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酒吧——即兴创作的音乐
在夜幕降临时
微风——来自世界的成都味道
是不负造访时光；

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There is no obvious connection between ink and springs. But take a look at the characters themselves: 泉水 consists of two components, 水 (water) and 泉 (spring), and it consists of two components, 门 (door) and 水 (water). 水 and 也 are both colors, and total opposites. And 也 and 之 are both part of the five elements held by the ancients and used in traditional Chinese medicine.

There are numerous well-known couplets in Chinese. I’ll leave some here, so grab your e-dictionary and enjoy digging the subtlety and beauty in them! And maybe you can come up with some English couplets better than “Study hard, work hard, make money more and more. Eat well, sleep well, have fun day by day.”

You may know > 小年 (xiǎonián) “Small Spring Festival”
New Year’s Eve falls on the 23rd day of the 12th lunar month (February 3 in 2013), and it is known as the “Small Spring Festival.” On this day, preparations for the new year, including a thorough cleaning of the home, shopping for new year decorations and gifts, and preparing food for the new year: it’s a busy time for domestic activities.

But do you know this? This year, 之春 (zhīchūn) (the start of spring) occurred before the first day of the new year, making the lunar year 2013 a “blind year” (目盲年) or “window year” (窗口年). Just as the name implies, it is considered unlucky to get married in such years, so unlike in some years, people aren’t rushing to the marriage office. The craftsman used a special type of paper with a crepe-like texture so that it would burn easily and fast. The “thieves” often went too, in order to cook their “trophies” in the field like a picnic. The belief goes that the harder the farmers work, the better the luck that befalls the people. But do you know this? Young people in suburbs and the countryside have fun on the first day of the lunar month by stealing vegetables from nearby fields. The activity, called “stealing the green” (偷青), was, in more conservative days, a good chance to make friends with people of the opposite gender. The “thieves” often steal fresh leaves in order to cook their “trophies” in the field like a picnic. The belief goes that the harder the farmers work, the better the luck that befalls the people.
You've talked about your parents’ expectations for you, as a first-generation Chinese American, and those didn’t involve pursuing a writing career and moving to China! So what do they think about your cooking—and your career—now?

They think it’s fine. They love the jiaozi. I think that they prefer southern food, like they grew up with, and my cooking tends to be more northern or Sichuan. They’re happy with the way things turned out. I think, as a parent—I can understand it now—having a child of my own, you want them to be happy, and your parents sometimes think they know what’ll make you happy. But at the end of the day if I’m happy, then I think they’re happy.

What do you think about the state of food writing in China?

I think domestically it’s a profession in China that hasn’t gotten a lot of respect. People don’t really believe reviews; they think critics are getting paid off and that kind of thing. I hope that will change and that food writing will become something that’s taken more seriously in China as it is now in the west and many developed countries.

The genre of foreigners writing about China is largely constituted of white males. Obviously, you don’t fit this stereotype.

I think it’s changed a lot in the last decade that I’ve been here. I think there used to be a much greater proportion of white men in the profession, and that’s changed, starting in the ’70s and ’80s, and now, I think there are a lot of female voices. I think there are a lot of Asian Americans and Asians of any kind of descent who are writing about China for a wider audience, so that’s encouraging. I think that everyone comes in with their own perspective, whether you do have a background with...
Derek Sandhaus

A s a university student in the American Midwest, Derek Sandhaus had his eye set on filmmaking. When plans to enroll in graduate school in Berlin didn't pan out, he decided "on a complete whim" to move to Shanghai and teach English for a year. Like many long-term foreign China residents, he soon realized that one year wasn't enough to experience China ("I don't know if falling in love with it is the right word.") Sandhaus explained. "Maybe, like how a fly gets stuck on fly paper, maybe that's more what happened"). But it was enough to convince him he needed to find another line of employment. Armed with encouragement from positive feedback to the occasional mass e-mails to friends and family, plus a degree in philosophy, a minor in German, and knowledge from "one anthropological approach in my own writing; I'm not just interested in China or you don't have a background in China and you use that to your advantage. Everybody has to have a niche, so it's not like one is better than the other. Certainly some people have more connections or know the industry better, but I think if you work hard at it and you find a unique perspective, I think it's still a place that outsiders are interested in understanding, and I think there's lots of room for differences.

