

WORLD GASTRONOMY

Gastronomy is the art of selecting, preparing, serving, and enjoying food. It is based on the relationships between the countries' food, culture, and tradition. The world is divided into distinctive cuisines that offer and use different ingredients endemic to them (Brittanica, 2023).

Cuisines of the World (Heyman, 2017)

The food and method of preparation traditionally used in a region or population is called **cuisine**. The factors that shape them are the **religious laws** under which certain food items are **prohibited**; **required economic conditions**, which regulate the trade in delicacies and imported ingredients; and climate, which determines the cooking ingredients that will be available.

The following are some of the known cuisines in the world:

CUISINES OF THE AMERICAS

The Americas are the location of some of the oldest cultural cuisines and the world's first global fusion cuisines. Christopher Columbus's discovery of the Americas during his expedition is an important moment in culinary history because it introduced the ingredients from America to Europe and Asia – and vice versa, leading to their incorporation into other cuisines. The following are the different cuisines of the Americas:

Caribbean Cuisine

Caribbean cuisine is the world's most diverse because the gastronomies of Europe, Africa, and Asia have converged, evolving into new cuisines that borrow from these areas. The cultural philosophy of this cuisine is to survive using whatever resources are available, which stemmed from the way of thinking during the brutal years of the slave trade and Asian immigrants from China and India when the majority of the people were restricted in access to food. The following are some of the famous Caribbean dishes:

- **Crack conch** is a Bahamian dish made from **conch meat (a large sea snail abundant in the country)** that is pounded/cracked with a meat mallet to become tender, breaded in a batter, then deep-fried until golden and crispy (Taste Atlas, n.d.).
- **Ropa Vieja** is a Cuban dish made from **stewed beef that is shredded**, topped with tomatoes alongside a **sofrito base (a puree of tomato, pepper, cilantro, onions, and garlic)**, and served with rice and black beans. Its name is translated as "old clothes" because it was traditionally made using leftover food (Havana Guide, n.d.).
- **Griyo/Griot (Baked Pork Shoulder)** is a popular dish in Haiti where pork shoulder is marinated in a mixture of citrus juices, garlic, Scotch bonnet peppers (the most popular hot pepper in the Caribbean region), and other aromatic spices (thyme, cloves, and parsley) then deep-fried until it achieves a crispy golden-brown exterior. It is usually served with *pikliz*, a combination of thinly sliced cabbage, bell peppers, onions, carrots, and Scotch bonnet peppers pickled in a vinegar brine to complement the rich and fatty taste of the pork (Jirie Caribbean, 2023).
- **Asopao** is a Puerto Rican rice dish cooked to a soupy consistency. Its main protein can be beef, poultry, pork, or seafood, and it is cooked with ham, onions, peppers, tomatoes, sausages, and olives (Taste Atlas, n.d.).
- **Jerk chicken** is a popular dish in Jamaica consisting of a chicken marinated or dry rubbed with a combination of spices, such as green onions, garlic, ginger, habaneros, lime juice, soy sauce, brown sugar, thyme, and spices, which is then grilled or baked. This dish was first cooked by laborers who escaped into the wilderness, where the only means of food was cooking any available meat on a wood fire (World Atlas, 2018).

Mexican Cuisine

Mexico has been home to several great civilizations, such as the Toltec, Maya, and Aztecs, who contributed to the country's development, including their cuisine. The native cultures in the country did not have a written language, and the specifics of its history are unknown. Still, they contributed to the foundation of Mexican cuisine. The arrival of the Spanish in the country led to the techniques of making cheese, sausage, and stews, using fats to sear and saute food, and making pastry and bread. The French invasion led to the refinement of rich sauces and structured classification of food and menu, which greatly developed Mexican cuisine. Below are some of the popular dishes in this cuisine (Travel Food Atlas, 2020):

