

## **A Taste of Tongren: Exploring Chinese Culture through Food**

**By Amy Thronsen**

1. *Nimen hao! Wo shi Sun Hong Mei.* Hi, my name is Amy. I served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in the Guizhou province of southwestern China. During my time in Peace Corps, I taught English to university students studying to become teachers.

你好，我叫 Amy。汉语名字叫孙红梅。我是中国西南部贵州省和平队的志愿者。当和平队志愿者的时候，我给将来当老师的学生讲英文课。

2. This is the view of my city, Tongren. With a population of about 350,000, it's considered a very small city-- especially when you compare it to places like Shanghai, which has a population of about 17 million, and Beijing, which is near 13 million.

这是我所在的城市，铜仁的景色。因为只有 350,000 的人口，铜仁算是一个小城市，特别是跟上海（人口 1700 万）和北京（人口 1300 万）来相比之下，铜仁很小。

3. Over the two years I spent in China, I learned a lot about Chinese culture. And I found that many of my most memorable experiences related in some way to food, as I tried new types of cuisine, explored marketplaces, and prepared and shared meals with my students and new friends.

在中国的两年期间，我学到了很多中国文化。当我尝试从来没吃过的菜，去菜市场或者跟学生和新朋友一起吃饭的时候，我就发现很多难忘的经历都是跟食物有关系的。

4. This is Tom, one of the first people I met when I began teaching in China. He owned a restaurant near the campus where I taught, and I sometimes ate his cooking two or three times a day! Over the course of two years, he helped me practice my language skills and learn the names of many vegetables unique to China.

这是 Tom,他是我开始在中国教学的时候遇到过的第一拨人之一。他在我教学的校园附近开饭馆，有时候我一天内两三次都去他的餐厅吃饭！在过去两年中，他帮助我练习中文而且也帮助我认识了许多中国特有蔬菜的名字。

5. My students were excited to share their cooking skills with me. These are four of my freshman students, Candy, Neva, Karen and Chim. They will likely become middle school English teachers in rural towns after they graduate from the Teachers' University. They are the first in their families to attend University and feel a great responsibility to get good jobs so they can take care of their parents. I have never been surrounded by so many young people who viewed caring for their parents as such an important goal in their lives.

我的学生们兴奋地与我分享他们的烹调技巧。这是我的四个大一学生，Candy，Neva，Karen 和 Chim。他们很可能在师范学院毕业后就成为农村城镇中学英语教师。他们都是其家庭中第一个

进入大学，因此感到责任重大，要找一个好工作以便更好的照顾他们的父母。我从来没有认识那么多把照顾父母作为自己生活的重要目的年轻人。

6. As you can see from the dishes we prepared together, food is always eaten "family style" which means that everyone around the table shares the same dishes. You can take as much or as little of each dish as you like.

正如你所看到的，我们一起准备的菜或食物总是“家庭式”，意思是桌子周围的人都分享所有盘子中的菜。你喜欢哪个就吃哪个，想吃多少就可以吃多少。

7. This is another famous type of meal in China - *huo guo*. Literally translated, it is "fire pot". In English, we say "hot pot". The outer ring is a spicy and oily soup. The inside is more like chicken broth. Around the table you can see all of the ingredients we will add to the soup. The meats are thinly sliced so they cook quickly when dropped into the soup.

这个是在中国一种很有名的餐式，火锅。从字面上翻译，它是“fire pot”。在英语中，我们说“hot pot”。火锅的外圈是一个辛辣和飘着一层油的汤。里圈的有点像鸡汤。围着桌子你可以看到摆放着我们将会放在汤中烫熟的所有材料。人们都把肉切成薄片，一烫就熟。

8. This probably looks a lot different from the Chinese food you are used to eating in America. Generally, the Chinese food we eat in America is the Cantonese-style: sweet and sour sauce with stewed vegetables and large chunks of meat. The food where I lived in China was much different. Actually, food across China is quite diverse.