How do you feel about being compared to Fuchsia Dunlop?

I think it's an honor. I think she's written amazing cookbooks, and she knows a lot about Chinese food. I think she's done great things for the understanding of Chinese food, I haven't met her in person, but we've certainly crossed paths and had acquaintances and friends in common, and I'm sure I'll have the chance to meet her someday.

Would you count her as an inspiration for your work?

I'm thinking of something a little different—I thought about writing cookbooks, but I haven't really gone in that direction yet. I take more of an anthropological approach in my own writing, I'm not just interested in food—I'm interested in the things that go on around food, and I think that comes across a lot in the book I'm working on now.

Chengdu is often described as a culinary capital. Do you think that you've been influenced by the food scene there?

Derek Sandhaus had his eye set on filmmaking. He found it in the form of writing historical tours of China and Japan … that was a requirement to graduate," Sandhaus set out looking for writing work. He found out that the Shuan food that my husband and I know from Beijing is kind of different from what people eat here. I was really surprised, like the love of rabbit—I didn't know there would be so much rabbit and rabbit meat. Some of the dishes my husband and I liked to eat are sometimes hard to find, like your kungpao chicken or the Chongqing laoji. It seems there's a huge amount of hotpot, that sometimes gets old. I think we definitely need to do more exploring, and I'm confident we'll find the good places to go.

What do you make when you cook at home?

We do a mix—since it's hard to find good Western food here, we probably do that a little more. It varies. But our daughter likes spicy food, so that's encouraging.

Any final thoughts for our readers?

Send me good restaurant tips! Anyone can send them to me; I'd love to hear from people!

TRAVEL

05A+E

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You had a relatively quick ascent to success in the China writing world. What's your secret?

I think a lot of people are trying to balance the idea of making more money with the idea of doing what they want to do, and I think those are two very different goals. So for me the concern has always been what will get me the next step on the ladder, not what will get more money in my pocket. I was at least a couple years into the process before I was making anything like I could have made being an English teacher. There's not a lot of money in it, but if you can stick with it, eventually the people who are just doing it because they want to be able to tell their friends they're a writer, those people drop out when they realize there’s no money there, and then there's just the crazy assholes who are OK working for nothing. Like myself.

You're very prolific, publishing a book a year since 2009. Can you talk about your work process?

For the book that I'm currently working on, the average working day would involve outlining what I wanted to write, getting all my ducks in a row in terms of making sure I had all the research I needed for that bit of writing at hand. And then maybe having lunch, I'd have a Chinese lesson somewhere in there, too, walk the dog, maybe. And then in the afternoon is when I'd do most of my writing. The general goal per day is one to two thousand words.

Obviously you can go on researching forever and always, so it's important to give yourself a date and say that's enough and I'll miss something I miss something. I think if you're disciplined and if you don't have too many distractions, I think a book a year is not so crazy. If you can get the research down to half a year, and you can write a thousand words a day, which is not a small amount, but is not an unreasonable amount, say it's a 75,000 to 90,000-word book, you can do the writing in three or four months, and then a couple months to clean it up.

And I don't want to give the wrong impression—I've spent a lot of hours at my house, sitting around in my pajamas and looking at the 50th Internet article so that I don't have to write because I'm just not feeling that particular day.

So what do you do on those days?

I generally read the articles on the internet.

Do you think this book is going to seal your fate as "the baijiu guy"?

I just went up to Shanghai last week, and it seems like "the baijiu guy" was kind of how people were identifying me there. Which is great, because my last book is about gay sex—I love that book, Décadence Mandchoue—it's a really interesting book about the gay community in Beijing around the turn of the 20th century, but obviously alcohol is more accessible to people. But I think it gives people a bit of a mistaken impression about me that I'm really drunk all the time. I'm more interested in cultural/historical perspectives. I drink baijiu, but not all the time.

Do you think baijiu enhances the quality of life?

Depends on the day, doesn't it? I think it can. One thing about baijiu is that it's something that's not really frowned upon the way that maybe hard liquor is in the west. In a social setting, drinking baijiu and even getting completely stifaced is totally OK. Drinking baijiu is a great way to get people to let their guard down and tell you about what they're actually thinking as opposed to what they think you want to hear about. It's a really great way to make friends.

