

Q & A (Disclaimer: These views represent the opinions of this group member and are only to give the reader a hint of what the group is like. It does not accurately reflect all of the group members' view on these subjects but was generally agreed on for the most part for this type of representation. It also in no way represents other families of Wing Chun or even other branches within our own family.)

What is Wing Chun?

Wing Chun is a Chinese martial art that uses sticking and deflecting as opposed to meeting brute force with force in its application. It is primarily principle driven rather than technique oriented the latter which seems to be the trend nowadays. Could be that's where all the differences and arguments of interpretations seem to stem from. Among other things the writer will not go into here. Wing Chun is interpreted in different ways through different families. And even what seems like the most watered version of Wing Chun, you can still recognize it as such. The essence is there despite lack of skill. So, with so many versions and interpretations, how does one with no knowledge tell the difference when there are no apparent standards? It is very difficult, indeed. The individual must visit and do his research on the different schools that are available and pick the one that suits the best for that individual. If you have no choice, then *caveat emptor*.

What is a pedigree in Wing Chun mean?

A pedigree in Wing Chun doesn't mean anything if the skill level isn't there to make good on the claims being made. It may be wise to look past the decorative icing to judge whether the cake underneath is stale or not. Either way, the surface value is still judged accordingly with those with no specific lineage at all. If you are easily impressed, you will probably be just as easily suckered. The truth should be in the students being produced by whoever is in question. A pedigree does not equate to skill, but a proven method of attaining the skill. We trace our lineage to Yip Man from Leung Sheung, senior-most student, through Chung Mannin Sifu.

What makes your group so different?

We operate more as a club than as a school organized by a single sifu. We have several seniors with more than 15 years experience who are the head instructors and several juniors who assist. Our open door policy welcomes most through our doors to see what we have to offer. We're not visually appealing but that doesn't matter much at a place where the concentration is on hard work. We're not going to rush you into the office to sign a contract before you know what you're getting yourself into either. We're classic, in the sense of where we start; the foundation of our lineage, the yee gee kim yeung ma or goat clamping stance. It is in our first set taught, or Sil Lim Tao, that you will first find this. For us, we feel is what separates us from other branches of Wing Chun. The basics must be ingrained early in the training or the techniques will not work to optimum without the proper fundamentals. Meaning that *with* the proper fundamentals, a small woman should be able to successfully utilize the techniques against a larger opponent. If not, then we do not consider it to be Wing Chun in our eyes. If the legend holds any truth about Wing Chun being derived from a woman, then it should make sense that a woman could be just as formidable as man with the right training. Yip man, who is considered the great grandmaster and responsible for bringing Wing Chun to the public, was only 5'4, maybe 120 pounds. He was unrivaled in skill and even today, no one will dispute the skill of the man. So, what does that say about Wing Chun? Brute force is not necessary to apply the techniques successfully against a larger opponent. Otherwise, Yip Man could not be known as such a great grandmaster if that were not true. When Leung Sheung met Yip Man, Leung Sheung was 6 inches taller, outweighed Yip Man by at least 80 pounds and was 20 years the junior. Not to mention he was already prolific in another style. After touching hands with Yip, Leung Sheung emptied his cup of his past martial arts and decided to follow this little old man and learn from him. Yip Man had to have been doing something that didn't involve using brute strength. How could he? He had to have relied on something else to get the job done and convince this big youngster, in Leung Sheung, that his way was the way.

What is the yee gee kim yeung ma exactly?

Your new best friend should you decide to join the group. This is the foundation and it begins with the Sil Lim Tao. This is the start for the building of the root. For those who have been with us, Sil Lim Tao is more than just a form; it becomes a way of life, a way to relax and a way to find out about oneself. As you progress through the system, special attention must be paid to the first form throughout the training process which can take a lifetime to perfect. The goal is simple; to become better than myself yesterday. Sil Lim Tao also teaches balance and proper structure along with the yee gee kim yeung ma. It lets you know if you out of position by not following 5 simple yet hard to master guidelines; head up, back straight, hips forward, knees in, elbows in. SLT also develops your center of gravity in this manner. Your tolerance to hold the stance will be in question in the beginning. As you build up strength in certain areas of the leg and knee and learn how to relax, so will your tolerance build. At least fifteen minutes a day is required and suggested outside of class. Since the joints are under stress, we also adhere

to good habits when concerning the maintenance of our ligaments and tendons. They have to last a lifetime so you need to care for them before, during and after the workout as well as on a daily basis. To the unbeknownst or the beginner, the stance appears to be immobile but that's not true. Progression through the system coupled with understanding, the student will realize the truth. It's far from immobile and without a firm grasp of the first form, the generation of power in application will not work well for smaller people. For larger people, they have mass to back it up, but for small people, particular women, it will not work. The basics are the key.

