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Regions and Food: What Do People Eat Around The World?

Think for just a second some of the foods that you and your family eat on a daily basis and even on special occasions. All around the world every day, all cultures have something that they eat on a day to day basis. The poorer cultures and regions grow their own food and eat fresh picked vegetables and whatever else they grow. For example “in a village in the east African country of Chad... your meal is always the same-puddinglike porridge called ‘aiysh’ and a thin okra soup with maybe a bit of dried goat meat for added flavor” (D’Aluisio 9). Some of the poorer regions make do with what they have and others don’t have the resources available to them so they have to import the food that they eat to survive and live.

Out on the coastal city of Brisbane, Queensland, there is the Brown family, who slaughter their sheep so that they can feed themselves and have meat for their families. The ratio of sheep to people is five to one. A typical morning breakfast is diced fruit with cream and sugar. In Australia, porcupine is a special dish for dinner. If you have one in the house, it is a big treat and two or three families show up for dinner. The standard foods include; porcupine, kangaroo, and lamb. Eating out isn’t a common thing for a family to do. Many grew up on a sheep ranch and it was home cooking and growing your own food. Now a days Queensland is the fat state while Southern Australians are slimmer because “it’s hotter up [in Queensland]-everyone runs for the air conditioner, and they lay there in front of the TV” (D’Aluisio 15).

Within the Himalaya's there is the city of Bhutan. In the village of Shingkhey, it is a remote hillside village with a dozen of homes. For one family--including extended family--of thirteen, their grocery list consists mainly of red rice, fish, fruits, vegetables, and milk. How they cook is very old tradition by using a clay stove fueled by wood fire. They preserve their food by naturally drying it. Food is made at home, no eating out and no fast food. All their meals are cooked and prepared at their home by the women in the house. People of the Shingkhey village have to walk two hours to Wangdi Phodrang to go to the market for their food. In one village, a market shopkeeper uses their TV satellite dish as a dehydration rack for red chili peppers.

Similar to the people in Bhutan, the people of Ecuador cook their meals on a wood fire and preserve their food by naturally drying it. The consumption of sugar and sweeteners per person per year is 99 pounds. During every meal, Ecuadorians put chili sauce at the table to "enliven" their food. Along with their hot sauce at every meal, there is a starchy food such as potatoes, plantains, or rice. Plantains are an odd and interesting mix and "is somewhere between potatoes and bananas" (Foley and Jermyn pg. 121). Ecuador has "One of the most influential legacies of the Spanish conquest of the Americas was the wide variety of foods they took back to Europe. The potato, for instance, probably had more of an impact on the world's diet than any other food; it completely changed the basic diet of many European societies (Foley and Jermyn 121). Ecuadorians love their fried food and the side dish of white rice or potatoes. Rice can be served plain and sticky or served with chicken or beef. In the morning, they eat a light breakfast because they don't like starting the day with a "heavy stomach". Breakfast usually consists of a white bread roll with "white cheese, juice, and coffee; they may occasionally add an egg" (Foley and Jermyn 122). Lunch is the biggest meal of the day and includes three courses. It starts with a soup, then the main dish of rice or potatoes that accompanies a thick stew or a fish or chicken dish, after the main dish, a light salad or a side dish of boiled broad beans are served. For dinner, the family sits down together and they eat a light meal that consists of no more than a grilled cheese sandwich or flour

or corn pancakes. Every region in Ecuador has a different version of every food. In the Sierra region they eat a lot of soups and stews “made with barley, corn, potatoes, beans, peas, broad beans, squash, quinoa (a highland grain), and melloco (a tuber)” (Foley and Jermyn 123-124). “Many highland campesinos, on the other hand, survive on little more than barley, either heavily toasted and made into flour, or lightly toasted and coarsely ground into barley rice” (Foley and Jermyn 124). In the Costa region their diets consists primarily of coconut milk, peanuts, plantains, noodles, rice, and a lot of seafood and shellfish. In the Oriente region, it is similar to the Costa region, but includes more game and river fish. They don’t hunt deer as much because they believe that they are the spirits of their ancestors.

