

Character Builder 您好嗎？

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 ceramics

燒

Pronunciation: *shao* (Putonghua, 1st tone), *siu* (Cantonese, 1st tone)
Basic meaning: burn, cook, roast, fire

燒 (radical 火 *huo* = fire) = burn/cook. Housewives 燒飯 (*shao fan* = burn-rice = cook rice). Worshippers 燒香 (*shao xiang* = burn-incense). 發燒 (*fa shao* = develop~burn) means getting a fever.

Potters mould 素胎 (*su tai* = plain/uncolored~womb = clay bodies), 上釉 (*shang you* = on~glaze = cover/paint with glaze), fire them in 窯 (*yao* = cave/oven = kilns). 低溫燒 (*di wen shao* = low~temperature~firing) produces potteryware, 高溫燒 (*gao wen shao* = high~temperature~firing) produces porcelainware.

紅燒 (*hong shao* = red~cook) means cooking in thick dark sauce. 燒鴨 (*shao ya* = roast~duck), 叉燒 (*cha shao* = fork~roast = barbecued pork), 燒肉 (*shao rou* = roast~pork) are Cantonese 燒味 (*shao wei* = roast~taste = roasted meats).

by Diana Yue