

The Chinese Dragon

By Eric Woods

Many western cultures view dragons as destructive, evil, fire breathing creatures. Chinese Dragons conversely are largely benevolent and are an essential part of traditional Chinese mythology. Being one of the four Divine Creatures, Dragons are the masters of lakes, rivers, and most importantly rainfall. For this reason, pleasing the Dragons was incredibly vital in ancient China, as a satisfied Dragon would bring a good season of rain but an angered Dragon could ensue terrible drought or destructive floods. Although Dragons have catastrophic potential, they are not feared in Chinese culture. They are instead revered and are symbols for greatness, good fortune, and wisdom.

Rather than being winged reptiles similar to European dragons, Chinese Dragons are an intricate combination of many animals. The Dragon possesses the head of a camel, a cow's ears, fiery eyes of a demon, a deer's horns, a clam's belly, a snake's neck, the paws of a tiger, and the sharp talons of an eagle. Covering the dragon are 117 scales of a carp, 81 of the yang aurora, and 36 of the yin essence. This distribution of yin and yang accounts for the dragon's usual kindness to humans and its occasional wrath.

The Chinese Dragon is an interesting combination of the caring bringer of life and a powerful destructive force. It is honored in many aspects of Chinese culture, especially in art and festivals. The golden Dragon is a symbol of wealth and power, and thusly was an Imperial emblem for many dynasties. Dragons, especially red ones, also represent luck and are common sights at celebrations. The famed Chinese Dragon Dance displays the power and grace of dragons through elaborate costumed dance. From their rain bringing powers to their symbolism of luck and greatness, Dragons are central and intriguing parts of Chinese mythology.

UPCOMING CSCCI EVENTS

Students from China through a non-profit organization "Nacel Open Door" visit to Colorado Springs from July 14th through July 27th.

Hosting Families are needed, students ages 12 to 15, and two adult chaperones.

For more information about hosting, please contact the program's founder Thomas Brickel at 719-440-5696 or nacel@att.net.

June 22-23, 2013: 41st Annual Cherry Blossom Festival, Sakura Square, Denver.

September 2013: Annual Japanese Arts & Crafts Showcase- Simpson United Methodist Church, Denver.

July 27-28, 2013: Colorado Dragon Boat Festival, Sloan's Lake Park, Denver.

January 2014: Uta Gassen/ Singing Competition- Tri-State/ Denver Buddhist Temple.

August 15, 2013: Asian Pacific Community Luncheon - Full detail in coming month on our website, www.cscCI.org. Hosted by the Colorado Springs Diversity Forum.

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

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Eric Woods
Newsletter Writer
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Fun Facts of Chopsticks

By Eric Woods

A common symbol of Asian culture, chopsticks have been the utensils of choice for much of Asia for nearly two and a half millennia. Although many westerners find chopsticks near impossible to maneuver, they are perfect for the Chinese diet's mainstay of rice and stir-fry. The origins of the chopsticks date back to ancient China, where people found that using long sticks as tweezers was handy when retrieving food from deep cooking pots. It wasn't until about 400 B.C. however that chopsticks became the primary utensil for meals. When China was hit by a shortage of resources, chefs discovered that food cooks much more efficiently when chopped into small pieces. During the same time, Confucius denounced the use of knives at the home, stating that, "The honorable and upright man keeps well away from both the slaughterhouse and the kitchen. And he allows no knives on his table." The combination of bite-sized food and the teachings of Confucius effectively asserted chopsticks as the main utensil of China, Japan, and parts of South East Asia. After their spike in popularity, chopsticks were produced on a massive scale, usually made from bamboo, but also from ivory, jade, bone, and brass. Wealthy families even used chopsticks crafted with silver, as it was believed that the silver would turn black when it contacted poison. With its extensive use, chopsticks have developed complex customs and many superstitions. For example, you should never hit the side of your bowl with your chopsticks, dropping your chopsticks is said to bring bad luck, and pointing at another person with your chopsticks is considered a symbolic threat. Many Chinese locals even believe that the higher you hold your chopsticks, the farther away you will live once you grow up. Even though difficult to learn, the skill of using chopsticks is a fun and rewarding ability to have. Some studies have even shown that using chopsticks improve memory and dexterity. From its humble beginnings as simple twigs, to carefully crafted utensils used by billions of people, chopsticks are truly remarkable pieces of Asian culture.



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CHINESE PROVERB

A book is like a garden carried in the pocket.