In Egypt, 90% of the camels that are imported, are used for food. The average person consumes 66 pounds of sugar and sweeteners every year and 37% of the population is living off less than 2\$ a day. About 90% of the camels that are imported are used for food. Just like many other countries they live off grains and other starchy foods, but instead of being the main focus, they add dairy, meat, fish eggs, fruits and vegetables, and nuts to their diet. Just like we have fruit snacks or crackers as snacks, they have what is called halawa. Halawa is made up of sesame paste. Most people live in villages along the Nile River, like their ancestors did thousands of years before them. Villagers eat breakfast at about 6 A.M. before going to work. The boys take the sheep and goats out to graze and their fathers teach them the traditional farming methods, the women bake bread in outdoor ovens and the girls milk goats, feed chickens, and fetch water from the village well. At sundown, the family gathers for the evening meal of rice, vegetables, and ful. In the villages, the food is simple and hearty. “Most meals include a dish made with fava beans, or broad beans. People boil them for hours, often overnight, to make them soft enough to eat” (Heinrichs, 117). The national dish is ful; a mix of various herbs and spices for flavor. The dish tamaiya is a ball or patty of soft beans that is fried in olive oil. Sometimes the beans that they make are chopped and mixed with their eggs. In the Egyptian cities, people eat breakfast around 7:30, lunch is in mid-afternoon, and dinner is served at 10 P.M. or sometimes even later.

In the country of Chile, “fresh fruits, vegetables, and seafood remain the central elements of many Chilean dishes, and some of the best meals may be found only when their ingredients are in season” (Winter and Roraff, 123). Chilean markets are lined with a profusion of delicious foods such as fresh fruits and vegetables such as “strawberries, raspberries, grapes, melons, bananas, figs, pears, avocados, apricots, peaches, corn squash, potatoes, eggplant, garlic, carrots, peppers, tomatoes, and beans”(Winter and Roraff, 123). They also have impressive seafood stands that are overflowing with fish and shellfish that came straight from the waters nearby. Because Chile is Huboldt Current, the water north from Antarctica flows into the Pacific and provides Chile with “some of the world’s finest and unusual fish” (Winter and Roraff, 123). Some fish that are Chileans favorite are: “Locos, Machas, razor clams, erizos, sea urchins the size of tennis balls, camarones, shrimp langostinos, tiny rock lobsters, congrio, or conger eel” (Winter and Roraff, 125). The cuisine in Chile is influenced by both indigenous and European influences. Meals are usually accompanied by Chilean wine. The national dish is porotos grandos and is made up of corn, beans, squash, onions, and garlic. The main ingredient of this stew is cranberry beans that grow in a central region that has a mild and stable climate to grow. If cranberry beans aren’t available, they use dried cranberry or navy beans as a substitute. Some Chileans top their stew with a spoonful of pebre, a hot sauce of onions, vinegar, olive oil, garlic, coriander, and chili. Another Chili special are the empanadas, pastries that are stuffed with meat, cheese, or seafood. Empanadoas de pino are filled with meat, onions, raisins, a black olive, and a hard cooked egg. Chileans eat the empanadas as a snack or as the first course of their main meal, often with their red wine. During festivals and celebrations and at rodeos, they are served. The pastel de choclo is a summer dish and is a large piece of chicken and a ground meat mixture similar to what is found in empanadas, it is then covered in corn, and baked in the oven and they even sprinkle a little bit of sugar on top before enjoying it. In southern Chile there is a special dish known as the curanto. It consists of shellfish, meat, potatoes, milcaos (potato pancakes), chapaleles (potato and wheat dumplings), and various types of bread. The

