

## LESSON NOTES

# Lower Beginner S1 #7

## This Cantonese Dish Has an Unusual Name!

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# 7

## TRADITIONAL CHINESE

1. 客人: 嗰碟係乜嘢?
2. 侍應: 「老少平安」。
3. 客人: 即係乜呀?
4. 侍應: 即係魚肉蒸豆腐。

## JYUTPING

1. HAAK3 JAN4: go2 dip6 hai6 mat1?
2. SI6 JING3: "lou5 siu2 ping4 on1."
3. HAAK3 JAN4: zik1 hai6 mat1 aa3?
4. SI6 JING3: zik1 hai6 jyu4 juk6 zing1 dau6 fu6.

## ENGLISH

1. CUSTOMER: What is that dish?
2. WAITER: "Everyone in peace."
3. CUSTOMER: What is that exactly?
4. WAITER: That is steamed tofu with minced fish.

## VOCABULARY

Traditional	Romanization	English	Class
碟	dip6	plate, plate of	noun; classifier
乜嘢	mat1 je5	what	pronoun
老少	lou5 siu3	everyone (literally “old and young”)	noun
平安	ping4 on1	peaceful; in peace	adjective
即係	zik1 hai6	that is; that means; in conclusion	phrase
魚肉	jyu4 juk6	(flesh of) fish	noun
豆腐花	dau6 fu6 faa1	tofu pudding	
蒸	zing1	to steam	verb

## SAMPLE SENTENCES

<p>兩碟菜就夠喇。</p> <p><i>loeng5 dip6 coi3 zau6 gau3 laa3.</i></p> <p>Two dishes are enough.</p>	<p>去旅行要準備乜嘢?</p> <p><i>heoi3 leoi5 hang4 jiu3 zeon2 bei6 mat1 je5?</i></p> <p>What should we prepare for the trip?</p>
<p>呢套戲老少咸宜。</p> <p><i>ni1 tou3 hei3 lou5 siu3 haam4 ji4.</i></p> <p>This movie is suitable for all ages.</p>	<p>祝你出入平安。</p> <p><i>zuk1 nei5 ceot1 jap6 ping4 on1.</i></p> <p>May you have peace wherever you go.</p>
<p>鴛鴦即係咖啡溝奶茶。</p> <p><i>jin1 joeng1 zik1 hai6 gaa3 fe1 kau1 naai5 caa4.</i></p> <p>Hong Kong-style coffee tea is a mixture of coffee and milk tea.</p>	<p>魚肉好有營養。</p> <p><i>jyu4 juk6 hou2 jau5 jing4 joeng5.</i></p> <p>Fish is very nutritious.</p>

而家唔係好多地方食到豆腐花喇。

ji4 gaa1 m4 hai6 hou2 do1 dei6 fong1 sik6 dou2  
dau6 fu6 faa1 gaa3 laa6.

Not many places offer tofu pudding now.

蒸水蛋嘅材料好簡單，而且好易整。

zing1 seoi2 daan2 ge3 coi4 liu2 hou2 gaan2  
daan1, ji4 ce2 hou2 ji3 zing2.

The ingredients for Chinese steamed eggs are very simple, and it's very easy to make.

## VOCABULARY PHRASE USAGE

老少

It is an expression that is very close to the English "young and old," because it is composed of the words 老 which means "old," and 少 which means "young." And as with English, it means "everybody" or "every person."

平安

平 means "flat" or "smooth," while 安 means "tranquil" and "safe." Together they mean "peaceful" or "in peace."

## GRAMMAR

**The Focus of this Lesson is Asking What Something Means**

即係乜呀？

**zik1 hai6 mat1 aa3?**

**"What is that exactly?"**

When we want to ask for a definition or some details about an object, we ask the question 即係乜呀？(zik1 hai6 mat1 aa3?) in Cantonese. You can use this phrase to ask about anything you do not understand. It is especially useful when you are faced with a new term or jargon and you don't know what it means. You can use this structure: [A] 即係乜呀？ where [A] can be anything, from food to special terms in business to slang words.

Let's break it down:

即係(zik1 hai6) "that is to say" or "that means"

乜 (*mat*) "what"

呀 (*aa3*) [a common final particle used in neutral questions]

For example:

1. 即係乜呀?  
*zik1 hai6 mat1 aa3?*  
"What is that exactly?"/"What does that mean?"
2. 即係魚肉蒸豆腐。  
*zik1 hai6 jyu4 yuk6 zing1 dau6 fu6.*  
"That is (means) steamed tofu with minced fish."

More examples:

1. 「老少平安」即係乜呀?  
*lou5 siu2 ping4 on1" zik1 hai6 mat1 aa3?*  
"What does "Everyone in peace" mean?"
2. 「炒麵」即係乜呀?  
*caau2 min6" zik1 hai6 mat1 aa3?*  
"What does "chow mein" mean?" (FYI, It means "stir-fried noodles")
3. IM即係乜呀?  
*IM zik1 hai6 mat1 aa3?*  
"What does IM mean?"
4. IM即係即時通訊。  
*IM zik1 hai6 zik1 si4 tung1 seon3.*  
"IM means "Instant Messaging."
5. 「七仔」即係乜呀?  
*cat1 zai2" zik1 hai6 mat1 aa3?*  
"What does 'little 7' mean?"

6. 「七仔」即係七十一便利店。  
*cat1 zai2" zik1 hai6 cat1 sap6 jat1 bin6 lei6 dim3.*  
 "Little 7" means "7-11 convenience store."

### Language Tip: Interrogative Pronouns in the Phrase

Other than "what," we can use other interrogative pronouns with this phrase like this:

<b>where</b> is that exactly?	即係邊度呀?	<i>zik1 hai6 bin1 dou6 aa3?</i>
<b>who</b> is that exactly?	即係邊個呀?	<i>zik1 hai6 bin1 go3 aa3?</i>
<b>when</b> is that exactly?	即係幾時度呀?	<i>zik1 hai6 ge2 si4 aa3?</i>
<b>why</b> is that exactly?	即係點解呀?	<i>zik1 hai6 dim2 gaai2 aa3?</i>
<b>how</b> is that exactly?	即係點呀?	<i>zik1 hai6 dim2 aa3?</i>

## CULTURAL INSIGHT

### Funny Dish Names in Hong Kong

One of the biggest differences between menus in Hong Kong and western countries is that English menus generally list the ingredients and how it was cooked, while common Cantonese or Chinese dish names can be completely irrelevant to the ingredients.

Here are some dish names that will be shocking for tourists if they take them too literally: 螞蟻上樹 (*maa5 ngai5 soeng5 syu6*) "ants climbing trees," 獅子頭 (*si1 zi2 tau4*) "lion head," 夫妻肺片 (*fu1 cai1 fai3 pin2*) "husband and wife lung slices," 佛跳牆 (*fat6 tiu3 coeng4*) "Buddha jumps over the wall," 狗不理 (*gau2 bat1 lei5*) "ignored by dogs." So, next time before you run out of the restaurant, ask the waiters to explain what's in the dish!