Food&Culture

SEVENTH EDITION

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Food and Culture

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Preface

The population of the United States is increasingly heterogeneous, moving toward a plurality of ethnic, religious, and regional groups. Each of these groups has traditional food habits that differ—slightly or significantly—from the so-called typical American majority diet. Effective nutrition counseling, education, and food service require that these variations be acknowledged and understood within the context of culture. It is our goal to provide dietitians, nutritionists, and food service professionals with the broad overview needed to avoid ethnocentric assumptions and the nutrition specifics helpful in working with each group discussed. We have attempted to combine the conceptual with the technical in a way that is useful to other health professionals as well.

We would like to draw attention specifically to the area of nutrition counseling: "In nutrition counseling, where many therapeutic interventions are on a personal level, sensitivity to the strong influence of culture on an individual's food intake, attitudes, and behaviors is especially imperative. . . . Multicultural competence is not a luxury or a specialty but a requirement for every registered dietitian" (Curry, 2000, pp. 1, 142). A model (Harris-Davis & Haughton, 2000) recommended for multicultural nutrition competencies specifically lists the following:

1. Understand food selection, preparation, and storage with a cultural context.
2. Have knowledge of cultural eating patterns and family traditions such as core foods, traditional celebrations, and fasting.
3. Familiarize self with relevant research and latest findings regarding food practices and nutrition-related health problems of various ethnic and racial groups.
4. Possess specific knowledge of cultural values, health beliefs, and nutrition practices of particular groups served, including culturally different clients.

This book offers information fundamental to these competencies.

How the Book Is Organized

The first four chapters form an introduction to the study of food and culture. Chapter 1 discusses methods for understanding food habits within the context of culture, changing demographics, and the ways in which ethnicity may affect nutrition and health status. Chapter 2 focuses on the role of diet in traditional health beliefs. Some intercultural communication strategies are suggested in Chapter 3, and Chapter 4 outlines the major Eastern and Western religions and reviews their dietary practices in detail.

Chapters 5 through 14 profile North American ethnic groups and their cuisines. We have chosen breadth over depth, discussing groups with significant populations in the United States, as well as smaller, more recent immigrant groups who have had an impact on the health care system. Other groups with low numbers of immigrants but notable influences on American cooking are briefly mentioned.

Groups are considered in the approximate order of their arrival in North America. Each chapter begins with a history of the group in the United States and current demographics. Worldview (outlook on life) is then examined, including religion, family structure, and traditional health practices. This background information illuminates the cultural context

from which ethnic foods and food habits emerge and evolve. The next section of each chapter outlines the traditional diet, including ingredients, some common dishes, meal patterns, special occasions, the role of food in the society, and therapeutic uses of food. The final section explains the contemporary diet of the group, such as adaptations made by the group after arrival in the United States and influences of the group on the American diet. Reported nutritional status is reviewed, and general counseling guidelines are provided.

One or more cultural food group tables are found in each of the ethnic group chapters. The emphasis is on ingredients common to the populations of the region. Important variations within regions and unique food habits are listed in the "Comments" column of the table. Known adaptations in the United States are also noted. The tables are intended as references for the reader; they do not replace either the chapter content or an in-depth interview with a client.

Chapter 15 considers the regional American fare of the Northeast, the Midwest, the South, and the West. Each section includes an examination of the foods common in the region and general nutritional status. Canadian regional fare is also briefly considered. This chapter brings the study of cultural nutrition full circle, discussing the significant influences of different ethnic and religious groups on North American fare.

Chapter-Specific Changes

- Chapter 1. Food and Culture—Updated population data.
- Chapter 2. Traditional Health Beliefs and Practices—Updated data on the use of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM).
- Chapter 3. Intercultural Communications—No changes.
- Chapter 4. Food and Religion—Updated demographics data on religious affiliation in the United States.
- Chapter 5. Native Americans—Updated U.S. Census data on Native American population and other demographics. Updated information on current diets, nutritional status, and medical disorders related to diet and nutrition.
- Chapter 6. Northern and Southern Europeans—Updated U.S. Census population and other demographics on European groups. Updated information on current diets, nutritional status, and medical disorders related to diet and nutrition.
- Chapter 7. Central Europeans, People of the Former Soviet Union, and Scandinavians—Updated U.S. Census population and other demographics on central and eastern European groups. Updated information on current diets, nutritional status, and medical disorders related to diet and nutrition.
- Chapter 8. Africans—Updated U.S. Census population and other demographics on African Americans and more recent immigrant groups from Africa. Updated information on current diets, nutritional status, and medical disorders related to diet and nutrition.
- Chapter 9. Mexicans and Central Americans—Updated U.S. Census population and other demographics on Mexicans and Central American groups. Updated information on current diets, nutritional status, and medical disorders related to diet and nutrition.
- Chapter 10. Caribbean Islanders and South Americans—Updated U.S. Census population and other demographics on Caribbean and South American groups. Updated information on current diets, nutritional status, and medical disorders related to diet and nutrition.
- Chapter 11. East Asians—Updated U.S. Census population and other demographics on East Asian groups. Updated information on current diets, nutritional status, and medical disorders related to diet and nutrition.
- Chapter 12. Southeast Asians and Pacific Islanders—Updated U.S. Census population and other demographics on East Asian groups. Updated information on current diets, nutritional status, and medical disorders related to diet and nutrition.

