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CHINESE CULTURAL INSTITUTE
科泉市中華文化協會

茶葉香談

冬 WINTER

TEA LEAVES

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Chinese Proverb

"Be not afraid of going slowly; be only afraid of standing still."

"该担心不是走的慢，而是自己在原地不动。"

CSCCI 2015

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Hot Pot

By Boni Jiang

Hot pot probably is one of the most popular cooking styles in China. It is never formal dining. At any time during the year, families, friends, or colleagues can gather around a hot pot and enjoy a relaxing time. Old relationships strengthen while the hot pot broth boils. New ideas and passion evaporate and permeate around the pot, turning people's cheeks red and eyes sparkling. What a fascinating way of cooking and eating. When I graduated from college and was returning home, I had a chance to stop over in Chengdu to visit my cousin. It was a typical Chengdu summer day, hot and hazy. My cousin took me for hot pot as my send-off. It was probably the peak time of Sichuan style hot pot in China, known as ma la tang (numbing, spicy, and hot). Through a large glass window, I saw the restaurant was packed with people surrounded by steam. At each corner there stood a tall air conditioners blowing out cold air. People were sweating and drinking beer while enjoying the spicy food this summer evening.

Chengdu is the most relaxed city I have ever seen. Perhaps it has been like this all the time. No wonder an ancient proverb says: "Do not go to Sichuan when you are young." I guess it implies that life is too comfortable and there is no need to work hard. Whether hot pot was invented in Sichuan or not, it really fits this place. It is normal to spend two to three hours together over a hot pot meal. Family, friendship, and love can all grow in this atmosphere. When my cousin's family and I were half way through the hot pot with sweat dripping down, the electricity went off. Many men just took off their shirts and continued. I also followed them and gobbled.

Early the next morning I rushed to the airport for my first flight ever, and I was curious about everything in the airplane. I found the reading light and air conditioner for each passenger quite luxurious. Chengdu is not far from Guiyang, my home city. It only takes about 40 minutes to take off and land. While I was fulfilling my curiosity by looking around, all food in my stomach began to wake up and seemingly rebel. I was about to take this opportunity to explore the airplane bathroom, but a chime went off with an announcement saying the airplane was preparing for landing and all bathrooms were locked.

Once I was back in Guiyang for a while, I was invited by a friend to visit his new hot pot restaurant. He was still a college senior at that time and was unsatisfied with life's prospects. Joined by a couple of friends, he decided to start his own business. We sat in his small and simple restaurant, watching pedestrians passing by on the street. In the middle of our table there was that aluminum pot with broth boiling. My friend was talking about how they handled people who came to the restaurant either for trouble or to take advantage of other people. Doing business was never easy back in the 90s. Yet, my friend was excited about the future of his hot pot restaurant.

Unfortunately, it did not last long. Nonetheless, my friend has never stopped doing business since then. Now he has become a successful businessman. All struggles and happiness he experienced during those years are just like the flavors of the hot pot: only people who experience it can understand.

Eating fulfills a need of our body to continue to work. Hot pot, however, gives us more than food. Hot Pot is more than just a pot with boiling broth, tasty meat and vegetables. I have never seen a person having hot pot alone. Hot Pot is all about people joining together through feast and conversation.

I can't wait to have a hot pot while I am writing. Don't you look forward to seeing red, smiley cheeks and sparkling eyes through the steam?



Tray of Togetherness

By Waiyuen

The year of Monkey is coming, and one of the items that is a must have during Chinese New Year is the Tray of Togetherness 攞盒 (chuen-hop). 攞盒 is a candy box that comes in all kinds of shapes and sizes, but is most often round with many compartments inside. Each compartment is filled with a variety of candied fruits, vegetable seeds, and candies. Each food put into the box as well as the box itself have their own meaning.

There are many kinds of food that can be put into the 攞盒. For example, there is a variety of traditional candied fruit that can only be found during Chinese New Year. First the orange dried candied lotus root has the meaning of abundance, year after year. Second, the ball-shaped and yellow lotus seeds, it means to have a large family. Third is the candied melon, greenish and blocky in shape, representing growth and good health. Lastly is one of my favorites, the white dried candied coconut strips having the meaning of togetherness. These dried candied fruits are covered with snow-white sugar and the interior is soft. All of these fruits are delicious and are great treats to share with friends.

Another kind of food that is commonly found in the 攞盒 is the vegetable seeds. The most commonly used seeds are dried red watermelon seeds and dried black watermelon seeds. The red seeds have the symbolic meaning of luck, happiness, and many offspring. The black seeds have the symbolic meaning of fertility and many offspring. These seeds are all-year-round snacks, so they can be enjoyed at any time.

However, dried candied fruit and seeds are not as popular as they used to be. Most children will go for modern candies over traditional sweets. So, many families replaced them with modern candies like gold chocolate coins, fruit candy, or milk candy. They are a lot easier to get in stores, so many families prefer them.

The name of 攞盒(chuen-hop) in Chinese has the same sound of 全盒(chuen-hop) which means complete and has the symbolic meaning of "perfect in every way". In order to make it perfect, the candy box is made of wood, and sometimes for easy storage, made out of plastic. They usually come in red, the color of luck and happiness. Therefore all the luck, happiness, good health, family, abundance, and wealth are put into one box. Its name explains it all, the Tray of Togetherness 全盒 because everything is in one box and is perfect to share with family and friends.

