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In the Comrade's Cultural Revolution Red Guard days, there weren't any 跳舞厅 tiào wǔ tīng (discos), 夜总会 yè zǒng huì (nightclubs), or 酒吧 jiǔ bā (bars). The only 娱乐 yú lè (entertainment) we had was to 批斗资本家 pī dòu zī běn jiā (persecute capitalists). But as the PRC celebrates its golden anniversary, and the Middle Kingdom plods into its sixth millenium of history, never before has more of the West's decadent deportment become common custom among the 老百姓 lǎo bǎi xìng (common folk).

China is a 发展中国家 fā zhǎn zhōng guó jiā (Developing Country), which explains why the most popular recreational activities include 吸烟 xī yān (smoking cigarettes) and staring at foreigners. Other, more strenuous recreational activities are not favored by most Chinese people. Thousands of years of social stratification dictate that physical exertion is something better reserved for 运动员 yùn dòng yuán (athletes) and 民工 mín gōng (migrant workers).

Most Chinese people can't understand why any grown adult would bother playing sports for the sake of sportsmanship and competition, fun and recreation, or

physical fitness. Why on earth would anybody want to exert themselves for any purpose other than 生殖 shēng zhí (procreation) or 赚钱 zhuàn qián (making money)?

What's more, most conventional Western recreational activities involve going outdoors, i.e. where the sun is. As a rule, Chinese people don't like the sun because they're afraid to 晒黑 shài hēi (get a tan). Dark skin is considered base and dirty in China because 农民 nóng mǐn (peasants) are identified by their dark tan, which comes from toiling in the sun all day long.

旅游 Lǚ yóu (Travel) isn't a viable recreational option for most Chinese people, either. Few members of the People's Republic desire to rove far from their hometown for fear that they won't be able to understand the local 方言 fāng yán (dialect) or, worse, that they'll be unaccustomed to the local fare and be unable to eat. It is for this very reason that one of the most frequently asked questions of foreigners by Chinese people is 你吃得惯中国菜吗 Nǐ chī de guàn zhōng guó cài ma? (Are you able to eat Chinese food?).

With sports, outdoor activities, and travel all avoided as potential recreational activities, the only viable option for Chinese people, besides playing 麻将 má jiǎng, is to grab 一条香烟 yī tiáo xiāng yān (a carton of cigarettes) and head out for a night of wining and dining.

Bottoms Up! 干杯 Gān bēi! As far as 洋酒 yáng jiǔ (Western booze) goes, X.O. is the drink of choice. But

when it comes to drinking Chinese liquor, 白酒 Bái jiǔ (Chinese white lightning) is as certain as death and taxes. A veritable potpourri of ingredients including maize, barley, oak, millet, petrochemicals and dung can all be used to make 白酒 bái jiǔ

If it is your habit to drink baijiu from 8 oz. glasses, paper or plastic cups or directly from the bottle, then there is no 白酒 bái jiǔ etiquette for you. But remember that when drinking 白酒 bái jiǔ out of small shot glasses, there are certain rules you must abide by.

Contrary to popular belief, if you 碰 pèng (clink) glasses with someone, you don't have to drink everything in your glass. Usually you can drink 随意 suí yì (as much as you want), unless someone specifies 半杯 bàn bēi (half glass) or 干杯 gān bēi (dry glass). And don't forget that when you clink your glass with someone you should always keep the rim of your glass below the rim of their glass as a sign of respect (the Comrade once tore a ligament in a deep knee bend competition with a rival department head).

Always make a small toast or gesture to the other comrades at the table and drink with them, not alone (wait 'til you get home to drink alone). Rather than 碰 pèng glasses with everyone at the table, you can simply tap your glass on the table before you drink. When your drinking companion's glasses are empty, it is polite to fill their glasses for them, starting with whomever has the most money and on down the line, always pouring for

yourself last.

When someone else pours for you, hold your glass up with two hands, one on the bottom of the glass. Originally this was meant to help the pouree keep from dropping his glass in his drunkenness. If you think you're too drunk to hold up your glass even with both hands, just tap your fingers on the table. To signal that you've had enough just 呕吐 (u tù (vomit) all over yourself (just like former President George Bush) and you won't have to drink anymore, otherwise you'll have to wait until you get to the taxi before you vomit out the window.

Dining 就餐 jiù cān

Dining out itself can often be an all-night experience. Chinese families typically go out to dinner for 火锅 huǒ guō (hot pot), eat for five hours straight, and go home. But whatever you do and wherever you go, a night out on the town in China almost always begins and ends with eating. Chinese youth go out for dinner, karaoke and dancing, but wouldn't think of ending the night until they had their mandatory end-of-the-night bowl of 豆浆 dòu jīng (soybean milk) and 油条 yóu tiáo (dough oil stick).

One of the benefits of going out to eat with Chinese people rather than going to their home for a meal is that it is difficult for them to force feed you in a public place. When eating out with Chinese people, just sit wherever they tell you to, but don't start eating or drinking until the host does. No matter how much your host tempts you

to eat or drink first, remember that it's a trick and insist that he go first or you'll be insulted. Another faux pas to avoid is 渔翻身 yú fān shēn (turning the fish over), as it is supposed to represent 翻船 fān chuán (a boat capsizing), but feel free to behead the fish.

Check, please! 结帐 Jié zhàng! Paying the bill is a privilege. If you are the one who extended the invitation, then you are the one paying the bill. Watch your guests so they don't pretend to go to the bathroom but actually secretly pay the bill, stealing the face and the spotlight that is rightfully yours. When paying the bill is your inalienable right, sometimes you must put your foot down. Do not rule out the use of force on particularly obstinate guests who insist on paying.

If you are the guest, offer to pay the bill, but give in when the host insists on paying. You must play the game: act like you want to pay the bill, pretend to actually try to pay it, rise from your seat and dramatically plunge your hand into your pocket. But everyone at the table knows that at the end of the night, only one will pay. The term AA 制 zhì, which means going Dutch, borrows English letters. That's because the very concept is so un-Chinese that they can't even bring themselves to make a fully Chinese word for it.