But the act of drinking it itself?

I think there are a lot of aspects of it that are unusual to the foreign palate. It's a big hurdle that people need to get around because it just does not smell like things that we're used to putting in our body outside of China. However, one thing that I've found, drinking quite a bit of baijiu from all over the country is that the taste is often not so bad. There are baijius in my liquor cabinet at home that I think are a fine drink to sip at out of a glass like you would any other hard liquor.

Most people outside of China are not used to drinking liquor that is as strong as baijiu—just the fiery sensation can be off-putting. It's also consumed in a very different way. I think most people like to drink their hard liquor in cocktails, and baijiu is not traditionally consumed in cocktails. That said, I find it quite well, but you can't make the same cocktail that you would make with other spirits and just substitute baijiu because it has such a distinct flavor. A lot of these experimental cocktail bars in Beijing and Shanghai are starting to add cocktails that have baijiu to their menus. Beyond that, alcohol plays such an essential role in Chinese life, and this is one aspect of Chinese culture that has been overlooked by just about everyone. Nobody talks about Chinese alcohol in the same way that they talk about tea or Chinese cuisine or dragon boats or pandas.

Do you think it’s possible to be successful in business in China and not drink baijiu?

In terms of the business world, it really is quite possible. You have to be able to take it in social settings, but you can do that with any other spirit. The only hurdle that people need to get around is the fact that it just does not smell like things that we're used to putting in our body outside of China. However, one thing that I've found, drinking quite a bit of baijiu from all over the country is that the taste is often not so bad. There are baijius in my liquor cabinet at home that I think are a fine drink to sip at out of a glass like you would any other hard liquor.

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CHENGDOO
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world, and Sichuan Chengdu because it’s so important to the baijiu blog in the idea that maybe I moved out to No, I might mislead people a little bit on my Was that specifically for the baijiu? You relocated to Chengdu in fall 2011. able to drink several bottles in one setting. baijiu was rationed so you wouldn’t have been Chinese history. In the early Communist years pressure to drink here, and that’s pretty new in this binge-drinking ritual. There’s tremendous because the act of driving gets them out of they could have just as easily have taken a cab instance,
[212x508]I think a lot of people drive when lot. However, I think this is changing a bit. For
[395x585]calendar for more details. For more about
culture at the Bookworm International Literary
Derek Sandhaus speaks on China’s drinking culture at the Bookworm International Literary Festival on Saturday, March 9, at 7:30 p.m. See calendar for more details. For more about
http://300hotspots.com

Noteworthy: The baijiu contained some kind of cobra (two packs of cheap cigarettes). The green snake baijiu, on the other hand, is a must-try bands anyway and definitely leaves your throat with the feeling of just having smoked the same goes for the white snake baijiu (which might lead to bad puns about ‘80s hair at RMB25 per snake steak. The snake in mala sauce is not worth the time or effort and hotpot is worth a try, and the aromatic fried snake is an absolute must-order the delicious RMB15 snake soup. The Cantonese snake mushrooms, start the meal with

Verdict during the course of our late lunch we started wondering why snake is not much more commonly eaten: The fattest meat seems more healthful than most other animal flesh that’s widely consumed and also more delicious and versatile. This restaurant in particular boasted a nice and very attentive staff, and we heartily recommend coming with friends so that you can try a variety of snake dishes and also afford the spectacle of ordering the entire snake (RMB200 to 300).

What better way to ring in the year of the snake than by feeding snake to Dandoval? Or so we thought, until we tried to find a restaurant that served snake. Not that we’d ever tried before, but we were under the impression that this species highly developed post-anal glands which, when the snake is picked up, are species’ highly developed post-anal glands which, when the snake is picked up, are species’ highly developed post-anal glands which, when the snake is picked up, are released from the slit at the base of the tail (called the “stink snake”, or “stinking goddess.” This name, according to Wikipedia, “referral” to this species’ incredible ability to leave a foul smell Скользящей. 