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A Look at the Denver Dragon Boat Festival

By Eric Woods

During the Warring States Period in China around 300 B.C. the Chu dynasty was stricken with civil war throughout the country. Qu Yuan, a wise and virtuous poet, served as an adviser to the royal court. Seeing the growing power of the new Qin dynasty, Qu Yuan suggested the Han dynasty to ally itself with the neighboring Qi State. This suggestion however was seen as disloyalty to the emperor and Qu Yuan was banished into the wilderness where later wrote some of the most important ancient Chinese texts. However, when the Chu fell to the now powerful Qin dynasty, Qu Yuan was dismayed that his beloved motherland had been destroyed and drowned himself in the Miluo River. After his death, Qu Yuan became a water spirit, and his supporters cast rice into the river to appease him. However, the rice was always intercepted by the Water Dragon of the river, and after centuries of hindrance, Qu Yuan's spirit enlightened his supporters to wrap their offerings in bamboo leaves so the Dragon could not steal the food.

This tale of tragedy is how one central tradition of the Dragon Boat Festival came to be. These leaf-wrapped rice balls, called zongzi, are popular snacks that are widely sold around the Festival. Zongzi today are delicacies with fillings including fruits, meats, eggs, and sweet red bean paste accompanying the sticky rice inside fresh bamboo leaves. Also with these delicious snacks, this year's Dragon Boat Festival in Denver on July 27-28 will have so many more fun activities and events. Large Dragon Dances will awe spectators with their perfect harmony and grace. Dozens of street vendors will line the streets, selling traditional Chinese clothing, souvenirs, and tasty cuisine.

The most important and exciting part of the Dragon Boat Festival is undoubtedly the spectacle of the boat races. All day, amateur and professional teams will compete on Sloan's Lake through a multitude of exciting boat races. However, these boats are not just regular rowing canoes, the Dragon Boats are beautifully crafted ships with as many as twenty rowers. At the back of the boat, one athlete uses a drum to rhythmically keep the rowers in beat, and at the front, one competitor stretches precariously over the dragon-sculpted bow, holding on solely with their legs, reaching for the flag that signals the end of the race.



Join us for the First CSCCI Excursion!

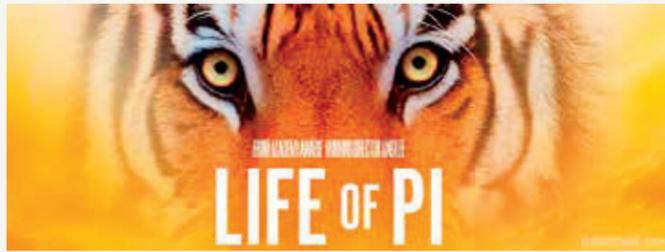
By Herman Tiemens, Vice Chairman

Colorado Dragon Boat Festival: Sat, July 27th, 2013

Starting in 2013 we will connect you to one of the best Summer Festivals held in the State of Colorado! Jump onboard our chartered coach at one of two convenient pick-up points in Colorado Springs for a fun and comfortable ride to the Colorado Dragon Boat Festival held at Sloan's Lake in Denver. At the Festival, now in its 13th Year, cheer on the Dragon Boat Racers, watch entertainers from throughout Asia Pacific, enjoy delicious food from the region and check out dozens of vendor booths.

Tickets are only \$25 for members and \$30 for non-members, which includes transportation, snacks, entrance to the Festival and the chance to make new friends with a common love for Asian cultures! Busses will pick us up at the South Circle Depot (2864 South Circle Drive Colorado Springs) at 7:45 a.m. or at the Woodmen Park & Ride (Woodmen & 125) at 8:15 a.m. After a full, exciting day at the festival, we will arrive back in Colorado Spring around 7:00pm.

Availability is limited, so please reserve your spot today at www.cscCI.org. Alternatively you can contact Jerry Hsu on 719-577-5575 or via e-mail at Jerry.Hsu@wellsfargo.com. We hope you will join us!



Film Review: Life of Pi

By: Jerry Hsu-CSCCI Board of Director

The Taiwan-born Ang Lee rapidly established himself in the 1990s as one of the world's most versatile film-makers, moving on from the trilogy of movies about Chinese families that made his name, to Jane Austen's England (Sense and Sensibility), Richard Nixon's America (The Ice Storm), and a western about a gay relationship in present-day Wyoming (Brokeback Mountain) that bestowed his first oscar.

His brilliant new film is a version of Yann Martel's Booker prize-winning novel, Life of Pi, adapted by an American writer, David Magee. From its opening scene of animals and birds strutting and preening themselves in a sunlit zoo to the final credits of fish and nautical objects shimmering beneath the sea, the movie has a sense of the mysterious, the magical. This effect is compounded by the hallucinatory 3D, and in tone the film suggests Robinson Crusoe rewritten by Laurence Sterne.

The form is a story within a story within a story. An unnamed Canadian author, whom we assume to be Yann Martel himself (Rafe Spall), is told by an Indian he meets that there is a man in Montreal called Pi who has a story that will make you believe in God. He is Piscine Molitor Patel (Irrfan Khan), a philosophy teacher, and he tells the curious story of his own extraordinary life, beginning as the son of a zookeeper in Pondicherry, the French enclave in India that wasn't ceded until 1954.