火锅

By Boni Jiang

在当今中国，火锅可能是最受大众喜爱的饮食方式之一了，它从来不是那么正式，一年四季，家人、朋友、同事都可以围着火锅小聚，享受这个放松的时刻，旧的感情越熬越浓，新的想法和激情也蒸发弥漫在火锅的上空，染红围坐之人的脸颊，点亮他们的眼睛。想想，这真是一种迷人的饮食氛围。

大学毕业时，我第一次有机会乘坐飞机回贵阳。当时我在成都停留，拜访表姐家。这是一个夏季七月的成都，看不见蓝天的闷热。表姐带我去吃火锅，为我送行。那可能是一个四川麻辣烫火爆的季节，透过餐馆的巨大透明玻璃，我看到里面坐满了人，热气腾腾。角落里站着几个巨大的空调，呼呼地吹着冷气。人们喝着啤酒，留着汗，享受着嘴里的火辣和这个夏日的傍晚。成都是我见过的最休闲的中国城市，也许古代也如此，所以有“少不入川”这个谚语。不管火锅是否为四川人发明，但它适合这个地方。一顿火锅下来，两三个小时就过去了。无论是亲情、友情、爱情，在这样的氛围中都得以浇灌生长。当我和表姐一家吃到一半，大汗淋漓之际，停电了。其间男人大多脱去衬衫，光着膀子继续。我也入乡随俗，放开手脚。第二天一早赶到机场，好奇地看着飞机上的一切，觉得每人一个阅读灯和空调风扇真是奢侈。成都距离贵阳很近，起飞到降落不过四十分钟左右。新奇感刚过，昨日纳入肚中的各种食物调料，都苏醒过来，仿佛要齐齐造反。正想借此机会探索一下飞机上的卫生间，却听“叮”的一声，飞机准备下降，关闭卫生间。

回到贵阳，一个尚未大学毕业的好友邀约到他开的一个麻辣烫小店相聚。他和三两好友，不甘清贫，立志创业。在一条小街，面对街上来往的行人，我们坐在一个简陋的小店中，中间是那一口汤汁翻滚的两耳铝锅。朋友聊着如何对付来小店找麻烦占便宜的各色人等，以及对小店生意的热切展望。这个小店并没有维持多久，但朋友从此走上生意的道路。今日，朋友已成为一个成功企业家，而其间的酸甜苦辣，和那火锅的味道一样，只有吃到的人，才深谙其味。

吃饭，是身体继续工作的需要；而火锅，则可以给我们食物之外更多的东西。我没有见过一个人吃火锅的，那恐怕完全失去了火锅的意义。我想，火锅的时刻该来了。你难道不期待透过热气，看到泛红的笑脸和闪亮的眼神吗？



Mission Statement

The CSCCI is committed to fostering understanding of Chinese culture by promoting opportunities for events, networking, travel, education and services available to the people of Colorado Springs.

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New Year's Celebrations

By Jiaying Peng

For centuries, the New Year's Celebrations has been the highlight of Chinese culture. Although it has never been on a set day each year due to the difference in the traditional Chinese calendar and the contemporary Gregorian calendar, no one ever misses the most important holiday of Chinese culture. The Chinese New Year's has a long-standing tradition of being the most celebrated Chinese holiday. For the Chinese, New Year's is like Christmas for the Westerners. Children are on break from school and the adults enjoy time off from work. Red envelopes are handed out to children, with blessings of good health and promises of good behavior.

One of the most common ways to celebrate any event like the New Year's is with a lion dance. For centuries, lion dances have been closely related with the tradition of Chinese New Year's. It is a dance routine of two to four people standing and dancing in a brightly colored and decorated lion costume. Sometimes, the face of the lion becomes lost with the flashy decorations and is mistaken for a dragon, which is why the lion dance is also commonly miscalled the dragon dance. Another way the Chinese like to celebrate is with firecrackers and fireworks. These explosives were first invented accidentally by a monk. Since then, the Chinese have lit firecrackers at almost every important occasion, such as weddings, funerals, but mostly during New Year's as a way to scare off demons. The most common way the Chinese like to celebrate is with food, and lots of it. The most common dishes to be served at a New Year's feast is fish. It is a play on words from a saying meaning, "to have good things every year." The "good things" part in Chinese sounds like the Chinese word for fish, hence the presence of fish on almost every dinner table.

A good way to celebrate the Chinese New Year while we are here in Colorado and not China is the CSCCI's annual Chinese New Year Festival held in the City Auditorium on February 7th. The event features a lion dance and several other traditional Chinese dance performances as well as martial arts demonstrations and erhu performances in the tea house. Not only that, but the event has several food vendors offering traditional Asian fare. This event is a good way to celebrate the tradition of Chinese New

Upcoming Asian Holidays

Chinese New Year
February 8

Latern Festival
February 22

Upcoming Asian Cultural Events

CSCCI Chinese New Year Festival
City Auditorium, Colorado Springs
January 30, 2016

CSCCI Traditional Chinese Hot Pot Dinner*
U-Like Sushi Grill Buffet Restaruant
November 6, 2015

*Register online at www.csccl.org

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