

FOUNDATIONS

OF RESTAURANT MANAGEMENT & CULINARY ARTS

SECOND EDITION



Global Cuisine 1: The Americas

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SECTION 1 NORTH AMERICA

North American cuisine is a melting pot, based upon the diversity of the natural resources of the continent and the variety of the native and immigrant populations. There is no single “American” flavor in the region from Canada to Mexico, Pacific to Atlantic. However, each region has traditional dishes, flavors, ingredients, and cooking methods. Each is worthy of attention. There are coastal zones with abundant seafood; Asian pockets with fusion influences; the vast mountains, plateaus, and plains with beef, wheat, potatoes, and corn; Southern cuisine with African influences; and Mexican food with both native and Spanish flavors, to name just a few. North American cuisine began with the Native Americans and soon fused with the first European settlers at Plymouth, so the Northeastern United States is a good place to begin.

Study Questions

After studying Section 1, you should be able to answer the following questions:

- What are the cultural influences and flavor profiles of the Northeast?
- What are the cultural influences and flavor profiles of the Midwest?
- What are the cultural influences and flavor profiles of the South?
- What are the cultural influences and flavor profiles of the Southwest?
- What are the cultural influences and flavor profiles of the Pacific Coast/Rim?
- What are the cultural influences and flavor profiles of Mexico?

Northeastern United States

[flavor]

Flavor Profile

Traditional New England recipes are not highly seasoned. The flavors are deep and rich, and tend to be more mild than spicy.

Cultural Influences

New England is in the northeast corner of the United States, situated along the Atlantic seaboard where it has access to a large supply of fresh seafood. Because this region was the location of some of the earliest settlements of the United States, Native Americans had an influence on New England cuisine. They introduced early European settlers to many foods, such as the region's wild game, corn, and vegetables.

The Native Americans of upstate New York and other parts of the Northeast had a nutritious diet based upon sophisticated agricultural techniques. Using a system known as "Three Sisters," the Iroquois cultivated a diet of corn, beans, and squash. First, corn was planted in mounds and grew a few inches. Then pole beans and ground squashes were added around the corn. The beans climbed the cornstalks for support. The squashes covered the ground to control the weeds and hold moisture, while their fallen leaves made mulch. The corn and beans provided carbohydrate energy and combined to form a complete protein for the diet. The squash provided vitamins and minerals. All could be stored for two years and could be cooked in one pot. This one-pot method of cooking is still prevalent in the region today, which produces bean dishes, chowders, and stews.

When the Pilgrims settled in New England, they wrote about the "fruits of the sea," referring to the abundance of fish. Cape Cod was so named due to the abundance of cod in the area. The seafood in the territory became the main ingredient in most recipes. Lobster, for example, was actually so abundant that it was a food typically eaten by the lower classes. Over the course of its 500-year history, New England has also been influenced by the Puritans, Portuguese, Irish, and Italians who came over from Europe.

New England culinary influences can be seen throughout the United States, partly because many groups migrated from the Northeast, taking culinary traditions with them. In the nineteenth century, herbs and spices were a luxury for only the upper classes. That history is still at play today as even the flavors of this regional cuisine tend to be more basic, involving simple preparations and milder spices.

Regional Ingredients and Dishes

New England cooking is characterized by simple recipes and extensive use of seafood, starches, and dairy products, including cheese and cream. The **New England boiled dinner** is a very popular, classic menu item in this region and includes corned beef brisket (beef that is cured in a salt brine, often with spices), boiled potatoes, cabbage, and root vegetables like onions, carrots, or parsnips.

Seafood is abundant in the Northeast region, so many dishes are centered around this ingredient. **New England clam chowder** is perhaps the most familiar version of a thick clam soup, creamy, white, and mild. Seafood bisque and lobster stew are also common dishes that are distinct from each other. While the stew is a thick soup with lobster meat, a **bisque** is made from the lobster shells, extracting all the color and flavor before straining the shells away. Other Northeast favorites include fresh Atlantic salmon, flounder, and boiled shellfish, such as crab legs or whole lobsters.

New England is also known for its maple syrup. Blueberries, cranberries, and Concord grapes are staple fruits in the area. Baked beans and apple cider can be enjoyed any time of year, and root vegetables such as squash and pumpkin are markers of the region.

[techniques]

Northeastern United States Cooking Methods

The clambake is a cooking method introduced by Native Americans, where fish, corn, and vegetables are cooked in a pit dug in wet sand. Today, the clambake has been modified to a one-pot method that can be used in any home or backyard. Boiling, baking, broiling, and frying are also frequent methods of cooking.

[nutrition]

Red, White, and Clam Chowder

Clam chowder is a thick, creamy soup made from milk, clams, onions, potatoes, and salt pork. It is a delicious meal in itself, originating in New England but now served nationwide. It is especially popular on both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts.

But not all clam chowder is white and creamy. The other main contender is Manhattan clam chowder, a Portuguese variant introduced in the fish markets of New York City. Manhattan clam chowder is tomato based and full of vegetables along with the clams.

Fisherman’s Wharf in San Francisco on the Pacific Coast is home to many seafood restaurants. Both types of clam chowder feature prominently on the menus, with the Manhattan style being especially good with San Francisco sourdough bread.

While both taste delicious, their nutritional values do differ. Manhattan clam chowder is a fairly low-fat food, while New England clam chowder is higher in fat. Also, red chowder has phytochemicals (chemical compounds such as beta-carotene that occur naturally in plants), which are absent from the New England style. The two soups may be cousins, but only distant ones. Table 1 compares some of the nutritional content of the two types of clam chowder.

Table 1: Nutritional Content of Clam Chowder

	Manhattan Clam Chowder	New England Clam Chowder
Serving size	8-ounce bowl	8-ounce bowl
Calories	134 calories	228 calories
Total fat	30 calories from fat	116 calories from fat
Calories from fat	3 grams total fat	13 grams total fat
Cholesterol	14 milligrams cholesterol	45 milligrams cholesterol

[ServSafe Connection]

The Safety of the Boiled Dinner

New England boiled dinner, Yankee pot roast, and other classics are one-pot meals with vegetable and meat simmered together for several hours in moist, low heat.

Covered steam kettles and slow cookers do a good job, but check the temperatures to make certain that the initial warming of the food is fast enough for safety. The food should reach a temperature above 140°F within 4 hours. Check it this way: Heat water in the cooker, lid on, for 4 hours. If the water reaches 185°F, it will heat food quickly enough.

When using the cooker, do not remove the lid unless absolutely necessary. Opening the cooker drops the temperature of the food by about 10 degrees. Do not put frozen foods into the cooker or the temperature might remain too low for too long. Start the foods on a high temperature setting for the first hour, and reduce it for the rest of the slow-cooking.

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Midwestern United States

[flavor]

Flavor Profile

Midwestern cuisine is generally hearty, but light handed with seasonings, preferring sage, dill, caraway, mustard, and parsley to bold and spicy flavors.

Cultural Influences

The Midwest region of the United States consists of states in the center of the country. These states are known for their grassy plains, lakes and streams, and changes of season. The climate and conditions are good for raising cattle and growing grains and vegetables. Midwestern cuisine usually showcases simple and hearty dishes that make use of locally grown food.

Midwestern cuisine has many cultural influences from people who immigrated from Germany, Britain, Italy, Hungary, and Scandinavia. In the early 1700s, Germans started to arrive, bringing sauerkraut and sausages. They also introduced the tradition of serving meals family style. The British began arriving in the late 1700s and brought **pasties** (PASS-tees), or meat pies, bread pudding, and roasts with potatoes. The Italians brought pastas and native cheeses, and the Hungarians brought goulash. The Scandinavians introduced **lefse** (potato bread) and meatballs. Together these various cultural influences bring a diverse range of tastes to the region.

Regional Ingredients and Dishes

Foods in the Midwest are simple and hearty. The vast farmland in the region provides an abundance of fresh produce. Excellent dairy foods are produced in the Midwest, including fine cheddar cheese varieties. Milk, sour cream, and ice cream are very popular in recipes and alone.

Food from the central part of the continent is sometimes called “meat-and-potatoes” or “comfort food.” It is probably the food that most people associate with the United States. Beef or pork roasts, sausage, turkey, and ground meats are typical proteins. These meats are often prepared by simply roasting them with potatoes and vegetables. Ground beef is common for meatloaf and casseroles.

