More than Nutrition

Culture & Cuisine from Ethnically Diverse Regions

A resource for people working with culturally and linguistically diverse communities
Introduction

We value the cultural diversity of different people, languages and culture which make-up our population and this resource, outlining the most common ethnic profiles of people who take up residency in Australia, aims to enable people working with culturally and linguistically diverse communities to build awareness of their varied cultural and nutrition preferences.

Culture is important in shaping a person’s values and beliefs, the foods they eat and their food related customs. This resource was originally developed for child care centres as part of the ‘Caring for Children in Liverpool’ Nutrition Project, Liverpool Health Service NSW. The idea came from focus groups conducted with local child care centre staff. The original authors have very kindly agreed for this resource to be reviewed and reprinted by HELPP (Healthy Eating Local Policies and Programs, South Australia). HELPP is funded by SA Health and led by Flinders University.

This booklet covers each culture including characteristics of the food eaten, common ingredients used in food preparation, how the food is traditionally served, and food for religious and special occasions. Recipes which promote fruit and vegetables and reflect the featured culture are included. These recipes are simple and some can be made by supervised young children as well as adults. Hints are provided on how existing menus can be adapted to each culture to create a culturally diverse menu.

The content from this resource has been reviewed from representatives of the relevant diverse communities.

Who can use this resource?

This resource can be used by anyone working with or supporting diverse populations. This includes child care centres, schools, community centres, work places and health related organisations.

Besides providing adequate nutrition, food served in settings with children, such as child care centres, can be used to increase children’s cultural awareness of the many different cultures in their community. Children need exposure to food from different cultures to gain acceptance of these foods. It is important that settings with children, such as child care centres, acknowledge families’ food preferences, habits and customs.

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Note: Children should always be supervised during food preparation and cooking.
Chinese Culture

Where in the world is China?

Location: Asia.

Neighbouring countries: Korea, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Vietnam, Bhutan, Laos and Myanmar.

Neighbouring bodies of water: Pacific Ocean, East Sea (Sea of Japan), and the Yellow Sea.

Language spoken: Mandarin (official language in mainland China) and Cantonese, particularly in Southern China. Other major dialects are Hakka, Hokkien and Teochew.

Capital city: Beijing

General characteristics:
- In China food is prepared in a variety of ways, which are distinct to each of the six regions: Cantonese, Sichuan, Shanghai, Peking (Beijing), Hokkien and Northern China.
- A Chinese meal consists of many different dishes with a variety of both textures and flavours within the same meal.
- Foods are usually prepared by steaming, stir-frying or boiling.
- Chinese people do not add as many spices to their food as other Asian countries, making it more suitable for children.
Common ingredients

**Rice**
Rice is the basis of almost all meals. Most Chinese people prefer to eat long grain, white rice which is prepared by boiling or steaming. In Northern China, noodles are preferred to rice. Rinse the rice well before cooking so it is less sticky.

**Congee (rice porridge)**
Congee is rice boiled in plenty of water with no salt or sugar added. It is often eaten at breakfast as well as other meals, and can be served with smaller dishes of salty fish, omelettes, Chinese sausage, and vegetables.

**Noodles**
Noodles are said to have originated in China. They come in a range of sizes and shapes from flat ribbons to thin strips. Of the many different kinds of noodles, some only need soaking prior to adding to dishes, some are cooked without soaking and some are deep fried to create a crispier texture. Common types of Chinese noodle include egg, hokkien and rice.

**Tofu**
Tofu (beancurd) is a firm white custard-like food made from soya beans. It has a bland flavour but a variety of ingredients can be used to add flavour. Tofu can be cut into cubes and used in stir-fries, added to soups and omelettes, or added to salads.

**Meat, Poultry and Fish**
Meat and poultry are not served in large portions, but cut up finely, making them easier to handle with chopsticks. Pork and chicken are the main meats eaten in China and are preferred to lamb, which the Chinese find too strong smelling. Beef is used in traditional cooking.

Seafood is also popular especially in regions located along the coastline. Prawns and other shellfish are eaten widely.

**Vegetables**
Vegetables are cooked so they are tender but crisp (however these may need to be softened for younger children). They are usually cooked by stir-frying and occasionally steaming. Common types of vegetables include:
- Shallots
- Water Chestnuts
- Bean Shoots
- Chinese Spinach (Choy Sum)
- Chinese Broccoli (Gai Lan)
- Mushrooms
- Bok Choy
- Chinese Cabbage
- Baby Corn
Common ingredients

Fruits
Fruit is enjoyed and is often eaten at the end of a meal. Cantonese cooking uses a lot of fruit and fruit juice in the preparation of meat dishes (eg sweet and sour). Common types of fruits include:
- Oranges
- Mandarin
- Lychees
- Pomegranates
- Grapes
- Peaches
- Apples
- Rambutans

Herbs, Spices and Flavours
There are a variety of distinct flavours used in Chinese cooking. Common flavours include:
- Ginger
- Soy sauce
- Black bean sauce
- Hoi sin sauce
- Garlic
- Oyster sauce
- Vinegar

Special utensils
- Wok
- Flat wok shovel
- Flat based spoons and small bowls
- Cleaver
- Bamboo steamer
- Chopsticks

How to give your menu a Chinese flavour
- Add egg, hokkien or other noodles to dishes instead of rice or pasta
- Serve rice with wet dishes such as meat casseroles instead of pasta or potato
- Instead of steamed, baked or boiled vegetables, stir-fry them in a wok or pan with a little soy sauce, ginger and garlic
- Marinate meat pieces with honey and soy sauce
- Baste chicken drumsticks with hoi sin sauce for some spicy chicken sticks
- Use cubes of tofu as a substitute for meat in vegetarian dishes
- Add commonly used vegetables in dishes like bok-choy, Chinese cabbage and mushrooms.
- Try using chopsticks or Chinese spoons and serving food in Chinese bowls
How is Chinese food traditionally served?

- Meals are served at the table
- Dishes are all served at the same time and individuals serve themselves into bowls
- Chinese people use chopsticks to eat meals
- A flat-bottomed spoon is used to eat soup
- Ingredients are chopped up finely so that there is no need for cutting at the table
- Table-settings consist of chopsticks and a range of bowls and plates of varying sizes and shapes (for rice, soup, meat, chicken or vegetables)

What religious or special occasions are celebrated?

Dates for many Chinese festivals are based on the lunar (moon) calendar, therefore the dates will vary every year. Key festivals are Chinese (Lunar) New Year, Duan Wu (Dragon Boat Festival), Mid-Autumn Festival (Moon Festival). The main religions in China are Taoism, and Buddhism, Confucianism or a mixture.

Taoism is an ancient set of beliefs that teaches people to live in harmony with nature. Chinese Buddhism combines Taoism with other Chinese beliefs and with Indian Buddhism.

Many Chinese believe in gods and nature spirits. They also believe when a person dies, he or she goes to another world. Family members burn special paper houses or cars as well as money for the dead. They also place food at the graves.

There are a number of people also practicing Christianity.

Chinese (New Year)

The main festival of the Chinese calendar, Chinese New Year, is celebrated during January/February and lasts 15 days as there are many festivals and celebrations before and after New Year. All family members come together to eat at this time and all food has a meaning.

Before the New Year, the Chinese give their houses a good clean to get rid of all the bad luck collected in the past year. It is also important not to sweep the house during the first days of the New Year, or all the new luck will be swept away.

Also before the festival you must prepare enough food to last for at least three days because using a knife during the first days of the New Year “cuts off” good luck. Fish and poultry is typically served whole with its feet and head.

Chinese New Year foods include Chinese dumplings, fish, spring rolls and Nian Gao (Glutinous Rice Cake).

Many foods eaten during Chinese New Year (eg cabbage Nian Gao) are chosen because they sound like the words for fortunes and riches in Chinese.

Carp is also associated with this time of year and symbolises a profitable year ahead. Tangarines and oranges are given as gifts, as their Chinese names sound like “wealth” and “gold”.

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Dragon Boat Festival
Held on the fifth day of the fifth moon, this festival is said to commemorate Qu Yuan who drowned himself as a protest against a corrupt government. The people of a nearby village went out in their boats to search for him but they were too late. In great sorrow, they threw rice into the water to feed Qu’s hungry spirit. Today, special cakes or rice dumplings are eaten as an offering to Qu’s spirit. On this day the Chinese also race dragon boats.

