

Discovering chestnuts roasting on an open fire in China

"Chestnuts roasting on an open fire" is the first line of *The Christmas Song*, one of my favorite holiday tunes



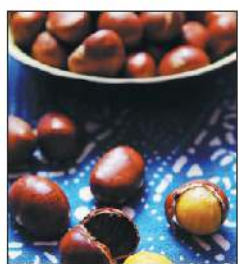
Jocelyn Eikenburg
Second Thoughts

growing up in the United States. Yet as a child, I never once roasted chestnuts at Christmas, let alone any other time of the year. Before I was born, a blight had devastated the vast majority of US chestnut trees, leaving me and most of my fellow countrymen strangers to the nut, apart from its mention in

that timeless song.

In fact, it wasn't until I came to China that I truly understood the wonders of a freshly roasted chestnut, especially those gathered in the wild.

Years ago in September, I discovered that wild chestnut trees, a variety native to China, thrived in the hills of my husband's rural Zhejiang village, and were as close to us as the backyard of the family home. "See, there's a chestnut tree," he said, pointing out the window from his old bedroom to its trunk and branches just a few meters away from us. I couldn't believe this tree, a rare sight in the US, actually



Sugar-roasted chestnuts.

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grew beside the family garden.

So imagine my astonishment when, while hiking some remote hills near the village, I couldn't walk a few

steps without stumbling over chestnuts that littered the ground. It was as if the heavens had decided to rain chestnuts upon the land, instead of water. My husband Jun had the foresight to suggest carrying along a few bags with us, and we began collecting these fall treasures as we meandered up and down the hills. Even though the sky was a melancholy gray, it felt like the sun had shined upon us that afternoon, thanks to the bounty of chestnuts we found and brought home with us.

The real magic, however, came from my mother-in-law, who helped me experience something close to that iconic

line from *The Christmas Song* in her kitchen. Her wood-burning stove, with a wok on top, was the next best thing to an open fire. She roasted the chestnuts in the wok along with sweet osmanthus blossoms from the front yard, and filled the house with the intoxicating fragrance of flowers mingled with the caramel aroma of the nuts. I'll never forget the first time I inhaled it — it was like being all wrapped up in the warmth and coziness of the holidays, even though Dec 25 was still months away.

That Christmassy feeling was only reinforced by the generous portion my moth-

er-in-law sent up to our room, a huge silver bowl piled high with more roasted chestnuts than anyone could have consumed in one sitting. And even though lunch had finished a few hours ago, we couldn't resist the natural, sugary goodness of the snack.

Nowadays, whenever I imagine chestnuts, it's no longer Christmas that first comes to mind. Instead, my thoughts will turn to my husband's hometown — the hills scattered with wild chestnuts, the smell of them roasting in my mother-in-law's fire-powered wok, and the ambrosial flavor when eating them

fresh from the stove. These memories have so completely saturated my brain that it's fall, not winter, that has become the season I most associate with chestnuts. So as much as I love that first line of *The Christmas Song*, perhaps it's time for someone — maybe me — to write the lyrics to an autumn melody that sings the praises of freshly roasted chestnuts in China.

Contact the writer at jocelyn@chinadaily.com.cn

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XINHUA

A moment in time: Technical progress

People wait to make a call or send a telegram in Chamdo, Tibet autonomous region, in 1990. In the era of smartphones and internet, such services no longer need to be offered in most post offices which today also provide easy access to local and national government services. Even driving licenses can be renewed at post offices as the photo taken last month (right) in Handan, Hebei province shows.



IAO QUNYING / FOR CHINA DAILY

The newspaper and beyond

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Stress can be beaten with exercise and good diet

The plight of a white collar worker in Nanjing, Jiangsu province who was recently diagnosed with cerebral infarction, a narrowing of the blood supply to the brain, has highlighted the dangers of stress, especially in younger people. Doctors from Nanjing Brain Hospital said that leading a more active lifestyle can lessen the chances of having a stroke. Regular exercise, eating a healthy diet, and not smoking reduces the risk of ischemic stroke, the most common form of stroke. And it's also important to keep blood pressure and cholesterol under control.

Tips to ease tension in your wrists and hands

Your hands perform a variety of tasks every day, from gripping a steering wheel to typing on a keyboard. Hand and wrist exercises can ease muscular or bone tension. One exercise in particular may alleviate tension. While standing, place your palms together in a praying position with elbows touching. Your hands should be in front of your face. With your palms pressed together, slowly spread your elbows. Do this while lowering your hands to waist height. Stop when your hands are in front of your belly button. Hold the stretch for 10 to 30 seconds, then repeat.

Man, 83, thwarts armed robbers

An elderly Irishman helped fight off armed robbers in Cork on Saturday. Security camera footage shows Denis O'Connor, 83, confronting three robbers at a betting shop. He said: "Sometimes you can just sit down and do nothing or you can stand up to people like these and that's what I did."

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Tech: Battery can recharge by 'breathing'

Researchers have made a breakthrough using composite materials with sodium carbonate to produce a rechargeable battery that sucks carbon dioxide from the air for its discharge. A team led by Chen Jun, a professor from Nankai University's College of Chemistry in Tianjin, assembled the battery. The "breathable" battery obtains oxygen from the air when discharging and releases oxygen into the air when charging. The battery will provide an energy supply for the Mars probe, since the planet's air is 95 percent carbon dioxide.

