迎同事投稿，細則請參閱第四十二期。

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