Do you have a ranking system?

What exactly is the purpose of a ranking system? Is it to provide a sense of accomplishment for the practitioner or to make the practitioner feel they've mastered the art to a certain point? Whatever the reason, we don't believe and don't have one. We believe in skill speaking for itself. That's the thing about Wing Chun, or gung fu in general; you never really know how good you really are unless you get in a fighting situation or you compete. Even then, that's no way to truly measure your ability. Is when you can kick someone's butt making you at it? The thing is you have to measure your own sense of accomplishment within yourself and recognize your limits and learn to optimize to your fullest potential with what you were into this world with. For kids, a ranking system maybe a good thing, but for adults, it could be a false sense of security. You must decide what's best for yourself.

What is the soft approach?

The term 'soft approach' can be misleading. It's that's used to describe our lineage to a point but can be taken out of context. We like the term, relaxing aggressive, to better describe. Soft gives the impression of being limp. One cannot be completely soft the whole time and expect to survive in a fighting situation. We train relaxation through the forms to learn to overcome those inherent reactions when going through an adrenaline dump. Adrenaline has been known give superhuman strength in certain situations to particular individuals to perform tasks they could never have done under normal circumstances. It's also been know to speed up or slow down the perception of time. By training to relax, it's theoretically possible to control to control the body during this time. Also, whatever has been ingrained in your nervous system is what should come out. A certain level can be reached where the mind reacts to what the body is feeling, autonomously. It begins with the soft approach making relaxation the key.

Is Wing Chun and internal or external martial art?

It's semantics. Whose interpretation of internal and external do you have in mind when asking this question? This is a whole other debate one can get into when discussing any Chinese martial art. Speaking of Wing Chun in general, one could say it is external. Its surface value says as much. If you've done your research or have come into contact with a practitioner, then you'd probably say as much as well. So, which is it then? For us, the smallest details make the most difference. The forms represent certain positions to be ingrained into the nervous system to be able to use Wing Chun effectively. Where our group stands on this topic, the answer would be neither. Does that suggest both or maybe one over the other? The question is for the student to answer. Wing Chun is a profound art. The profundity is for those with the ability to delve.

I heard Kenneth Chung does Taiji. Is that true?

This is a common misconception about lineage because of our soft approach to Wing Chun. It's not adopted by all branches and styles. Different strokes for different folks. Nothing wrong with that, I hope. The story that begat the rumor was started back in the early eighties where Ken Chung had met a certain high level Chen Taiji player. After their encounter, Ken was able to be relayed an honest comment the Taiji player had said through a mutual friend about Ken's Gung Fu. He said that Ken had 'good listening energy'. This was tremendous comment from a man he highly respected. That comment let Ken know that he was on the path with the soft approach towards Wing Chun. So, to everyone's misconceptions, it seemed logical that from the way Ken teaches and explains Wing Chun that he must have gotten his ideas from Taiji to move the way he does. Nothing could be further from the truth. Ken has never practiced Taiji. He has respect for some major players but that doesn't make him a practitioner.

Is there full contact sparring?

The class is made up of all different kinds of people with different goals in mind as they train in the group. Not all of them are interested in fighting much less full contact. We spar with no gear at maybe sixty percent tops. The goal is not to fight but to work on position and timing. Hitting is easy. It's defense that's a bit harder to master. There is a time and a place for full out sparring. There are a few group members who are interested

in the fighting/competing side of the art. It is only after a good understanding of the basics should you choose to compete. It's up to the individual. Sparring comes later in the training.

So what can I expect on my first visit?

You must be prepared to experience our yee gee kim yeung ma. The first class is complimentary so don't worry about money unless you have made up your mind and are ready to commit to a quarter. Its seventy-five dollars per quarter and when Sifu comes down, the seminars are 2-3 times a year at one hundred fifty dollars for Saturday and Sunday, lunch included. There will be ample amount of notice prior to the seminars. These seminars are mandatory and the fees are part of the group tuition. It hands on with one of the most prominent Wing Chun masters in the world, but you don't have to take my word on it.

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