

Food Vocabulary and Shopping in a Chinese Supermarket

Food vocabulary in any language is probably the most fun and also most challenging to learn because there are just so many words to get to grips with.

Although some food words share the same Chinese, most of the time this can actually make learning new words easier because you simply add an extra character to create a whole new vegetable.

For example, 萝卜 (luó bo) is radish, whilst carrot is 红萝卜 (hóng luó bo) or 'red radish'.

Additionally, vegetables and fruits from the same 'family' may also share a similar character, such as 南瓜 (nán guā) 'pumpkin', 黄瓜 (huáng guā) 'cucumber' and 冬瓜 (dōng guā) 'squash' which all contain the character 瓜 (guā) meaning 'melon or gourd'.

Below are some short vocabulary lists to start you off learning some food, drink and household items that you can buy in the supermarket, as well as some useful phrases you might need when shopping.

If you want to learn more food and drink words in Chinese, take a look at our Food and Drink flashcard set available in our [Written Chinese Dictionary app](#) that contains over 300 words for you to learn!

Special Offers in Chinese

Special offers in the supermarket will usually be highlighted at the end of an aisle or with a colourful tag. Even if your Chinese characters aren't perfect yet, keep an eye out for the following to make sure you don't miss out on some great deals!

买一送一 (mǎi yī sòng yī) Buy one get one free (lit. buy one give one)

Written Chinese

Percentage discounts in China do not show the amount of discount you will receive, but the percentage you will actually pay.

A sign promoting 8折 is not promoting an 80% discount, but a 20% discount. The 8折 means you will pay 80% of the original price.

...折 (...zhé) % discount

...元两件 (...yuán liǎng jiàn) Buy two for ##RMB

Useful Phrases for the Supermarket

请问...在哪儿? (qǐng wèn...zài nǎr?) Where is the?

请问这个多少钱? (qǐng wèn zhè ge duō shao qián) How much is this?

请问...还有吗? (qǐng wèn...hái yǒu ma?) Are there anymore?

可以帮我切一下吗? (kě yǐ bāng wǒ qiē yī xià ma?) Can you cut it for me?

可以帮我称一下这个吗? (kě yǐ bāng wǒ chēng yī xià ma?) Can you weigh this please?

重量 (zhòng liàng) Weights

(公)克 (gōng kè) gram

斤 (jīn) 500g

公斤 (gōng jīn) 1kg

Food and Drink Vocabulary

饮料 (yǐn liào) Drinks

Written Chinese

茶 (chá) tea

咖啡 (kā fēi) coffee

橙汁 (chéng zhī) Orange juice

啤酒 (pí jiǔ) Beer

乳制品 (rǔ zhì pǐ n) Dairy

牛奶 (niú nǎi) milk

酸奶 (suān nǎi) yoghurt

黄油 (huáng yóu) butter

奶酪 (nǎi lào) cheese

The borrowed word 芝士 (zhī shì) is also frequently used for the word 'cheese'.

蛋 (dàn) eggs

In China, there are many different kinds of eggs available to buy in the supermarket. The general word for egg in Chinese is 蛋 (dàn), but to specifically ask for 'chicken eggs' you must say 鸡蛋 (jī dàn).

蔬菜 (shū cài) Vegetables

土豆 (tǔ dòu) Potato

红萝卜 (hóng luó bo) Carrots

菠菜 (bō cài) Spinach

白菜 (bái cài) Cabbage

Written Chinese

椰菜 (yē cài) Broccoli/Cauliflower

水果 (shuǐ guǒ) Fruit

苹果 (píng guǒ) Apples

橙子 (chéng zi) Oranges

西瓜 (xī guā) Watermelon

柚子 (yòu zi) Pomelo

火龙果 (huǒ lóng guǒ) Dragon fruit

李子 (lǐ zi) Plums

香蕉 (xiāng jiāo) Bananas

柠檬 (níng méng) Lemons

梨子 (lí zi) Pears

调味料 (tiáo wèi liào) Spices and Condiments

盐 (yán) Salt

大蒜 (dà suàn) Garlic

辣椒 (là jiāo) Chili

番茄酱 (fān qié jiàng) Tomato Sauce/Ketchup

花生酱 (huā shēng jiàng) Peanut Butter

酱油 (jiàng yóu) Soy Sauce

醋 (cù) Vinegar

烘焙, 谷物 (hōng bèi, g ŭ wù) Baked Goods, Cereals & Grains

面包 (miàn bāo) Bread

蛋糕 (dàn gāo) Cake

饼干 (b ǐ ng gān) Cookies

燕麦粥 (yàn mài zhōu) Porridge/Oatmeal

面条 (miàn tiáo) Noodles

大米 (dà m ǐ) Rice

Uncooked rice has a different name to cooked rice in Chinese. So, if you wish to buy a bag of uncooked rice in the supermarket use the bigram 大米 (dà m ǐ). You can ask for cooked rice in a restaurant with the bigram 米饭 (m ǐ fàn).

鱼肉 (yú ròu) Meat & Fish

Although the character for 'meat' in Chinese is 肉 (ròu) if you see the character on a menu, or in the supermarket without another character such as 牛 (niú) 'cow' or 鸭 (yā) 'duck', then this probably means it is pork.

猪肉 (zhū ròu) Pork

牛肉 (niú ròu) Beef

鸭肉 (yā ròu) Duck

鸡肉 (jī ròu) Chicken

鱼 (yú) Fish

日用品 (rì yòng p ǐ n) Household Goods

厕纸 (cè zh ǐ) Toilet roll

肥皂 (féi zào) Soap

垃圾袋 (lā jī dài) Rubbish bags

擦碗布 (cā wǎ n bù) Dish cloth

洗洁精 (xǐ jié jīng) Washing liquid

Other Vocabulary

有机 (yǒu jī) Organic

进口 (jìn kǒu) Imported

国产 (guó chǎn) Domestic

You can learn more more shopping dialogues in our article *How to Order Coffee in Chinese and Other Dialogues You Need to Know*