Ground beef is also the basis for the hamburger, a German name for the very American sandwich. Macaroni and cheese, pork chops and gravy, mashed potatoes, chicken-fried steak, green bean casserole, chicken and dumplings, and bean soup are all popular dishes as well. Each of these dishes is based upon foods that are plentiful and easy to purchase in the Midwest. Some of these dishes are quite filling, a holdover from the dietary needs of folks who worked hard on their farms in the summers and withstood freezing weather in the winters.

Kansas City, Missouri, in particular is famous for its barbecue. Other regions of the country have delicious barbecue dishes as well, of course, but Kansas City couples terrific barbecue sauces and techniques with local corn-fed, high-quality beef and pork for a very special result. Pork and beef are cooked slowly over slow-burning wood fires. Kansas City barbecue features dry rubs for meat prior to cooking. The famous Kansas City barbecue sauces are applied at the table.

[techniques]

Midwestern United States Cooking Methods

The cooking techniques used in the Midwestern United States include barbecue, chicken-fry, pickling, and canning.

[trends]

Entertainment Concept Dining

Building on global concepts, restaurants in the United States are starting to offer not only food, but a whole new world to take in. Entertainment dining is a growing trend in the restaurant industry.

In the United States, outlets like The Rainforest Cafè, The Mayan Restaurant, and Dave & Buster's offer a full experience for the entire family. The Rainforest Cafè takes a tropical theme one better by re-creating the rainforest in a family-friendly, fun environment. Whether it's indoor cliff diving at the Mayan or interactive online games from Dave & Buster's, there is something for everyone in concept dining. The family no longer just goes out to eat; they go on a global adventure.

Southern United States

[flavor]

Flavor Profile

The flavor profiles of the southern regions vary from the highly flavored and spicy Cajun dishes to the more mild but full-flavored cuisine of the Tidewater region. In all cases, they are fresh flavors that speak of the local ingredients.

Cultural Influences

The southern United States is often defined as Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, and Tennessee. This is a large and, in many places, fertile land that provides a wide variety of food. Due to the wide expanse of this region, it's easiest to discuss the cuisine in three parts: the Tidewater region of Virginia and North Carolina; the Low Country of South Carolina, Georgia, and northeastern Florida; and the Gulf Coast area of the Mississippi Delta and Louisiana.

Tidewater cuisine was influenced by the Native Americans who taught European settlers to plant corn and introduced them to native squashes, plums, berries, greens, game, and seafood, including fish and oysters. These native foods were then combined with the pigs, cattle, sheep, chickens, wheat, and cabbages that the British settlers brought over from England. The English settlers also brought with them cooking methods from both the upper class and the tavern. The other major influence came from enslaved Africans who brought native African foods such as yams, black-eyed peas, and okra. They also contributed their cooking methods and familiarity with Native American foods, such as peanuts, tomatoes, and peppers, which were not widely used in Europe.

Low Country cuisine had many of the same cultural influences as Tidewater, but the cuisine is also influenced by the warmer climate and rice plantations combined with the busy port of Charleston, where pickles and relishes of the warmer climates became standard fare.

Florida is a Low Country Southern state with some of its own unique cuisine. Cuban flavors inform southern Florida cooking with spices of garlic, oregano, bay leaves, and cumin. Beans, potatoes, and rice blend with seafood and peppery heat to form a unique palate that includes tropical fruits, seafood, and even alligator.

Two of the primary cuisines of the Gulf Coast region, Cajun and Creole, were the result of migration, the geography of the region, and the influence of conquerors. Louisiana has been influenced by its Native American heritage, the influx of Spanish, French, English, Italian, and German immigrants; and Africans, who have deeply affected the culture and cuisine of this region.

Creole (KREE-ole) developed in the city of New Orleans in the homes of the rich French and Spanish land owners. It is the blending of French grand cuisine principles with the cooking techniques of the enslaved Africans. The techniques are then applied to local and imported foods and seasoning. These recipes often still carry the French or African names that inspired them. Just as the word Creole was used to describe a person of mixed ethnicities—African and generally French—the cuisine is a mix of cultures and food. Creole cooking is found in the areas along the Gulf Coast and into Florida. It is rather spicy with some heat, and it includes Caribbean elements and spices.

Cajun is a style of cooking from the swamps and bayous of southwestern Louisiana. The people who developed this cooking style were French Acadian Catholics who originally settled in Nova Scotia. They were forced to relocate after England gained control of Canada. They returned to France where they continued to be persecuted for their religious beliefs. When France took control of Louisiana they saw an opportunity and immigrated to New Orleans. From New Orleans they settled into the bayous west of the city. The name “Cajun” comes from a way of pronouncing “Acadian.” They adapted their heritage of French cooking to the bounty of the swamp. They used the native laurel (bay), pepper grass (for a pepper flavor), thistle (instead of celery), and wild onion and garlic to prepare the seafood, freshwater fish, and game native to the region.

Regional Ingredients and Dishes

Tidewater dishes include fried chicken, crab cakes, and oyster on the half shell.

One popular Low Country dish is **low country boil**, which is a well-spiced, one-pot dish, generally consisting of shrimp, smoked sausage, red potato, and corn. Hoppin John, shrimp and grits, and she-crab soup are also popular.

Both Cajun and Creole cuisines frequently incorporate what's called the **trinity**, which means a unity of three. In this case, the trinity is a form of mirepoix that blends celery, onions, and green bell peppers instead of the carrots that are traditional in mirepoix. Trinity is considered foundational to Louisiana cooking.

Creole dishes include Creole **gumbo**, which is not roux based like Cajun gumbo and often contains tomato, shrimp remoulade, and seafood Creole.

Cajun dishes include **jambalaya**, which is a spicy rice dish with chicken, andouille sausage, shrimp, crayfish, trinity, other vegetables, herbs, broth, and seasonings. **Andouille** (an-DOO-ee) is pork sausage with a strong, smoky, garlicky taste. **Gumbo** is a hearty soup with trinity and shrimp, thickened with brown roux containing okra (a seed-pod vegetable that helps gel the gumbo), and **filé**, a thickener made from dried sassafras leaves. True Cajun cuisine is more spicy than Creole, but not as overwhelmingly hot as is often expected by Louisiana visitors.

[techniques]

Southern United States Cooking Methods

The cooking techniques used in the southern United States cover the full range of techniques used in Western cookery. The one that is somewhat a hallmark of the region is one-pot cookery, in which a full meal is prepared in one pot. Everything is well spiced and carries an exquisitely blended flavor and aroma.

GMO Food

GMO means “genetically modified organism.” When DNA was discovered in the 1950s, it became apparent that scientists could adjust the building blocks and recombine them to create different traits. This concept has grown into the genetic engineering industry. Humulin, a synthetic form of insulin, was developed through this process, called recombinant DNA, and has been a huge benefit to individuals with diabetes. More very promising therapies are in development for multiple sclerosis, cystic fibrosis, and others.

The same technology is used to create food crops that are more productive, more nutritious, and resistant to diseases and pests. Millions of acres worldwide, including land in developing nations, are now farmed using GMO seeds. Common GMO crops include corn, soybeans, and rice. Solutions to world hunger problems may include GMO crops.

However, there is controversy with GMO and food crops. The technology is expensive, and the new seed lines are patented. Some are genetically encoded to prevent the seeds from being fertile after the first planting. A farmer cannot develop seed stock, but must purchase new seeds every year. This is a multibillion-dollar global industry.

The profit potential leaves some folks in fear of GMO. Also, environmental groups are wary of the pollens and crossbreedings that occur in the plant world. What if there is something harmful in the new products? What if there are allergens or pollens not yet identified?

The United States is a leader in the use of GMO crops, but there are pockets in the United States where strong environmental concerns have outlawed them locally. African governments are encouraging their use, but there is still fear from the population. Canadian and Australian states are mixed on their acceptance. There is GMO use in Asia. The European Union is avoiding their use while taking a slow approach toward acceptance, and is studying the matter in various committees.

What is your opinion of GMO?



