

Traditional Food and Eating Practices

Food Foundations • an NAQ Nutrition program

List of countries and their traditional food and celebrations

Country	Traditional Diet	Traditional Serving/Eating Practices
China	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Low in sugar, fat and protein and high in carbohydrates - Meal consists of many different dishes and involves a variety of textures and flavours within the same meal - Rice is almost always the basis of a meal - Usually have 3 meals a day, do not tend to snack - Food are commonly steamed, boiled or stir-fried - Chinese food is fairly plain in comparison to some other Asian foods which are spicier - Vegetables are traditionally cooked to be tender but crisp 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dishes are served at the same time and individuals serve themselves into bowls - Ingredients are chopped up finely so that there is no need for cutting at the table - Meals are usually eaten with chopsticks and a porcelain spoon for soup - Deep bowls are commonly used to eat from - Soy sauce is commonly placed on the table to be used as a condiment
Burma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Influenced by Indian, Chinese, English and indigenous Burmese cuisines - Rice is the staple eaten at most meals - Curries are mild - Fish is a common feature. - Vegetables are usually crisp and stir-fried rather than boiled - Green vegetables are very popular and are traditionally served with most meals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Burmese eat at the table and may eat their meal with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o their fingers o Spoon only o Cutlery – knife and fork - Usually eat from small bowls - Dishes are placed on the table and individuals serve themselves into bowls
Greece	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fish is eaten in large quantities and cooked in a variety of ways - Lamb is a favourite meat but poultry, goat, beef and pork are also enjoyed - Vegetables are usually cooked in oil and usually have added 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Traditional European setting with knives, forks and spoons

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	<p>herbs/spices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Salad is served at almost every meal - Greek cuisine relies on the use of fresh seasonal ingredients - Olives and olive oil are essential ingredients in the Greek diet - Dried fruit and nuts feature highly in the Greek diet - White crusty bread is served at most meals without butter or margarine 	
India	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A wide variety of food is eaten and regional variation that is present. Major differences exist between Northern and Southern India <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Northern India staple – Wheat, eaten as chapattis o Southern India staple – rice o Northern India curry is usually dry as they can be eaten with chapattis o Southern India curry is usually wet so that the rice can soak up the juices o Northern India meat – mutton, chicken, pork. No beef o Southern India meat – Mainly vegetarian o Northern India fish – river fish o Southern India fish – ocean fish occasionally - At least one curry is preferred per day - A wide variety of fruits and vegetables are eaten throughout India - Regardless of religion persuasion most Indians will not eat meat every day if at all - Most Indian meals are served with an array of different dishes including pappadums, pickles, relishes and raitas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All the food is placed on the table at the same time. Each person eats what they wish depending on the individual taste - Northern Indians may use spoons to eat the meal - Southern Indians may use their hands to eat their meal

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<p>Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fruit is eaten often - Due to the similar climate, many of the vegetables eaten in Australia are also eaten in Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore - Indian Malaysians and Indian Singaporeans enjoy spicy foods including curries and satay dishes - Chinese Malaysians and Singaporeans eat less spicy, quite plain food - Eating habits will vary according to religious beliefs. E.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Muslims do not eat pork o Hindus will not eat beef o Buddhists can be strict vegetarians - The staple of every meal is rice - Soup is eaten at least once a day - In general pork is the meat eaten most frequently, followed by chicken (Muslim Malaysians however do not eat pork) - Fish and prawns are commonly eaten - All vegetables are eaten. Green vegetables are preferred and to other vegetables and are eaten at almost every meal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All dishes are placed on the table at the same time. Individuals serve themselves - Dishes are usually served and eaten from bowls rather than plates - Utensils will vary. Some people will use chopsticks, while others will prefer to use their fingers (right hand only). Those who use this method of eating are very gracious and neat.
<p>Italy</p>	<p>In Italy there are over 20 different regions each with a unique cuisine.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Italians like to eat pork, veal, chicken and fish. Cold cuts of meat such as salami, ham and mortadella are eaten regularly. The majority of these cold cuts are high in fat and/or salt and their consumption should be minimised. - Vegetables, including legumes are usually boiled and then flavoured with spices. - Salad is a part of almost every midday and evening meal, even when hot 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use traditional European setting with knives, forks and spoons - The meal usually begins with a soup or antipasto (a selection of meats, cheeses and vegetables) - Olive oil and vinegar are placed on the table to be used as a dressing for salad

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	<p>vegetables are being served</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pasta is common - White crusty bread it served without butter or margarine at every meal - Fruit is usually served at the end of each meal 	
Middle East	<p>Represents the general geographical region south east of Europe. Countries considered to be in this region include: Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey and Yemen. Every country has it's own individual culture and eating habits however these countries have been grouped together as they follow similar patterns.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cooking and eating are very social affairs and often take place in the company of others - Many Middle Eastern food habits especially food taboos, will be based on religious beliefs – see sections on Jewish and Islamic Eating habits. - Wheat and rice are the staples – bread, rice or both are consumed at most meals. - There are many types of bread, the most common bread is flat and sometimes used to pick up meat or vegetables and to dip into a sauce or gravy - Meals are based on chick peas, beans. Lentils, rice, cracked wheat, barley and toher cereals. - Meat is eaten regularly and is usually spiced or marinated. Grilling, frying and stewing are common ways of cooking meat - Lamb is very popular, although fish, beef and chicken are also eaten 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Many Middle Eastern people will eat with their hands, using bread to act as a spoon, however some will prefer to use utensils - Food is usually placed in the middle of the table on serving platters or bowls and people help themselves - Iraqis are offended if the left hand is used while eating, as it is considered unclean.

