

International Conversation Café

Lifestyle Topic: Cuisine from Around the World

First, let's look at some food vocabulary.

Savory – meat like

Sweet – sugar like

Spicy, tangy, hot like peppers

Sour, tart, like a lemon

Bitter – strong lemon taste or medicine taste

Salty – like the ocean

What combinations of taste do you like?

How would you use “tangy” in a sentence?

Where did these basic foods originate?

Corn- This staple was first cultivated in Mexico 10,000 years ago. Corn makes up 20% of the staple food in the world.

Wheat – the first starch in the world and developed in Iraq. It is the main ingredient of bread, pasta, crackers, breakfast cereals, and pastry. 15% of all starch in world diets comes from wheat.

Potato – first grown by the Incas in the Andes mountains of present- day Ecuador/ Peru. It makes up only 2% of the calories from staples in the world.

Rice – first cultivated in India and Southeast Asia. It makes up 17% of the staple food worldwide.

Chicken – the most widely consumed meat. The chicken has its origins in the red and gray jungle fowl of Southeast Asia. Interestingly chickens were probably first bred for fighting. The male rooster can be very aggressive. Only later did this bird's meat become important.

What staple did your family use the most?

Which staple do you like with chicken?

The Basic World Cuisines

Mexican

These dishes are often spicy. Most Mexican food in the USA is Tex-Mex, Mexican food that has been altered for the taste of US people. Dishes include burrito, enchiladas, tacos, stuffed peppers, flour and corn tortillas. The origin for this food is Northern Mexico. Central and South Mexico use subtler flavors. Some sauces use chocolate.

Italian

Italian meals usually begin with antipasto or appetizer, then to the starch like pasta, next the meat dish, and finally dessert. Each region of Italy enjoys a different style of food. Parma Italy is known for Parma ham and Parmesan cheese. In fact, Italy has over 400 types of cheese including one that allows flies to lay eggs and the larva to eat the cheese so that the cheese has a unique texture.

What is your favorite cheese?

Would you choose a Mexican meal or Italian?

Indian

India has a vast range of cuisines as there are over 23 main regional languages spoken there. Curry is a common type of dish. It is a spicy sauce that is used with rice and with meat and/ or vegetables in it. There are sections of India that specialize in vegetarian foods. Some parts of India use a special Hindu style that produces medicinal food. Other sections will use chicken, lamb, or goat, but beef is generally avoided.

Why do you think hot climates enjoy spicy food?

What is your favorite Indian dish?

Thai

This food type focuses on broths (liquid dishes) and many types of noodles such as rice or wheat. The noodles all have varying diameters and lengths. It often uses fresh vegetables and has a wide range from sweet to spicy, salty to bitter.

Chinese

There are eight basic types of cuisine in China, a sample being Fujian, Cantonese, and Szechuan. Opposites are often important based on the concepts of yin and yang. Thus, there are varieties of color, taste, and texture. Wheat steamed dumplings are found in the north and rice more often in the south. Wheat noodles are also popular in the north. Rice is not fried but steamed. Since there is a Buddhist tradition in China, vegetarian cooking is professionally done. Tofu, which is a soybean curd, is served in many ways from fried to cold.

What opposite tastes do you like on the same plate?

What Chinese vegetable dishes do you like?

Comfort food is a term to describe food that we eat to feel satisfied, both emotionally and physically. Tell about your favorite comfort foods.