Dandoval, who claims to have killed, grilled, and eaten rattlesnakes, continued singing praises: “Snake is the new white meat. Actually it’s like dark meat chicken. This should be on the KFC menu. Dandoval? Or so we thought, until we tried to find a restaurant that served snake. Not that we’d ever tried before, but we were under the impression that this would be an easy task. Finally after numerous phone calls, we found a two-year-old restaurant with a minimalist menu. The manager recommended the Guangzhou-style snake hotpot, and although he couldn’t help us with live cobra heart or snake eggs, he offered an exotic alternative: (a paradoxically) green-colored baijiu infused with the gall bladders of two snakes (“It’s like a cheap vodka mixed with a cheap baijiu and a strange, strange flavor,” remarked Dan after a sip.) As Dan cringed and his voice Dandoval? Or so we thought, until we tried to find a restaurant that served snake. Not that we’d ever tried before, but we were under the impression that this would be an easy task. Finally after numerous phone calls, we found a two-year-old restaurant with a minimalist menu. The manager recommended the Guangzhou-style snake hotpot, and although he couldn’t help us with live cobra heart or snake eggs, he offered an exotic alternative: (a paradoxically) green-colored baijiu infused with the gall bladders of two snakes (“It’s like a cheap vodka mixed with a cheap baijiu and a strange, strange flavor,” remarked Dan after a sip.) As Dan cringed and his voice...
Xinjiang usually conjures images of the vast deserts of the Gobi or ancient stops along the ancient silk road—but much of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region is covered in beautiful grasslands that extend to the northwestern edges of China.

Heading west from the deserts of Urumqi will lead you to Ili (known as 伊宁/yīníng in Chinese), the capital city of the Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture (伊犁州/yīlízhōu) in the northwestern-most reaches of the country. The road from Urumqi to Ili is long (eight to ten hours by car), but the journey offers spectacular views and places to stop, including the huge, crystal-clear Sayram Lake (赛里木湖/sàilǐmù hú). The marvelous natural scenery that surrounds the lake is dotted by Mongolian homesteads offering horseback rides (RMB20 to 40 per hour) and is an ideal stopping point for a late lunch before continuing on the journey.

After a late-day arrival in Ili, rise early the next day to visit the Nalati (Narat) grasslands (那拉提草原/nàlādī cǎoyuán), which are divided into two parts—to the right, a plateau grassland that is the summer home to a large nomadic Mongolian population (wintertime snow drives them to lower ground during the cold season). At this part of the grasslands, locals offer horseback rides, meals (including locally made cheese), and yurt-stays to tourists. The other part of the grasslands is mountainous and much less set up for tourism. Although it can provide the traveler a glimpse at the winter residences of the locals, any additional sightseeing comes at a premium that seems a much lesser value than the offerings of the other side of the grasslands. Entrance and bus tickets for both parts of the park are sold separately.
To the southeast of Nalati is the Bayinbuluke prairie (巴音布鲁克草原 bāyīnbùlǔkè cǎoyuán). The terrain here is a mixture of grassland and marsh; the large, grassy fields teem with life. For anyone interested in birding, this location—which was until recently closed off to foreign visitors due to its military bases—offers a fantastic array of migratory birds. The highlight of the marshland is a winding river that snakes from one side to the other as it disappears into the horizon, a view immortalized in poetry. The park has a hill that overlooks the bends as far as the eye can see, guaranteeing one of the most amazing sunsets in the world (weather cooperating).

**Practicalities**

The most practical way to explore this sprawling region is by hiring a car and driver, which allows you to stop along the road (highly recommended). Finding accommodation can be tricky at times, and the area’s tourism industry is still very much under development. It’s best to ask around for prices before choosing a place. For all of the above places, snacks and good hiking shoes are essential. Temperatures can drop, so layers are recommended, even if the daytime weather doesn’t require them. Use of mosquito repellent is highly advised, especially at dusk around the marshlands.

Photos provided by PureQuest Adventures. For more adventure ideas, please visit www.purequest.com.
Cần Thơ, the biggest city in Vietnam’s Mekong Delta, is a three-hour bus ride south of Ho Chi Minh City and the central traffic hub for discovering the southern tip of Vietnam. Cruise boat operators will offer to take you either northwest across the Cambodian border and all the way to Phnom Penh, or around for the day to floating markets and the surrounding villages that are connected only by waterways. Longer two or three-day tours lead you to relaxing beaches in the southeast and tropical islands. Despite being one of the densest populated areas in the world, the tiny region produces more rice than Japan and Korea together and offers a variety of flora and fauna protected in many wild sanctuaries and national parks.
New vocabulary appears frequently on the Chinese Internet. Here are 10 of the most frequently used slang phrases, most of which allegedly originated online. These days you see and hear them almost everywhere—on the street, on the phone, on Weibo, and more. Amaze and impress your local friends by casually dropping one or two of these in-style phrases into your next conversation.

