

Ancestors have a special seat at the table for ‘Ghost Festival’

The first time I ever experienced “Ghost Festival” with my husband’s family in their rural Zhejiang village, it was the table that caught my attention.

Zhongyuan Festival, also known as Ghost Festival, falls on the 15th day of the seventh lunar month each year.

Two candles up front illuminated a fine spread of homemade delicacies from my mother-in-law’s kitchen, from spicy stewed fish to red-braised pork. The food was surrounded by six white, porcelain rice bowls

with chopsticks and six tiny matching cups filled generously with the local rice wine.

Even though the wooden benches surrounding the table were ready to welcome people for a real feast that evening, they remained empty. After all, the real guests — the family’s ancestors — had probably already arrived, in ghostly form. These ancestors had always presided over the entrance hall to the home through their sepia-toned photos hung high on the wall. But the table arranged below them seemed to strengthen their presence in the room.

And just as family members often do at special occasions and holidays in China, we were presenting the ancestors



The table set for the family’s ancestors during Ghost Festival. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

with money that evening. Granted, the neat, silvery piles of joss paper folded into boat-shaped *yuanbao*, the imperial ingots once used as currency in ancient China, looked nothing like the crisp yuan we

would normally stuff into festive red envelopes. And unlike real banknotes, these paper *yuanbao* needed fire to reach the hands of their recipients. Nevertheless, the idea behind it all — that a little money

could show you cared — remained the same.

As I watched my father-in-law bow before the ancestors’ table with sticks of incense in his hands, I was struck by how the entire scene — from the steaming dishes on the table to the paper money on the floor — was so full of life. In that moment, it was possible even for me, a woman who usually didn’t believe in ghosts, to imagine the ancestors were all seated before us.

But for my husband and his family, it wasn’t imagination at all. The ancestors were still a part of their world, as they had always been. Death had merely delivered them to another realm, where their presence carried on in each

and every day, just like their photos on the wall. They brought strength to the family and blessed everyone. They could even “visit” the family, which is said to happen during Ghost Festival.

Experiencing Ghost Festival with the family, along with their ideas of how the deceased fit into our world, brought great consolation to me. I still occasionally mourned the loss of my mother, who had passed away from cancer when I was in high school. But the idea that she still existed in this world, even if I couldn’t see her here — that I too could invite her to my own table to sit down for a dinner feast — was more reassuring than much of the

advice I had received for my grieving soul. So one day, I unpacked my own box of memories of my mother — which included a painting of her face, so reminiscent of the sepia-toned photos that hung on the walls of my husband’s family home — and placed them reverently in a prime corner of our home. Though I joked with my husband that she was “finally home”, in fact, she had always been there — just like his ancestors.

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LI CHANGYONG / XINHUA

A moment in time: Dawn of a new era

Electronic products are assembled in a factory in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, in the 1980s. Technology has advanced almost beyond imagination from those days and the next stage seems likely to see robots replacing humans on the factory floor (right) and probably in many other areas of our working life.



ZHANG WENKUI / FOR CHINA DAILY

The newspaper and beyond

On our Sina Weibo

Surgeon warns of dangers of food-stall meat

A surgeon warned a businesswoman about the dangers of eating undercooked meat at food stalls after he removed tapeworms from her breast. The woman, surnamed Wu, 44, recently underwent surgery in Zigui county, Hubei province, and four tapeworms were removed. The longest was 21 centimeters. Because of her busy lifestyle, she usually grabbed a quick bite to eat at street food stalls. The surgeon told her tapeworm eggs normally enter the human host from animals via food, especially raw or undercooked meat.

School bans mobile devices and short skirts

Hengshui High School in Hebei province has banned students from bringing mobile devices to class, and girls are required not to wear makeup or short skirts. The move sparked online comments that the policy was too strict, but a parent said in an interview that she supports what the school has done as it will enhance the learning environment.



NASA highlights threat of more climate damage

New NASA-funded research has revealed that the Arctic permafrost has undergone a gradual thawing and the associated release of greenhouse gases to the atmosphere will add to the cycle of global warming. The Arctic landscape stores one of the largest natural reservoirs of organic carbon in the world in its frozen tundra. But once thawed, soil microbes in the permafrost can turn that carbon into the greenhouse gases of carbon dioxide and methane, which then enter into the atmosphere and contribute to climate warming. Check more posts online.



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Photos: Daily commute turns into an adventure

When you think of commuting, what comes to mind, beyond subways and buses? Have you ever imagined going to work by plane and paraglider, or on horseback? Believe it or not, some people have actually used all of these unusual transport methods — and others — on their way to the office. Visit our website to find out more about the unusual commuting methods to help you re-imagine your daily trek to work.

Rankings: Top cities in AI development

Beijing and Shanghai lead the nation in artificial intelligence development, with policy support from local governments, according to a report released by Chinese research company CCID Consulting. The report covered nearly 40 Chinese cities, which have raced to build up their AI industries, and was based on the evaluation of more than 40 indicators including policy support, scientific research, key laboratories and financing. Visit our website to find out more about the report.



Food: Star pastry chef leads top league

Pastry chef Cedric Grolet is cooking up a sweet storm this month in Beijing. Having taught a series of master classes at Tdessert, a pastry academy in the capital, he celebrated the school’s fifth anniversary and witnessed the establishment of the International Top Chef League. Best-known for his striking *trompe l’oeil* (food looking like other food, for instance an éclair that resembles a hot dog), Grolet collected a clutch of awards and became an Instagram star with over 1 million followers. Founded in 2013, Tdessert focuses on both professional baking skills and aesthetic training, and has invited many leading international chefs to give courses.