Culture: Molten iron turns into fireworks

Every year, during Lantern Festival and Spring Festival, Nuanquan, a village in Hebei province, hosts one of the most spectacular pyrotechnic shows in the world. Called *dashuhua*, the tradition involves experienced blacksmiths showering themselves with molten iron. Believed

to have originated over 300 years ago, the tradition is a vestige of northeast China's steel-producing regions and a source of pride for generations of miners and their families. Inspired by iron striking, the blacksmiths started melting iron at temperatures of around 1,000 C and throwing it at a large stone wall to create an effect similar to fireworks. In contact with the cold stone, the splashed molten iron would generate beautiful iron "flowers" that rained down on the hardy blacksmiths.



Society: Stamp to mark Mid-Autumn Festival
China Post has issued a stamp to celebrate the upcoming Mid-Autumn Festival. The set is

designed by Cui Jingzhe. The upper part of the stamp shows the legend of Jade Rabbit pounding medicine, which symbolizes the wishes for a healthy body, happiness and longevity. The lower part of the stamp portrays the folk custom of "walking under the moon", which symbolizes a happy marriage and fertility.

Rankings: Tourism trends show upturn

The barometer of world tourism issued by the United Nations World Tourism Organization, "The UNWTO Tourism Highlights 2018 Edition" has just been released. According to the report, overall international tourist arrivals grew by 6.8 percent to 1.32 billion last year, the highest increase since 2009 and some 84 million more than in 2016, fueled by a rapid global economic upswing.

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Bilingual: Favorite brands

国人喜爱的品牌

中国日报双语新闻

上周四, 品牌研究公司铂慧发布了新一期中国最受欢迎品牌调查榜单。在上榜的50个品牌中, 有30个是国产品牌, 其中排名第一的是支付宝; 华为和美团点评榜上有名, 一些国际大牌纷纷被国产品牌挤下, 风光不再。

下面, 请跟随双语君来看一看吧!

Branding consulting company, Prophet, released a report this month on the country's 50 top brands.

品牌研究公司铂慧在本月发布了一个关于中国消费者最喜爱的50个品牌的榜单。

Move over Apple and Nike. Phone maker Huawei and food delivery giant Meituan Dianping are among the domestic brands topping the list.

国产手机华为和食品外卖巨头美团点评已经取代了苹果公司和耐克, 跻身中国最受喜爱的品牌之列。

Chinese brands now occupy 30 of the top 50 slots, with online payment operator Alipay at the top.

在上榜的50个品牌中, 有30个是国产品牌, 其中排名第一的是在线支付运营商——支付宝。

That's a big change from 2016 when only 18 local brands made the top 50 in the survey.

今年的榜单与2016年相比有明显的变化。铂慧2016年的调查显示, 前50个最受喜爱的品牌中, 国产品牌仅占18个。

"Chinese brands have been better at leveraging social media to reach out to shoppers in China," said Catherine Lim, a Bloomberg Intelligence analyst.

彭博行业研究分析师凯瑟琳·利姆说: "中国的国产品牌更善于利用社交媒体吸引消费者。"

The survey asked 13,000 Chinese consumers to rank brands that are innovative, practical, customer-focused and inspirational, according to the report.

该项调查共有13000名中国消费者参与, 他们按照品牌的创新性、实用性、消费定位和消费激励等因素对品牌进行综合排名。

Meituan Dianping broke through to the top 10 for the first time. Shares in the food review and delivery giant started trading on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange on Thursday.

美团点评首次打进榜单前10名。这家食品评价和派送巨头于本周四在港交所上市。

The company has attracted investment from Hong Kong billionaire Li Ka-shing, the region's richest man. 这家公司还吸引了香港首富、亿万富翁李嘉诚的投资。

The survey could point to more trouble for Apple in China, its second-largest market after the US. The Palo Alto, California-based company has struggled in

China as domestic rivals like Huawei and Xiaomi gain in popularity.

调查也指出, 苹果公司在中国正面临重重困难。中国是苹果公司的第二大市场, 紧随美国之后。但近年来, 随着华为和小米等本土竞争对手的崛起, 总部位于美国加利福尼亚州的帕托阿洛的苹果公司在中国市场的日子日益艰难。

Consumers have become more strategic in their purchases. They increasingly value meaningful and tangible innovations of home-grown brands, the survey found.

调查发现中国消费者在购物时考虑地更加周全。他们越来越看重国产品牌兼具价值和实用性的创新。

Home-grown brands have demonstrated a strong ability to create continuous, tangible innovation, according to the survey, often outpacing their international competitors.

正如调查所示, 中国的国产品牌展现出了持续创新的强劲能力, 比国外竞争对手更胜一筹。

In China's biggest cities, the mystique of the foreign brand is fading, said Benoit Garbe, a Prophet senior partner in Shanghai.

一位在上海的铂慧高级合伙人本诺伊特·加尔博说, 在中国的大城市里, 国外品牌的神秘感正在逐渐消失。

"Consumers are getting more sophisticated," he said. "We are seeing local brands — the good ones — popping up as more relevant."

我们看到的是消费者越来越精明, 好的国产品牌越来越得人心。

Many other big Western brands were booted off the top 10 this year.

还有许多西方知名品牌今年相继跌出了榜单的前10名。

Nike tumbled to 44 and Estee Lauder dropped to 22, though it remained the top-ranked label for cosmetics. 耐克跌至第44名。雅诗兰黛下滑至第22名, 虽然在化妆品品牌中保持了第一名的位置。

Home-furnishing retailer Ikea, fourth on last year's list, didn't make the top 30 this time.

瑞典家居零售商宜家去年排在第4位, 今年却没能挤进前30名。

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