The Mid-Autumn Festival (Moon Festival)
This celebration marks the moon’s birthday and is believed to be the only night of the year when the moon appears perfectly round. It is customary to have moon-watching parties and offerings are made to the moon. Women of the house dress an open alter with round shaped fruits such as apples, peaches, pomegranates, grapes and melons. Apart from symbolising the moon, their rounded shape denotes family unity. The Mid-Autumn Festival is a time for great celebration and special foods including moon cakes (round pastry filled with sweet bean paste, or preserved fruit and melon seeds) are eaten. Paper lanterns are also in abundance.

Birthdays
Noodles are eaten, as the length of the noodle represents longevity – living a longer life. Boiled eggs are also eaten as a sign of new life. When a baby is one month old, known as ‘full month’, a special celebration is held.

After this first party, a person’s individual birthday is no longer celebrated. Instead people honour the birthday of the Chinese New Year, when everyone becomes one year older. This is on the seventh day of the New Year and is called “Everybody’s Birthday”.
Chinese Culture

Activities to increase cultural awareness

Chinese Stir-fry
What you will need to serve 10 small children or 4 adults

Ingredients
- 600g lean beef, cut into strips
- 1 packet of hokkien noodles
- 1 tablespoon oil
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 2 carrots, thinly sliced
- 100g bok-choy or other Asian green vegetables shredded
- 1 cup bean sprouts
- 1 red capsicum, thinly sliced
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon oyster sauce

Method
1. Soak hokkien noodles in warm water for 2 minutes and drain.
2. Heat oil in a wok (or use an electric frypan).
3. Fry beef and garlic until brown. Remove from wok.
4. Add carrot and stir fry for 1 minute.
5. Add all ingredients except beef and noodles. Cook for 2 minutes.
6. Add beef and noodles. Stir for 1 minute.

Chinese Lantern
What you will need:

Materials
- Coloured A4 paper
- Scissors
- Red or orange cellophane
- Glue

Steps
1. Take an already decorated A4 sized piece of paper, fold it in half longways and make cuts that do not meet the end.
2. Fold the other way (short-ways) and glue the ends together.
3. Before attaching the ends the children can stick a piece of red or orange cellophane inside the lantern (a piece big enough to cover the cuts), to make a light.
4. Cut out a paper handle (20cm x 2cm wide), and glue the handle to one of the ends.
Malay Culture

Where in the world is Malaysia?

Location: Asia.
Neighbouring countries: Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand.
Races: Malay, Chinese, Indian and Orang Asli (indigenous peoples).
Language spoken: Malay (Bahasa Melayu), Chinese, Tamil, English.
Capital city: Kuala Lumpur.

General characteristics:
• Malaysian food is heavily influenced by the Chinese and Indian cultures as well as the native Malay style of cooking
• The wok is the main cooking pan
• Malaysian food is often hot and spicy and normally accompanied by rice or noodles.
• Steamed meat, fish or vegetable dishes are commonly dipped into a variety of sauces.

QUICK FACTS
Common ingredients

Lemongrass
Lemongrass (serai) has a lemony aroma and flavour. Look for young, fresh stems and use the white part closest to the base of the stem.

Soy Sauce (light and dark)
Light soy has been fermented for less time than dark soy. Dark soy has a more intense flavour, but reduced saltiness. Light soy is used mainly in stir-fries, marinades and as a dipping sauce. Dark soy is used for braising, heartier stir-fries and to add colour.

Kecap Manis
A sweet dark soy. The addition of palm sugar gives this sauce its sweetness. It is also flavoured with star anise and sometimes garlic.

Tofu
Tofu is a bean curd product, made from soy beans. It is generally bland on its own; however will take on the flavour of any dish it is added to. Tofu is used in sweet and savoury dishes.

Tamarind Paste
Tamarind paste is made from the pulp that surrounds the seeds of the tamarind pod. It is used in many dishes and curry pastes to give a tart sweetness.

Shrimp Paste
Shrimp Paste is known as belachan in Malaysia. Ground shrimp is fermented, mixed with salt and pressed into a block. It is an essential ingredient in many curries and sauces, with a distinctive aroma.

Pandan Leaf
Also available in powder form to add flavour and colour to cakes, pandan leaf is the Asian equivalent of vanilla essence. The subtle aroma is released when the leaves are bruised by tying one or two long leaves into a knot. Traditionally the leaves are used to wrap chicken or fish before cooking. Knotted leaves are also added to curries, rice and desserts to infuse flavour.

Vegetables
- Okra
- Broccoli
- Kang Kong
- Kai-lan
- Pak Choy
- Chinese Cabbage
- Bean Sprouts
- Lemongrass
Common ingredients

Fruits
- Durian
- Lychees
- Mangosteen
- Longan
- Rambutan
- Guava
- Coconut
- Mango

Popular dishes

Nasi lemak
Nasi lemak is considered the national dish of Malaysia. The rice is cooked in coconut milk and wrapped in a pandan leave. Traditionally served with ikan bilis (fried anchovies), peanuts, sliced cucumber, hard-boiled egg and a spicy chili paste called sambal. Although it is traditionally a breakfast dish, it is often eaten at any time of the day.

Laksa
There are two types of laksa – curry laksa and assam laksa. Curry laksa is a coconut-based curry soup and assam laksa is a sour fish soup. Curry laksa usually includes tofu, fish sticks, shrimp and cockles. Laksa is commonly served with a spoonful of sambal chili paste and garnished with Vietnamese coriander or laksa leave (daun kesum).

Rendang
Rendang is a type of meat dish that takes hours to prepare. Meat, coconut milk, chilies, onions and spices such as cinnamon, cloves, coriander and nutmeg are cooked over a low heat. The result is a moist, tender dish. Usually eaten with ketupat (rice dumpling) or lemang (glutinous rice cooked in coconut milk).

Satay
Bite-sized pieces of seasoned, skewered meat or tofu, grilled or barbequed over a wood or charcoal fire and served with a spicy dipping sauce.
Malay Culture

Add a dash of Malay flavour to your menu

- Use a variety of spices like cinnamon, star anise, cloves, cumin and cardamom in your dishes
- Use belachan (shrimp paste), sambal or tamarind paste when cooking meat or fish dishes
- Add coconut milk to your curries for that lemak taste
- Use lemongrass, garlic, chilli and coriander to flavour salad dressings
- Use pandang paste in cakes and desserts
- Serve meals with a glass of rose syrup

Malay eating customs

- It is common practice to remove your shoes and cleanse the feet before entering a house
- A traditional Malay feast is laid down on the floor with all the guests seated facing a square or rectangular piece of cloth called a saprah, normally female guests and children will be served on a separate saprah
- Men sit with their feet criss-crossed in front of them (bersila). Women fold both feet to one side (bersimpuh) normally on the right side
- Never point at the food or other guests using your foot
- Food is not presented in courses, but served all at the same time
- Although food and drinks are served together, it is best to wait until after you have finished your food before drinking
- The fingertips of the right hand are cleansed before eating. Food is eaten with the fingertips of the right hand. The left hand should never be used to handle food
- You must clean your plate, therefore only take small amounts at a time
- Don’t take the last piece of food. If two pieces remain they can be taken simultaneously by you and another person
- Men may burp or belch (but they must cover their mouths)
Festivities and special occasions

Islam is the dominant religion in Malaysia; however, other festivals such as Chinese New Year, Deepavali, Thaipusam and Christmas are also celebrated. Despite most festivals being identified with a particular ethnic or religious group, celebrations are universal. Open House is a Malaysian tradition. During celebrations, the house is open to anyone to visit and share food.

Hari Merdeka
Hari Merdeka also known as Independence Day in Malaysia and celebrated every year on the 31st of August. When the day overlaps with Ramadan, festivities do not focus on food but still include the Merdeka Parade, flags and fireworks in the streets.

Hari Raya Haji
This celebration of sacrifice comes two months and ten days after Hari Raya Puasa. On this day, after prayers, Muslims sacrifice an animal: a goat, sheep or cow. The meat is divided into three parts; one part distributed among the poor and needy, the second part among relatives and friends and the last part is used by the family. This is also a major holiday for Muslims to visit each other. Many Muslims make their pilgrimage to Mecca during this period.

Hari Raya Puasa
Hari Raya Puasa or Aidilfitri is a joyous and important Muslim holiday. It marks the end of Ramadan. The celebration begins after sunset on the 29th day of Ramadan. The day begins with Muslims praying in mosques early in the morning followed by visits to the graveyards of loved ones. Children also ask parents forgiveness for any wrongdoings and then it is time for feasting and visiting friends and relatives. Children are also given money in green packets.

The night before, household members will gather together to prepare festive foods to serve to their family and friends. Foods served on Hari Puasa including ketupat (rice cakes), beef rending, raya cookies and other biscuits, pineapple tarts and lemang (sticky rice in banana leaf).
Coconut rice (nasi lemak)
Try this traditional Malaysian street food.

