



Merry  
Christmas



Happy  
Holidays

*Friends at a Colorful Shrimp Dinner*

*L to R: Linda Liu, me, Winnie (the other Am. tchr.),  
Bino (Winnie's brother), and Kevin Zhang*

## Taste of Hunan

### What I Actually Eat!

#### Stir-fried greens – Bái Cài or Bō Cài

Take a bundle of kale, mustard greens, spinach or Chinese cabbage (easily purchased from street vendors) and clean it thoroughly to remove pesticides and worms.

Stir-fry the greens in a hot wok with oil (sunflower, vegetable or olive), fresh garlic, dash of vinegar, a pinch of salt and a little chicken broth to steam it – be careful not to burn the greens!

#### Eggy Thing

Take 4 or 5 fresh chicken eggs (also easily purchased from the street vendors), and beat them with fresh chili peppers, scallions (finely chopped), garlic and a little salt.

Pour this mixture into a heavily oiled medium heat wok. After a short period of time (I still haven't mastered the timing), flip the egg "pancake" to heat the other side.

#### Beef or Pork Stir-Fry

Thinly slice lean steak and marinate in a mixture of soy sauce, garlic, chili peppers, red wine (sweet or dry), chopped cilantro and grated ginger.

Stir-fry this in a hot wok and remove from wok. Now stir-fry (in this order) broccoli florets, carrot strings, red bell pepper strings, scallions, and more garlic. Add the meat back to mix the flavors. Serve with steamed white rice.

## DID YOU SHOWER TODAY?

### Taking the Basics For Granted

No. 1 Railway Middle School, Changsha City – If you showered today, consider yourself privileged and clean! Did you have power yesterday? If so, be thankful that you were warm in the middle of the night.

Currently, much of China is facing a long winter with frequent power outages and water rationing (Oh Joy!). Following the dry summer, many of China's hydroelectric power stations are without ample water to sustain the more than 40% of the total power provided by this method.

Due to the difficulty of getting any hard facts about this, my reporters are relying on much hearsay, but sources say that at least three times per week, various areas of the city will be cut off from power at different times of the day to ease the strain on the electric system. At the same time, water will be randomly turned off without warning. The basic idea here is that if you think you will get to shower or do your dishes whenever you please, buckle up because it will hit you when you least expect it, and often at the most inopportune times!

## Special Thanks

Throughout the last three months, many people have been amazing about keeping in touch, and I would like to thank all of you – it's a great feeling to be connected to "home" so easily, and it keeps me grounded.

I would especially like to thank **my parents** for their generosity and diligence in sending me many needed supplies (warm clothes, vitamins, shoes, etc.). I love you and miss you!

This issue wouldn't be complete without many wonderful photographs taken and donated by my friend and fellow foreign teacher, **Winnie Chai** – thank you for your talent and being a great friend.

And, thank you to **Christine Kordiuk** for putting together some supplies for me (in the midst of her crazy, wonderful life) to send with Eva – clothes, coffee, deoderant (they don't wear the stuff here!) and other incidentals. Good luck with Café Ballou!

In advance, I would like to thank **Eva Sitek** for leaving room in her suitcase to bring me those items when I will see her in Hong Kong in January. We are going to have a blast! See you on the 5<sup>th</sup>!

### Thanksgiving Lesson Plan Description

Me: We are celebrating a holiday in America this Thursday. Do you know which holiday?

Class: (blank stares)

Me: I will give you a hint, but first I need 12 volunteers to come to the front of the class.

Class: (frightened looks and frantic moves to hide under desks)

Me: Okay, I will choose then: 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10-11 and .... yes, you, 12. Come to the front of the class.

(I give them random large letters on pieces of paper with all of the letters for Thanksgiving.)

Me: Now I want you to spell a word with all of these letters -- please stand in order and show your letters to the class.

Class: (riotous laughter when they realize how narrowly they escaped being called on to go to the front of the class and make fools of themselves)

Students at front: (lots of chatter in Chinese as they try to figure out what I just said in English until one person figures it out and starts to lead the group into spelling something)

### THANKSGIVING

And finally, they know what we will talk about for the remaining 2 minutes of class! Just kidding -- at this point, I explain about the term "Giving thanks" (i.e. "I am thankful for...") and ask them to write 5 things they are thankful for and then have a conversation with their partner (IN ENGLISH) that goes like this:

Partner A: What are you thankful for in your life?"

Partner B: I am thankful for \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. What are you thankful for?"

Partner A: I am thankful for \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_."

Pretty enlightening, eh?

### COOKING LESSONS

During my time here, I've been very fortunate to have lessons in traditional Hunan cooking from some of the great cooks I have encountered. Early on, I learned how to make "snowballs" from my friend and mother figure (don't worry, Mom!), Mrs. Dai. And, if I do say so myself, I think I have mastered



Me and Mrs. Dai

this dish!

Just a few weeks ago, Winnie and I were invited to learn how to make Chinese dumplings (jiǎozi) from a woman who comes from the north -- where they are popular.

To my dear friends and family ~

I'm so sorry I didn't send out a newsletter at the end of November, but my staff was slacking off a bit, and it took a while to whip them back into shape. Everything here is going well -- and it almost seems as if I have a "normal" life, which is why there is not much to report that seems strange.

Thanksgiving was very nice. I spent the week teaching about Thanksgiving (see lesson plan on this page), and that kept me in the spirit all week -- demonstrating all of the things that I am thankful for.

That night, one of the teachers took me for a Thanksgiving meal with his 9 year-old daughter at a five star hotel. It was nice, but it wasn't the same without my friends and family. I had fun teaching them to use a fork and knife, though.



Two of my adoring students

Now that Christmas is just around the corner, I've begun to get in the spirit and my students are creating Christmas cards for their friends that include one wish and one compliment. My wish for all of you is that you will have a holiday season (and a lifetime!) of laughter and peace. I can't possibly provide individualized compliments here, but if you are receiving this newsletter, you are special to me, and my standards are pretty high!

### (Cooking Lessons, cont')

It was a great affair with many people involved, and Winnie and I were the hit of the party. I would be remiss if I didn't mention the woman of the hour, though -- she made more than 160 dumplings (Winnie and I really probably only made 10 of those...), and she did absolutely everything from scratch. I believe that it took 3 hours from when she started to when we sat down for the meal -- not bad, Mrs. Li!



Mrs. Li chopping veggies



A master chef in training

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