ESSENTIAL SKILLS MAKING THE TRINITY

Trinity means a unity of three. Trinity is a form of mirepoix that is used in Cajun and Creole cuisines. Instead of carrots, celery, and onions, the carrots are replaced by green bell pepper. Gumbo and Jambalaya are two classic Creole dishes based on trinity. Trinity is considered foundational to Louisiana cooking. Here is the process for making trinity:

- 1 Dice two parts celery.
- 2 Dice two parts onion.
- 3 Dice one part green bell pepper.
- 4 Over medium-low heat, slowly sauté all three in a pan with olive oil.
- 5 Stir occasionally and add a few tablespoons of water as ingredients reduce in size and blend together.
- 6 When celery, onion, and green peppers all look similar to each other, the trinity is complete, usually about 30 minutes or so.

Southwestern United States

[flavor]

Flavor Profile

Southwestern flavors are smoky and spicy.

Cultural Influences

The Southwest is composed of Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico. Much of the cuisine of the Southwest has been heavily influenced by Mexican culture, heritage, and cooking methods, all of which will be discussed in greater detail later in the chapter. The first contributors to the formation of Southwestern cuisine were the Native Americans, who had to adapt to the arid weather conditions and scarce vegetation in the desert and mountains. The use of edible plants such as pine nuts,

beans, corn, and prickly pear (cactus) became the foundation of Southwestern cuisine. Aztec Indians and Spanish colonists introduced the use of different meats like rabbit, deer, and wild turkey to the Southwestern natives. Prominent Mexican influences include the use of a variety of chili peppers. Other cuisines have spun off of the Southwestern cuisines, such as **Tex-Mex** and **Cal-Mex**. In Cal-Mex, meats are shredded, while with Tex-Mex the meats are generally ground.

Regional Ingredients and Dishes

Beef and pork are commonly used meats. Offal meat, such as heart, kidneys, liver, tripe, sweetbreads, and tongue, is also used in Southwestern cuisine. Corn, beans, cactus, nuts, cumin, avocados, rice, citrus, and chili, ancho, and chipotle peppers are common ingredients.

[techniques]

Southwestern United States Cooking Methods

The cooking techniques used in the Southwestern United States include grilling, smoking, and barbecue.

Salsa is a signature dish of the Southwest. The word means sauce in Spanish. Although salsa can be smooth and thin in consistency, it is usually a chunky sauce that may even resemble a relish. Salsa can be cooked or fresh, can be made with vegetables and/or fruits, and can be hot and spicy or mild. It has become an umbrella term with a broad application, but usually has a foundation of fresh chopped red or green tomatoes.

Barbecue is also common in the region. Whole **barbecued** chicken, pulled pork, and ribs—cooked with the heat of a fire, sometimes after a marinade, spice rub, or basting sauce has been applied—are popular dishes. Texas alone has several different varieties of barbecue methods and specialties. Throughout the Southwest, barbecued meat is a favorite. Chili, a thick blend of kidney, red, or pinto beans with meat and seasonings, will be on most any Southwestern menu.

Spanish in the Americas

Knowing how to speak Spanish in the Western Hemisphere is a good idea. Spanish is the official language of every nation of the Americas except Canada, The United States, Suriname, Guyana, some Caribbean islands, and Brazil. In fact, it is estimated that between 325 and 400 million people speak Spanish as their native language. That means that there are more native Spanish speakers in the world than any other language, with the exception of Mandarin Chinese.

The United States has no official language but is mostly an English-speaking country with a large Spanish-speaking portion of the population. Spanish is very common in California, the Southwest, Texas, and Florida, and is spreading rapidly throughout the Pacific Northwest, Intermountain West, and Midwestern states. It is estimated that 35 million U.S. residents speak Spanish, making it the second most common language in the United States. This number is continuing to grow.

Both English and Spanish are commonly spoken in restaurant and foodservice kitchens across the country. Knowing both languages can be an invaluable tool on the job. Being able to communicate with most anyone in an establishment, or being able to serve as translator for customers or fellow employees will help anyone wanting to work in management, as a chef, or even as a server.

If you want to learn Spanish, start taking classes in school. Local community colleges and adult education programs also frequently provide Spanish classes. And if those options don't work, try a self-learning guide, online program, or recorded lessons.

[fast fact]

Did You Know . . . ?

Barbecue is a noun, a verb, and an adjective. It describes several pieces of cooking equipment; an event; a place; several styles of various types of cooked meat; a method of cooking anything; an unlimited array of sauces, spices and marinades; and even a flavor of potato chips.

So just what exactly is barbecue? As you can see, it means a number of different things, but there is one element common to all barbecue: smoke.

To barbecue something is to cook it over wood fire or coals, using the smoke as part of the cooking process. Because of the smokiness of the process, it is done outdoors. The cooking may take a few minutes, or last up to 18 hours. It can also include cooking food on an outdoor gas grill with a closed lid to retain the smoke. Anything from a tiny Japanese hibachi to a huge fire pit dug into the ground can become a barbecue as long as very hot smoke meets meat.

Barbecue is also a flavor for sauces. Many Southwestern barbecue sauces are tomato and molasses based, but sauces with mayonnaise or vinegar are also found around the United States. The sauce can be a marinade, a last-minute glaze, or a table sauce. Do not baste with a tomato-based sauce throughout the cooking process, because it burns the sauce on the meat. Barbecue flavor for potato chips and other snacks means a sweet-sour-smoky-tomato taste.

Vegetables and fruits such as summer squash, bell peppers, pineapple, apples, and onions can also be grilled on a barbecue. This makes good use of the heat while imparting a rich, smoky flavor to the vegetables. Bread, corn, potatoes, and even apple pie can be cooked with the smoky heat of a barbecue and be all the better for it. Again, smoke is the common thread tying all of these variations together.

Pacific Rim/Coast

[flavor]

Flavor Profile

Asian fusion flavors range from sweet and sour to bland due to the influences of Thai and Chinese cuisines. The Thai and Chinese believe that food should be served in its natural state. Additional Pacific Coast flavors are based in seafood, sourdough bread, and local fruits and vegetables.

History and Cultural Influences

This is a vast region, including all of the Pacific Coast shoreline of the United States as well as the islands all along the coast in the Pacific Ocean. The food of this region is sometimes referred to as Asian fusion or Euro-Pacific. Awareness of this cuisine was created around the early 1970s when many eclectic styles of

fusion cuisine became popular. Chef Wolfgang Puck helped popularize fusion cuisine. It is a style of cooking and presenting food that combines the ingredients and techniques of Asian and West Coast cuisines. In Hawaii, Chef Roy Yamaguchi was credited with creating and developing Pacific Rim cuisine in particular.

Common Ingredients and Dishes

Seafood ingredients are used in abundance. Salmon, halibut, mussels, and oysters are all commonly used in dishes. Other staples include poultry, coconut, bananas, pineapple, tropical fruits, fruit salsas, avocados, red onions, tomatoes, cucumbers, sesame seeds, basil, cilantro, wasabi, citrus fruits, annatto seed oil, and cardamom. One hallmark example of Asian fusion is Chef Sammy Choy's wasabi cheesecake appetizer, a sweet/spicy creation with a macadamia-nut crust. This single dish exemplifies the fusion of a Euro-American concept by combining the Asian flavor of wasabi with a distinctly Hawaiian crust. These principles are carried out in many dishes along the Pacific Coast, including the easy-to-find Asian chicken salad.

Pacific cuisine is not limited to Asian influences. San Francisco, for example, has a singular cuisine style that revolves around seafood and sourdough bread. The cooler, more even-keeled climate of the Bay Area creates the environment for what some feel is the perfect sourdough starter. Both the seafood and the bread are heavily influenced by Italian cooking principles from the Italians who settled throughout the city and the Bay Area. Spanish and Portuguese cuisine made an impact as well, along with Asian and Native Californian inflections.

Continuing north to Oregon and Washington, increased rainfall and fertile soil create an area where trees, flowers, and berries grow like weeds. Pacific Northwest salmon, halibut, and crawfish are popular local items. Marionberry cobbler is a restaurant favorite. Farther north in Seattle, the coffee culture is very strong. However, people also enjoy a steaming hot cup of clam juice on a chilly afternoon in the harbor. In Seattle, Western Canada, and on up to Alaska, some form of salmon is found on most local menus.

[techniques]

Pacific Coast/Pacific Rim Cooking Methods

Pacific Coast/Pacific Rim cooking methods include stir-frying, grilling, and baking.

[nutrition]

Got SPAM®?