- Chapter 13. People of the Balkans and the Middle East—Updated U.S. Census population and other demographics on Balkan and Middle Eastern groups. Updated information on current diets, nutritional status, and medical disorders related to diet and nutrition.
- Chapter 14. South Asians—Updated U.S. Census population and other demographics on South Asian groups. Updated information on current diets, nutritional status, and medical disorders related to diet and nutrition.
- Chapter 15. Regional Americans—Updated U.S. Census regional population and other demographics. Updated information on current diets, nutritional status, and medical disorders related to diet and nutrition.

Before You Begin

Food is so essential to ethnic, religious, and regional identity that dietary descriptions must be as objective as possible to prevent inadvertent criticism of the underlying culture. Yet as members of two Western ethnic and religious groups, we recognize that our own cultural assumptions are unavoidable and, in fact, serve as a starting point for our work. One would be lost without such a cultural footing. Any instances of bias are unintentional.

Any definition of a group's food habits implies homogeneity in the described group. In daily life, however, each member of a group has a distinctive diet, combining traditional practices with new influences. We do not want to stereotype the fare of any cultural group. Rather, we strive to generalize common U.S. food and culture trends as a basis for understanding the personal preferences of individual clients.

We have tried to be sensitive to the designations used by each cultural group, though sometimes there is no consensus among members regarding the preferred name for the group. Also, there may be some confusion about dates in the book. Nearly all religious traditions adhere to their own calendar of events based on solar or lunar months. These calendars frequently differ from the Gregorian calendar used throughout most of the world in business and government. Religious ceremonies often move around according to Gregorian dates, yet usually they are calculated to occur in the correct season each year. Historical events in the text are listed according to the Gregorian calendar, using the abbreviations for before common era (BCE) and common era (CE).

We believe this book will do more than introduce the concepts of food and culture. It should also encourage self-examination and individual cultural identification by the reader. We hope that it will help dietitians, nutritionists, other health care providers, and food service professionals work effectively with members of different ethnic, religious, and regional groups. If it sparks a gustatory interest in the foods of the world, we will be personally pleased. *De gustibus non est disputatum!*

Acknowledgments

We are forever indebted to the many researchers, especially from the fields of anthropology and sociology, who did the seminal work on food habits that provided the groundwork for this book, and to the many nutrition professionals who have shared their expertise with us over the years. We especially want to thank the many colleagues who have graciously given support and advice in the development of the numerous editions: Carmen Boyd, MS, LPC, RD, Missouri State University; Bonny Burns-Whitmore, DrPH, RD, California State Polytechnic University, Pomona; Arlene Grant-Holcomb, RD, MAE, California State Polytechnic University, San Luis Obispo; Carolyn Hollingshead, PhD, RD, University of Utah; Tawni Holmes, PhD, RD, University of Central Oklahoma; Claire G. Kratz, MS, RD, LDN, Montgomery County Community College; Yvonne Moody, EdD, Chadron State College; Sudha Raj, PhD, Syracuse University; Stacey A. Roush, MS, Montgomery County Community College; Dana Wassmer, MS, RD, Cosumnes River College; and Donna M. Winham, DrPH, Arizona State University. We are grateful for the expertise of Gerald Nelms, PhD, as his development of the discussion starters during the 6th edition revision was an important contribution to the pedagogy for this text.

CHAPTER 1

Food and Culture

What do Americans eat? Meat and potatoes, according to popular myth. There's no denying that per person in the United States, an average of over half a pound of beef, pork, lamb, or veal is eaten daily, and more than one hundred pounds of potatoes (mostly as chips and fries) are consumed annually. Yet the American diet is as diverse as its population, and we should no longer describe the U.S. population as white, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant, or the diet as consisting of mostly meat and potatoes.

U.S. Census and other demographic data show that close to 40 percent of Americans are not white, 13 percent are foreign born, 11 percent have one parent who was foreign born, and one in five people in the United States are first or second generation. More than seventy-five different ancestry groups were reported in 2007.[1,2] In that year the fastest and largest growing ethnic groups in America were from Latin America, but more recently Asians became the fastest growing race or ethnic group.[3]

Each American ethnic, religious, or regional group has its own culturally based food habits. Many of these customs have been modified through contact with American culture and, in turn, they have changed and shaped American food habits. Today, a fast-food restaurant or street stand is as likely to offer pizza, tacos, egg rolls, or falafel as it is hamburgers. It is the intricate interplay between food habits of the past and the present, the old and the new, and the traditional and the innovative that is the hallmark of the American diet.

What Is Food?

Food, as defined in the dictionary, is any substance that provides the nutrients necessary to maintain life and growth when ingested. When most animals feed, they repeatedly consume those foods necessary for their well-being, and they do so in a similar manner at each feeding. Humans, however, do not feed. They eat.