**Ingredients**
- 1 cup long grain or jasmine rice, rinsed and drained
- 200ml coconut milk (low fat)
- 200ml water
- 2 cm piece of ginger, peeled, bruised
- 1 pandan leaf, washed, split and tied into a knot (optional)
- Pinch of salt

**Method**
1. Add all ingredients to a large saucepan and bring to the boil. Cover and reduce heat until all the liquid is absorbed. This should take about 15 minutes
2. Set aside – off the heat for a further 5 mins
3. Serve with quarters of boiled eggs, sliced cucumber, sambal, baby spinach, nuts and for adults – Sambal (see recipe)

Authentic sambal belachan
Use this paste in stir-fries or any time when you want to add a little heat to a dish:

**Ingredients**
- 4 seeded chilies, sliced thinly
- 1 tablespoon belachan (shrimp paste)
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 2 tablespoon kalamansi (lime juice)
- Salt to taste

**Method**
1. Place chillies in a mortar
2. Heat up a wok or pan on low heat and “toast” the belachan until aromatic
3. The texture of the belachan should turn to powder
4. Add the powdered belachan to the chilies and pound with the pestle until fine
5. Transfer to a bowl and add sugar, lime juice and salt to taste, blending well
6. Sambal can be kept in an airtight container in the fridge for about a week

*A food processor is a good alternative to a mortar and pestle.*
Where in the world is the Middle East?

**Location:**
The definition of countries in the Middle East varies. Generally however the Middle East is defined as the countries from the west coast of India to the east coast of Turkey.

**Countries of the Middle East:**
Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Cyprus, Georgia, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, Yemen.

**Neighbouring bodies of water:**
Mediterranean Sea, Red Sea, Arabian Sea and Arabian Gulf.

**Language spoken:**
Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Berber, Kurdish.

**General characteristics:**
- The Middle Eastern diet is varied given its expanse over many countries.
- Common elements include an extensive range of herbs and spices in cooking, rice served as an accompaniment to most meals or as the main dish.
Common ingredients

Baharat
Baharat (the Arabic word for ‘spices’) is a mixed spice. It usually consists of cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg, coriander, caraway, pepper, cardamom and allspice, however it can vary. Baharat is commonly used to season meats.

Cracked wheat (bulgar)
Cracked wheat is also known as bulgur and is used in salads such as tabouli and as an ingredient of stuffing in kibbeh (spiced meatballs stuffed with breadcrumbs, bulgur, parsley and onion).

Dates
Dates are the fruit of the date palm tree. They are an important food for Muslims. The date palm tree is referred to in the Qur’an (Holy book of Islam) as the ‘blessed tree.’ It is common practice for Muslims to eat dates at Iftar (the evening meal which breaks the fast) as this is how the Muslim Prophet Mohammed broke his fast. Dates are also commonly eaten by Arabs with coffee and offered to guests.

Rice
Rice is a staple and is served with most dishes, but can also be the centrepiece of a meal such as Palaw, which is a colourful rice dish consisting of nuts and spices. Long grain rice such as basmati is preferred.

Labna
Labna (or labneh) is a staple food in the Middle East. It is produced from salted yoghurt when the whey is removed. It has a velvet-like consistency and can be likened to a slightly sour cream cheese spread. Labna is generally eaten on bread with other foods such as olives, mint, tomato, cucumber and olive oil.

Yoghurt
Plain yoghurt is also commonly used in cooking and as an accompaniment to many meals.

Vegetables
- Okra
- Beans and Lentils
- Cucumber

Fruits
- Apricots
- Prunes
- Figs

- Tomatoes
- Turnips
- Chilli

- Pomegranate
- Saltanas
- Lime
Baba Ghannous
Baba Ghannous is an Arab dish which consists of mashed eggplant and olive oil mixed with a variety of herbs and spices. It is generally eaten as a dip with pita bread, but can be used as an ingredient in other dishes.

Kibbeh
Kibbeh is the national dish of Syria. There are many variations given its popularity, however traditionally it is made with finely ground lamb. Kibbeh can be served raw, baked or fried and is generally served with yoghurt. It can be shaped in a variety of ways with a range of fillings (eg as stuffed meatballs).

Zereshk Polow
Zereshk Polow is a Persian dish known as celebration or jewelled rice. It is made with red barberries and a range of spices. Saffron is used to colour rice and almonds and pistachio nuts add to the colour and texture. Kabuli Pulao is a similar Afghani rice dish, consisting of carrots and raisins as well as almonds, pistachio nuts, saffron and a range of spices.

Hommus
Hommus (the Arabic word for chick peas) is a dip popular in the Middle East made predominantly from mashed chick peas. Other ingredients of hommus include tahini (sesame seed paste), olive oil, lemon juice and garlic. It is often served with pita bread or as an accompaniment to falafel, meat, fish or eggplant. It is a common part of meals in both Israel and Palestine.
Add a dash of Middle Eastern flavour to your menu

- Use a range of spices such as cinnamon, allspice, cumin, coriander, garlic to add flavour to dishes
- Serve hommus or baba ghannous with pita wedges as an snack, or use it as a spread instead of margarine or butter
- Add colour to rice with saffron or turmeric
- Add beans such as chick peas and lentils to curries and stews
- Use Lebanese or pita bread
- Include dates and apricots in fruit platters
- Serve tabouli as a salad
- Use couscous as an accompaniment to meat
- Serve dishes such as casserole with rice and salad

Middle Eastern eating customs

- Many people from Middle Eastern countries eat with their hands and use bread to scoop up their food when necessary
- People eat with their right hand and avoid putting their left hand on the table as it is considered rude
- It is common for hosts in Middle Eastern countries to offer more food to their guests each time the guest’s plate is emptied. This is done as a sign of generosity.
Middle Eastern Culture

Festivities and special occasions

• The most common religion practiced in the Middle East is Islam and followers are called Muslims. Within the Muslim faith there are various sects or subdivisions such as Sunni or Shiite, although there are many others.

• Judaism is the major religion followed in Israel and it is one of the only countries in the Middle East where Islam is not the main religion. People who practice Judaism are known as Jews.

• Christianity is another religion followed by people (known as Christians) in Middle Eastern countries such as Lebanon, Egypt and Israel.

• Each religion has its own significant festivals and celebrations some of which are included below:

Islamic

• Ramadan

This occurs on the 9th month of the Islamic calendar and lasts for 30 days. During the month of Ramadan Muslims fast from dawn until dusk. It is a time of prayer and reflection and commemorates when the Quran (religious text of Islam) was revealed to the Prophet Mohammed.

• Eid el-Fitur (Feast of the Breaking the Fast)

This three day celebration marks the end of Ramadan and is a time when Muslims give thanks to God for giving them strength and self-control over the previous month. During this time families and friends come together dressed in their finest clothes and share plenty of food and give to charity. Recipes include lamb tagines, kormas, biryani, samosas, kebabs, halwa and baklava.

• Moulid el-Nabi (The Prophet’s Birthday)

‘Moulid’ means birthday in Arabic, celebrating a holy person. It is celebrated by Muslims and Christians to honour their Saints. It is a custom rather than part of the religion. The birth of the Prophet Mohammed is celebrated as Moulid el-Naby. Celebrations include decorating homes and mosques, charity, distributing food, dancing and music.

• Eid Al-Adha (Feast of the Sacrifice)

This feast is of significant importance to Muslims as it celebrates Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice his only son to prove his obedience to God. Muslims dress in their finest clothes and perform festival prayer in mosques. Some Muslims also make annual pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia during this time. Lasting for three days, an animal is sacrificed and given mostly to the poor. Special sweets and cookies are made in advance and special dishes that use all of the animal.
Jewish

• **Passover (Festival of Unleavened Bread)**

Passover is an eight day Jewish festival. It is a time when Jewish people remember the exodus of Jewish slaves from Egypt. The festival starts with the Seder meal which is a religious service that is held in the family home over a meal. During the meal the story of deliverance is recounted as narrated in traditional Jewish literature. Unleavened bread (Matzah) and other unleavened foods are eaten during the festival.

• **Rosh Hashanah (The Day of Judgement)**

This is the Jewish New Year which lasts two days. During this time Jewish people go to synagogues (Jewish place of worship) to hear stories of the history of Jewish people. The festival marks the beginning of the ten days of repentance and is a time which God sits in judgement of each individual.