When you think of SPAM, you might think of canned meat, Monty Python, and unwanted email. But now add “tropical paradise” to the group. Hawaii is the top market for SPAM in the world. World War II altered many things in the Pacific Islands, cuisine being one of them. During the war, Hawaiians relied upon U.S. military barges of supplies for many commodities, including protein from SPAM canned meat from the Hormel Food Corp.

SPAM appears on the local classic Hawaiian plate lunch: meat, two scoops of white rice, one scoop of macaroni salad. This meal is loaded with calories (more than 1,000), fat, and sodium—well over half the daily allowance of all three! Meanwhile, it contributes protein and carbohydrates, but very few other nutrients.

Plate lunch is so common that the phrase, “Have you eaten rice yet?” means, “Do you want to go to lunch?” The option for “Hapa-style” plate lunch increases the fiber and a few vitamins by mixing a scoop of brown rice and a scoop of white. SPAM is served at McDonald’s and Burger King outlets in the Hawaiian Islands.

Mexico

[flavor]

Flavor Profile

The flavors of Mexico are spicy hot and earthy. Most of the flavors originate from vegetarian sources, but meat, poultry, and seafood feature prominently in modern Mexican cuisine.

Cultural Influences

Mexico is a vast country with various climates and regions. Mexico has regions of mountains, plains, deserts, rainforests, and vast coastlines. It is fairly warm throughout, except for the highest elevations, so crops can grow in some regions of the country year-round.

Mexico was colonized by Spain during a time when the area was dominated by two powerful native cultures: the Aztecs and the Mayas. The Spanish were not always well received because they focused on conquering the local populations. The conflict between the Spanish colonizers and the Aztec and Mayan natives continued for many years. Modern-day Mexico is a Spanish-speaking nation of people who are a mix of Spanish, Aztec, and Mayan descent.

Today, Mexican cuisine derives from those ancient Aztec and Mayan cultures, which were very sophisticated in their food preparation. There are techniques and nutritional considerations that the Aztec and Mayan people integrated into their cooking methods and diets that scientists didn't fully understand until the twentieth century; and there's more discovery likely to come. In short, Mexican tacos and enchiladas are just the beginning of the bold and broad palate of our neighbors to the south.

Regional Ingredients and Dishes

Corn has been a staple food of Mexico for centuries. The technique of chemically treating corn with alkali to remove the husks and create a corn meal called **masa** was an ancient food science breakthrough. It increased the palatability, digestibility, and absorbability of this foundational food. The simple, daily handmade corn tortilla was a benchmark in food processing long before the arrival of the Europeans and their influences. It is similar in significance to the development of breads in other nations, all of which are marvels of biochemistry.

Corn tortillas were originally cooked without fat on a **comale**, or a round, flat griddle made of stone or earthenware. Modern comales are cast iron or made of another metal, and are still commonly used in the Mexican kitchen. Tortillas today are fried with or without fat, but are still made from masa.

The ancient Mexican diet was usually vegetarian, perhaps supplemented with seafood in the coastal regions. Meat products were rare, and dairy products were introduced by the Europeans. Some meat and dairy are now incorporated into traditional dishes; shredded meat, melted cheese, or sour cream are all common now. But it is still difficult to think of Mexican food without tortillas, beans, some sort of pepper, and perhaps guacamole, all of which are original to the cuisine.

Peppers are a major flavoring agent of Mexican food in all regions. The varieties of peppers themselves vary from area to area, but they are commonly called chiles, or chili peppers. These are more pungent and spicier with capsaicin than typical green bell peppers. A jalapeño pepper is the flagship, familiar throughout the world as a Mexican flavor. Other peppers include the relatively mild poblano (or ancho when it's dried), the spicy serrano, and the very hot habañero peppers, which some say are the hottest peppers of all. Hot, spicy peppers are perhaps the notable flavor of Mexico. But, there are subtleties far beyond the heat of peppers.

Seafood, beef, pork, and chicken are very typical in modern Mexican food. Also, a traveler might encounter goat, iguana, or grasshopper on the menu in certain locales. Offal meats, such as heart and kidney, are also used in Mexican dishes, a favorite being menudo, a tripe (stomach organ) soup that is very spicy and cooks slowly over several hours or even days. Meat pieces and seasonings are also made into Mexican *salchichas*, or sausages, including chorizo (pork) and *butifarra* (dried pork).

Mole means sauce or mixture and can sometimes be used as a suffix on words to describe the sauce. The most familiar example of this is guacamole or “avocado mixture.” However, cooked mole is also a feature in Mexican cuisine. Mole is a slow-cooked sauce that is elegant in its complexity of flavors. It is rich and dark with a smoky or tobacco type of flavor. The most notable variety is Mole Poblano, which is made with dried fruits and ancho chilis. Sometimes chocolate is melted in, giving it a sweet yet smoky flavor and a rich brown color. *Mole Negro*, from Oaxaca (Wah-HAH-Ka), has a smoky, earthy tobacco quality imparted by local *chihuacle negro* chilis. Other moles come in various colors: *Mole Verde* is a green sauce of toasted pumpkin seeds, tomatillos (a fruit related to the tomato family), and cilantro; and *Mole Amarillo* is a yellow variety of tomatillo sauce.

[techniques]

Mexican Cooking Methods

Mexican cooking methods include griddle frying with or without fat (comale), grinding, and fire roasting.

Summary

In this section, you learned the following:

- New England is in the northeast corner of the United States situated along the Atlantic Seaboard, so it has access to a large supply of fresh seafood. Because this region was the location of some of the earliest European settlements of the United States, Native Americans had an influence on New England cuisine. It has also been influenced by the Puritans and Portuguese, Irish, and Italian immigrants who came over from Europe. Traditional New England recipes are not highly seasoned. The flavors are deep and rich and tend to be more mild than spicy. One-pot cookery is common in the region.
- The Midwest region of the United States consists of states in the center of the country. These states are known for their grassy plains, lakes and streams, change of seasons, and a good climate and conditions for raising cattle and growing vegetables. Midwestern cuisine usually showcases simple, hearty dishes that make use of locally grown food. Midwestern cuisine has many cultural influences because people immigrated to this area from Germany, Britain, Italy, Hungary, and Scandinavia. The food is generally hearty, but can be prepared with a light hand with seasonings ranging from sage, dill, caraway, mustard, and parsley to bring out bold and spicy flavors. Barbecue, chicken-frying, pickling, and canning are popular cooking methods of the region.
- Due to the wide expanse of this region, it's easiest to discuss Southern cuisine in three parts: the Tidewater region of Virginia and North Carolina; the Low Country of South Carolina, Georgia, and northeastern Florida; and the Gulf Coast area of the Mississippi Delta and Louisiana. The flavor profiles of Southern regions vary from the highly flavored and spicy Cajun food to the more mild but full-flavored food of the Tidewater region. In all cases, the flavors are fresh and typical of local ingredients. The cooking techniques used in the southern United States cover the full range of techniques used in Western cookery. One that is somewhat of a hallmark of the region is one-pot cookery, in which a full meal is prepared in one pot. Everything is well spiced and carries an exquisitely blended flavor and aroma.

- The Southwest is composed of Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico. Much of the cuisine of the Southwest has been heavily influenced by Mexican culture, heritage, and cooking methods. The flavor profile of Southwestern cuisine is typically smoky and spicy, and the cooking methods consist of grilling, smoking, and barbecuing.
- Sometimes referred to as Asian fusion or Euro-Pacific, Pacific Rim cuisine was created around the early 1970s when many eclectic styles of fusion cuisine became popular. Pacific Rim cuisine is a combination of the cuisine of many different countries along the Pacific Coast. It is a style of cooking and presenting foods that combines the ingredients and techniques of Asian and West Coast cuisines. Additional Pacific Coast flavors are based in seafood, sourdough bread, and local fruits and vegetables.
- Mexican cuisine derives from ancient Aztec and Mayan cultures, which were very sophisticated in their food preparation. Mexican tacos and enchiladas are just the beginning of the bold and broad palate of our neighbors to the south. The flavor profile of Mexican cuisine is spicy hot and earthy. Most of the flavors originate from vegetarian sources, but meat, poultry, and seafood feature prominently in modern Mexican cuisine. Cooked mole is a feature in Mexican cuisine.