这看起来可能比你在美国习惯的中餐很不一样。一般来说，美国中餐是广东风味的：酸甜酱与蔬菜和大块肉。我在中国住的地方的食物就很不一样。其实，在中国食品相当多元化。

9. The food in my region was considered Sichuan-style, which is some of the spiciest food in China. Chinese people in this region like to joke by saying, "*Guizhouren bu pa la*." Which literally means: "Guizhou people aren't afraid of spice."

我所在的地区的食物风味被人认为是四川风格，这几乎是中国菜式中最辣的。这个地区的人喜欢开玩笑说：“贵州人不怕辣。”

10. This is my favorite Chinese dish - *yuxiang qie zi*. *Yu xiang* means "fish-like", and *qie zi* is eggplant. The "fish-like" means that they cut the skin of the eggplant to look like the gills of a fish. The eggplant is fried with pork and tomatoes.

这是我最喜欢的中国菜 – 鱼香茄子。鱼香的意思是“鱼状,很香”，而茄子是 eggplant。“鱼状”意味着他们把茄子切成像鱼鳃一样。茄子是跟西红柿和猪肉一起炒的。

11. This is me eating a type of candy, or *tang*, made from a thick melted sugar. Outside of schools, there are often vendors selling treats like this to the students.

这是我在吃一种糖，这种糖是通过浓缩融化了的糖制作的。在学校外，经常有人卖像这样的糖一类的小吃给学生。

12. This is what a typical market looks like. Vegetables are lined up on shelves and laid in baskets on the street, so people can easily see what is for sale. The available vegetables change constantly - depending on what is in season. Vegetables are always weighed on a scale, like the blue one on the right. They are measured in the unit *jin*, which is equal to 500 grams or a little more than one pound.

这是一个典型的菜市场的样子。蔬菜被放在货架上或者放在篮子里，人们可以很容易地看到卖的是什么。蔬菜根据不同的季节不断变化。蔬菜总是被放在像右边的那个蓝色的天平上称重。他们使用的计量单位是斤，相当于500克或者略微多于一磅。

13. People often finish a meal by eating fruit. I bought fruit from the same family for almost 2 years. Here is the baby girl I watched grow up while buying my oranges. There are markets on every block, similar to farmer's markets we have in the U.S., so people shop once or twice a day to buy vegetables and meat for meals. People shop often because it's very convenient, the vegetables are all fresh, and many families have limited refrigeration space in their homes. Let's take a walk through a few of the markets in Tongren to see the variety of things you can buy.

人们通常要吃水果来完成一餐。我在那两年中几乎总是从同一个家庭购买水果。这是买橘子的时候我看着他长大的女孩儿。每个街区都有市场，类似于在美国的农贸市场，所以人们每天在市场买肉类和蔬菜一到两次。这是因为在菜市场购物很方便，蔬菜都很新鲜，而且许多家庭的冰箱空间是有限的。为了看到你在这里能够买到的各个类型的东西，就让我们一起在几个铜仁的市场里走一走。

14. Here, a butcher displays smoked meat for his customers. The pieces on the left taste like bacon, and the pieces on the right are like sausage

在这里，一个摊贩陈列着他卖的腊肉。左边的味道有点儿像培根，右边的那块儿就像香肠一样。

15. In China, fish are a symbol of prosperity. They are served whole, including the head, to symbolize the unity of the family. During banquets, when all the meat has been eaten off one side of the fish, it is the special privilege of the host to flip the fish over to eat the meat from the second side. It is traditional for a supervisor, or someone in a higher position to eat one of the lips of the fish and the employee or lower level person to eat the other lip. Fish is typically eaten on special occasions with honored guests.

在中国，鱼是一个繁荣的象征。为了象征家庭的团结，鱼是包括头整体做的。宴会期间，当鱼的一面所有的肉已被吃掉后，把鱼翻转到另一面是主人的特权。传统上，一个领导或

地位较高的人吃鱼的一个嘴唇后，员工或地位较低的人吃另外一个嘴唇。鱼通常是在特殊场合宴请嘉宾的。

16. In this section of the market, you can buy bulk products like seeds and grains. Sunflower seeds are a popular snack that people often enjoy eating before meals.