Foods served at Rosh Hashanah are often symbolic of the occasion but vary according to local customs. It is common for apples, honey and other sweet foods to be served to celebrate and symbolise the sweet New Year. Some may serve the head of a fish to symbolise the head of a new year or round bread to symbolise that each year is a cycle. Other common foods served include jams, pomegranates, wine, dates, stuffed vegetable, leek fritters and black-eyed peas.

• **Hanukkah (Festival of Lights)**

Hanukkah is an eight day Jewish holiday. It begins on the 25th day of the month of Kislev according to the Hebrew calendar and marks the re-dedication of the Temple in Jerusalem after it's vandalism. It commemorates the ‘miracle of the cruse of oil’ where there was only enough consecrated olive oil to fuel the eternal flame in the temple for one day, however the oil burned for eight days.

Foods traditionally served at Hanukkah include fried foods such as jelly-filled doughnuts and potato pancakes. Because these foods are cooked in oil, they symbolise the miracle of oil behind this holiday. Eating dairy foods such as cheese, cheesecake and cheese-filled crepes (blintzes) is also popular, and a newer food tradition for Hanukkah.

• **Sukkot (Feast of Booths)**

Sukkot is a harvest festival which commemorates the 40 years Jews spent on the way from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the Promise Land. Jewish people are advised to construct a temporary structure (a sukkah) in which to eat their meals, relax and even sleep for eight or nine days of the festival. It is a symbol of the types of huts ancient Israelites lived in during their 40 years of wandering in the desert after leaving Egypt and is meant to reflect the goodwill of God in providing for Jews in their time of need.
Middle Eastern Culture

Festivities and special occasions

Christian

- **Christmas**
  The annual holiday that marks the birth of Jesus. In Western churches Christmas is celebrated on the 25th of December. In Israel Christmas comes three times each year. Traditionally for Middle Eastern Christians, Christmas morning is spent visiting friends who offer coffee, liqueurs and sugared almonds to their guests. Lunch is the most important meal at Christmas and is spent with family. In the Middle East Christmas is a religious and family celebration and gifts are generally not exchanged. Children, however, are usually given new clothes.

  Foods served at Christmas lunch varies depending on the country, but many include roast lamb or turkey and baked ham, along with appetizers, side dishes and dessert.

- **Easter**
  This is the most important festival for Christians in the Middle East. Orthodox Christians as with those in Greece paint eggs bright red to symbolise the blood of Christ. Food traditions during Easter vary across the Middle East, from Easter eggs, bunnies and cake in Israel to date-filled Easter eggs in Saudi Arabia. Leading up to Easter during Lent, it is common for meat and dairy products to be excluded from the diet.

Secular Celebrations

- **Basant (Spring Festival)**
  People from a range of religious backgrounds in Pakistan and throughout Southern Asia partake in this festival which marks the end of winter and arrival of spring. Traditionally people dress in green and yellow and fly kites.

  Celebrations involve kite-flying, music, dancing and eating traditional foods.
Try these recipes

Kafta Rolls

Ingredients
• 1 cup parsley, finely chopped
• 1 small onion, grated
• 1/3 tsp ground allspice
• 750g minced lamb or beef
• 1 cup hommus (see recipe)
• 10 squares of Lebanese bread*, cut in half
• 1/2 head lettuce, shredded
• 3 tomatoes, sliced

Method
1. Mix parsley, onion, allspice and mince together
2. Shape meat mixture into 10 sausages (kafta)
3. Gently barbecue or grill meat
4. Spread Lebanese bread with hommus
5. Place kafta on square of bread
6. Top with lettuce and tomato and roll.
* Lavash, pocket, pita or regular sliced bread can also be used.

Hommus

Ingredients
• 410g can chick peas, drained
• 1 clove garlic, crushed
• 2 Tablespoons tahini (sesame seed) paste
• 3 Tablespoons lemon juice

Method
1. Puree chick peas in a blender or a food processor.
2. Add tahini, garlic and lemon juice.
3. Mix well

Serve with vegetable sticks, Lebanese bread, pita chips or use a spread in sandwiches or wraps.

* Unsuitable for children with allergies to sesame.
Where in the world is Myanmar?

Location: Asia.
Capital City: Naypyidaw (meaning ‘royal city’).
Neighbouring counties: Bangladesh, India, China, Laos and Thailand.
Language spoken: Burmese, Jingpho, Kayah and Karen.
Races: Myanmese, Karen, Karreni and Chin.

General characteristics:
Myanmar was formerly known as Burma until 1989 when it was changed by authorities. Some opposition political parties and groups do not recognise the name changes and continue to refer to the country as Burma.

- The Myanmarese typically eat steamed rice accompanied by curry and condiments.
- Extensive use of fish sauce in the dishes and ngapi (fish paste).
Myanmar Culture

Common ingredients

**Fruit**
It is common for fruit such as jackfruit, guava, durian and lychee to be served for dessert in Myanmar.

**Ngapi jaw**
*Ngapi* or ‘compressed fish’ is a generic term for pungent pastes made of either fish or shrimp. They are often used as a main ingredient in lower Myanmarese cooking or as a condiment. Ngapi can also be eaten on its own, such as baked or roasted ngapi; or used in salads, and as a pounded mixture with chili. It is also used as a soup base and in many dishes.

**Noodles**
Rice noodles are often used in soups. Thick rice and wheat noodles are used in salads. Thoke is one of the most common noodle dishes in Myanmar.

**Rice**
White rice is eaten daily and at almost every meal. *Paw hsan hmwe* is the most popular rice used in Myanmar. *Kauk hnyin* is glutinous rice that is very popular among the Myanmarese as a snack. Steamed rice is served with ‘Hin’ accompaniments such as curried fish, meat, soup and boiled vegetables.

**Seafood**
As in many Southeast Asian countries, fish and seafood play are used regularly, especially by those living on the coast. Fish is eaten in various ways such as fresh, salted, dried and as a paste.

**Spices**
Myanmarese dishes are commonly seasoned with turmeric and chilli as well as garlic, ginger and onion.

**Vegetables**
- Cabbage
- Onion
- Beans
- Tomatoes
- Bitter gourd
- Cauliflower
- Cucumber
- Okra

**Fruits**
- Mango
- Avocado
- Papaya
- Pineapple
- Guava
- Jackfruit
- Orange
- Watermelon
- Banana
- Durian
Myanmar Culture

Popular dishes

**Dan Pauk**
Dan Pauk is also known as Myanmarese Biryani. It is a rice dish made from long rice; curry marinated chicken, raisins, cashews and a combination of spices including turmeric. It is often eaten with salad and pickled mango.

**Lahpet**
Lahpet or pickled tea leaves with a dash of oil and served with sesame seeds, fried garlic and roasted peanuts is another popular dish typical of Myanmar. No special occasion or ceremony in Myanmar is considered complete without this dish for dessert as it offers a balance of soft and crunchy textures.

**Mohinga**
Mohinga is the unofficial national dish of Myanmar and is mostly enjoyed at breakfast. It consists of vermicelli in a fish-based broth of onions, garlic, ginger and lemon grass – all topped with sliced banana blossom, boiled eggs and fritters.

**Ohn no khao swe**
This traditional dish consists of vermicelli or wheat noodles in a curried chicken or coconut milk broth. It is often garnished with crisp fried bean fritters, sliced raw onions, chillies and slices of hard-boiled egg and zested with lime or lemon juice and fish sauce.

**Shwe yin aye**
Shwe yin aye or coconut cream sherbet is a popular traditional dessert that is sweet and creamy.

Add a dash of Myanmarese flavour to your menu

- Add ingredients like turmeric, chilli and ginger
- Serve soup with meals
- Add rice noodles to salads
- Serve pickled vegetables with meat dishes
- Use fish paste as a stock for soup
Myanmar Culture

Myanmarese eating customs

- Traditionally, Myanmarese eat their meals from dishes on a low table while sitting on a bamboo mat.
- All dishes are laid on the table together so that they can be combined.
- The eldest are always served first as a sign of respect.
- Traditionally, Myanmarese eat with their right hand forming the rice into a small ball with only the fingertips.
- Dessert is not often eaten during normal meals unless entertaining a guest.

Festivities and special occasions

The most significant festivals for the Myanmarese include: the Water Festival (Thingyan) that celebrates the New Year in mid-April, the Festival of Lights in October, and another Festival of Lights in November.

**Thingyan ‘Water Festival’**

During the water festival, people throw water on each other or, in a more refined ceremony, sprinkle scented water on each other using leafy twigs. The water symbolically washing away the sins of the past year. The festival lasts for four days. Foods commonly served during the festival include boiled rice balls (‘mont loun yeibaw’) with palm sugar on the inside, ‘mont let saung’ made up of rice, grated coconut, sweet syrup and sesame seeds on top.