Section 1 Review Questions

- 1 What is the most notable cooking method of the Northeast?
- 2 How does the flavor profile of the Midwest compare to the Southwest?
- 3 What are the three regions of the Southern United States?
- 4 List three cooking methods commonly used in Pacific Rim/Coast cuisine.
- 5 Pick one region of North America and describe how the culture has influenced the cuisine. What influence do you feel has had the biggest impact on the cuisine of this region today? Report your findings and opinion in two paragraphs.
- 6 If you had to combine the six regions of North America discussed in this section into three regions, what regions would you combine and why? Explain your rationale based on geography, regional ingredients, or cultural influences.

Section 1 Activities

1. Study Skills/Group Activity: Clambake!

A clambake has become an American tradition involving a large social gathering and party atmosphere. What is the origin of the word? What region is it from? In a small group, explain the origin of the word, what region it originated in, and what a traditional clambake was like. Then, plan a clambake including the location, food, safety, menu, presentation, and cleanup.

2. Activity: Looking Deeper Into the South

Pick one subsection of the Southern United States—Low Country, Tidewater, or the Gulf Coast region—and research the cuisine. Be sure to include ethnic and racial influences, geographic influences, and ingredients native to the particular region you choose. Report your findings in a three-paragraph summary. Add two recipes from the region.

3. Critical Thinking: Taste of North America

Create a six-course meal using one dish from each of the six regions of North America discussed in this section. You will need to include the full recipe for each of the six dishes you incorporate. Be sure to consider how the dishes will work with each other in terms of taste, texture, and the sequence in which they are served. Each dish should reflect what you feel is the essence of each region's cuisine.

SECTION 2 CENTRAL AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

The Caribbean has an overlapping collection of cuisine influences from past and present residents. There are native, Spanish, English, French, Dutch, and African foods and techniques fused with the local tropical and ocean foods. A varied array of foods and preparation methods is the result. Food may be different even on the same island. For example, on the island of Hispaniola, the Spanish settled the Dominican Republic on the eastern side, and the French settled Haiti on the west. Each side now has its own cuisine.

Often overlooked, but interesting in its own right, is the cuisine of Central America. While it has definitely been influenced by Mexico and the Caribbean, there are unique qualities to the corn, rice, and bean diet of this region. Sadly, many of them derive from poverty and the struggles and adaptations that it requires. Tourism and immigration have not been historically strong in this region, so outside influences are not as prevalent as they are in other places. This has kept the native diet fairly pure and unchanged in some villages for centuries.

Study Questions

After studying Section 2, you should be able to answer the following questions:

- What are the cultural influences and flavor profiles of Central America?
- What are the cultural influences and flavor profiles of the Caribbean?

Central America

[flavor]

Central American Cuisine Flavor Profile

Central American flavors are mild and earthy accompanied by the sweetness of tropical fruit.

Cultural Influences

Central America includes Guatemala, El Salvador, Belize, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Panama. It is located on the land between the southern border of Mexico and the northern border of Colombia, which is also the defining division of South America. Tropical weather, beaches, and volcanic mountain terrain are hallmarks of Central America. The culture differs from Mexico in important ways, including a larger remnant of the original native Mayan populations. These Mayan tribes are distinct from each other and have their own languages and religions to this day.

The influence of the Spanish conquerors of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was profound in these regions as well as Mexico and the Caribbean. Spanish is the official language of every Central American country except Belize, where English is spoken. Political and economic conflicts have long kept Central America off many vacationers' must-see lists, but now this is changing and the newly evolving cuisines of the region reflect that.

Since the main trade has historically been fruit (especially bananas), these countries are nicknamed "The Banana Republics." Bananas, pineapples, cacao (chocolate), organic dyes, and coffee beans have been the main exports. **Cacao** is a tropical tree that grows the seed pods that produce the beans that are ground to make cocoa powder, which is made into chocolate.

Common Ingredients and Dishes

Central American cuisine is an interesting transition point between classic Mexican food and the more varied array of foods in South America. It is influenced by Spanish and Caribbean dishes without as much West African flavor. There are still original remnants of the Mayan diet. Tropical fruits, vegetables, and starches are simple to prepare and provide much of the daily fare. The most common features are rice, beans, coconuts, yuca, and some spices. Although chili peppers are found, they are not as prominent a cuisine element as they are in either Mexico or some South American countries.

Curtido is a typical Central American relish that is made from cabbage, onions, and carrots in vinegar. It originated in El Salvador and spread to its neighbors. It is served as a condiment on various dishes, including *pupusas*, a stuffed corn tortilla.

Gallo pinto, which literally means “painted chicken,” has nothing to do with either paint or chickens. It is a mix of white rice and black beans, cooked separately and then fried together in coconut oil. The blend of colors makes it look similar to the markings on a local variety of hen. *Gallo pinto* is eaten nearly every day, often for breakfast, plus with later meals. It is affordable and offers a complete protein. The addition of coconut oil adds both saturated and monounsaturated fats to the diet, which can have both a positive and negative impact on heart health.

Corn tortillas and masa harina are staples in Central America as they are in Mexico. Tamales of this region may be steamed in banana leaves instead of corn husks. Tamale fillings are made from various combinations of pork, chicken, raisins, carrots, peas, onions, corn kernels, rice, and tomatoes. The mixture is placed inside the corn meal dough, wrapped in leaves or husks, and steamed. Sometimes starchy plantain bananas are used for the dough rather than cornmeal. A corn-flour version, a bit more refined, is popular in Guatemala at Christmas.

[techniques]

Central American Cooking Methods

Central American cooking methods include griddle-frying and steaming.

[nutrition]

Yuca

Yuca, yucca, cassava, manioc, and tapioca are all the same thing! They are names for the starchy root of the cassava plant. A food staple in many tropical parts of the world, these roots are rich in carbohydrates (starch for energy), calcium, phosphorus, and vitamin C. Yuca provides for a balanced, adequate diet in many parts of Central America, South America, and the Caribbean.

Yuca is used boiled or fried, as Americans might use a potato. The flour is used for baking and as a thickener. Little pearls are used to thicken milk and sugar in tapioca pudding. It is an efficient crop, providing a lot of energy output for minimal energy input. Since it has no connection to wheat at all, it can be used by individuals with gluten-sensitive enteropathy (Celiac Disease) or wheat allergy.



ESSENTIAL SKILLS MAKING PUPUSAS

Originally a Salvadoran food, the *pupusa* has migrated next door to Guatemala, other Central American countries, and farther north, all the way to Canada. A *pupusa* looks like a fat homemade tortilla. It is actually a stuffed, pan-fried corn biscuit filled with cheese, beans, pork, or chicken and perhaps even bacon. It's topped with *curtido* (a pickled cabbage relish) and a simple tomato salsa, and eaten handheld. Here is a recipe to make *pupusas*:

- 1 Mix 2 parts masa harina with 1 part water in a mixing bowl. Knead well, adding more water a little at a time if needed to make moist but firm dough.
- 2 Set aside for a few minutes to let it rest.
- 3 Roll the dough into a log and cut into approximately 8 equal portions.
- 4 Roll each portion into a ball and then press an indentation into each ball with your thumb.
- 5 Fill the indentation with filling of choice, then completely enclose it with dough.
- 6 Carefully press each filled dough ball until it is about 5 or 6 inches wide and $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick.
- 7 On an ungreased pan heated at medium-high heat, cook each *pupusa* about 2 minutes on each side, or until lightly browned.

[fast fact]

Did You Know . . . ?

Central America has a combined population of approximately 42 million people.

Caribbean

[flavor]

Flavor Profile

Caribbean flavors are sweet and tropical, while the meat is richly spiced and smoky.

Cultural Influences

Christopher Columbus himself could not have realized all the changes his arrival would have upon the American continent. It all began on the island of Hispaniola, where he first set foot on American soil in 1492. He thought he had landed in the East Indies, but he had actually arrived at an island in the Caribbean. It would be some time before he had any idea that there were two enormous land masses, the North and South American continents—in the nearby region. The island Columbus and his crew landed on is now the home of two nations: Haiti, settled by the French, and The Dominican Republic, settled by Spain.

The Caribbean natives knew their land and their food supply. They knew what to grow and how to use it. The newcomers had to learn to use the native foods. In addition, they brought their own foods and cooking skills. When African slaves arrived, they also brought their foods and skills to the new land. Together, these Carib-Euro-African influences created the varied and vast cuisine of the tiny island nations of the Caribbean. Perhaps nowhere else on earth are there blended more distant and far-flung influences than this region.

