
China Double Ninth Festival

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During the Double Ninth Festival in China cemeteries get crowded. People drink chrysanthemum wine and hold onto dogwood as they clean ancestral graves and pay respects to the dearly departed.

Celebrating the Chongyang festival in the capital of Sichuan province meant visiting pandas in the Giant Panda Breeding Research Base, watching them devour bamboo with their human-like dexterous hands and indulging in the local spicy cuisine: Chopsticks clack, soups being brewed, meat being sliced with a chop chop chop on wooden boards, bingqilin being offered. Huajiao, Sichuan pepper, is quite something.

More related to the citrus family than the black pepper family, with slight lemony overtones its bioactive component causes a numbing, tingling sensation, which has been compared to touching the terminals of a nine-volt battery to the tongue. Chances are it would be classified as fiendishly hot even at your average brunch in the depths of Hades. With the oral cavity aptly anaesthetized, one was looking for some après déjeuner distraction.

A disused bunker underneath Chengdu's lively Remnin Park that harbours decrepit and rickety animated dioramas of deathbed scenarios seems a bizarre place to grow things, but it certainly works for mushrooms.

Cow dung, cool temperature and high humidity create ideal conditions for many types of fungi. Cholesterol free, virtually no fat or sodium, they are good sources of fibre and contain B vitamins, especially niacin and riboflavin. Some of them contain psilocybin.

Be it dancing with the substance that Albert Hoffmann (requiescat in pace) managed to isolate in lysergic acid diethylamide or letting the inward facing eye swivel to the tea that Peruvian shamans brew to connect drinkers to their spirit world – depending on setting, context and disposition, some of the insights they provide are about as accurate as looking at yourself in a funhouse mirror while wearing shattered glasses in semi-darkness.

The doors of perception were once again kicked open wide.

Sometimes what starts with an insight ends with a tunnel vision – in a tunnel.

Psychedelic as crossing Huangpu River in Shanghai between the Bund in Puxi and the Oriental Pearl Tower in Pudong inside the glass portal car with whirling projected lights, which let you relive surreal visuals of the 1960s.

"Wake" was probably one of the first Vegas songs. Not unlike a prophetic revelation, it talks about a "tunnel vision tightening its grip."

During the intro we gleefully ride on a buoyant rhythm that has as much strut as a Zeni Geva

song and makes as much sense.

The assembly of dissonant layers is as unorthodox as the Japanese approach to rock music.

Voilà - the perfect entrée for a simple, rudimentary rolling-with-punch number.

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