Eating is distinguished from feeding by the ways humans use food. Humans not only gather or hunt food, but they also cultivate plants and raise livestock. Agriculture means that some foods are regularly available, alleviating hand-to-mouth sustenance. This permits the development of specific customs associated with foods that are the foundation of the diet, such as wheat or rice. Humans also cook, softening tough foods, including raw grains and meats, and combine foods to create new textures and taste sensations. This greatly expands the number and variety of edible substances available. What follows are rules regarding what can be eaten with what and creates the meal. Humans use utensils to eat meals and institute complex rules, commonly called manners, about how meals are consumed. And, significantly, humans share food. Standards for who may dine with whom in each eating situation are well defined.

The term *food habits* (also called food culture or foodways) refers to the ways in which humans use food, including everything from how it is selected, obtained, and distributed to who prepares it, serves it, and eats it. The significance of this process is unique to

As suggested by their names, not even hamburgers and French fries are American in origin. Chopped beef steaks were introduced to the United States from the German city of Hamburg in the late nineteenth century. The American term *French-fried potatoes* first appeared in the 1860s and was probably coined to describe the method used in France for deep-frying potato pieces until crisp. Other foods considered typically American also have foreign origins, for example, hot dogs, apple pie, and ice cream.

Data from the 2006 Canadian census indicate more than 200 different ethnic origins were documented. The most common ethnic groups noted included English, French, Scottish, Irish, German, Italian, Chinese, North American Indian, Ukrainian, and Dutch. Newer groups include individuals from Montserrat in the Carribean and African countries such as Chad, Gabon, Gambia, and Zambia.[90]

Tom McCarthy/PhotoEdit

▲ *Humans create complex rules, commonly called manners, about how food is to be eaten.*

It is thought that children are less likely than adults to try new foods, in part because they have not yet learned cultural rules regarding what is safe and edible. A child who is exposed repeatedly to new items loses the fear of new foods faster than one who experiences a limited diet.[11]

humankind. Why don't people simply feed on the diet of our primitive ancestors, surviving on foraged fruits, vegetables, grains, and the occasional insect or small mammal thrown in for protein? Why do people choose to spend their time, energy, money, and creativity on eating? The answers to these questions, according to some researchers, can be found in the basic biological and psychological constitution of humans.

The Omnivore's Paradox

Humans are omnivorous, meaning that they can consume and digest a wide selection of plants and animals found in their surroundings. The primary advantage to this is that they can live in various climates and terrains. Because no single food provides the nutrition necessary for survival, humans must be able to eat enough of a variety of items, yet cautious enough not to ingest foods that are harmful and, possibly, fatal. This dilemma, the need to experiment combined with the need for caution, is known as the omnivore's paradox.[4,5] It results in two contradictory psychological impulses regarding eating—an attraction to new foods, but a preference for familiar foods. The food habits developed by a community provide the framework that reduces the anxiety produced by these opposing desires. Rules about which foods are edible, how they are procured and cooked, how they should taste, and when they should be consumed provide guidelines for both testing new foods (based on previous experience with similar plants and animals or flavors and textures) and maintaining food traditions through ritual and repetition.

Self-Identity

The choice of which foods to ingest is further complicated by another psychological concept regarding eating—the incorporation of food. This means that consumption is not just the conversion of food into nutrients in the human body, but also includes gaining the food's physical properties as well—hence the phrase "You are what you eat." In most cases this refers to the physical properties of a food expressed through incorporation. For example, some Asian Indians eat walnuts, which look like miniature brains, to make them smarter, and weight lifters may dine on rare meat to build muscle. In other cases, the character of the food is incorporated. Some Native Americans believe that because milk is a food for infants, it will weaken adults. The French say a person who eats too many turnips becomes gutless, and some Vietnamese consume gelatinized tiger bones to improve their strength.

It is a small step from incorporating the traits associated with a specific food to making assumptions about a total diet. The correlation between what people eat, how others perceive them, and how they characterize themselves is striking. In one study researchers listed five typical diets: vegetarian (kale quiche, brown rice, avocado, and bean sprout sandwich), gourmet (oysters, caviar, French roast coffee), health food (protein shake, wheat germ, yogurt), and fast food (hamburger, fried chicken, pizza). It was found that each category was associated with a certain personality type. Vegetarians were considered to be pacifists and likely to drive foreign cars. Gourmets were believed to be liberal and sophisticated. Health food fans were described as antinuclear activists and were also liberal. Fast-food eaters were believed to be religious, conservative, and fond of polyester clothing. These stereotypes were confirmed by

self-description and personality tests completed by people whose diets fell into the five categories.[6]

Another study asked college students to rate profiles of people based on their diets. Those who ate "good" foods were judged to be thinner, more fit, and more active than people with the identical physical characteristics and exercise habits who ate "bad" foods. Furthermore, the people who ate "good" foods were perceived by some students as being more attractive, likable, practical, methodical, quiet, and analytical than people who ate "bad" foods. The researchers attribute the strong morality-food effect to several factors, including the concept of incorporation and a prevailing Puritan ethic that espouses self-discipline.[7]