**Festival of Lights**

During the Festival of Lights families light up their houses with coloured electric lights, lanterns, or candles. They do this for 3 consecutive nights – before, on and after the full moon – during the months of Thadingyut and Tazaungmone (7th and 8th month of Myanmarese calendar).

The month of Thadingyut celebrates the end of the Buddhist Lent (3 months of rainy season). During this time people offer robes to monks and pay respect to the elders such as parents, grandparents, and teachers with gifts of clothing, fruits, food and beverages. In the month of Tazaungmone, it is the custom to offer robes to monks in a ceremony known as ka-htein.

**Kyaiktiyo Pagoda Festival**

Kyaiktiyo Pagoda also known as the ‘Golden Rock’ is a large gold leaf covered boulder with a pagoda that sits on top of the Kyaiktiyo hill, overhanging the cliff-face. It is a key Buddhist pilgrimage site. Legend has it that it is on top of a strand of Buddha’s hair and it is thought to defy gravity, given that it overhangs the cliff. On the Full Moon Day in March, a total number of 9 999 candles are ceremoniously lit at midnight on the platform of the pagoda as an offering to Buddha. Fruit, food and incense are also offered.
Burmese Rolls

This traditional dish from Burma is also often made as a snack for Festivals. It has been modified to be child friendly and baked rather than fried. Add chopped chillies for an adult version.

Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons chopped onions
- 250g lean minced lamb (or beef)
- 1 teaspoon ginger-garlic paste
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon mild curry powder
- 2 tablespoons chopped coriander
- 1 tablespoon rice vinegar
- 1 cup bean sprouts
- 4 sheets frozen puff pastry (fat reduced)

Method

1. Brown the onions in oil. Add the ginger-garlic paste and the mince.
2. Add curry powder and pepper. Cook through (about 10 minutes).
3. Add coriander and vinegar. Finish cooking and let cool.
4. Lay out one pastry sheet. Put a line of filling on the sheet and top with a few bean sprouts.
5. Roll up completely, keeping the seam side down. Cut into smaller serves.
6. Continue until you’ve run out of filling.
7. Bake in the oven at 200°C until cooked (approx 15 mins)
8. Serve with dipping sauce.
Burmese Chicken Satays

Ingredients
- 700g chicken, in strips

Marinade
- 1 lemon grass stalk, chopped
- 1 cm fresh ginger, grated
- 1 garlic clove, chopped
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/2 teaspoon ground turmeric
- 1/2 teaspoon paprika
- 2 tablespoons rice wine
- 1 tablespoon dark soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon light soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons coconut cream

Sauce
- 3 shallots, finely chopped
- 1 garlic clove, chopped
- 1cm fresh ginger, finely chopped
- 1 lemon grass stalk, white part only
- 3 tablespoons low fat peanut paste
- 100ml fat reduced coconut milk

Preparation
1. Soak the skewers in cold water for 30 minutes before using to stop them burning.
2. Make the marinade by mixing all of the ingredients together. Add to chicken cut into strips and marinate in the fridge for at least an hour.
3. To make the sauce, gently fry the shallots, garlic, ginger and lemon grass together for 2 mins to release aroma. Add coconut milk and peanut paste on a lower heat and blend the ingredients together. Heat and stir until it thickens slightly.
4. Thread the marinated chicken onto the skewers. BBQ or grill. Serve with satay sauce on the side or over the satays.
North African Culture

Where in the world is North Africa?

Location:
In the northernmost region of the African continent, abutting the Mediterranean Sea. The world’s largest hot dessert (the Sahara) occupies most of the region.

Countries of North Africa:
The United Nations definition of North Africa includes - Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia and Western Sahara.

Neighbouring bodies of water:

Language spoken:
Various sub-dialects of Arabic and Berber, French (mainly in Algeria).

General characteristics:
This is a diverse region with Arab, Asian and European influences seen in the cuisine; however there are some similarities:
- Common staple foods include meat, seafood, goat, lamb, beef, wheat, dates, almonds, olives and legumes.
- Spices are a feature in North African cooking, especially cumin, clove, ginger, paprika, cinnamon and saffron or spice mixtures such as ras el hanout, baharat and harissa.
- Peppermint, parsley, chilli and coriander are also widely used.
North African Culture

Common ingredients

Karkade (Egypt)
Teas are popular in North Africa. Karkade is a popular Hibiscus infusion tea in Egypt and can be drunk hot or cold.

Ras el hanout (Northwest Africa)
This spice mixture originated from the Meghribi villages of North Africa to the west of Egypt. The number of spices used in the mix can vary from 20-27 and quantities will depend on the maker. Ras el hanout is used with poultry, meat, game, rice and couscous.

Couscous
Couscous is a staple in North Africa. The traditional way to prepare it, is to rub together fine semolina with super fine semolina until a coating is formed resembling a grain. Couscous is light and fluffy when steamed.

Harissa
Harissa is served as an accompaniment with many meals. Chilli, garlic and oil is ground into a paste. Sometimes the paste is flavoured with cumin or coriander.

Sha’riya (Egypt)
Egg noodles are fried and then cooked with stock and rice. Used as an accompaniment to main meals.

Preserved lemon (Morocco)
Used as an ingredient in marinades and as a garnish. The process of preserving the lemons in salt and either brine or oil results in a more mellow, sweet flavour.

Olives
Olives are native to the coastal areas of the eastern Mediterranean Basin, as well as northern Africa. Olives and olive oil are used extensively in cooking.

Fruit
- Apricots
- Figs
- Dates
- Lemons
- Olives
- Oranges
- Almonds

Vegetables
- Okra
- Lentils
- Tomatoes
- Chilli
- Cucumber
- Cabbage
- Corn
- Yams
- Potato
Popular dishes

Similar dishes are found across North Africa, sometimes a very similar dish will be called a different name, or conversely two entirely different dishes may share a common name.

**Tajine (Morocco)**
The word tajine refers to the cooking vessel itself. It is traditionally made of clay and consists of two parts; a flat circular base, and a dome-shaped cover that sits on the base. The tajine needs to be prepared before use to infuse the porous terracotta with the flavour of herbs. The tajine is used to slow-cook meats and vegetables at low temperatures.

**Kushari (Egypt)**
This is a popular vegetarian combination of rice, lentils and pasta, served with onions and a tomato sauce.

**Shakshouka (Libya)**
Chopped lamb and vegetables in tomato sauce, topped with an egg and served over couscous. Traditionally served in a large cast iron pot with lots of flat bread to mop up the sauce.

Add a dash of North African flavour to your menu

- Use a range of spices such as cumin, clove, ginger, paprika and cinnamon to add flavour to dishes
- Ready-made spice mixes such as harissa can now be found in the supermarket
- Experiment with orange blossom water. It can be used in sweet and savoury dishes
- Use couscous as an accompaniment to meat
- Serve dukkah and olive oil with flat bread
- Serve black or green tea infused with mint and sugar to taste
- Flavour rice and other dishes with saffron. Only a small amount though – it is the most expensive spice in the world and a little goes a long way
North African eating customs

- Food is usually eaten communal style, sharing many dishes
- Teas infused with mint or other flowers are always offered to guests
- Nuts are offered to guests in Egyptian homes. Almonds, peanuts, pistachio and hazelnuts are favourites
- The custom in many countries is to eat with their hands, using bread to scoop or wrap food when necessary
- Food is eaten with the thumb, pointer and middle finger of the right hand – the left hand is considered unclean. Hands are first cleaned and rinsed in rose water or orange blossom water, which makes the hands smell sweet and adds to the flavour of the food. After eating, hands are rinsed in rose water again
- In Libya plates and glasses are turned upside down, to allow the guest to turn up their own plate, the hostess will remain seated until the meal is completely finished
Festivities and special occasions

• The most common religion practiced in North Africa is Islam, and followers are called Muslims. Within the Muslim faith there are various sects or subdivisions such as Sunni or Shi'ite, although there are many others.

• Christianity is another religion followed by people (known as Christians) in some North African countries, such as Egypt.

• Each religion has its own significant festivals and celebrations some of which are included below:

**Islamic**

• **Ramadan**

  This occurs on the 9th month of the Islamic calendar and lasts for 30 days. During the month of Ramadan Muslims fast from dawn until dusk. It is a time of prayer and reflection and commemorates when the Qu’ran (religious text of Islam) was revealed to the Prophet Mohammed.

