



Above: Wei Xingyu feeds his five goats, which produce milk for his baby girl as a supplement to breast milk. Below: Wei poses with his baby girl.

PHOTOS BY WEN XINZHENG / CHINA DAILY

Nanny goat's milk best?

A businessman in Changsha has been feeding his baby girl milk from the goats he has been raising on the roof of his four-story house, rather than rely on commercially produced milk formula. **Wen Xinzheng** in Changsha and **Huang Yuli** in Shenzhen report.

Unconvinced by the safety of milk powders, Wei Xingyu from Hunan province's capital Changsha raises five goats on the roof of his house to provide milk for his 4-month-old baby in addition to his wife's breast milk.

CHINAFACE The 36-year-old businessman was living in downtown Changsha. But since the weather is unbearably hot in the city, he has temporarily moved his family and goats to his hometown in Changlong village, suburban Changsha.

Changlong village has developed in recent years with new factories and several new roads being built. A few meters away from Wei's old house is a construction site.

But that hasn't stopped Wei from making a pasture for his goats.

Wei was disturbed to read about milk powder being poisonous or of bad quality. So, when his wife got pregnant last year, he bought two cans of goat milk powder, but soon after he read media reports that cast doubts on the quality of this substance. For the safety of his wife and the baby, he decided to raise goats himself.

At the beginning of the year, Wei con-



tacted a farm in Beijing. The farm owner recommended the Swiss Saanen goat, which lactates 10 months each year, and produces 3 liters or more of milk per day.

Wei bought two goats, each costing around 3,000 yuan (\$471). In March, one month before his wife's expected delivery, the two goats were transported by train for 17 hours from Beijing to Changsha. More recently, he bought two young does and one buck.

Wei says raising goats is not easy. He planted 1-meter tall "elephant grass" (originally from Taiwan province) in the backyard of the old house. And he feeds the goats twice a day and milks them in the morning.

As for the goat manure, Wei says it's "very dry, not dirty!"

Wei's wife has been supportive of the idea. Her five-month maternity leave will end soon. She says the goat milk "tastes very good".

When his daughter was 100 days old, and according to local custom the family held a ceremony in a restaurant in Changsha. After the meal, some relatives recounted how he fed the baby with self-raised goats on their way home on the bus, where a reporter of a local newspaper happened to overhear and later reported it.

Some pediatricians, however, say goat's milk for under 3-year-olds is not good because their stomachs haven't developed enough and there may be hygiene problems.

Wei disagrees: "Have they ever done it? They don't know it at all!" He says it was not a sudden impulse to raise goats and adds that he was inspired when he visited the Inner Mongolia and Tibet autonomous regions,

where locals fed their babies fresh goat milk. He has also been studying traditional Chinese medicine for several years and believes it is safe from a TCM point of view.

He says his 4-month-old daughter is healthy and this proves what he has been saying.

Wei's neighbors in Changlong village are conflicted about his experiment. A neighbor surnamed Zhou says: "He is doing an experiment on his own baby," and also complained about the smell of goat feces.

Wei counters that "food from nature is the best". His goats produce about 6 liters of milk each day, more than enough for his wife and the baby, he says. Lately a cousin got pregnant, and she also plans to drink the goat milk, Wei adds.

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Feng Zhiwei contributed to the story.

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Puppets battle it out on London stage

By **SUN LI** in Fuzhou
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London audiences following battles among Olympic athletes are in for another treat — witnessing stage fights among a dozen Chinese puppet characters.

Three puppeteers from Fujian province's Jinjiang Glove Puppet Troupe will stage a 10-minute show at London's Hackney Empire theater on Aug 9.

According to troupe leader Hong Shijian, the brief performance is part of the 2012 Chinese Youth London Olympics Carnival, a cultural exchange program initiated by the Chinese Young Pioneers Business Development Center. The organization has more than 100 performers specializing in a range of art forms such as opera, dance and martial arts.

Hong says the troupe was selected to perform in London because it has cemented its reputation of performing in many foreign countries, with rousing responses from viewers.

For the London stage, the organizers wanted a show which was "as vibrant and cheerful as possible", so Hong sorted through the repertoire and chose the piece, *Celebrating the Lantern Festival*.

IF YOU GO

When: 7:30 pm, Aug 9
Where: Hackney Empire, 291 Mare Street, London E8 1EJ

"It depicts various scenes during traditional Chinese festivals, is action-packed and has a jolly musical accompaniment," Hong says.

"But it's also the most difficult glove puppet show for the performers because it contains complex movements such as lion dancing, plate spinning and jar juggling."

Citing the plate trick as an example, Hong says the performer, in an attempt to let the puppet catch the plate and spin it, must have one hand tossing a tiny wooden plate onto the head of the puppet, while using the other hand to control the puppet. He says a steel wire is inserted in the puppet's head to help with the spinning.

"It's hard enough for real acrobats to catch the plate, let alone puppeteers!" Hong says, adding that to prevent the plate from falling off requires intricate finger and palm movements, and a puppeteer has to practice for years to master the skill.