Food choice is, in fact, influenced by self-identity, a process whereby the food likes or dislikes of someone else are accepted and internalized as personal preferences. Research suggests that children choose foods eaten by admired adults (e.g., teachers), fictional characters, peers, and especially older siblings. Parents have little long-lasting influence. Group approval or disapproval of a food can also condition a person's acceptance or rejection. This may explain why certain relatively unpalatable items, such as chili peppers or unsweetened coffee, are enjoyed if introduced through socially mediated events, such as family meals or workplace snack breaks. Although the mechanism for the internalization of food preference and self-identity is not well understood, it is considered a significant factor in the development of food habits.[8,9]

A study on the consumption of organic vegetables, for example, found that those who identified themselves as green (people who are concerned with ecology and make consumer decisions based on this concern) predicted an intention to eat organic items independent of other attitudes, such as perceived flavor and health benefits.[9]

Food as self-identity is especially evident in the experience of dining out. Researchers suggest that restaurants often serve more than food, satisfying both emotional and physical needs. A diner may consider the menu, atmosphere, service, and cost or value when selecting a restaurant; and most establishments cater to a specific clientele. Some offer quick, inexpensive meals and play equipment to attract families. Business clubs feature a conservative setting suitable for financial transactions, and the candlelit ambiance of a bistro is conducive to romance. The same diner may choose the first in her role as a mother, the second while at work, and the last when meeting a date. In Japan, restaurants serve as surrogate homes where company is entertained, preserving the privacy of family life. The host chooses and pays for the meal ahead of time, all guests are provided the same dishes, and the servers are expected to partake in the conversation. Ethnic restaurants appeal to those individuals seeking familiarity and authenticity in the foods of their homeland or those interested in novelty and culinary adventure. Conversely, exposure to different foods in restaurants is sometimes the first step in adopting new food items at home.[10]

Symbolic Use of Food

The development of food habits clearly indicates that for humans, food is more than just nutrients. Humans use foods symbolically, due to relationship, association, or convention. Bread is an excellent example—it is called the staff of life; one breaks bread with friends, and bread represents the body of Christ in the Christian sacrament of communion. White bread was traditionally eaten by the upper classes, dark bread by the poor, but whole wheat bread is consumed today by people concerned more with health than status. A person with money has "a lot of bread." In many cultures, bread is shared by couples as part of the wedding ceremony or left for the soul of the dead. Superstitions about bread also demonstrate its importance beyond sustenance. Greek soldiers took a piece from home to ensure their safe, victorious return; English midwives placed a loaf at the foot of the mother's bed to prevent the woman and her baby from being stolen by evil spirits; and sailors traditionally brought a bun to sea to prevent shipwreck. It is the symbolic use of a food that is valued most by people, not its nutritional composition.

The inability to express self-identity through food habits can be devastating. A study of persons with permanent feeding tubes living at home or in nursing facilities found they frequently avoided meals with families and friends. They missed their favorite foods, but more important, they mourned the loss of their self-identities reinforced by these daily social interactions.[106]