• **Eid el-Fitur (Feast of the Breaking the Fast)**

  This three day celebration marks the end of Ramadan and is a time when Muslims give thanks to God for giving them strength and self-control over the previous month. During this time families and friends come together dressed in their finest clothes and share plenty of food and give to charity. Recipes include lamb tagines, kormas, biryani, samosas, halwa and baklava.

• **Moulid el-Nabi (The Prophet’s Birthday)**

  The birth of the Prophet Mohammed is celebrated each year. This includes decorating homes and mosques, charity and distributing food. ‘Moulid’ means birthday and Muslims and Christians celebrate various Saints’ birthdays as a custom rather than part of a religion.

• **Eid el-Adha (Feast of the Sacrifice)**

  This feast is of significant importance to Muslims as it celebrates Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice his only son to prove his obedience to God. Muslims dress in their finest clothes and perform festival prayer in mosques. Muslims also make the annual pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia during this time. Lasting for three days, an animal is sacrificed and a third given to the family, friends and the poor. Special sweets are made in advance and all parts of the animal used in special dishes.

**Christian**

• **Christmas**

  The annual holiday that marks the birth of Jesus. In the West, Christmas is celebrated on the 25th of December. Coptic Christians in Egypt also celebrate Christmas on the 25th of December in their calendar, which is the 7th of January elsewhere. Those who can afford to, give gifts, however this is not the focus of celebrations. Gifts are usually of a practical nature, rather than toys.
Festivities and special occasions

Christian (continued)

• **Palm Sunday**

Palm Sunday is also referred to as the Sunday of Olives in the Middle East and is also celebrated in Northern Africa. It occurs the Sunday before Easter and commemorates Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem. Traditionally people waved palm branches and praised Jesus. Today, Christians attend church on Palm Sunday and take palm branches (a symbol of triumph and victory) home to weave them into crosses and hang on their front doors.

• **Easter**

This is the most important festival for Christians around the world and it is also a major event for Christians living in Northern Africa. People assemble in church for an Easter Vigil, which begins at 3pm and finishes when night falls, usually around 6pm. Hymns are accompanied by beating drums and traditional dances are performed.

Secular celebrations

• **Sham el-Nessim (Smelling the Breeze)**

Sham el-Nessim is an Egyptian festival which marks the beginning of spring and means “smelling the breeze.” It was originally a celebration that related to agriculture, harvest and fertility. Today both Christian and Muslim Egyptians enjoy the festival outdoors. Food is prepared early by families and then eaten outside on blankets so that they can enjoy the breeze of spring. Fiseekh (salted fish), boiled coloured eggs, termis (lupin seeds) and green onions are traditional foods eaten on Sham el-Nessim.
**Dukkah**

A dry mix of nuts, seeds and spices. Traditionally eaten by dipping fresh bread into olive oil and then into the nut mixture, it can also be used as a seasoning or coating on fish, etc.

**Ingredients**
- 3/4 cup sesame seeds
- 1/2 cup pine nuts
- 1/2 cup coriander seeds
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon chilli powder (optional)
- 1/2 teaspoon baharat (mixture of white and black pepper, cinnamon, cloves and nutmeg)

**Method**
1. Using a large frying pan, dry roast pine nuts and coriander seeds over medium-high heat
2. When the mix starts to colour, add sesame seeds and continue to toast until golden brown
3. Transfer the mixture to a food processor. Add cumin, baharat mix, chilli powder and salt and blend

* Unsuitable for children with allergies to nuts or sesame.
Moroccan Salad Platter

Ingredients

Rice
• 3 cups cooked long grain rice
  (Pre-cook rice with a pinch of saffron or turmeric. When cooked, stir through a small amount of olive oil, chopped parsley and a handful of sultanas)

Vegetables
• 160mls olive oil
• 2 cups broccoli, diced and cooked
• 2 cups beetroot, diced and cooked
• 2 cups carrot, diced and cooked
• 2 cups potato, diced and cooked

Salad Dressing
• Juice of 2 lemons
• 5 tablespoons olive oil
• 3 tablespoons finely chopped parsley
• Black pepper to taste

Decoration
• Iceberg lettuce leaves, washed
• 1 continental cucumber, sliced
• 2 large tomatoes, sliced
• Olives
• 2 boiled eggs, sliced

Method
1. Fry the cooked broccoli, beetroot, carrot and potato separately in a small amount of oil, using a combination of spices (for example, chilli, garlic, paprika, cumin, nutmeg, thyme, oregano). Set aside to cool. Do this before working with children.
2. Place lemon juice, olive oil, parsley and pepper in a jar with a tight fitting lid and shake to mix.
3. Wash and drain lettuce. Place leaves around a large serving plate.
4. Place rice in the centre of the plate.
5. Arrange broccoli, beetroot, potato salad and carrots at intervals around the outside of the rice.
6. Arrange sliced tomato and cucumber in the spaces between the other vegetables around the rice.
7. Decorate the top of the rice with sliced boiled egg and olives.
8. Drizzle salad dressing over the tomatoes and cucumbers.
Somalia Culture

Where in the world is Somalia?

Location:
East Africa – also referred to as Horn of Africa.

Capital City:
Mogadishu.

Neighbouring counties:
Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia and Saudi Arabia.

Language spoken:
Somali, Arabic and English.

Races:
Somali, Benadiris and Bantus.

General characteristics:
• All food served is halal
• Vegetarianism is rare. Goat, chicken, camel, sheep or lamb are eaten at lunch, dinner and sometimes breakfast.
• Cumin, cardamom, cloves, cinnamon and sage are commonly used spices.

QUICK FACTS
Common ingredients

**Rice or pasta**
Varieties of baris (rice) are usually served with the main dish, spiced with cumin, cardamom, cloves, cinnamon and sage. The most popular type of rice is basmati. Pasta also became popular when Somaliland was under Italian rule.

**Cassava**
Cassava must be properly prepared before being eaten as it contains toxins. When boiled, it has a delicate flavour and can be used as a substitute for potato. Dry cassava can be fried, roasted, boiled or eaten fresh. It can also be made into flour, used as a thickening agent or as the main ingredient in a milky pudding similar to rice pudding.

**Camel milk**
Camel milk is a staple for rural Somalis. It is stored in a covered pitcher called a *haan* and despite the heat will keep fresh for several days. Fermented camel milk turns into a solid, yoghurt-like substance called *jinow*.

**Cornmeal**
Sooor is a soft cornmeal, mashed with fresh milk, butter and sugar. It can also be presented with a hole in the middle which can be filled with maraq (stew).

**Plantain**
The plantain belongs to the banana family. They are firmer with a lower sugar content and need to be cooked before eating. Generally served deep fried or eaten as a side dish.

**Peanuts**
Peanuts are the most widely grown nuts in the region and are eaten raw, roasted, boiled or added to stews.

**Jerky**
Dried meat is usually prepared from beef, goat or camel. Strips are cut and left in the sun to dry and later cut into small pieces that are fried (usually in oil with garlic and dried cardamom pods). The dry-fried meat is then immersed in camel ghee and can be stored for up to three months.

**Vegetables**
- African eggplants
- Water spinach
- Cabbage
- Cassave/Cassava leaves
- Sweet potato/sweet potato leaves
- Amaranth (Chinese spinach)
- Beans

**Fruits**
- Mango
- Bananas/Plantains
- Papaya
- Guava
- Passionfruit
- Dates
Popular dishes

**Shah Hawaash**
The majority of Somalis drink this traditional tea made from cardamom and cinnamon bark.

**Canjeero (Injera)**
*Canjeero* is the Somali version of the Ethiopian *injera* and is a staple of the region. A spongy, fermented, crepe-like pan bread. The flat bread is served with almost every meal. Sprinkled with sugar and drizzled with sesame oil or melted ghee for breakfast or with *maraq* (stew) for lunch.

**Xalwad or Xalwo**
A Somali jelly-like sweet made from sugar, water and cornflour. Sometimes peanuts are added along with cardamom and cinnamon. This dessert is usually served at special occasions.

**Sambuusa**
This is a popular snack similar to the Indian samosa. The main ingredient is ground meat and it is spiced with hot green peppers and wrapped in pastry like a pasty.

**Add a dash of Somali flavour to your menu**

- Spice tea with cardamom and cinnamon
- Add spices like turmeric, coriander, cumin and cardamom to meat and rice dishes
- Add peanuts to your dishes for added texture
Somalia Culture

Somali eating customs

• It is polite to leave some food on the plate
• Only eat with your right hand. The left hand is considered unclean
• When dining, do not expose the soles of your feet to another person
• Lunch is often the most elaborate meal of the day
• The evening meal is the smallest of the day, and is generally eaten late
• After meals, homes are traditionally perfumed using incense which is prepared inside an incense burner referred to as a dabqaad.