1. 伤害 (kànhài) to cheat; to be cheated or deceived
   Literally, this can be translated to “cheat your father,” but used in this fashion, “father” represents the speaker. People use it as a joke when they feel something is unfair, or when they feel shocked or astonished. For instance, if I find a bug in my bowl of noodles at a restaurant, I might yell, 太坑爹了! (tài kēngdiē le!) It can also be used when one is not very satisfied with how things turn out—for example, if I thought I passed my Japanese exam, but it turned out that I had actually failed it, I would say 伤不起 (shāngbùqǐ) can’t stand the pain; easily hurt
   Rumor has it that a student of French wrote this phrase on Weibo (micro blog) to complain about how hard French is: “学法语的人你伤不起啊” (xué fǎyǔ de rén nǐ shāngbùqǐ ā). People use it as a joke when they feel cheated or deceived.

2. 伤不起 (shāngbùqǐ) can’t stand the pain; easily hurt. This is a very popular example of the mix of English-Chinese language. In a TV show, a guest said in a fierce voice to address customers. This word has its roots in the English phrase “I can’t handle it.”

3. 伤害 (kànhài) to cheat; to be cheated or deceived
   This is one of the most famous buzzwords on the Internet. Millions of young people—mostly males, but the term is becoming increasingly popular among females—call themselves 自嘲 (zì cháo) self-mockingly. Baidu legend has it that the term originated from posters on a forum about the football star Liyi. Liyi fans are known as “yi” (from yi + the si from 粉丝/fēnsi/fans), and on the forum they were complaining about their lives. Observers started referring to them as diaosi, and the phrase caught on quickly to refer to any young man who doesn’t have much going for him in terms of wealth, looks, or cool factor.

4. 爱疯 (ài fēng) iPhone
   The literal translation is to be crazy in love, in love to the point of madness. And the pronunciation is identical to the Chinese pronunciation of “iPhone.” Coincidence?

5. 亲 (qīn) dear (as a form of address) frequently used by Taobao sellers to address customers. This word has its roots in the pronunciation of miánrén, which means sweetie or honey but is too intimate a form of address for a seller to a customer. So it has been shortened to “亲” which is also commonly used by friends, colleagues and classmates without the very intimate connotation of亲爱的.

6. 坑爹 (kēngdiē) to cheat; to be cheated or deceived
   Literally, 爹 means “father,” and 坑 means “cheat.” This term can apply to both males and females, children and adults (including my 35-year-old teacher, when he makes a baby face). And those people who post their photo on the Internet trying to look innocent, or doll-like? Totally maimeng. It’s also used in jest between friends, as in 别卖萌了 (bié màiméngle)! It can also be used when one is not very satisfied with how things turn out—for example, if I thought I passed my Japanese exam, but it turned out that I had actually failed it, I would say 伤不起 (shāngbùqǐ) can’t stand the pain; easily hurt.

7. 伤不起 (shāngbùqǐ) can’t stand the pain; easily hurt
   Literally, “I can’t handle it.”

8. 贱 (qiàn) cheap
   This is a very popular example of buzzwords on the Internet. This expression refers to young people bucking tradition by marrying before they buy a car and apartment, sometimes even without even a party. This is a trend because of rising costs of living.

9. 高富帅 (gāo fù shuài) tall, rich, and handsome
   Some female Internet posters claim that this is their criteria for boyfriends/husbands.

10. 打酱油 (dǎjiàngyóu) that has nothing to do with me
    An oldie but goodie, this expression literally translates to “buying soy sauce.” A man-on-the-street interview in 2008 about the Edison Chen sex-photo scandal led to the popularization of this phrase as meaning “That has nothing to do with me.” The interviewee, when asked about his opinion, replied, “It has nothing to do with me, I was just stopping by to get some soy sauce.”
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