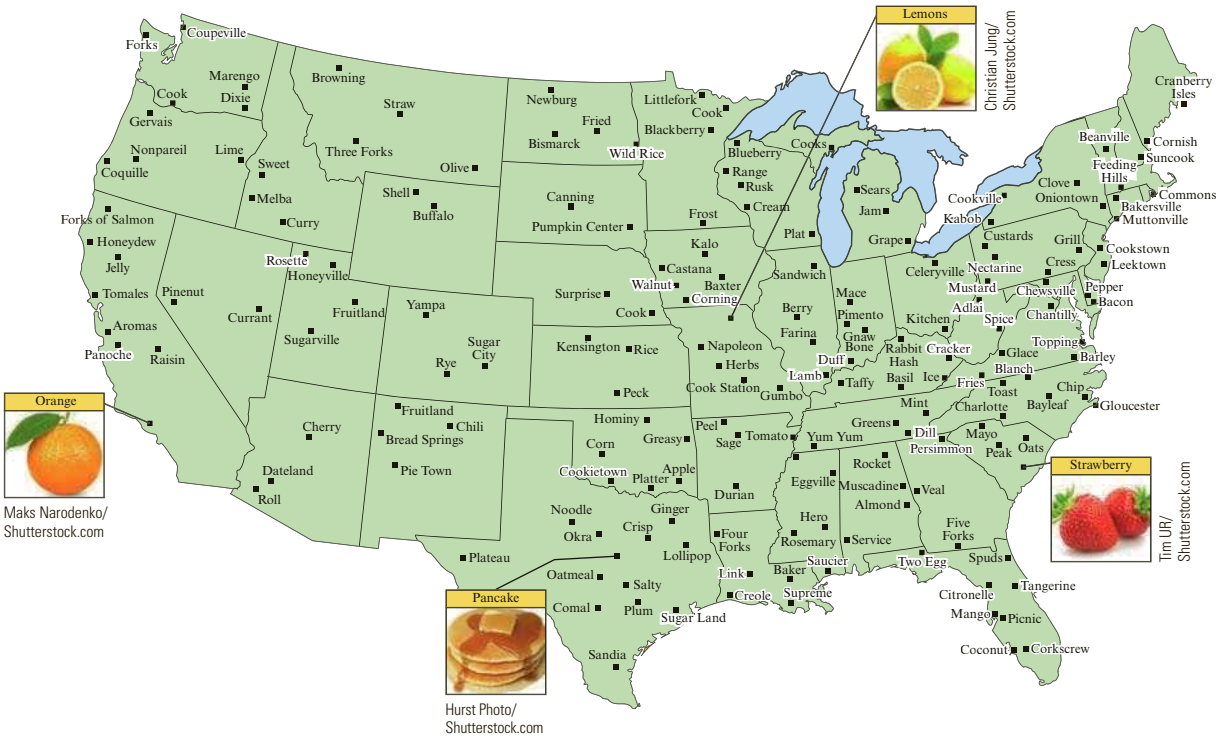

Figure 1.1

An edible map—food-related names of cities and towns in the United States. Food often means more than simply nutrients.

Source: From *All Over the Map: An Extraordinary Atlas of the United States: Featuring Towns That Actually Exist!* by David Jouris, copyright © 1994 by David Jouris. Used by permission of Ten Speed Press, an imprint of Crown Publishing Group, a division of Random House, Inc.

Cultural Identity

An essential symbolic function of food is cultural identity. What one eats defines who one is, culturally speaking, and, conversely, who one is not. In the Middle East, for example, a person who eats pork is probably Roman Catholic or Orthodox Christian, not Jewish or Muslim (pork is prohibited in Judaism and Islam). Ravioli served with roast turkey suggest an Italian American family celebrating Thanksgiving, not a Mexican American family, who would be more likely to dine on tamales and turkey. The food habits of each cultural group are often linked to religious beliefs or ethnic behaviors. Eating is a daily reaffirmation of cultural identity (Figure 1.1).

Foods that demonstrate affiliation with a culture are usually introduced during childhood and are associated with security or good memories. Such foods hold special worth to a person, even if other diets have been adopted due to changes in residence, religious membership, health status, or daily personal preference. They may be eaten during ethnic holidays and for personal events, such as birthdays or weddings, or during times of stress. These items are sometimes called comfort foods because they satisfy the basic psychological need for food familiarity. For example, in the United States one study found comfort foods for women required little preparation and tended to be snacks, such as potato chips, ice cream, chocolate, and cookies; men preferred foods served by their mothers, such as soup, pizza or pasta, steak, and mashed potatoes.[11] Occasionally, a person embraces a certain diet as an adult to establish association with a group. A convert to Judaism, for instance, may adhere to the kosher dietary laws. African Americans who live outside the South may occasionally choose to eat soul food (typically southern black cuisine, such as pork ribs and greens) as an expression of ethnic solidarity.

The reverse is also true. One way to establish that a person is not a member of a certain cultural group is through diet. Researchers suggest that when one first eats the food of another cultural group, a chain of reasoning occurs, beginning with the recognition that one is experiencing a new flavor and ending with the assumption that this new flavor is an authentic marker of other group members.[12] Ethnic groups may be denigrated by using food stereotyping, and such slurs are found in nearly all cultures. In the United States, Germans are sometimes called "krauts," Chinese "cookies" or "dim sums," Italians "spaghetti benders," Mexicans "beaners," Irish "potatoheads," Koreans "kimchi," and poor white southerners "crackers" (possibly from "corncracker," someone who cracks corn to distill whiskey or from early immigrants to Georgia who survived on biscuits).

Foods that come from other cultures may also be distinguished as foreign to maintain group separation. *Kafir*, a derogatory Arabic term for "infidel," was used to label some items found in areas they colonized, including the knobby kaffir lime of Malaysia, and kaffir corn (millet) in Africa. Similarly, when some non-Asian foods were introduced to China, they were labeled barbarian or Wester and named after items already familiar in the diet. Thus, sweet potatoes were called barbarian yams, and tomatoes became barbarian eggplants.[13] Less provocative place names are used, too, though the origins of the food are often incorrect, such as *Turkey wheat* (the Dutch term for native American corn, which was thought to come from Turkey) and Irish potatoes (which are indigenous to Peru but were brought to the United States by immigrants from Ireland). The powerful symbolic significance of food terms leads occasionally to renaming foreign items in an attempt to assert a new cultural identity. Turkish coffee (it was the Ottomans of Turkey who popularized this thick, dark brew from Africa and spread it through their empire) became Greek coffee in Greece after tensions between the two nations escalated in the 1920s. Examples in the United States include renaming sauerkraut liberty cabbage during World War I, and more recently, calling French fries freedom fries when France opposed the United States in the invasion of Iraq.