Festivities and special occasions

The majority of Somalis are Sunni Muslims. As a result, the festivals of the country are heavily influenced by the teachings of Islam.

Ramadan
Ramadan is the 9th month of the lunar calendar and during these 30 days, people pray, fast and refrain from drinking from sunrise to sunset. Pregnant women, people who are very ill and children (under 13 years old) are exempted from fasting.

Eid ul-Fitri
On the last day of Ramadan, eid will be celebrated for three days. During these three days, people wear new dresses and pass their time offering prayers or exchanging gifts. This celebration also involves big family gatherings and typically includes large banquets, often including a sweet, dense dessert based on flour or nuts and seeds, called halvva.

Deb-shid
Deb-shid is also known as the festival of fire, which takes place on the 27th and 28th of July. This festival marks the commencement of the solar year. This is important, because farmers use the solar calendar to plant crops.
Canjeero (Flat bread)

Ingredients
- 1 cup plain flour
- 1/2 cup wholewheat or wholemeal flour
- 3 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 2 cups milk
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 egg

Method
1. Mix all the ingredients together to form a batter
2. Stir well to avoid lumps, and add more milk until it reaches a thin pancake-like consistency
3. Lightly oil a skillet or a non-stick pan and heat over a medium heat
4. Spread 1/4 cup of the batter gently, in a circular motion by starting in the middle and then working clockwise
5. Cook briefly, until holes form in the canjeero and the edges lift from the pan; do not let it brown and don’t flip it over as it is only supposed to be cooked on one side
6. Remove and let it cool
7. Repeat using all the batter
8. Serve sprinkled with sugar or as an accompaniment to a stew
Try these recipes

Qahwe

Ingredients
- 2 cups milk
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 2 tablespoons freshly ground coffee
- 7 cardamom seeds, crushed
- 2 cinnamon sticks

Method
1. Bring the milk to a boil in a saucepan on medium heat
2. Crush the cardamom and cinnamon using a mortar and pestle
3. Add the cinnamon, cardamom and coffee to the milk
4. Allow the flavour to infuse on a low heat for 3-5 minutes
5. Serve with dates
Vietnamese Culture

Where in the world is Vietnam?

Location:
South–east Asia.

Capital City:
Ha noi City.

Neighbouring counties:
China, Laos and Cambodia.

Neighbouring bodies of water:
South China Sea, the Gulf of Tonkin and the Gulf of Thailand.

Language spoken:
Vietnamese.

Races:
Kihn, Tay, Muong, Khome, Hoa, Nun, Hmong.

General characteristics:
- Rice or noodles and vegetables are part of every meal
- Fish sauce is a common ingredient in many Vietnamese dishes

QUICK FACTS
Vietnamese Culture

Common ingredients

Rice
Rice is usually eaten at every meal (including breakfast) and in large quantities (about 1 1/2 cups of cooked rice per person). The rice is usually a long grain white rice such as Jasmine, or short grain glutinous (sticky) rice. Rice kernels are ground into flour and used to make thin noodles. Rice flour is also made into rice paper, a thin sheet in which meat and vegetables are wrapped before they are eaten.

Noodles
Rice vermicelli noodles (thin and clear) are used in many dishes. Vermicelli or instant noodles may be steamed, boiled or fried and served with meat or vegetables as part of a meal, instead of rice. Glass or bean thread noodles are used for frying.

Bread
Due to the French influence, fresh crusty French style bread is also eaten.

Rice Paper Sheets
Before using each sheet is dipped in a bowl of warm water to rehydrate. The rougher patterned side is the inside of the roll and helps to hold the filling ingredients.

Congee (rice porridge)
Congee is rice steamed in water until it is of porridge like consistency. Fish, chicken or pork may be served with the rice and stir-fried green vegetables. Rice porridge is often flavoured with fish sauce and ginger.

Fish Sauce
Fish sauce is used for flavouring. The first press (‘nuoc mam nhi’) is clear and is used for dipping sauces and salads, The second press is used for cooking. The famous sauce nuoc cham is made from fish sauce, vinegar, garlic and chilli.

Tofu
Tofu (beancurd) is a firm white custard-like food made from soya beans. It has a bland flavour but a variety of ingredients can be used to add flavour. Tofu can be cut into cubes and used in stir-fries, added to soups and omelettes, or added to salads. Many Buddhist Vietnamese are vegetarian and consequently tofu is used extensively as a meat substitute.

Meat, Poultry and Fish
Most Vietnamese enjoy pork, duck, veal, and chicken. Fish and seafood are very common in the Vietnamese diet. Beef is eaten except by Buddhists. Vietnamese people dislike the strong smell and taste of lamb. The meat is cut into small pieces so that it can be handled with chopsticks.
Dairy Foods
Dairy products are not widely used, as many people from Asian backgrounds are lactose intolerant. Soy bean based drinks are popular (choose soy milks and soy drinks with added calcium).

Other sources of calcium in the Vietnamese diet include tofu, green leafy vegetables, and fish bones (these can be a choking hazard for young children).

Many Vietnamese people also make a type of homemade yoghurt.

Vegetables
A wide variety of vegetables (stir-fried, steamed or raw) are served with meals. Fresh, uncooked vegetables and salads are an integral part of most Vietnamese meals. Fresh salad vegetables include lettuce, cucumber, coriander and mint. Other commonly used vegetables include:

- Cauliflower
- Mung beans
- Shallots
- Bean sprouts
- Chinese cabbage
- Cucumber
- Coriander
- Mushrooms
- Celery
- Bamboo shoots
- Bitter melon
- Spring onions
- Lettuce
- Mint

Fruits
Most varieties of fruit are eaten. Oranges in particular are cut into wedges and passed around the table on a plate. Most Vietnamese will finish a meal with fruit. Common fruits include:

- Melons
- Lychee
- Grapes
- Pineapple
- Mango
- Peach
- Mangosteen
- Star Fruit
- Oranges
- Banana
- Rambutan
- Lemon
- Paw Paw
- Custard apple
- Pear
- Durian
- Tamarind
- Mint

Herbs, Spices and Flavours
Herbs and spices are freely used to add flavour to dishes. A variety of sauces are also used in dishes and as flavouring on the table. Fish sauce (nuoc mam) is the main flavour used in cooking, and is included in practically all recipes. Common flavours include:

- Fish sauce
- Hoi Sin sauce
- Fresh coriander
- White pepper
- Sesame seed oil
- Garlic
- Lemon grass
- Oyster sauce
- Mint
- Ginger
- Soy sauce
- Basil
- Chilli
Vietnamese Culture

How to give your menu a Vietnamese flavour

• Use rice or noodles instead of potato or pasta as an accompaniment to meals
• For casseroles, stir-fries or soups, make sure that the meat is cut into bite-sized pieces.
• Add vegetables such as spring onions, celery, capsicum, mushrooms and cabbage to dishes.
• Stir-fry vegetables and add fish sauce to taste at the table
• Add spring onions and 1 teaspoon of fish sauce to scrambled eggs
• Add rice noodles and 1 teaspoon of fish sauce to vegetable or chicken soup
• Serve meats cut up with fish sauce on the table. Serve with rice and steamed or stir-fried vegetables
• Offer a selection of common Vietnamese fruits for dessert or snacks

How is Vietnamese food traditionally served?

• Rice is served into individual bowls, but vegetable and meat dishes are placed centrally on the table for people to help themselves
• Meals are usually served into a rice bowl
• Chopsticks are used in preference to cutlery, with a porcelain spoon used for soup
• Vietnamese spring rolls are eaten with the hands
• Fish sauce, soy sauce and coriander should be made available on the table
Vietnamese Culture

Festivities and special occasions

Dates for many Vietnamese festivals are based on the lunar (moon) calendar, therefore the dates will vary every year. Check with your local Vietnamese community for current dates.

Most Vietnamese people are Buddhist. Buddhists believe that each person has many lives. The cycle of living and dying ends only when a person reaches nirvana, or ultimate peace.

Most special days are marked by an increase in both the number of dishes and the variety of dishes available. Spring rolls and barbequed pork with vermicelli noodles are popular festival dishes.

**Tet (New Year)**

Tet is the traditional New Year and marks the beginning of Spring. Tet is the most important holiday in Vietnam and is celebrated for many days with festivals and fireworks. The night before Tet, families gather for a huge meal.

A favourite treat is banh chung, a small rice cake wrapped in banana leaves that has sweet bean paste and pork in the centre. Other special Tet foods include fried watermelon seeds, dried fruits, and pickled vegetables. Noodles, representing longevity, are also eaten at this time.