curanto is wrapped in big leaves and placed over red-hot rocks in a hole in the ground and is then covered with dirt and left to cook slowly for a couple of hours. Conger eel is known as a gourmet treat to those in Chile. It really isn't an eel, but a long, nearly boneless, firm-fleshed fish with a small tail. They bake it, grill it, fry, or make it into stew. There are three varieties to the eels: black, gold, and red. The red is the tastiest, but it is also the rarest to have. Chileans prefer to eat at home and they offer a variety of restaurants to choose from. In Chile you can find everything from fine dining to hamburger joints, to your typical Chilean restaurants. Many of the Chilean restaurants serve traditional Chilean specialties and seafood. Others offer Chinese, French, and Spanish menus. The number of vegetarian restaurants in the cities have increased and offer vegetarians a number of choices. Breakfast in Chile is served between 7-9 A.M. It consists of toast with coffee or brewed tea. Some eat large breakfasts and add ham and scrambled eggs. Lunch is served around 1 or 1:30 P.M. and goes on until three and is the largest meal of the day. Just like in Egypt, they eat their dinner between 8 and 9. On the weekends they eat it after 9. Most restaurants don't open until 9 p.m. some don't serve until 10.

In Kuwait the main meal is rice. There are several ways that they prepare it, but the most common way in Kuwait is mahbus. Mahbu is a dish where the rice is seasoned with saffron and is topped with lamb or chicken, mixed with vegetables and spices, and then is covered with a tomato-paste sauce. Mahbus has many different variations to it and is enjoyed many ways. The dish is influenced by Kuwait's Bedouin past, when everything was easier to cook in one giant pot at one time. The common shish kebab in Kuwait is typically cooked with lamb, and beef is starting to become more popular. Kuwaitis don't eat pork because Islam forbids it. Another popular dish is known as maraj and is similar to the mahbus. The difference between the two is in the maraj, the meat and vegetables are boiled or fried separately first then they are mixed together with seasonings. The influence behind this dish came from Persia, when they brought it with them. Seafood is very popular and plentiful in Kuwait and they enjoy it several times a week. Some favorites include: shrimp, crab, lobster, grouper, and red

snapper. Kuwaitis also love and enjoy a variety of vegetables too. When a visitor comes over, it is considered impolite if you do not offer coffee and tea throughout the day. Coffee and tea are the most popular and are included with meals. The tea is flavored with spices like cardamom or saffron more often than not. Many people often drink mineral water, juice, and soft drinks as well. During large family gatherings, Kuwaitis often share their meals and it is an important part of their social life. There are a number of choices to eat out and it is becoming increasingly more popular. The restaurants reflect the diversity of the immigrants who live there. There is a growing number of international chain restaurants such as: Starbucks, Pizza Hut, and McDonald's. "The first McDonald's in Kuwait opened in 1994. By 2006, thirty-four McDonald's restaurants were sprinkled across the country" (Willis 119). You can find traditional Arab coffee shops called maqhas that are found around in Kuwait. "Sponge cake is a popular dessert in Kuwait. It is often served with a pomegranate sauce to add flavor and color" (Willis 118). The amount of food being imported to Kuwait is 98%. The grocery shopping in one of the country is influenced by the western style. "Although Kuwait imports 98 percent of its food, much of it from thousands of miles away, the choice and quality of the goods on display easily match those in European or U.S. markets, and the prices are lower (D'Aluisio 105).

The most important event during the New Year in China, are the preparations for the reunion dinner. The daily activity of eating, is the Chinese favorite. "Sometimes people do not even say hello but just ask whether you have had a meal" (Ferroa, Chan, and Lin 119). Because of the poverty of Chinese, it has led to an interesting and unique style of cooking. While making stir-fry, they would cut things up into little, even pieces that would cook quickly and would save their precious firewood. They also would braise and simmer soups on the same fire that was used to warm the house. The Chinese invented a recipe for every part of an animal besides their fur and the feathers, so that they were saving and not throwing away good food. In the country, people cook their food with burners that are fired by firewood and in the city their burners are fired by gas. The word fan means fan (fun) means rice and refers to a