The appropriate use of food and the behaviors associated with eating, also known as etiquette, are another expression of group membership. In the United States, entirely different manners are required during a business lunch at an expensive restaurant, when eating in the school cafeteria, when drinking with friends at a bar, or when dining with a date. Discomfort can occur if a person is unfamiliar with the rules, and if a person deliberately breaks the rules, he or she may be ostracized or shunned.

Another function of food symbolism is to define status—a person's position or ranking within a particular cultural group. Food can be used to signify economic social standing: champagne, Kobe beef, and truffles suggest wealth; trendy hip restaurants suggest upward mobility; and beans or potatoes are traditionally associated with the poor. Status foods are characteristically used for social interaction. In the United States, a wife may appreciate a box of chocolates from her husband—but not a bundle of broccoli. Wine is considered an appropriate gift to a hostess—a gallon of milk is not. In general, eating with someone connotes social equality with that person. Many societies regulate commensalism (who can dine together) as a means of establishing class relationships. Men may eat separately from women and children, or servants may eat in the kitchen, away from their employers. In India, the separate social castes did not traditionally dine together, nor were people of higher castes permitted to eat food prepared by someone of a lower caste. This class

Children younger than age two will eat anything and everything. Children between three and six years of age begin to reject culturally unacceptable food items. By age seven, children are completely repulsed by foods that their culture categorizes as repugnant.[107]

DIZ Muenchen GmbH, Sueddeutsche Zeitung Photo/Alamy

◀ ***Typically, first-generation immigrants remain emotionally connected to their ethnicity, surrounding themselves with a reference group of family and friends who share their cultural background.***

segregation was also seen in some U.S. restaurants that excluded blacks before civil rights legislation of the 1960s.

What Is Culture?

Culture is broadly defined as the values, beliefs, attitudes, and practices accepted by members of a group or community. Culture is learned, not inherited; it is passed from generation to generation through language and socialization in a process called enculturation.[14] Yet culture is not rigid and does change over time in response to group dynamics.[15]

Cultural membership is defined by ethnicity. Unlike national origin (which may include numerous ethnic groups), ethnicity is a social identity associated with shared behavior patterns, including food habits, dress, language, family structure, and often religious affiliation.[15] Members of the same ethnic group usually have a common heritage through locality or history and participate together with other cultural groups in a larger social system. As part of this greater community, each ethnic group may have different status or positions of power. Diversity within each cultural group is also common due to racial, regional, or economic divisions as well as differing rates of acculturation to the majority culture.[16]

Ethnocentric is the term applied to a person who uses his or her own values to evaluate the behaviors of others. It may be done unconsciously or in the conscious belief that their own habits are superior to those of another culture. Ethnorelativism occurs when a person assumes that all cultural values have equal validity, resulting in moral paralysis and an inability to advocate for a belief. Prejudice is hostility directed toward persons of different cultural groups because they are members of such groups; it does not account for individual differences.[108]

The Acculturation Process

When people from one ethnicity move to an area with different cultural norms, adaptation to the new majority society begins. This process is known as acculturation, and it takes place along a continuum of behavior patterns that can be very fluid, moving back and forth between traditional practices and adopted customs. It occurs at the micro level, reflecting an individual's change in attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors, and at the macro level, resulting in group changes that may be physical, economic, social, or political in nature.[17,18,19] Typically, first-generation immigrants remain emotionally connected to their culture of origin. They integrate into their new society by adopting some majority culture values and practices but generally surround themselves with a reference group of family and friends from their ethnic background. For example, Asian Indians living in the United States who consider themselves to be "mostly or very Asian Indian" may encourage their children to speak English and allow them to celebrate American holidays, but usually do not permit them to date non-Asian Indian peers.[20]

Other immigrants become bicultural, which happens when the new majority culture is seen as complementing, rather than competing with, an individual's ethnicity. The positive aspects of both societies are embraced, and the individual develops the skills needed to operate within either culture.[21] Asian Indians who call themselves Indo-Americans or Asian Indian Americans fall into this category, eating equal amounts of Indian and American foods, thinking and reading equally in an Indian language and in English. Assimilation occurs when people from one cultural group shed their ethnic identity and fully merge into the majority culture. Although some first-generation immigrants strive toward assimilation, due perhaps to personal determination to survive in a foreign country or to take advantage of opportunities, most often assimilation takes place in subsequent generations. Asian Indians who identify themselves as being "mostly American" do not consider Asian Indian culture superior to American culture, and they are willing to let their children date non-Indians. It is believed that ethnic pride is reawakened in some immigrants if they become disillusioned with life in America, particularly if the disappointment is attributed to prejudice from the majority society. A few immigrants exist at the edges of the acculturation process, either maintaining total ethnic identity or rejecting both their culture of origin and that of the majority culture.[22]

