

**What do you eat?  
Nǐ chī shénme?**

In this session's learnchinese.com, we teach you how to eat! No, just kidding! You will be learning how to say "I eat...", "do you eat...?", "what do you eat?" in Chinese. We will also serve you a very rich dinner if you can order them in Chinese: chicken, beef, pork, rice etc...

**VOCABULARY:**

chī	to eat
wǒ chī...	I eat...
nǐ chī...	you eat...
ròu	meat
jīròu	chicken (meat)
jī	chicken (animal)
niúròu	beef
niú	cow
zhūròu	pork
zhū	pig
mífàn	rice
nǐ chī shénme?	What do you eat.

**SENTENCES:**

1. wǒ chī jīròu.  
I eat chicken.
2. Kevan chī jīròu  
Kevan eats chicken.
3. Yào chī niú ròu

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Have fun learning Chinese!

Yao eats beef.

4. Nǐ chī shénme?  
What do you eat?

5. Nǐ chī niúròu ma?  
Do you eat beef?

6. Nǐ chī mǐfàn ma?  
Do you eat rice?

**NOTE:**

In Chinese we use a “single-signal” system as called by Dr. Yong Ho<sup>1</sup> compare with double or multiple signal system in English language. E.g.

We want to ask question for the underlined part of statement sentence in both Chinese and English:

Chinese:

**Statement:** Tā chī niúròu.  
**Question:** Tā chī shénme?

English:

**Statement:** He eats beef.  
**Question:** What does he eat?

You certainly notice that “shénme” or the English equivalent “What” indicates a question by itself is used in both Chinese and English question. We can notice two extra in the English sentence:

1. We need to put “what” in front of a sentence instead of the same place of the object “beef”.

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<sup>1</sup> Beginner’s Chinese by Yong Ho, 1997

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2. Since the first word - the question word “what” doesn’t go directly with the subject “he”, we need to put another verb “does” in front of the subject which itself also indicate this sentence is a question;

Chinese allows only one signal for one meaning, as we move on, you would notice that Chinese is a very pragmatic language.

### TAKE MY ADVICE:

Sometimes it’s hard to be simple! It’s not always easy to get used to such a convenient way to say “What does he eat?”

Tā chī shénme?

We’ll do some exercise by yourself by imagining talking to Yao or Kevan and ask “What do you eat?”, in fact you would have to say “ You eat what?” in Chinese:

Nǐ chī shénme?

Make sure it sounds like a question!! If you have a Chinese speaking friend, that’s even better to test today’s class on him/her.

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GOOD LUCK! Your small stories, insights, questions and comments are very welcome on learnchinese.com website!

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