CHOPSTICKS
A pair of small even-length tapered sticks, are the traditional eating utensils of East Asia (China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam, the four "chopstick countries")

Chopsticks are commonly made of wood, bamboo, metal, bone, ivory, & in modern times, plastic as well.
Why the name CHOPSTICKS?

Exactly how the name ‘chopsticks’ came about, or even who coined this term, has been lost to history.

It was likely invented by an early Western visitor to China, who dreamt up the ‘Chinese-sounding’ name when trying to figure out a way to name the strange, thin, tapering sticks that were thrust into his hands.
According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the first published use of the word ‘chopsticks’ to refer to a pair of tapered eating-utensils was in 1699.

The adventurer William Dampier, in his book “Voyages and Descriptions” makes first mention of these curious Oriental oddities and that English sailors had coined the name ‘chopsticks’ when referring to them.
Chopsticks play an important role in Chinese food culture. Chopsticks are called "Kuaizi" in Chinese and were called "Zhu" in the ancient period but also at present in certain areas of China.

Chinese people have been using kuaizi for more than 3,000 years.
It was mentioned in Shiji 史記 (A key source of Chinese history) that Zhou 紂王, the last king of the Shang Dynasty 商代 (1600 BC - 1100 BC), used ivory chopsticks.

Experts believe the history of wood or bamboo chopsticks can be dated to about 1,000 years earlier than ivory chopsticks.
Bronze chopsticks were invented in the Western Zhou 西周 Dynasty (1100 BC - 771 BC).

Lacquer chopsticks from the Western Han 西漢 (206 BC-24 AD) were discovered in 馬王堆 Mawangdui, China.
Gold and silver chopsticks became popular in the Tang Dynasty (618 - 907). It was believed that silver chopsticks could detect poisons in food.

if poison was present, the chopsticks would become blackened owing to displacement reactions on the silver.
Chopsticks shop in Shanghai

Chopsticks at market
The characteristic use of chopsticks in traditional Chinese society stems essentially from philosophical reasons.

Mealtimes are considered as events which promote social harmony through the gathering of family and friends.
It is therefore considered inappropriate for any implement designed to stab and cut (such as a knife) to be used at the dining table, as such implements are associated with violence.

It is also for this reason that Chinese chopsticks never have sharp ends.
Chinese philosopher **Confucius** (551-479 BCE) stated:

*The honorable and upright man keeps well away from both the slaughterhouse and the kitchen. And he allows no knives on his table.*
How to use chopsticks

1. Put one chopstick between the palm and the base of the thumb, using the ring finger (the fourth finger) to support the lower part of the stick. With the thumb, squeeze the stick down while the ring finger pushes it up. The stick should be stationary and very stable.
2. Use the tips of the thumb, index and middle fingers to hold the other stick like a pen. Make sure the tips of the two sticks line up.

3. Pivot the upper stick up and down towards the stationary lower stick. With this motion one can pick up food of surprising size.

4. With enough practice, the two sticks function like a pair of pincers.
Chopstick etiquette

Chopstick etiquette is similar to general Western etiquette regarding eating utensils.

Never wave your chopsticks around as if it was an extension of your hand gestures, bang them like drumsticks, or use them to move bowls or plates.
Decide what to pick up before reaching with chopsticks (do not hover around or poke looking for special ingredients).

After you have picked up an item, do not put it back in the dish.

When picking up a piece of food, never use the tips of your chopsticks to poke through the food as if you were using a fork.
Chinese banquet

Chopsticks & spoon
Noodles soup
Chopsticks can be rested horizontally on one's plate or bowl to keep them off the table entirely.

A chopstick stand can also be used to keep the points off the table.
chopsticks stand
Never place your chopsticks on rice facing upwards. Any stick-like object facing upward resembles the incense sticks that Chinese use as offerings to deceased family members.
In Chinese and Japanese etiquette, the blunt end is sometimes used to transfer food from a common dish to your own plate or bowl (never your mouth).

In Korea, the blunt handle end is not considered sanitary.
Chinese Wedding Banquet
While using chopsticks to pick up food, the palm of your hand should face down at all times.

Twisting your chopsticks — holding the wrist in such a way that everyone can see your palm — is considered unrefined in Chinese culture.
Chinese traditionally eat rice from a bowl. The rice bowl is raised to the mouth and the rice pushed into the mouth using the chopsticks.

If rice is served on a plate, as is more common in the West, it is acceptable and more practical to eat it with a fork or spoon.
A set of chopsticks are one of the wedding gifts normally presented to Chinese newlyweds as the Chinese pronunciation for "chopsticks" and "soon son" are the same.

儿子很快 Érzi hěn kuài
筷子 Kuàizì
It is a sign of respect to pass food to the elderly first before the dinner starts (part of the Confucian tradition of respecting seniors).
When communal chopsticks are supplied with shared plates of food, it is considered impolite to use your own chopsticks to pick up the food from the shared plate or eat using the communal chopsticks.