Growing up, the ever-curious Pi becomes attracted to religion and the meaning of life, a spiritual journey that the film treats with a respectful wit as the boy rejects his father's rationalism and creates a personal amalgam of Hinduism, Christianity and Islam. His faith is tested as an adolescent when his father is forced to give up the family zoo, where Pi realizes he's been as much a captive as the animals themselves. A Japanese freighter becomes a temporary ark on which the Patel family takes the animals to be sold in Canada. As fate has it the freighter is struck by a storm rendering Pi the sole survivor and captain of a lifeboat with only a zebra, a hyena, a female orangutan and the gigantic Bengal tiger, Richard Parker, for company.

This is a grand adventure on an epic scale. Pi confronts thirst and starvation, finds a temporary arrangement with the fierce tiger, endures and wonders at a mighty storm, a squadron of flying fish, a humpbacked whale, a school of dolphins, a night illuminated by luminous jellyfish. This poetic Life of Pi concludes with a fascinating open-endedness that raises questions about the reality of what we've seen and confronts the teleological issues involved. Simply put, this intensely intuitive masterpiece is Ang Lee's best work yet and quite possibly one of the most self-reflective films ever made.

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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Hot and Sour Soup

By Professor Cathy Hsu at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University



酸辣湯

Hot and Sour Soup provides an intriguing combination of both tangy and spicy savor and is a perfect addition to any meal.

Ingredients:

Pork loin chop- 3 oz
Cooking wine- 1 tsp
Soy sauce- 2 Tbsp
Bamboo shoots- 4 oz
1 carrot
2 black mushrooms (optional)
Oil- 1 Tbsp
Chicken stock- 3/4 cups
Water- 3 cups
Salt- 1 tsp
Black pepper- 1 tsp
Vinegar- 2 Tbsp
Cornstarch- 3 Tbsp
1 beaten egg
Sesame oil- 1/2 Tbsp
Chopped green onion- 1/4 cup

Procedure:

1. Julienne pork.
2. Mix cooking wine and 1/2 tsp soy sauce, then marinate pork.
3. Julienne vegetables.
4. Heat 1 Tbsp oil in a pan and stir-fry pork, bamboo shoots, carrots, and black mushrooms.
5. In a separate pot, combine the chicken stock and 3 cups of water and bring to a boil. Once boiling, add:
 - Stir-fry
 - Salt, remaining soy sauce, black pepper, and vinegar to soup
 - Separately, mix the cornstarch and 1/4 cup of water, then stir into soup for consistency and bring back to a boil
6. Remove from heat and slowly add beaten egg into soup stirring in one direction
7. Add green onion and sesame oil to soup.
8. This will yield about 6 servings of hot and sour soup. Serve hot for best flavor.

Pot Stickers

By Professor Cathy Hsu at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University



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Pot stickers are a delicious dish that is fantastic as an appetizer, snack, or meal. In addition, preparing and wrapping homemade dumplings is great fun for family and friends.

Ingredients:

Pot Stickers:
Chopped green cabbage- 1/2 lbs
Salt- 1 tsp
Ground beef/pork- 1/2 lbs
Sesame oil- 1/2 Tbsp
Sugar- 1/2 tsp
Black pepper- 1/4 tsp
Soy sauce- 1 Tbsp
Chopped green onion- 2 Tbsp
Dumpling skins*- 1 package (22-24)
Oil- 2 Tbsp
Hot Water- 1/2 cup

Sauce:

Soy sauce- 2 Tbsp
Vinegar- 2 tsp
Sesame Oil- 2 tsp

Procedure:

1. In a large bowl, mix salt with chopped green cabbage. Let this sit for 10 minutes then squeeze out excess water.
2. Combine the ground beef/pork, sesame oil, sugar, black pepper, soy sauce, and chopped green onion into another container. After this, add in the cabbage and mix well. (This mixture is the dumpling filling)
3. Place about 1 Tbsp of filling in center of dumpling skin. Moisten the edges with water and fold the circle in half. With your index finger and thumb, close the center of the semi-circle.
4. Close both ends by bringing the sides together to pleat one edge while keeping the other smooth. Pinch the pleats together, then pinch them to seal. Repeat for each dumpling. (Refer to URL provided for visual help**)
5. Heat oil to medium heat on nonstick pan. Arrange the dumpling, flat-side down, around the pan.
6. Fry the dumpling approximately 1 min. or until bottoms are golden brown.
7. Add hot water and cover the pan. Cook the dumplings an additional 6 minutes or until the water has near completely boiled away.
8. Serve warm and enjoy. If you wish, simply mix the sauce ingredients together for a tasty sauce to accompany your dumplings

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mfMWljufjU>

*Leftover dumpling skins may be wrapped tightly and frozen for later use.