Acculturation of Food Habits

Culturally based food habits are often the last practices people change through acculturation. Unlike speaking a foreign language or wearing traditional clothing, eating is usually done in the privacy of the home, hidden

from observation by others. Adoption of new food items does not generally develop as a steady progression from traditional diet to the diet of the majority culture. Instead, research indicates that the consumption of new items is often independent of traditional food habits.[17,18] The lack of available native ingredients may force immediate acculturation, or convenience or cost factors may speed change. Samoans may be unable to find the fresh coconut cream needed to prepare favorite dishes, for instance, or an Iranian may find the cost of saffron prohibitive. Some immigrants, however, adapt the foods of the new culture to the preparation of traditional dishes.[17] Tasty foods are easily accepted—fast food, pastries, candies, and soft drinks; conversely, unpopular traditional foods may be the first to go. Mexican children living in the United States quickly reject certain cuts of meat, such as tripe, that their parents still enjoy. It is the foods most associated with ethnic identity that are most resistant to acculturation. Muslims will probably never eat pork, regardless of where they live. People from several Asian countries may insist on eating rice with every meal, even if it is the only Asian food on the table.

Cultural Food Habits

Food functions vary culturally, and each group creates categories reflective of their priorities. In the United States, food has been typically classified by food group (protein, dairy, cereal and grain, fruits and vegetables), by percentage of important nutrients (as identified in Dietary Reference Intake [DRI] for energy, protein, fat, carbohydrates, vitamins, and minerals), or according to recommendations for health. American models, especially the Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2010 and the new model, ChooseMyPlate, outline current dietary recommendations to support health guidelines. These categories also suggest that Americans value food more for nutritional content and impact on health than for any symbolic use. But only limited information is provided about U.S. food habits; although these schemes list what foods people eat, they reveal nothing about how, when, or why foods are consumed.

Culturally based categories are commonly used by members of each culture. Examples found in both developing and industrialized societies include cultural superfoods, usually staples that have a dominant role in the diet; prestige foods, often protein items or expensive or rare foods; body image foods, believed to influence health, beauty, and well-being; sympathetic magic foods, whose traits, through association of color or form, are incorporated; and physiologic group foods, reserved for, or forbidden to, groups with certain physiologic status, such as gender, age, or health condition.[23]

Researchers have proposed numerous models to understand the food habits of different cultures. Some of these models are helpful in understanding the role of food within a culture, including:

1. *Core and complementary foods model* frequency of food consumption
2. *Food-flavor principles:* ways a culture traditionally prepares and seasons its foods
3. *Meal patterns and meal cycles:* daily, weekly, and yearly use of food
4. *Developmental perspective of food culture:* changes in food functions that emerge during structural growth in a culture

Core and Complementary Foods Model

Foods selected by a culture can be grouped according to how often they're consumed. Core foods are staples regularly included in a person's diet, usually on a daily basis.[24] These typically include complex carbohydrates, such as rice, wheat, corn, yams, cassava, taro, or plantains. Foods widely but less frequently eaten are termed secondary foods. These items, such as chicken or lettuce or apples, are consumed once a week or more, but not daily. Foods eaten only sporadically are called peripheral foods. These foods are characteristic of individual food preference, not cultural group habit.

A slightly different version of this model suggests that in many cultures, the core food is always served with fringe, or complementary, items to improve palatability (Figure 1.2).[25] Because most starchy staples are bland and uniform in texture, these flavorful foods, eaten in small quantities, encourage consumption of the core food as the bulk of the diet. Legumes, for example, are sometimes a complementary food and sometimes a secondary food. It has been hypothesized that these core and complementary food pairings often combine to provide nutritionally adequate meals, especially when legumes are included. Another example is in cultures where a grain is a core food and additional sources of vitamins A and C are required. Rice, breads and pastas, and corn are frequently prepared with leafy green vegetables, abundant herbs, or tomatoes, which are high in these needed nutrients. Chinese rice with pickled vegetables, Italian noodles with tomato sauce, Mexican corn tortillas with salsa, and Middle Eastern pilaf with parsley and dried fruit are examples. When the core diet is almost adequate nutritionally, the addition of secondary foods—including legumes (soybean products in China; beans or lentils in Italy; red or pinto beans in Mexico; and chickpeas, fava beans, and lentils in the Middle East), small amounts of meats, poultry, fish, and cheeses or yogurt—can provide the necessary balance.

Changes in food behaviors are believed to happen most often with peripheral foods and then core foods. A person who is willing to omit foods that she or he rarely eats is typically much more reluctant to change those eaten daily and associated with her or his cultural identity. Although little has been reported on the significance of complementary foods in diet modification, presumably, if complementary items were altered or omitted, the core would no longer be palatable. The complementary foods provide the flavor familiarity associated with the core.

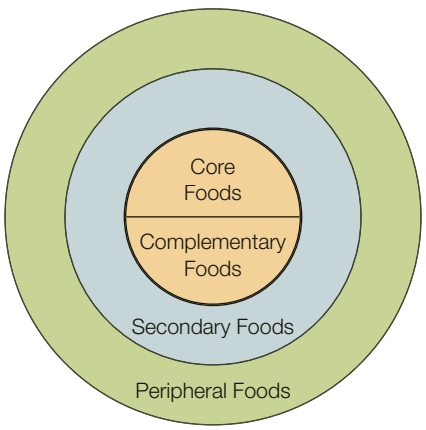

Figure 1.2
The core and complementary foods model.