- **Chilaquiles** /chi-la-ki-les/ is a common breakfast in Mexico consisting of corn tortillas that have been quartered, fried, and topped off with salsa.
- **Enmolada** consists of shredded chicken and cotija cheese (aged Mexican cheese) wrapped in corn tortillas and then doused with black mole sauce, made from Mexican chocolate, herbs and spices, topped with sesame seeds and more cheese.
- **Elote** /e-lo-te/ is a popular street food where boiled corn can be seasoned with salt, chili powder, sour cream butter, lime, mayonnaise, and cheese. The corn is mostly served on a stick but sometimes sliced off the cob and served in a cup for convenience.
- **Chongos zamoranos** /chohn-gohs za-mo-ra-nos/ is a dessert prepared using raw milk, sugar, cinnamon, and rennet tablets (an enzyme produced in the stomach of young mammals used for coagulating milk or cheesemaking). It has a sweet taste and cheese-like consistency.
- **Escamoles** /es-ka-mo-les/ (**Mexican Caviar**) are the edible larvae and pupae of ants in the country. They have a nutty and buttery flavor and become crunchy after being fried. They are also usually consumed with tacos, omelets, or salsa and served with tortillas.

South American Cuisine

South American indigenous tribes (Incas, Quechua, and other Native Americans) developed irrigation systems. They terraced the steep mountains in the region to make them suitable for growing corn, lima beans, and chili peppers. When the Europeans arrived, they brought European livestock and ingredients, such as pigs, chickens, goats, citrus, and wheat. The combination of the indigenous tribes and European influences resulted in the development of South American cuisine. The popular South American dishes are the following (Taste Atlas, 2023):

- **Churrasco** is a fresh cut of beef (sirloin cap) on the back side of the animal called *picanha*, which is first grilled, sliced off, and then put in a skewer. It is widely popular in Brazil and consists of a tender, juicy steak served with chimichurri sauce (a combination of olive oil, onion, garlic, spices and herbs, and red wine vinegar).
- **Pan de bono** is a traditional Colombian bread shaped into bagels or balls slightly larger than golf balls made up of cassava starch, corn flour, queso fresco (a combination of cow and goat milk), sugar, and eggs. It is usually served warm with hot chocolate as an accompaniment.
- **Leche de Tigre** is a Peruvian beverage made from ceviche (a dish consisting of fish marinated in various citrus and seasonings) juice. The milky liquid is sometimes made on its own using fish stock, adding pureed fish to make it more creamy or adding milk to balance the acidity from the citrus juice.
- **Pastel de Choclo** is a creamy and soft casserole-like pie famous in Chile consisting of ground beef, chicken, onions, black olives, hard-boiled eggs, and dough from freshly ground corn, called *choclo*.
- **Locro de Papa** is a classic Ecuadorian soup made from onions, potatoes, garlic, annatto, milk, cumin, and queso fresco. It is simmered until all the ingredients are fully cooked, and the cheese is mixed until it melts. It is served hot, topped with chopped cilantro, diced avocado, and hot sauce.

CUISINES OF EUROPE

European cuisine is distinct because of the use of a wide array of sauces and many vegetable dishes. The cuisine focuses on naturality and lightness, which means they use less seasoning and spices to preserve the natural tastes of the food products (BucketListtc, 2022). Below are some of the famous European cuisines:

Cuisine of the British Isles

The British Isles includes the countries of England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. British cuisine has been heavily influenced by foreign invaders, such as the Vikings (who taught the smoking technique) and Romans (who introduced cherries, cabbages, and wines). The increase in overseas trade helped in the adoption and arrival of spices such as saffron, nutmeg, pepper, ginger, and sugar ingredients from the Americas. A typical British cuisine consists of meat and vegetable dishes, but traditional meals still include bread and cheese, meat and game pies, boiled vegetables and soups, and roasted and stewed meats. The following are some of the famous British dishes (Britain-Visitor, n.d.):

- **Sunday roast** is traditionally eaten every Sunday by English households. It is a roasted meat (beef, lamb, duck, chicken, or pork), assorted potatoes, and other vegetables served with gravy.
- A **scone** is a cake made of flour, milk, and butter. It is halved, eaten with butter and jam, and sometimes contains raisins.
- **Steak and kidney pie** is a savory pie filled with diced beef, kidney (ox, pork, or lamb), fried onion, and brown gravy. The gravy consists of salted beef broth flavored with Worcestershire sauce and black pepper thickened with flour.
- **Fish and chips** contain battered and deep-fried fish (cod or haddock) and French fries. This dish was among the few food items that were not subjected to rationing during World War II since it is believed that the dish was good for boosting the nation's morale and a contributing factor in defeating Nazi Germany.
- **Cornish pastry** is a baked pastry made by placing a filling of vegetables and meat on a flat pastry circle, folding it to wrap the filling, and crimping its edge to seal it before placing it in the oven.