As small as the tiny island nations are, each cuisine carries the stamp of its original colonizer. The Dutch-settled islands have quite different flavors and foods than the Spanish-settled islands, for example. Each cuisine has a sensibility from the settlers' homeland that mixed with the African influences in a tropical oceanic setting.

Modern history has influenced cuisine even more. Many Caribbean islands have become resorts and tourist stops for cruise ships. This brings chefs and restaurants to further broaden the palate of the region. However, the largest island, Cuba, has been politically and socially isolated from the rest of the hemisphere for decades. Its cuisine has not had the recent influx of new flavors that the others have experienced. Politics and food go hand-in-hand, especially in the Americas.

Regional Ingredients and Dishes

Caribbean cooking has influenced the entire planet, because barbecue originated in this region. The technique of spicing meat and roasting it over a smoky wood fire may not have first happened here, but this is where it was first noticed and appreciated by the rest of the world. In Jamaica, meat is seasoned with a spicy dry rub called **jerk spice**, which helps preserve the meat, and allows it to marinate in the flavors. Traditional jerk spice was a local mixture of allspice, Scotch bonnet peppers (a very hot relative of the habañero chili), marjoram, cinnamon, and other local herbs (which varied depending upon the chef). Europeans added garlic and rum to the mix, and recently dry mustard and other additions have added a deeper color. When it is roasted, the flavor of the chili and garlic and other spices permeates the entire cut of meat. Even the jerk spice blend is an example of a melting pot—the roasting method came from Africa, the spices grew in the Caribbean, and the garlic was a European contribution.

The Caribbean is a tropical zone. The beauty of tropical islands includes the abundance of fresh fruits and seafood. The fresh seafood of the region includes crustaceans, marlin, and other very meaty, flavorful fish. Coconuts and cashews are native plants, while peanuts were brought from Africa.

African cuisine included many mashed starchy staples. This has brought mashed yams and yuca (cassava) to Caribbean cuisine. Plantains are a type of starchy banana that is also mashed as a savory side dish both in the Caribbean and in tropical parts of the American continents.

Modern Caribbean people put their own stamp on even the most European foods. For example, a simple raw carrot is juiced and then mixed with cream and sugar for a delicious refreshing Jamaican beverage. It's just called carrot juice, but it's sometimes flavored with a little bit of vanilla for a sweet and creamy flavor.

A ham-and-cheese sandwich becomes a *Cubano* by adding roasted pork and pickles and then grilling it like a panini on *pan Cubano*, or Cuban bread, which is a simple white yeast roll with a crease down the center. *Cubanos* are popular throughout Cuba and southern Florida as a quick lunch.

Even the concepts of mirepoix and trinity are seen in Puerto Rican *sofrito*, which is a mix of salt pork, ham, onions, garlic, green peppers, jalapeño, tomato, oregano, and cilantro. **Sofrito** is cooked slowly together and then used as a foundation in soups and stews. It is even used to flavor basic rice or beans.

[techniques]

Caribbean Cooking Methods

Caribbean cooking methods include barbecue, frying, and stewing.

[what's new]

What's Stevia?

Stevia is a food sweetener developed from a subtropical plant also called stevia. The dried plant leaves produce a sweetener that is 300 times as sweet as sugar. Therefore, much less is required, so the caloric contribution is negligible. Individuals can use stevia to sweeten their foods without elevating their blood sugar or insulin requirements or consuming the calories of sugar.

Sweeteners are important for their performance in food, not just for their flavor. Stevia performs well, but while it is legal for sale in the United States as a “naturally sweet herb,” it cannot be marketed as a sweetener because it does not have FDA approval. However, it is legal in foods in Japan and other parts of Asia, Australia, New Zealand, and South American countries. The FDA has not yet completed studies on the safe consumption of stevia as a widely used sweetener, but research and use in other countries has thus far shown positive results.

[fast fact]

Did You Know . . . ?

Steel drums that store 55 gallons of oil or water have been used for decades in the Caribbean. It is believed they are an abandoned remnant of World War II supplies. These drums are cut down and used for barbecue grills. A wood fire is built under a metal mesh laid across the top. The drums are used to roast jerk chicken and jerk pork for purchase along the roadside.

In addition, residents without running water take frequent trips to the local reservoir and fill the drums with fresh water for culinary, hygiene, and household use. The drums can also be used to create a home shower by mounting the drum up high, and installing a spigot and showerhead.

As more and more families install water cisterns and pumps into their residences, the steel drums become surplus. Probably originating on the island of Trinidad, but spreading to Jamaica, the drums are used as musical instruments. The bottom of the drum is cut out and tuned by hammering the shape to sound a certain note when struck with a bamboo stick or the hand. Several drums together can play tunes. Steel drum bands perform at carnivals and elsewhere around the islands.

Summary

In this section, you learned the following:

- Central American cuisine is an interesting transition point between classic Mexican food and the more varied array of foods in South America. It is influenced by Spanish and Caribbean dishes, without as much West African flavor. Tropical fruits, vegetables, and starches are simple to prepare and provide much of the daily fare. The most common features are rice, beans, coconuts, yuca, and some spices. Although chili peppers are used in Central America, they are not as prominent a cuisine element as they are in Mexico or some South American countries. The flavor profile tends to be more mild and earthy, and common cooking methods include griddle-frying and steaming.
- Caribbean cooking has influenced the entire planet, because barbecue originated in this region. The technique of spicing meat and roasting it over a smoky wood fire may not have first and only happened here, but this is where it was first noticed and appreciated by the rest of the world. The beauty of tropical islands includes the abundance of fresh fruits and seafood. The fresh seafood of the region includes crustaceans, marlin, and other very meaty flavorful fish. Caribbean flavors are sweet and tropical, while the meat is richly spiced and smoky. Barbequing, frying, and stewing are all common cooking methods in the Caribbean.

Section 2 Review Questions

- 1 What is the flavor profile of Central American cuisine?
- 2 What are common cooking methods of Central American cuisine?
- 3 What is the flavor profile of Caribbean cuisine?
- 4 What are common cooking methods used in Caribbean cuisine?
- 5 Are there herbs and spices that are commonly used in classic Mexican, Central American, and Caribbean cooking? What is the history behind two of these herbs or spices?
- 6 Compare mirepoix, trinity, and *sofrito*. How do the ingredients and flavor profiles of each reflect the cultures they derive from?
- 7 Which aspect of Caribbean cuisine best fits your thoughts about the region as a whole: the sweet tropical fruit profile or the more spicy, savory side? Explain why you made the choice that you did in a paragraph.

Section 2 Activities

1. Study Skills/Group Activity: Caribbean Time Line

Working in small groups, create a time line highlighting the prominence of the various ethnic and racial groups who have inhabited the Caribbean. Your group will need to start, of course, with the native peoples and then mark the arrival of the various explorers as well as African slaves. Detail what influences each group brought to what we now know as Caribbean cuisine. Compare and contrast your findings with the time lines created by other groups.

2. Independent Activity: Looking Deeper into Jerk

Often, the evolution of a region's cuisine reveals a lot about its history. Research jerk seasoning. Where does the name derive from? Why was the mixture originally created? How and why has it changed over the years? Report your finding in a one-page report.

3. Critical Thinking: Caribbean Meal

Create a three-course meal focusing on Caribbean cuisine. Include an appetizer, entrée, and a dessert. Be sure to include the recipes for each course that you choose.

SECTION 3 SOUTH AMERICA

When you think of South American cuisine, you probably think more of tacos than of wienerschnitzel. However, the cuisine of South America is truly an international mix of concepts that began with native tribal foods to which the influences of Spain, Portugal, Italy, Germany, and Switzerland have been added. Currently, Asian cultures are being incorporated into South America, bringing their signature dishes with them as well.

The entire continent is varied and vast. It begins with tropical and equatorial regions in the north that are hot and humid. Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador and Brazil are green and lush with jungles, rainforests, coastlines, and mountains. Some native cultures are still strong in villages of this region. The cuisine is heavily influenced by both the Spanish and the natives. Tropical fruits are plentiful. Corn, beans, and rice are typical.