Despite his rich experience performing abroad, the 49-year-old veteran puppet



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A puppet spins a plate during *Celebrating the Lantern Festival*.

show artist says he feels way more excited because this time it is against the background of the London 2012 Olympic Games this time.

"I've never been to London before, and I'm proud that now that I finally have such a chance to present puppetry to the whole world," Hong says.

Jinjiang glove puppetry started in the Jin Dynasty (AD 265-420) and developed rapidly during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), but the time-honored art form is still not widely known, Hong says.

Cai Meina, one of the performers and an award-winning puppeteer, admits she is slightly anxious.

"I feel really excited to perform at the

Olympic Games. I can empathize with the pressure felt by those athletes," Cai says.

The 31-year-old says she has been putting in extra hours to practice and ensure a successful performance.

"The puppet show doesn't have dialogues but, foreign audiences will understand the facial expressions and the body language," says Cai.

She says the London performance is special — not only do the audiences get to see the puppets act on stage, they will get to witness the skills of the puppeteers as they use one hand to control a sword-wielding character to fight another armed puppet.

"I'm sure the interaction will wow the audience," adds Cai.

Where there are Chinese there are always lion dance costumes

By **LI WENFANG** in Guangzhou
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As a fifth-generation lion dance costume maker, Zhong Jiachao, 64, has been through the many ups and downs of the business.

"Our industry is closely related to the economy and government policies," says Zhong. "I've been through the hard times, during the war and revolution. But now, the quality of life generally has improved. There are so many festivals, celebrations and sports events, which need our products. It's the best time of my career."

Zhong's family is one of the best-known lion dance costume makers in Guangdong's provincial capital Guangzhou. They delivered more than 1,800 sets of lion, dragon, *qilin* and *pixiu* costumes last year. Both *qilin*, a mythical Chinese animal much like a unicorn; and *pixiu*, a Chinese mythical hybrid creature of dragon, dog and lion; are also auspicious creatures in Chinese culture.

When Zhong's ancestors started the business in Dongguan, Guangdong, during the reign of Emperor Daoguang (1820-1849) in the Qing Dynasty, peak seasons came only before major festivals, like the Spring Festival, Mid-Autumn Festival and Dragon Boat Festival. During non-peak seasons, Zhong says, his ancestors operated a ferry to make ends meet.

Zhong's father opened a lion dance costume store on Daxin Road in Guangzhou in the 1930s, the most prosperous years for the trade, where more than 40 stores of its kind lined the road.

Business went downhill after the city fell to the Japanese troops in 1938, followed by the War of Liberation (1946-49).

Zhong started getting involved in the business in 1958, when all the lion dance costume stores on Daxin Road were combined into one. Soon after, he experienced the worst years of his business during the "cultural revolution" (1966-76).

The reform and opening-up of the country brought vitality back to the trade, he says.

The lion and dragon costumes his family made were used for major events like the return of Hong Kong and Macao to China, the Beijing Olympics in 2008 and the 2010 Asian Games in Guangzhou. "Our lion and dragon costumes were also used at the launch ceremonies of major casinos in Macao. They were also worn by Jackie Chan in his movies," Zhong says with pride.

He was always on site to supervise the product quality and to instruct the dancers.

The making of lion dance costumes in Guangzhou was included in the provincial intangible cultural heritage list in 2009. The local government also offers tax incentives to Zhong's shop for its unique craftsmanship.

"I feel obliged to carry on this craft. Otherwise my 50 years in this trade will go to waste," Zhong says at his four-story traditional Cantonese arcade-shophouse on Daxin Road. There are now less than 10 lion-dancing shops on the same street.

To make a lion head, Zhong first shapes the frame with bamboo strips. He then covers the skeleton with paper and paints on it. Zhong says although it is not a very difficult craft to learn, apprentices need at least a year to master the craft.

Unfortunately, not many young people are interested in being apprentices. They find the job boring.

He feels blessed that his two daughters have joined him in the business. His eldest daughter, Zhong Lichang, joined him after some failed jobs.

"My father is getting old and needs someone to inherit the trade. This is a field that cannot be replaced by machines," Zhong Lichang says. "There's room for development in this job and it gives me a sense of accomplishment."

Zhong Lichang has introduced some improvement. For example, she processes orders online and designs the lion heads on computer.

She replaces man-made materials and rabbit hair with Australian wool for the lion mane, which makes the head lighter and livelier, and installs LED lights to illuminate the head at night.

"We have to change constantly to offer something new all the time," she says.

But there are stressful moments. "When we receive urgent orders, we have to work very hard." Zhong Jiachao is still very hands-on. When he is not traveling, he is at the store.

"Where there are Chinese, there is Chinese kung fu and there are dragon and lion costumes made by us," Zhong says. More than half of his products are shipped overseas.

Zheng Erqi contributed to the story.



ZOU ZHONGPIN / CHINA DAILY

Zhong Jiachao introduces lion dance costumes at his family shop in Guangzhou.