whole meal. Many of the Chinese sayings revolve around rice. The “breadwinner” in China is known as the one who “puts rice on the table”. “If a Chinese asks you to come and eat rice, he or she is inviting you to a meal” (Ferroa, Chan, and Lin 120). Rice is so highly respected that if a grain is spilled, it is then picked up, washed, and cooked. Parents persuade their children to eat every last grain of rice by saying that each grain of rice means that they will marry someone with pockmarked skin. The Beijing cuisine in the northern part is characterized by the use of garlic and chilies. The food is often drenched in oil and is seasoned with vinegar, salt, and sugar. In the North, less rice is eaten. Plain steamed buns or wheat pancakes are eaten with stir-fried dishes of diced meat and vegetables or stewed meats. The main meal are dumplings stuffed with minced meat and vegetables, especially during the winter season. Skewered mutton is sold along the streets and is fried in oil and rolled in powdered chili and cumin. The Shanghai cuisine is eaten throughout the lower Yangtze River Delta. This region is known as the Land of Rice and Fish. Their cuisine consists of whatever they can catch in the rivers. There are fish, eels, and shrimp that are steamed or cooked in a tasty soy and sugar based sauces. A favorite condiment is black vinegar and it is used as a dipping sauce. Just as in the northern region, a lot of oil and chilies are used and are cooked in the simplest way. The Sichuan cuisine has some of the spiciest food in China. Most of the dishes served are covered in a red chili oil and sprinkled with a fragrant pepper. Cold boiled noodles are tossed into a bowl and seasoned with chili oil, ginger juice, garlic paste, soy sauce, vinegar, and sugar and at times is topped with shreds of cucumber and sesame-seed paste. The Cantonese cuisine is the best-known form of Chinese cuisine outside of China. They are very fussy about the freshness of the ingredients in their dishes. They are never overcooked and the flavors are very seldom masked with heavy, spicy, or pungent sauces. The vegetables are lightly stir-fried with hot water and are dressed in oyster sauce.

Cameroon is one of few African countries that are able to grow food for themselves. Their cash crops are cocoa, coffee, and cotton. 75 percent of the people working are either farming, fishing, or

forestry. Most of the group includes farmers. Arabica coffee is grown in the west where it grows best, and robusta coffee grows and flourishes in the south. Also in the south, cocoa, tea, bananas, and oil palm trees flourish in the southern part. In the north, they harvest groundnuts, millet, and cassava. The rice is grown in flooded areas. Cassava, beans, sweet potatoes, yams, and maize (corn) are some of the South's most important cash crops. Because of the wide variety of ethnic groups, languages, religions, climates, and vegetation zones, this has led to a number of ways of life in Cameroon. In the traditional home, the men will eat first and then the women will follow. After the men and women are done eating, the children will eat last. The oldest is always served first along to the youngest in each of the groups. Washing one's hands is a very important ritual to do before each meal. Food is eaten with the fingers and they only use their right hand to feed themselves. Those who can afford it, have three meals a day. "Breakfast for villagers might consist of dried or smoked fish and tea, chocolate, or coffee" (Kummer 120). In the city, just like other countries, they eat much different. In the country they might eat scrambled eggs, fried potatoes, and bread. One of the favorite beverages is called café au lait, which is coffee with hot milk. For lunch, villagers eat at noon and eat a lunch that consists of rice in a spicy sauce. For cities, they eat lunch around one and their lunch might consist of fufu, soup, stew, or plantains which are similar to bananas. The plantains are boiled, fried, or roasted before they are eaten. Dinner is eaten between 7 and 8:30 P.M. People who live in the village have yams or plantains and add it to whatever was leftover from their lunch. As snacks throughout Cameroon, they will eat bananas, mangoes, papayas, and oranges around or after a meal.

Every region and country survive on their resources around them. In the villages they eat small portions and many can't afford a whole lot. While in the cities, they eat more and their food is more complicated. In a country, all the regions eat different things because of the influences that are around it, the religion, the language, and the immigrants that have moved there, play a big role in what they eat and how things are cooked. Some things are similar, they just add a few things of their own, and cook it

another way. Some of the poorer countries use, outside brick ovens to cook their food and use your average fire with firewood to cook food. “Many affluent countries are overfed. And, unfortunately, it seems that in developing countries, even before people attain a level of prosperity that helps ensure their adequate nutrition, they are eating in ways almost guaranteed to make them less healthy” (D’Aluisio 10).

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