French Cuisine

French cuisine has been celebrated as the Western world's finest cuisine. It has two (2) types: *haute cuisine*, a traditional style where recipes are meats and fish prepared with sauces containing cream, egg yolks, brandy, sugar, and other starches, and *nouvelle cuisine*, which emphasizes lighter, subtler tastes that require the best and freshest raw ingredients. Below are some of the popular French dishes:

- **Quiche Lorraine** /kish lo-reyn/ is a big tart containing bacon or grilled ham, eggs, cream, nutmeg, salt, and black pepper. The top is baked until lightly browned to give it a smokey taste.
- **Cassoulet** /ka-su-le/ is a casserole made with white beans and various types of meat: different parts of pork, sausage, and duck legs. All ingredients are slowly braised together for hours in a glazed terracotta pot until the hardest piece of meat gets tender.
- **Pot Au Feu** /paw-toh-fœ/. A national dish and the most celebrated dish in France by poor and affluent families. A classic French comfort food, it is stewed meat with mixed vegetables.
- **Coq Au Vin** /kaw-aw-van/. It means "rooster in red wine." It is a chicken braised with red wine, mushrooms, and garlic.
- **Foie gras** /fwa-gra/ is a soft buttery pâté /pah-tay/ (a mixture of seasoned ground food) made with duck liver with a texture similar to ice cream. It is spread on a toast of crispy, warm bread and is mostly used for extravagant parties and ceremonies.

Scandinavian Cuisine

Scandinavia covers the countries of Sweden, Norway, Finland, Iceland, and Denmark. The cooking methods of Scandinavian cuisine revolve around a stove or fire since the dishes are baked or roasted inside the stove or pan-fried, stewed, or sauteed on the top of the stove because of the region's cold climate. The challenges to the climate also resulted in the development of techniques for preserving food, such as salting, pickling, smoking, and drying. Below are some of the popular Scandinavian dishes (Taste Atlas, 2023):

- **Kladdkaka** is a rich chocolate cake famous in Sweden made from eggs, cocoa or chocolate, butter, flour, and sugar into a dense and luscious dessert with a moist center and an outer layer with a thin and crunchy coating.
- **Danish pastry** is made with laminated dough (repeatedly covered with butter and folded over itself) shaped into different forms, such as pinwheels and filled with flavorful and creamy fruit fillings.
- **Köttbullar** /shut-boo-lar/ are famous Swedish meatballs consisting of ground beef mixed with pork or veal and typically seasoned with onions, salt, pepper, and allspice. The rounded meatballs are browned in hot butter until their exterior is crispy brown but with a light, airy, and tender texture on the interior.
- **Pinnekjøtt** /pin-ne-shot/ is a rack of lamb or mutton that is brined and air-dried/smoked before being sliced into individual ribs and cooked on birch branches (thin-leaved tree) and steamed until all the water evaporates so the meat becomes juicy and tender. It is usually served with mashed potatoes, pureed turnips, and various salads.
- **Brunede kartofler** /bru-nd kar-to-fla/ is made from cooked and peeled potatoes that are simmered in a mixture of butter and sugar until completely coated in the caramelized glaze.

MEDITERRANEAN CUISINE

The Mediterranean includes the countries of Turkey, Lebanon, Israel, Greece, Spain, Malta, and Portugal. Mediterranean cuisine focuses on fresh, minimal-processed ingredients, pronounced flavors, and simple recipes with varieties. The basic ingredients of this cuisine include olives, wheat, and grapes, where olive oil, bread, and wine can be produced, respectively. The cuisine is considered one of the healthiest and most delicious because it widely uses olive-based products and unrefined grains, vegetables, and fruits. The following are some of the famous Mediterranean dishes (Zawadzki, 2022):