Flavor Principles

The significance of food flavor cannot be overestimated. The ways foods are prepared and seasoned is only second in importance to the initial selection of ingredients. It is no less than the transformation of feeding into eating.

Foods demonstrate variability according to location. Much is made, for example, of wine *terroir*—the soil texture, natural minerals, drainage, source of water, sun exposure, average temperature, and other environmental factors in which grapes are grown for wine production. Each region and every vineyard are distinctive, often producing appreciable differences in the resulting product. Yet this variation is insignificant when compared to how foods in general are processed for consumption. Every technique, from preparation for cooking (e.g., washing, hulling or peeling, chopping, pounding, squeezing, soaking, leaching, and marinating) to cooking (e.g., baking, roasting, grilling, stewing, toasting, steaming, boiling, and frying) and preserving (e.g., drying, curing, canning, pickling, fermenting, and freezing), alters the original flavor of the ingredient. Nevertheless, location and manipulation practices alone do not equal cuisine. For that, foods must be seasoned.

Historians and scientists speculate there are several reasons why herbs and spices have assumed such an essential role in food habits. Foremost is palatability. Salt, one of the most widely used seasonings, prompts an innate human taste response. It is enjoyed by most people and physiologically craved by some.

Researchers also suggest that the burn of chili peppers (and perhaps other spices) may trigger the release of pleasurable endorphins. Another recurrent theory on the popularity of seasoning early on was to disguise the taste of spoiled meats, though evidence for this is limited. A more plausible assertion is that spices were found effective in preserving meats. A survey of recipes worldwide suggested that the antimicrobial activity of spices accounts for their widespread use, especially in hot climates.[26] Other researchers speculate that eating chili peppers (and, by extension, other hot seasonings such as mustard, horseradish, and wasabi) is a benign form of risk taking that provides a safe thrill.[27] Additionally, the recurrent use of seasonings may provide the familiarity sought in the omnivore's dilemma.[28]

Theories aside, seasonings can be used to classify cuisines culturally.[28,29] Unique seasoning combinations, termed *flavor principles*, typify the foods of ethnic groups worldwide. They are so distinctive that few people mistake their use. For example, a dish flavored with soy sauce is Asian and not European. These seasoning combinations are often found in the complementary foods of the core and complementary foods model, providing the flavors associated with the starchy carbohydrates that are the staples of a culture. They usually include herbs, spices, vegetables, and a fat or oil, although many variations exist. A principle flavor combination in West Africa is tomatoes, onion, and chili peppers that have been sauté in palm oil. In the Pacific Islands, a flavor principle is coconut milk or cream with a little lime juice and salt. Yams taste like West African food when topped with the tomato mixture and like Pacific Islander food when served with the coconut sauce. Some widely recognizable flavor principles include:

- Asian Indian: garam masala (curry blend of coriander, cumin, fenugreek, turmeric, black pepper, cayenne, cloves, cardamom, and chili peppers)
- Brazilian (Bahia): chili peppers, dried shrimp, ginger root, and palm oil
- Chinese: soy sauce, rice wine, and ginger root
- French: butter, cream, wine, boquet garni (selected herbs, such as tarragon, thyme, and bay leaf)
- German: sour cream, vinegar, dill, mustard, and black pepper
- Greek: lemon, onions, garlic, oregano, and olive oil
- Italian: tomato, garlic, basil, oregano, and olive oil
- Japanese: soy sauce, sugar, and rice wine vinegar
- Korean: soy sauce, garlic, ginger root, black pepper, scallions, chili peppers, and sesame seeds or oil
- Mexican: tomatoes, onions, chili peppers, and cumin
- Puerto Rican: sofrito (seasoning sauce of tomatoes, onions, garlic, bell peppers, cilantro, capers, pimento, annatto seeds, and lard)
- Russian: sour cream, onion, dill, and parsley
- Scandinavian: sour cream, onion, mustard, dill, and caraway
- Thai: fermented fish sauce, coconut milk, chili peppers, garlic, ginger root, lemon grass, and tamarind

It would be incorrect to assume that every dish from each culture is flavored with its characteristic seasoning combinations, or that flavor principle seasonings are limited to just those listed. It's common to find regional variations as well. In China, northern cuisine often includes the flavor principle seasonings enhanced with soybean paste, garlic, and sesame oil. In the south, fermented black beans are frequently added, although in the Szechwan region hot bean paste, chili peppers, or Szechwan (fagara) pepper is more common. In the specialty cuisine of the Hakka, the addition of red rice wine is distinctive. Further, in any culture where the traditional seasoning combinations are prepared at home, not purchased, modifications to suit each family are

A few cuisines have extremely limited seasonings, including the fare of the Inuits. Broadly speaking, cuisines offering large portions of meat and other protein foods tend to be less seasoned than those with a higher proportion of grains, fruits and vegetables, and legumes.