Society: Students build energy-efficient car

More than 30 students of the Beijing Institute of Technology’s the School of Mechanical Engineering have designed a racing car which is energy efficient and has a lower drag coefficient. With a Honda motor engine, the refitted vehicle has a top speed of 45 km/h.

Culture: The Big Bang Theory to end next year

US network CBS said the upcoming 12th season of *The Big Bang Theory* will be the last. The series began about geeky physicist roommates portrayed by Jim Parsons and Johnny Galecki and expanded to include their friends, girlfriends and then wives. Other stars include Mayim Bialik and Kaley Cuoco. Parsons’ work on the show earned him four Emmy awards and a Golden Globe. CBS also aired a prequel about his character called *Young Sheldon*. Season 12 will premiere on Sept 24.

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Bilingual: UK royal drama

国外宫斗戏

中国日报双语新闻

《延禧攻略》自开播以来，热度居高不下，成为当下讨论度最高的宫斗剧。如果觉得清宫戏看不过瘾，双语君带大家看看英国精彩的宫廷剧。

Victoria & Abdul (2017)

A comedy drama about Queen Victoria and Abdul Karim, this movie centers on the true story of the long-reigning ruler’s friendship with her royal servant. A critical and commercial hit.《维多利亚与阿卜杜勒》是关于维多利亚女王和阿卜杜勒的喜剧片，这部电影聚焦这位在位时间超长的统治者与她的皇家侍者之间的友谊。影片叫好又叫座。

The Other Boleyn Girl (2008)

A sumptuous and sensual tale of intrigue, romance and betrayal set against the backdrop of a defining moment in European history. Two beautiful sisters, Anne and Mary Boleyn, driven by their family’s blind ambition, compete for the love of the handsome and passionate King Henry VIII. The period drama delivers twists and turns.

电影《另一个波琳家的女孩》是一个关于阴谋、爱情与背叛的香艳而奢靡的故事，围绕国王乔治八世与其妻子展开，讲述了宫廷内侍波琳家族的两个女儿：安妮与玛丽，由于受到家族盲目野心的驱使，争宠的故事。它演绎了跌宕起伏的剧情。

The White Queen (2013)

Based on the popular book series by renowned writer on the royals Philippa Gregory, this film doubled up on drama, unfolding as the Wars of the Roses rage on.

《白色女王》改编自宫廷题材作家菲利帕·格里高利的人气系列著作。电影中戏剧冲突更加强烈，展现了玫瑰战争进行得如火如荼的这个时期的风貌。

Following one woman’s fight for the throne, Rebecca Ferguson plays the titular character, Elizabeth Woodville, who must stake her claim in a world of growing uncertainty and shifting politics.

丽贝卡·弗格森饰演白色女王本人伊丽莎白·伍德维尔，诠释了一个女人的王权争夺之路。她必须在一个变幻莫测、政治风向摇摆不定的世界里，坚持自己的立场。

The Tudors (2007-10)

An underrated gem from the archives of British TV, this show centers on the Tudor period and mostly on Henry VIII and his relationship with his six wives.

《都铎王朝》是英国电视剧史上的一颗蒙尘的珠宝，这部电视剧聚焦于都铎王朝时期，主要讲述国王亨利八世和他六任妻子的故事。

Elizabeth (1998)

Focusing on the tough and testing times that Elizabeth faced while getting to grips with her role as monarch,

her task is made harder by political and social pressures, not least because she’s an unmarried woman. 电影《伊丽莎白》聚焦于伊丽莎白一世登上王位之初面临的困难和考验，尤其是作为一名未婚女性，她的使命给她带来政治和社会压力。

Wolf Hall (2015)

Wolf Hall was adapted from books by Hilary Mantel, and the action also focuses on the reign of Henry VIII. Mark Rylance takes center stage here as Henry’s influential adviser, Thomas Cromwell, who rises through the ranks as a royal right-hand man.

《狼厅》改编自希拉里·曼特尔的小说，电影讲述了国王亨利八世统治时期的故事。马克·里朗斯饰演主角托马斯·克伦威尔，他是亨利重要的顾问，打破阶级天花板，成了皇家得力助手。

Victoria (2016)

Offering a career-making role for Jenna Coleman, *Victoria* was critically acclaimed for its elaborate sets and costume design. The series charts the early life of the 19th century queen as she ascends to the throne at just 18.

电影《维多利亚》以它广受好评的圣诞特辑，考究的布景与服装设计闻名，也为女演员珍娜·科尔曼的演艺之路提供了一个绝佳的角色。该剧记录了这位19世纪女王的早年生活，她登上王位时只有18岁。

The King’s Speech (2010)

After the death of his father King George V, Bertie who has suffered from a debilitating speech impediment all his life, is suddenly crowned King George VI. With his country on the brink of war and in desperate need of a leader, his wife, Elizabeth, arranges for her husband to see an eccentric speech therapist, Lionel Logue. With the support of Logue, his family, and his government, the king overcomes his stammer and delivers a wartime radio address that inspires his people and unites them in battle.

电影《国王的演讲》讲述了乔治五世驾崩，一生患有口吃的伯蒂突然被推上王位，成为乔治六世的故事。当时英国即将卷入二战，急需领袖。他的妻子伊丽莎白为他找了一位古怪的语言治疗师罗格。在罗格、家人和政府的帮助下，乔治六世终于克服口吃的困难，发表了一席电台讲话，让全国人民在战争中团结在一起。



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