- **Paella** /pa-eh-yah/ is one of Spain's most popular dishes. It was originally a dish for agricultural workers made with short-grain rice, tomatoes, onions, beans, saffron, chicken, and seafood. It is traditionally eaten straight from a massive pan, each person using a wooden spoon.
- **Falafel** is mostly a street food in Turkey, Lebanon, and Israel. They are a tasty combination of ground chickpeas with fresh herbs and spices shaped into small patties and sometimes served between slices of pita bread.
- **Hummus** /ha-mus/ is a dipping sauce made by blending chickpeas (garbanzos) with tahini (sesame paste), citrus, and garlic. Batons of fresh vegetables, such as carrots and celery or warm pita bread, are the common food items where the hummus is used as a dipping sauce.
- **Moussaka** /mu-sa-ka/ is a popular baked dish from Greece made from fried eggplants, potatoes, beef, or lamb mince sauce and finished with a bechamel sauce. It is similar to a lasagna, except this dish is made with layers of vegetables.
- **Stuffat tal-fenek** /stu-fat tal-fe-nek/ is a traditional rabbit stew from Malta that is slow-cooked in a rich tomato, garlic, and red wine sauce until the meat becomes tender.

CUISINES OF ASIA (Heyman, 2017)

Asia is the largest continent globally in terms of both land area and population. It is home to various ethnicities and food habits. Asian food blends sweet, sour, salty, spicy, and bitter tastes. Asian cuisine focuses on a combination of flavors and textures. The following are the cuisines of Asia:

North Asian Cuisine

The North Asian region includes the bulk of Siberia of Russia and the northeastern edges of the Asian continent. Most of North Asia is under the government of the Russian Federation. It is the reason Russia heavily influences its cuisine. The following are some of the famous dishes in this cuisine (Williams, 2022):

- **Blini** is a wheat pancake rolled with various fillings, such as jam, cheese, caviar, sour cream, onions, or chocolate syrup. It is the equivalent of a crepe in Russia.
- **Pashka** is a festive dessert made commonly during Easter. This sweetened cheesecake dessert is decorated with Christian symbols for the holiday feast.
- **Pelmeni** are pastry dumplings filled with minced meat and wrapped in a thin pasta-liked dough. They are usually served alone, pan-fried in butter, topped with sour cream, or in a soup broth.
- **Shchi** /sh-chi/ is a cabbage soup made from fresh or fermented cabbage and contains potatoes, onions, carrots, and chicken.
- **Solyanka** is a thick soup made with various types of smoked meat, including sausage, ham, bacon, beef, and vegetables, such as carrots, onions, cabbage, and potatoes.

Central Asian Cuisine

Central Asia covers Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. The region uses various spices, but its cuisine is not too spicy. Central Asian cuisine is commonly mild and uses fresh ingredients from nearby regions. The commonly used ingredients are lamb, beef, bread, baked pies, and handmade noodles. Below are some of the famous dishes in this cuisine:

- **Boorsoks** are little fried dough for special events and served as restaurant appetizers.
- **Kumis** /koo-mis/ is fermented horse milk popular in North and Central Asia.
- **Manty** is a dumpling filled with minced meat, fat, and onions. It is steamed and served with ketchup, vinegar, or sour cream.
- **Pirozhki** /pi-roj-ki/ is a fried or baked dough filled with mashed potatoes or cabbage.
- **Shorpo** is a meat broth soup with big pieces of fatty mutton meat.

South Asian Cuisine

The South Asian region includes Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. South Asian cuisine is unique because of the prevalence of vegetarian food (grains and legumes) and the use of spices. Long-grain rice is the most commonly consumed grain. Masalas are mixtures of spices and herbs that can be fresh and “wet” or dried and powdered. Islamic dietary laws are prevalent across Bangladesh. Halal food includes food items Muslims can eat and drink under Islamic dietary guidelines. Cultured milk (yogurt) is typically used as a condiment and an ingredient in most South Asian dishes. The following are some of the popular dishes in South Asia:

- **Kadhi** is a curry made with yogurt and chickpea or garbanzo bean flour.
- **Khichri** /kich-ree/ combines vegetables sautéed with rice and dal (a collective term for dried lentils, peas, and beans) in ample ghee (a type of clarified butter). Khichri is usually served with kadhi.

- **Samosa** is an angular, deep-fried turnover with spicy potatoes, vegetables, cheese, or meat stuffing served with chutney (a condiment made from a combination of chopped fruits, vinegar, spices, and sugar with a thick consistency).
- **Biryani** is a mixed rice dish made from Indian spices, such as pepper, turmeric, cardamom, cumin, nutmeg, meat, cheese, egg, or fish. It is often cooked in a clay pot, sealed with dough, and layered with herbs and yogurt.
- **Kottu** is a popular street food in Sri Lanka made of shredded bits of paratha bread (a flatbread in the South Asian region), then stir-fried with several spices and meat or vegetables. It is frequently served with a spicy curry sauce.