**The Mid-Autumn Festival (Moon Festival)**

This festival is associated with the harvest and alters are set up to make harvest offerings to the gods of the moon. It is believed to be the only time of the year when the moon appears perfectly round. In Vietnam, this is predominantly a children’s festival. Children make paper lanterns in the shapes of animals and these lanterns are lit at night and paraded around. It is also the time to eat mooncakes which are filled with sweets, nuts and fruits.

**Baby’s First Birthday**

A baby’s first birthday is celebrated by family and friends. At a party, the parents officially name their child. After this first party, a person’s individual birthday is no longer celebrated. Instead people honour the birthday of Tet, the Vietnamese New Year, when everyone becomes one year older.
Vietnamese Fresh Cold Rolls with Dipping Sauce

What you will need to serve 10:

**Ingredients**
- 100g bean sprouts
- 1 head of lettuce, shredded
- 2 sprigs fresh mint
- 2 sprigs fresh basil
- 1 cup rice vermicelli noodles
- 1 carrot, shredded
- Rice paper

**Method**
1. Place rice noodles into boiling water for 5-10 minutes and drain well
2. Wash lettuce, basil, mint and bean sprouts
3. Dip the rice paper into a little hot water and place onto a plate
4. Place some lettuce, basil, mint, and carrot onto the rice paper
5. Place some of the noodles and pork on top
6. Fold the sides in and then roll up
7. Repeat this until all the fillings have been used up
8. Serve with the dipping sauce

**Dipping Sauce**
- 100ml Hoi Sin sauce
- 1 clove garlic
- 1 tablespoon vinegar
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 2 teaspoons oil
- 1 tablespoon cornflour

**Method for Dipping Sauce**
1. Heat the oil in a pan and add crushed garlic clove
2. Add hoi sin sauce, sugar and vinegar
3. Stir and cook for 5 minutes
4. Mix cornflour with a little water and add to sauce to make it thicker

**Food Discussion**
- Taste test a variety of ingredients. Blindfold children and ask them to taste different ingredients. Ask them to describe the different flavours and textures and guess what food it is
- Visit a grocery or an Asian vegetable shop so the children see and smell the veggies
- Ask children to name each ingredient and its colour as they add them to the rice paper when making Cold Rolls
- Discuss Vietnamese culture and foods
- Fine slices of pork or chicken can also be added when making cold rolls.
Food handling and hygiene

Hygiene
- Do not prepare food if you are unwell
- Cover sores or cuts with a water proof bandage
- Wear a clean apron
- Wash hands thoroughly with warm, soapy water before preparing or eating food and after touching raw meat
- Wash hands every time after:
  - handling rubbish
  - going to the toilet
  - sneezing
  - coughing
  - eating or drinking
  - touching the hair, scalp or body
- Dry hands thoroughly with a single use paper towel
- If gloves are used, they should be changed any time you would normally wash hands or if they are torn
- Keep kitchen utensils and workbenches clean and dry

Food handling
- Use separate chopping boards and utensils for cooked meat, raw meat and ready-to-eat items such as salad or cheese
- Wash fruit and vegetables before preparation for eating or cooking
- Cook food thoroughly, especially meat, poultry, eggs and seafood

Keep hot food hot, and cold food cold
- Transport risky food (cooked meat and foods containing meat, dairy products, prepared fruits and vegetables, cooked rice and pasta, cooked or processed foods containing eggs) using insulated packs and refrigerate as soon as possible
- Store risky food in the fridge until needed
  - Cold food should be stored below 5°C
  - Frozen food should be stored below -15°C
- Hot food should be eaten as soon as possible after cooking
  - If storing cooked food for later use, cool quickly. When the food has stopped steaming it can be placed in the fridge. After it has cooled completely it can be transferred to the freezer
  - Re-heat food to steaming hot, making sure there are no cold spots
- Risky food held at room temperature (between 5°C and 60°C) for:
  - Up to two hours is okay to use or refrigerate (includes preparation and serving time)
  - More than two hours but less than four hours is okay to use, but cannot be refrigerated for later use (includes preparation and serving time)
  - Longer than four hours must be thrown away; it is unsafe to eat (includes preparation and serving time)
Religious Requirements

Food is an important part of life and in Australia there are various religious and cultural practices around food. Food is used in celebrations and helps to maintain ties with tradition and family. Listed below are some widely known religions and their food guidelines. This is not an exhaustive list and individuals differ on how strictly they follow the guidelines from non observance to strict orthodoxy. It is always best to confirm requirements with individuals.

Buddhists do not have set dietary rules, however vegetarianism is common as The Five Precepts of Buddhism that govern the moral conduct of followers states “that all living beings have a right to life.”

Christians observe lent, which is a 40 day period prior to Easter when Christians fast or give up luxuries in penance for their sins and reflect on the sacrifice and suffering of Jesus Christ. Lent runs from Ash Wednesday to Maundy Thursday, which is the day before Good Friday when Christ is said to have died on the cross. Traditionally meat is replaced by fish on Good Friday and the resurrection of Christ is celebrated on Easter Sunday. Easter falls between 22 March and 25 April each year. The timing changes according to the lunar cycle (the first Sunday after the full moon which occurs on or next after 21 March).

Hindu dietary practices may vary quite a bit depending on individual beliefs. Food plays a significant role in worship and fasting is also commonly practiced as a way of enhancing meditation and worship. All food should be offered to God before eating (prasada). Although eating meat is allowed, most Hindus avoid beef (as the cow is sacred) and eating pork is rare. Hindus believe all living things are sacred, therefore vegetarianism is common. In addition some Hindus believe other foods such as onion, garlic, mushrooms, alcohol, caffeine, eggs and very spicy foods are detrimental to meditation, so they are avoided.

Judaism follows the guidelines set out in the Talmud. Kosher is the Hebrew word for ‘fit or lawful’ and describes foods that are permitted according to the regulations of kashrut (Jewish dietary law). Foods that are not kosher are called trief.
Religious Requirements

The basic kosher rules are as follows:

- Meat of animals may only be eaten if the animal has been slaughtered in the prescribed way and the animal does not kill other animals – i.e. chews its cud (ox, sheep, goat), has split (cloven) hooves and is not a bird of prey
- Only fish with both fins and scales are kosher, shellfish are not permitted
- Eggs (without blood spots), milk and cheese must only be from kosher animals
- Meat and milk products must not be cooked, served at the same table or eaten together
- Once meat is eaten there should be a delay of three hours before eating milk products
- Separate utensils, pots and cutlery are used for meat and milk products; and in some homes there are separate kitchens
- As most insects are not kosher (trief) fruit and vegetables should be checked carefully prior to eating for contamination by insects
- Certified kosher wine is permissible to drink

Muslim followers are culturally diverse. The term halal refers to foods that are permitted according to Islamic law. For meat to be halal the animal must be slaughtered in a way that observes Sharia law. Haram foods are those foods that are forbidden according to Islamic law. Haram foods (forbidden) include:

- Meat from an animal that is already dead
- Blood
- Pork
- Predatory animals
- Alcohol
- Animal fat and dairy made with animal fat
- Any food additive from non-halal sources
Where to find further information

Resources

- **Calendar of cultural and religious dates**, (2012) Australian Government, Department of Immigration and Citizenship

- **Community profiles for health care providers**, (2011), Queensland Health

- **Home and personal care kit (community profiles)**, (2004), Migrant Information Centre, Eastern Melbourne and Home and Community Care (HACC)

- **Finding familiar foods: list of common foods** (2004), Association for Services to Torture and Trauma Survivors

- **Five keys to safer food, World Health Organisation (WHO)** (n.d.)
  http://www.who.int/foodsafety/publications/consumer/5keys/en/

- **Food safety information kit – Charities and Community Groups**, (2010), Government of South Australia, Department of Health

- **Good food for new arrivals**, (2012), Association for Services to Torture and Trauma Survivors Inc. (ASeTTS) WA

- **Healthy food in the first seven days**, (2009), Nourishing New Communities, Queensland Health, Multicultural Health

- **School lunchbox posters** (2004), Association for Services to Torture, & Trauma Survivors (ASeTTS)

- **Settlement data by source country and visa category.** Department of Immigration and Citizenship

- **SBS Food Safari recipes from around the world**

- **The Cooks Thesaurus** (lists range of CALD ingredients and their substitutes).
  http://www.foodsubs.com/

- **Pictorial resources for CALD groups. Healthy Eating Local Policies and Programs (HELPP)**
  Flinders University SA Health South Australia
  http://www.wecanhelpp.com.au