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- Vegetables are eaten with most meals and are an integral part of the diet. They may be eaten raw, pickled, as salads, stuffed as a main dish, added to meat in a stew, sautéed, steamed or deep fried.
- Fresh fruit is generally preferred, although stewed, stuffed and dried fruit are also enjoyed.
- Yoghurt is an essential part of the Middle Eastern diet and used in both hot and cold dishes
- Soups are popular and are often eaten as a meal in themselves, accompanied by bread.
- For most Middle Eastern people, the main dish of the day is a rich vegetables stew which contains only a little meat.

China - special/religious occasions

Dates for many Chinese festivals are based on the lunar calendar. Consequently, the date will vary every year. Check with your local Chinese community for exact dates.

- Chinese new year – January (3 day festival)
- Mid Autumn Festival – May/June
- Dragon Boat Festival
- Birthdays

Burma - special/religious occasions

- Ya Gui Me Bon Pwe – February
 - o Burmese version of 'Let's have a BBQ' except they celebrate with a large bonfire and a long wok is used to cook.
- Thin Junge (Water Festival) – April
- Da Ma Set Kya – July
 - o Beginning of the Buddhist lent. Some people may fast at this time
- Tha Din Kyut (Festival of Light) – October
- Good Friday
- Christmas
- Birthdays and Anniversaries

Greece – Special/religious occasions

- Greek eating habits are largely influenced by religion. Most Greeks follow the Greek Orthodox religion and their Easter and Christmas celebrations fall on different dates to those from Christian religions.
- Holy Thursday – Easter bread is usually baked
- Good Friday – only vegetables and legumes without oil are eaten
- Easter
- Lent
- 15 August (St Mary's Day called the Assumption)
- 14 September (Day of the Cross)
- Christmas
- Names Days
- New Year

India – special/religious occasions

- The Indian year is based on the lunar calendar and so dates for special events will vary every year. Contact your local Indian society to find out exact dates.
- The majority of Indians practise Hinduism and this is followed in descending order by Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Jainism and Buddhism. Different religious groups have different food restrictions and celebrate different religious occasions. Take to the families attending your OSHC to determine their special/religious occasions celebrated.

Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore – special/religious occasions

- Good Friday
- Easter Sunday
- Chinese New Year
- Mid Autumn Festival
- Winter Solstice Festival
- Muslim – see Islam section

Italy – special/religious occasions

The majority of Italians are Roman Catholic; therefore two of the most important events of the year are Christmas and Easter

- Christmas Eve
- Christmas Day
- Good Friday
- Ash Wednesday
- Easter

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Vegetarian:

Vegetarian is a broad term that means a diet free from meat, fish and poultry. There are many reasons why a family may choose to be vegetarian such as personal health, religion and animal rights, so it is always important that services are respectful of these.

The three main types of vegetarians are listed below with the food groups they do and do not eat.

Food Group	Breads & Cereals	Vegetables	Fruit	Dairy/ alternatives	Meat/ alternatives	Other
Lacto-ovo vegetarians: avoid meat and seafood, but consume dairy, eggs and plant food.	All permitted	All permitted	All permitted	All permitted	Eggs permitted Nuts and seeds permitted	
					No meat No seafood	
Lacto vegetarians: Avoid meat, seafood and eggs but consume dairy and plant food.	All permitted	All permitted	All permitted	All permitted	Nuts and seeds permitted	
					No eggs No meat No seafood	

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Vegans: consume plant food only.	All permitted	All permitted	All permitted	Soy permitted	Nuts and seeds permitted	
				No dairy	No eggs No meat No seafood	No products containing traces of dairy, eggs, meat, seafood
<p>Islamic Religion:</p> <p>Islam is a religion which is practiced in almost all countries; a person who follows this religion is called a Muslim. Muslims eat a Halal diet, which means they only eat food which is permitted in Islam. Food which is not permitted is called Haram. Islam places responsibility on the individual to practice their religion, as such there are personal and cultural variations – so always discuss with families first so you know what food their children can and can't eat.</p>						
Food Group	Breads & Cereals	Vegetables	Fruit	Dairy/ alternatives	Meat/ alternatives	Other
Permitted – Halal Food	All permitted without addition of animal fats or alcohol during	All permitted without addition of animal fats or alcohol during	All permitted without addition of animal fats or alcohol during	All permitted without addition of animal fat and with vanilla or halal	Chicken, beef and lamb slaughtered according to Islamic dietary	Spices, pickles, chutney Jam, honey and

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	preparation	preparation	preparation	approved gelatine	law All seafood Eggs Dried beans, lentils and nuts	sugar Ice-cream only if made with halal-approved gelatine and without animal fat Butter, margarine, vegetable oils Mayonnaise Cordial, fruit juice, mineral and soda water
Not allowed – Haram Food						