The western side of South America is made of the countries of Peru, Chile, and Bolivia. The Andes Mountains define this region, both geographically and culturally. They run the length of the continent and are very high (the highest point is 22,000 feet) and very harsh. Chile is a long, narrow nation between the western Andes to the Pacific coast. Most of the population is near the seaports, with native, Spanish, and northern European settlers. There are even German-speaking sections of Chile and other South American countries from migrations late in the 1800s. Tropical fruit supplements a diet of seafood, rice, and beans that might also include llama meat and **quinoa** (the high-protein dried fruits and seeds of the goosefoot plant used as a food staple and ground into flour).

Bolivia neighbors the eastern border of part of Chile in the Andes. It is a very high-altitude country of the Altiplano, or High Plain, which is a high, dry plateau region. Potatoes, rice, beans, and yuca are the staples of Bolivia. Guinea pig meat is included in the diet as well.

Also neighboring the Andes on the eastern side is Argentina, named for its silver mines that attracted the Spanish conquistadors. Argentina extends to the Atlantic coast. The climate in this region is temperate with vast grasslands similar to the plains of the United States. Cattle ranches and wheat fields thrive here. Argentina is famous for its beef, and it is a major part of the diet.

Also in this region of the continent are Paraguay and Uruguay. Uruguay is perhaps the melting pot of South America, with populations of nearly every nationality and philosophy. Many northern and eastern European communities exist within Uruguay, and they have mixed with the native populations to produce a culture that differs from most South American countries. Both Uruguay and Paraguay have climates ranging from the temperate zones at their southern borders to the subtropical, which increases the variety of foods in the diet.

Hot peppers are used in South American cuisine, including many varieties that are not found elsewhere in the world. The northern regions along the Atlantic coast were settled by the Dutch, the French, and the English along with the Spanish, so there is a unique flavor in each of the small nations of Guyana (English), Suriname (Dutch), and French Guiana. West African slaves were also brought here to work sugar, coffee, and cacao plantations. Peanuts, collards, okra, and black-eyed peas are all African additions. There are many varieties of potatoes throughout South America in colors ranging from purple to red to white, with cooked textures varying from waxy to mealy to crispy. Domesticated animals, introduced by the Spanish, increased the protein options beyond the use of seafood, guinea pig, iguana, wild fowl, and game to include goats, pigs, and beef cattle. No matter how varied the cultures and the cuisines, the common features to all are beans and rice.

Study Questions

After studying Section 3, you should be able to answer the following questions:

- What are the cultural influences and flavor profiles of Brazil?
- What are the cultural influences and flavor profiles of Peru?

Brazil

[flavor]

Flavor Profile

Brazilian cuisine features savory and spicy roasted meats with tropical fruits and Portuguese influences.

Cultural Influences

Brazil is unique among all the nations of South America. It is the largest nation of the continent by far, fifth largest by area in the world. The northern portion is the Amazon River valley and rainforest, still populated by native communities, some of which have never been contacted by outsiders. They live on local plants, insects, and wild game in their own societies with their own languages. The Amazon rainforest extends beyond the river and into the other nations in northeastern South America. The Amazon itself begins in the Peruvian Andes.

The most important aspect of this region is the vegetation itself. This rainforest has been called “the lungs of the planet” because of the enormous oxygen output of so much growth. Layer upon layer of plants and trees grow in this fertile zone.

Brazil was settled by Portugal as a colony, so the language and customs are Portuguese. Even though Portugal is a neighbor of Spain, the two countries have different sensibilities. Portugal introduced the western world to citrus fruits, which were also brought to the New World and grow in Brazil. Portuguese cuisine includes tomato-based fish stews, which influenced the Brazilian *Moqueca de Peixe*, a version with coconut milk added. This same influence is found in Manhattan clam chowder in the United States (without the coconut milk, of course). West African slaves were brought to Brazil for agricultural work, and their influence is also felt throughout the settled areas as well, with the use of okra and other African foods.

Regional Ingredients and Dishes

Portuguese-bred Brazilian cuisine is not based upon corn and tortillas like many of its South American neighbors. Tropical fruits like bananas are a staple of the daily diet. Meat roasted on skewers over fire (churrasco) is a specialty. A bean stew called feijoada (FEY-oo-da) is a hallmark item in both Portugal and Brazil.

[techniques]

Brazilian Cooking Methods

Brazilian cooking methods include churrasco (roasting skewered meat over fire), stewing, and incorporating fresh tropical produce.

Beverages common to Brazil as well as Uruguay are yerba matè tea and guarana. Both are stimulants similar to and stronger than coffee. A typical breakfast in Sao Paulo, the largest city in Brazil, would simply be one of these beverages and a plain white roll. In parts of Brazil, pinto beans (brown beans) will be daily fare; in other areas it will be black beans. Rice and beans are common, and meat is served even in poverty-stricken areas.

[fast fact]

Did You Know . . . ?

The World Health Organization, or WHO, is the public health arm of the United Nations. It was founded in 1948 and is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland. It includes delegates from 193 member nations. The purpose of WHO is to improve the quality of life and longevity of all humans on earth.

Food distribution has become a global enterprise. Fresh and processed foods are flown to the far reaches of the globe within hours. Restaurants that feature a cuisine from a particular region can have authentic and native ingredients delivered daily.

This accessibility demands some global safety precautions. WHO's Department of Food Safety and Zoonoses (zōh-UH-nuh-seez)—diseases that can spread from animals to humans—is currently studying the world food markets to develop global food safety standards and quality controls. These controls can help safeguard the health of consumers of imported food. In addition, they help to improve the flavor, nutrition, and freshness of any food purchased from any country.

WHO produces publications periodically on its findings. As it determines the safety issues and solutions, it influences public policy within the participating nations. WHO publications and positions are available in the food safety section of its Web site at www.who.int.

**ESSENTIAL SKILLS CRACKING COCONUTS**

Coconut and coconut milk are commonly used in Brazilian cuisine. But while a coconut is easy to find, it's not necessarily as easy to access. The shell of a coconut is very hard. However, knowing a few easy tips can make the process of opening a coconut faster, cleaner, and safer.

- 1 Hold the coconut over a large bowl in one hand so that the middle (fattest part) rests in the middle of your palm.
- 2 Whack the coconut with the back of a cleaver—that is, the blunt (nonsharp) side—a few times all around the center of the shell until it cracks open easily into two almost equally sized halves.
- 3 The juice from the coconut will fall into the bowl, and you're ready to go.

[fast fact]**Did You Know . . . ?**

South America is the world's fourth-largest continent (below Asia, Africa, and North America, and above Antarctica, Europe, and Australia). It is divided into twelve countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay, and Venezuela, plus the overseas administration of French Guiana.

Peruvian Cuisine

[flavor]**Flavor Profile**

Peruvian cuisine features mild staples of fish, potatoes, and other local foods with the addition of hot peppers.

Cultural Influences

Peru sits in northwestern South America on the Pacific coast and extends up into the rugged Andes mountains. Lima, the largest city, has a large and growing Asian population in addition to the Spanish and native mixed populations and communities from other parts of the world. The cuisine incorporates these Chinese and Japanese influences, in addition to the Euro-African-American flavors found throughout South America.

Historically, the native populations developed sophisticated methods for coping with their extreme environment that are a marvel even now. The western native tribes that descended from the Incas learned to tame and farm the Andean highlands. They terraced the steep hillsides to hold the rain and level the land for planting. Narrow stripes of terracing extended up the mountain farms. It was an ingenious coping mechanism developed by the highly advanced ancient Incan civilization. They raised corn, rice, beans, and potatoes, and still do.

Regional Ingredients and Dishes

Cuisine in Peru fuses many South American flavors with Chinese concepts and haute cuisine techniques. **Ceviche** is a citrus and fish mixture common to most of the Latin American coastal regions, but it's a signature dish in Peru. In the city of Lima it is called *chebiche*, and key lime juice, rather than heat cooking, is used to denature the protein. Chunks of meaty fish varieties are served with onions, salt, peppers, and potatoes.

Potatoes are many and varied in Peru. They come in more than 3,000 sizes, shapes, and colors! Peruvian purple potatoes are making a showing in the United States recently. Potatoes are served in soups, salads, and meat dishes, and are prepared in any number of ways, including boiled, fried, baked, steamed, mashed, and stuffed. *Papa rellena* is a deep-fried mashed potato dumpling filled with ground beef, raisins, onions, and spicy hot aji peppers. Ancient Peruvian potatoes are the original progenitors of all the familiar varieties used today.

