

Busy harvest time in China's bamboo forests

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Lin'an is in an area of eastern Zhejiang province whose rich forests are estimated to supply up to two-thirds of China's [bamboo](#) shoots, plus a

range of other products derived from the fast-growing plant that are produced both for domestic and overseas markets.

Harvesting takes several hours starting at dawn, and has been a cornerstone of the region's economy for countless centuries.

The shoots are a regular item on Chinese dinner tables, typically made into a soup, braised with meat or vegetables, or eaten as snacks, said Wang Guoying, a vendor at a bamboo market in Lin'an.

"The even larger ones, the hairy shoots, can be made into canned ones and sold overseas," she said.

She was referring to "mao sun", or "hairy shoots", which get their name from their hair-like surfaces.

Another vendor, Lang Erhua, said, "everyone knows how to cook bamboo shoots here."

"You cut the fresh shoots into thin pieces and braise it with pork and bones. Or you can just braise it with plain water. Add a dash of ginger, garlic and, in the end, some salt and MSG. It's delicious," she said.



Men carry bamboo through a forest near the city of Lin'an, Zhejiang Province

Bamboo, which despite its woody appearance is a type of grass, is among nature's most versatile plants.

Its lightness and strength lend it to a range of uses including as building materials, chopsticks, furniture, window blinds, hats, musical instruments, baskets and ornamental arrangements. It is even utilised in paper and textile products.

Bamboo's fast rate of growth is also legendary, with certain species reputed to grow a few centimetres per hour.

Bamboo is found in tropical and sub-tropical regions around the world but nowhere is it perhaps as important as in China where it has been admired for thousands of years.



A woman cleans bamboo shoots at a market in Taihuyuan village near the city of Lin'an, Zhejiang Province



The rich bamboo forests in Lin'an in China's eastern Zhejiang province supply up to two-thirds of the country's bamboo shoots, plus a range of other products derived from the fast-growing plant



A woman harvests bamboo in Shimen village near the city of Lin'an, Zhejiang Province

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