



World Taste

Food is a very important and necessary part of our lives. We use it for a variety of different purposes and what we choose to eat is selected because of a variety of different influences. Food also plays an important part in how we celebrate. Foods commonly eaten at celebrations often reflect particular staple foods commonly eaten in certain countries, for example pasta in Italy, beans in Mexico, and rice in China.

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● Let's take a closer look at each of these countries and the foods they are known for:

Food Focus – Italy

Not too many nations can say their national dish has become an international phenomenon. Italy has two such dishes, pasta and of course pizza. In America, pizza usually falls into two categories: thick and cheesy Chicago style or thin and more traditional New York pizza. In Italy, pizza also falls into two distinct categories: Italian pizza and the rest of the world. It might seem silly considering the basic ingredients, but one taste of a true Italian pizza and that's it - you will never feel the same about this simple and delicious food again.

The word "pizza" is thought to have come from the Latin word 'pinsa', meaning flatbread. A legend suggests that Roman soldiers gained a taste for Jewish Matzoth while stationed in Roman occupied Palestine and developed a similar food after returning home. However a recent archeological discovery has found a preserved Bronze Age pizza in the Veneto region. By the Middle Ages these early pizzas started to take on a more modern look and taste. The peasantry of the time used what few ingredients they could get their hands on to produce the modern pizza dough and topped it with olive oil and herbs. The introduction of the Indian Water Buffalo gave pizza another dimension with the production of mozzarella cheese. Even today, the use of fresh 'mozzarella di buffalo' in Italian pizza cannot be substituted. *Source: www.lifeinitaly.com*



Food Focus - China

Chinese cooking, like most of Asia, focuses first on a starch such as rice or noodles. It then adds an accompaniment of meat or seafood and vegetables (unlike meat being the focus with starch and vegetables added second - as found in European-influenced cuisines). Recipes in China are as diverse as the 80,000 character language, and Chinese immigrants have brought this complex culinary heritage to almost every region of the world.

Traditionally, Chinese culinary characteristics are divided by region. The northern portion of China has a distinct Mongolian influence, characterized by the nomadic simplicity of the fire pot. Since rice is not grown in the north, there is more emphasis on noodles, soybeans and breads. To the south, Cantonese cooking evolved in a rich agricultural region; and local cuisine highlights fresh fruit and seafood. Spicy foods prevail in the western mountain regions of Szechuan and Hunan.

Source: www.globalgourmet.com





Food Focus – Mexico

So much more than tacos, Mexican cuisine is diverse and delicious. Mexican cuisine combines the traditional indigenous foods of the Aztecs and Mayas, like chocolate, corn, tomato, avocado, beans and chile peppers, with the meats, rice and garlic brought to Mexico by the Spanish colonists.



Most of today's Mexican food is based on ancient traditions, such as the Aztecs and Maya, combined with culinary trends introduced by Spanish colonists. Quesadillas, for example, are a flour or corn tortilla filled with cheese (often a Mexican-style soft farmer's cheese such as Queso Fresco or Queso Oaxaca), beef, chicken or pork. The indigenous part of this, and many other traditional foods, is the chili pepper. Foods like the Quesadilla also tend to be very colorful because of the rich variety of vegetables that are also used (among them are chili peppers, green peppers, chilies, broccoli, cauliflower, and radishes).

What a country does with its native fruits and vegetables also paints a picture of the resources, terrain and climate. In Mexico, the heat of the chilies causes sweat, making us cooler; while banana leaves act as both cooking vessels and flavoring agents. Source: www.globalgourmet.com

Coming Soon - March is National Nutrition Month®!

Chartwells is celebrating by exploring the food and cultures of the Mediterranean. Our cafeterias will be communicating important messages about eating a balanced diet and getting physical activity, while highlighting the health benefits of traditional diets eaten in Mediterranean countries. Food samples, games, and educational materials, including easy recipes to take home, will be available to students. More to come in March!

Flavors of the Mediterranean

Fads come and go, but the attributes of a diet based on the cooking style of countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea have remained relevant for many decades. The fundamental ingredients of this diet include olive oil, legumes, unrefined cereals, vegetables and fruits, as well as a moderate consumption of dairy and fish. There is certainly less of an emphasis on red meats when it comes to following a typical Mediterranean diet. It is also suggested that this diet, with lower saturated fat levels and more emphasis on unrefined foods, has contributed to the lower level of heart disease typically found in Mediterranean regions.

Create a taste of the Mediterranean closer to home with this dip recipe that's simple and quick to prepare. It's also versatile and makes a great sandwich spread!



Cannelloni & Garlic Dip Ingredients

2 tsp. finely chopped red onion	½ tsp. freshly ground black pepper
2 tsp. finely chopped fresh basil	2 tbsp. olive oil
2 tsp. chopped fresh parsley	1 tbsp. lemon juice
2 tsp. minced fresh garlic	1 can cannelloni beans, rinsed

Directions: Combine and process all ingredients in a food processor until smooth. Chill prior to service. **Suggestions:** Garnish with a pinch of paprika, a drizzle of olive oil & a sprig of basil. Serve with cut vegetables or warm whole grain pita bread triangles.

Food Trivia

Rice (Including Brown Rice)

Did you know that rice is mankind's largest food crop? People all over the world eat rice. In the United States, we each eat about 27 pounds of rice per year. There are four basic types of rice. Long grain rice is at least four times as long as it is wide. Medium grain rice is plump in shape and short grain rice is almost round. Brown rice is the healthiest option because it is unrefined rice, meaning it still has the bran and germ that are removed from white rice - along with a slightly nutty flavor.



Whole Wheat

Did you know that one bushel of whole wheat contains about 1 million kernels and one acre can produce enough wheat to furnish your family with bread for nearly 10 years? More foods are made with whole wheat than any other cereal grain. The United States alone uses over 3 million bushels of whole wheat each day. Whole wheat has been around for ages - the workers who built the pyramids in Egypt were paid in bread.



Beans

Did you know that beans have been used throughout the world for thousands of years? They come in hundreds of shapes, sizes and colors, and are versatile and amazingly convenient because they can be dried and stored for years. Beans are one of the most nutritionally complete foods available and are full of fiber, B vitamins and iron. Beans are the only food that fits into two groups according to USDA's food guidance system, MyPyramid: vegetable and protein.