[techniques]

Peruvian Cooking Methods

Peruvian cooking methods include marinating, mashing boiled starches, frying, grilling, and braising.

[nutrition]

Cherimoya

The author Mark Twain made quite sarcastic comments about things he didn't particularly enjoy. And he was seldom lavish in praise for something good. However, Mr. Twain himself said that cherimoya was "the most delicious fruit known to men." High praise, indeed.

Cherimoya is grown around the world, but only in moderately high-altitude, tropical areas. The lower part of Bolivia is one such place, and cherimoya is a popular fruit there. It is a green bulbous fruit with a white flesh and dark seeds that grows on a shrub throughout South America, including the Andes Mountains foothills.

Cherimoya is a good source of vitamin C. At 20 mg/100 grams of fruit, it contains as much vitamin C as potatoes, melons, and berries. It tastes like a cross between a banana, a pineapple, an apple, a berry, and custard. So many great flavors rolled into one!

[fast fact]

Did You Know . . . ?

The potato, which can be found in just about any cuisine today, was first cultivated as long as 10,000 years ago in southern Peru. High in the Andes Mountains, tribes in ancient Peru found that the potato was a very nutritious food that could be easily domesticated and stored for long periods of time. These early crops are the ancestors to nearly 5,000 modern worldwide varieties of potato.

In 1537, Spanish conquistadors exploring Peru brought the potato to Europe. Even though potato plants are easily grown, the food was rejected by most Europeans. The potato is a member of the poisonous nightshade family, and parts of the plant, such as the leaves, can cause illness or death when eaten. Not understanding that the potato itself could be safely eaten, people ignored the nutritious crops for several decades.

Eventually, the potato gained acceptance as a food for the poor. In France and Ireland, the potato became a staple food for the lower classes. In 1708, Scottish and Irish settlers brought the potato back to the Americas and introduced the crop to North America.

The acceptance of the potato in France led to many new preparations and uses for potatoes. French fries, though, weren't actually invented in France, but in Belgium. The fried strips of potato were so popular that during Thomas Jefferson's term as president, they were added to the White House menu.

In the United States, the most recognizable variety of potato is the Idaho potato. The most common variety of Idaho potato, which is grown in the Rocky Mountain valleys of that state, is the Russet Burbank, which is known for its long-bodied tuber and the white, starchy flesh inside. The soil and climate of Idaho combine with a long growing season to produce potatoes that are unique for their size and their flavor.

Summary

In this section, you learned the following:

- Brazil was settled by Portugal as a colony, so the language and customs are Portuguese. Portugal introduced the western world to citrus fruits, which were brought to the New World and grown in Brazil. Portuguese cuisine includes tomato-based fish stews, which influenced the Brazilian *Moqueca de Peixe*, a version with coconut milk added. This same influence is found in Manhattan clam chowder in the United States. West African slaves were brought to Brazil for agricultural work, and their influence is also felt throughout the settled areas with the use of okra and other African foods. A cooking method unique to the region is churrasco. Savory and spicy roasted meats are often featured in the cuisine, with tropical fruits and Portuguese influences.
- Peru sits in northwestern South America on the Pacific coast and extends up into the rugged Andes mountains. The cuisine incorporates Chinese and Japanese influences in addition to the Euro-African-American flavors found throughout South America. Historically, the native populations developed sophisticated methods for coping with their extreme environment that are a marvel even now. They terraced the steep hillsides to hold the rain and level the land for planting. Narrow stripes of terracing extended up the mountain farms. It was an ingenious coping mechanism developed by the highly advanced ancient Incan civilization. They raised corn, rice, beans, and potatoes, and still do. The dishes often rely on the mild staples of fish, potatoes, and other local foods with the addition of hot peppers for spice. Mashing boiled starches is common in Peru, as is marinating and frying.

Section 3 Review Questions

- 1 What European country has had the strongest influence on the cuisine of Brazil?
- 2 What is a common cooking method of Brazil?
- 3 How are starches often prepared in Peruvian cuisine?
- 4 Name two staple ingredients in Peruvian cuisine.
- 5 We know that individual recipes are altered based on local produce or specific cooking methods. Identify two dishes that are served in some form in all three countries of Brazil, Peru, and Mexico. Explain how each country's version of these dishes is similar to the others, and how they differ.
- 6 Which cuisine do you feel best captures the "essence" of South America: the meat-based cuisine of Brazil or the potato-based cuisine of Peru? Explain your rationale.
- 7 What similarities do you see between the cuisines of South America and North America? What are some differences? Explain your answer in two paragraphs.

Section 3 Activities

1. Study Skills/Group Activity: Mapping South America

In small groups, create a map of South America that is highlighted by the ingredients, signature dishes, and cooking methods of each region.

2. Independent Activity: Midwest-Brazil Connection

Compare and contrast the cuisine of the Midwestern United States with the cuisine of Brazil. What are the similarities? What are the differences? Why would there be similarities or differences? Write two paragraphs.

3. Critical Thinking: South American Seafood Dinner

Create a three-course seafood menu, using ingredients and cooking techniques from South America. Be sure to include the full recipe for each course you create.

Apply Your Learning



Compare and Contrast

Compare and contrast the cuisine of the Northeastern United States with the cuisine of Peru. Supplement the information in the text with additional research. Create a two-circle Venn diagram to display your result. Common characteristics will be in the overlap of the two circles.



Language and the Culinary Arts

Create a chart of the various nations and regions of the Western Hemisphere and their languages. What might this tell you about the European settlers of each nation or region? How does this information relate to the cuisine of each nation or region? Total the number of nations or regions that speak each of the following languages: English, Spanish, Portuguese, French, and Dutch.



Some Like It Hot

Hot peppers are used in the various cuisines of the Americas. What causes these foods to taste hot? What effect do they have on the body? Are they safe? Are there risks and/or benefits to eating hot foods? Research and create a chart answering these questions.

Critical Thinking

A Selling Script

Pick one region discussed in this chapter and design a one-page promotional brochure for it on the computer. Discuss the geography, the people, the cultural influences, and the cuisine. Remember, you're promoting this region, so you want to not only know the details of the region, but frame them in a way that will sound appealing to potential visitors.

Exam Prep Questions

- 1 The flavor profile of the cuisine in the Northeastern United States can best be described in general as
 - A. sweet and sour.
 - B. salty and savory.
 - C. deep, rich, and mild.
 - D. sharp, pungent, and bitter.
- 2 The foods of the Midwestern United States can best be described as
 - A. sweet and sour.
 - B. simple and hearty.
 - C. light and nutritious.
 - D. delicate and complex.
- 3 What are the ingredients of the trinity?
 - A. Red peppers, onions, and carrots
 - B. Celery, onions, and green peppers
 - C. Scallions, garlic, and yellow peppers
 - D. Carrots, orange peppers, and scallions
- 4 What country has had a strong influence on Southwestern cuisine?
 - A. France
 - B. Mexico
 - C. Portugal
 - D. Puerto Rico
- 5 The flavors of Pacific Rim/Coast cuisine can best be described as
 - A. spicy.
 - B. hearty.
 - C. simple.
 - D. eclectic.
- 6 *Comales* used in Mexican cooking are
 - A. clay plates.
 - B. ceramic pots.
 - C. cast-iron pans.
 - D. pewter pitchers.

Exam Prep Questions *(continued)*

- 7 *Gallo pinto*, of Central American cuisine, is a staple dish that consists of
- A. black beans and tomatoes.
 - B. white rice and black beans.
 - C. pulled chicken and brown rice.
 - D. white beans and pulled chicken.
- 8 A hallmark of Caribbean cooking is meat that is
- A. served raw.
 - B. stewed and pulled.
 - C. stuffed with cheese.
 - D. richly spiced and smoky.
- 9 The cooking technique of churrasco in Brazil involves
- A. steaming meats over a fire pit.
 - B. roasting skewered meat over fire.
 - C. marinating meat before griddle-frying.
 - D. stewing meat slowly for long periods of time.
- 10 What signature dish of Peru mixes key lime citrus juice with raw fish?
- A. Ceviche
 - B. Sashimi
 - C. Feijoada
 - D. *Papa rellena*