East Asian Cuisine

East Asian region includes China, Japan, Korea, Mongolia, and Taiwan. Rice is essential in East Asian cuisine and is believed to have been introduced to the region from India. Rice can also be made into a congee porridge for breakfast or as a late-night snack, with added vegetables, meat, or fish for flavor. Below are some of the common dishes in East Asia:

- **Dumplings** are small steamed bundles made with wontons filled with bits of shrimp, crab, and vegetables or bread-like versions filled with spiced pork, minced beef, or sweetened bean paste, then baked, steamed, or pan-fried.
- **Bibimbap** is a Korean dish with rice, vegetables, beef, gochujang (hot chili paste), and a fried egg. It is seasoned with soy sauce and sesame seeds.
- **Samgyeopsal** is a South Korean delicacy consisting of pork belly cooked at a table in a special pan to let the fat run off the sides of it. It became popular in the 1960s when the price of soju decreased, and people needed a dish to go with it since it was low-priced at that time.
- **Ramen** is a staple in Japanese cuisine. It is made with noodles and served with meat and vegetables in a broth.
- **Sashimi**. It refers to any thinly sliced raw food, including raw beef, chicken, and horse, but fish and seafood are the most popular.

Southeast Asian Cuisine

The countries of Brunei, Cambodia, Philippines, Indonesia, Laos, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand comprise the Southeast Asian region. The region's traditional emphasis is on lightly prepared food items and aromas using a delicate balance of quick stir-frying, steaming, and boiling with herbs, spices, and seasonings. Southeast Asian cuisines have many ingredients in common, but the food preparation methods and meal patterns reflect the foreign cultures that have influenced each nation. A meal is not considered complete unless rice is included. These are some of the common dishes of the region (Asia Highlights, 2023):

- **Popiah** /pohp-yah/ is a fresh spring roll served fresh or fried, commonly found in Malaysia, Singapore, and Taiwan.
- **Nasi lemak** is made with fragrant rice, peanuts, spicy sambal, boiled egg, and dried anchovies wrapped in a banana leaf parcel.
- **Pad Thai** is a fried noodle dish with a sweet and sour taste, usually made with shrimp or chicken, crunchy bean sprouts, eggs, onion, and finely grated peanuts.
- **Pho** is a traditional Vietnamese soup consisting of broth, noodles, chicken or beef, and fresh herbs. It is traditionally eaten for breakfast and favored by the locals and travelers.
- **Laap/Lahp/Larb** is a minced meat salad in Laos made with chicken, beef, duck, fish, or pork, usually seasoned with fish sauce, fermented fish juice, lime juice, rice noodles, and fresh herbs.

West Asian Cuisine

West Asia includes Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. Most of the region is often referred to as the Middle East. Pork is banned in Islam and Judaism, so it is hardly consumed in the region. Eating naan (bread), along with mutton and kebabs, hot peppers, black pepper, cloves, and other strong spices, became widespread. In addition to rice, *chapati* made from wheat or barley is also a diet staple, and beans play an essential role in meals. These are some of the region's famous food items (Kirmaci, 2022):

- **Tabouleh** is made by blending bulgur (cracked wheat), finely chopped tomatoes, cucumber, parsley, mint, garlic, olive oil, onion, lemon juice, and sour pomegranate syrup. It can be served with a side of pita and romaine lettuce leaves, which act as wraps for the salad.
- **Shawarma** is a dish comprising sliced meat (chicken, beef, lamb, or turkey) wrapped in a warm pita and dressed with garlic sauce, tomatoes, cucumbers, pickles, and tahini sauce (a combination of sesame seed paste, garlic, olive oil, and lemon juice).
- **Kebab** is a skewered meat, such as lamb or beef, with vegetables and then grilled. The meat is typically sliced into bite-size cubes and marinated in olive oil, lemon juice, and various spices.
- **Kabsa** is a rice (usually long grain rice) dish with meat, lentils, fish, lamb, and spices with a distinct mild, lemony flavor. It is served on almost every occasion, including weddings.
- **Thareed** is a dish of red meat chunks with vegetables and a thick sauce from fresh tomatoes and tomato paste. It is served over flatbread. It is a popular dish during Ramadan as a main meal after the soup during the fasting break.

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