在市场的这个部分，你可以买到比如一些散装的种子和谷物。瓜子是一种流行的小吃，人们经常喜欢在饭前嗑瓜子。

17. In some markets, you can find people making different types of food from scratch, like tofu, which requires a lot of soaking the soybeans, pressing, and draining. Tofu is a cheap source of protein that has sustained many Chinese people through times of scarcity.

在某些市场，你可以看到人们从头开始做不同类型的食品，比如豆腐，这需要浸泡大豆，挤压和排水。豆腐是便宜的蛋白质来源，在中国食物供应不足的时候曾经养活了很多中国人。

18. This is what the tofu looks like once it's fried and ready to eat.

这是一块已经做好的炸豆腐。

19. While their parents were busy making tofu, I was greeted by this group of children. They were very shy, but very curious!

在他们的父母都忙着做豆腐的时候，这群孩子和我打了招呼。他们很害羞，但非常好奇！

20. Eating noodles is more popular in the north of China than the south. It's a tradition to eat extremely long noodles, called *la mien*, on your birthday. The length of the *la mien* symbolizes long life. Noodles are traditionally thought to be popular in northern regions, apparently because they are wheat based and wheat grows easier at northern latitudes. The south is traditionally dominated by rice and rice noodles.

吃面条在中国北方比南方流行。过生日的时候一个传统是吃超长的拉面。长长的拉面象征长寿。传统上认为面条在北方更流行，可能是因为北方以面食为主而且小麦在北方更容易种植。南方则以大米和米粉为主。

21. Here you can see the process of making *jiao zi*, a popular food that loosely translates to "dumpling".

在这里你可以看到制作饺子的过程。饺子是一种流行的食物，翻译成英文是“dumpling”。

22. This is the most popular way of cooking *jiao zi*. They are placed in a steamer until the dough and the filling are cooked all the way through.

最流行的做饺子的方式是放在蒸笼里蒸，直到面和馅都熟透为止。

23. The markets of Tongren were close enough to the countryside that farmers could walk into town each morning with their produce to sell at the market.

铜仁的市场离农村很近，每天早晨农民可以步行带着他们的农产品到这里的菜市场上销售。

24. These were some of the agricultural lands just outside of Tongren. This photo was taken in the spring, so you can see the bright yellow flowers of the rapeseed growing.

这是铜仁城外的耕地。这张照片拍摄于春季，所以你可以看到地里生长的金黄色的油菜花。

25. And here is what China is famous for: rice. Rice is the most popular food in China, and its production has played an important role in China's history, economy, and culture.

这里是中国出名的东西：大米。大米是中国最流行的食品，其生产在中国的历史，经济，文化中发挥了重要作用。

26. Often, rice and other types of produce are grown on terraced fields like this one. Because many areas of China are mountainous, terracing allows farmers to grow on steep slopes. It is important that Chinese farmers make efficient use of their land; China must feed 20% of the world's population on only 10% of the world's arable land.

通常大米和其他类型的作物是在这样的梯田里种植的。由于中国许多地区都是山区，梯田使农民能够在较陡的斜坡上种植农作物。在中国，农民有效地利用其耕地面积非常重要，因为中国要在全世界 10% 的耕地上养活 20% 的世界人口。

27. By meeting farmers and grocers in the markets of Tongren, and enjoying many meals with my new neighbors and friends, I learned a lot about the people and culture of China. I'll never forget my *nai cha xiao peng you*, my little milk tea friend, who would run over to me every time I bought a milk tea drink,

通过在菜场接触农民和摊贩，以及与我的新邻居和朋友享受多次聚餐，我学到了很多关于中国的人民和文化。我永远不会忘记我的小奶茶朋友，每次我买奶茶的时候，她都会跑过来。

28. or my *Da Ma*, which means "grandma". *Da Ma* and I would leave packages of fruit and seasonal treats on each other's door steps. I loved the food, culture, landscape, and lifestyle I was able to live in China. But most of all, I loved the people I met while I was there.

还有我大妈，意思是“奶奶”。大妈和我互相把水果和点心包放在对方门前的台阶上。我热爱那里的食物，文化，景观和我在中国期间享受的生活方式。但最重要的是我爱我在那里认识的人。