

FOUNDATIONS

OF RESTAURANT MANAGEMENT & CULINARY ARTS

SECOND EDITION



Global Cuisine 2: Europe, the Mediterranean, the Middle East, and Asia

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SECTION 1 EUROPE

With 50 countries and more than 730 million residents, the continent of Europe spans an enormous range of cultures and cuisines. Abundant resources exist for those who want to learn more about these countries and their culinary traditions. However, for reasons of space, only a few can be included here. France, Italy, and Spain have been selected to demonstrate how both physical geography and cultural influences can affect the development of a country's cuisines.

Study Questions

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

- What are the cultural influences and flavor profiles of France?
- What are the cultural influences and flavor profiles of Italy?
- What are the cultural influences and flavor profiles of Spain?

France

Cultural Influences

France's culture and cuisine have been shaped by the numerous invaders, peaceful and otherwise, who have passed through over the centuries. The Gauls introduced farming around 1500 BCE and the Romans emphasized fishing and hunting upon their arrival nearly 1500 years later. The Moors invaded in 718 AD, bringing a number of new ingredients (galangal, caraway, and cinnamon, for instance) and techniques to the region.

[flavor]

Flavor Profile

Fresh and refined dishes are typical of French cuisine. Food items taste of themselves without overwhelming or complex spices. This preference is shown by the use of reduction, a process by which stocks and sauces are simmered or boiled to remove excess water and concentrate flavors.

But perhaps the event that most profoundly affected the development of French cuisine was the 1533 AD marriage of Henri II to the Italian Catherine de'Medici. As a member of Florence's powerful ruling family, Catherine was used to the finer things in life, which included cuisine. She was so disappointed in the simple, rustic food popular in France at that time that she brought in cooks from Italy. In fact, she and her employees are credited with introducing roux and forks to France, as well as refining sauces and increasing the use of vegetables.

The Industrial Revolution of the nineteenth century began to break down regional barriers throughout France as improvements in transportation allowed products to be shipped nationwide. These changes, along with advances in technology, gave chefs new opportunities for demonstrating their skills and creativity. The resulting development of **haute cuisine**, characterized by highly refined dishes and the creation of a strictly disciplined brigade system (a hierarchy of specialized roles in the kitchen), soon spread throughout the globe. "French" soon became synonymous with both "fine dining" and "fancy." Most French people, however, maintained their traditional, regional eating habits.

Haute cuisine eventually became "**cuisine classique**" and later "**nouvelle cuisine**" (noo-vehl kwee-ZEEN), as chefs in the late twentieth century embraced lighter dishes and simpler flavors—in a sense, returning to their roots. Contemporary French cuisine blends new and old as well as regional and global, and France continues to be esteemed as a culinary capital.

Regional Ingredients and Dishes

Each of France's regions has a unique gastronomic identity, characterized largely by its geography. Brittany, in Northwest France, is renowned for its seafood (especially oysters) and its buckwheat crêpes (KREIPS). Nearby Normandy, a dairy stronghold, is famous for its cheeses, particularly *Pont l'Évêque* and Camembert, and its apples. Northeast France, with its bitterly cold winters, specializes in hearty, cold-weather dishes, especially the famous choucroute (shoo-KROOT), which is sauerkraut served with a variety of meats, mostly pork. In fact, pork fat appears prominently in many regional dishes, and pork charcuterie (sausages, pâtés, and terrines) is extremely popular. An Alsatian specialty is **foie gras** (FWA gra), the engorged liver of a specially fattened goose or duck, which is seared or poached.

Lyon, the country's culinary center, is in southeast France; famous restaurants like Fernand Point's La Pyramide and Paul Bocuse's Restaurant Paul Bocuse are located nearby. This region is Burgundy, home to Dijon mustard, *boeuf bourguignonne* (BEUF boor-gee-NYON), and the famous **poulet de Bresse**, a blue-legged chicken of renowned tenderness and flavor. Provence is a Mediterranean region, offering such food items as ratatouille, a summer vegetable dish, and bouillabaisse, a hearty fish soup made with saffron. Southwest France is renowned for **cassoulet** (ka-soo-LAY), a rich dish of beans and meat. Different towns have different versions, which include such ingredients as sausages and preserved goose. Foie gras is also found here, as are **duck confit** (kohn-FEE) (salted pieces of duck, poached in duck fat), black truffles (the edible body of a group of fungi), and **jambon de Bayonne**, a mild local ham.

[techniques]

French Cooking Methods

French cooking methods include braising, sautéing, *sous-viding*, deglazing, reducing, and confiting.

Moreover, France is home to the mother sauces: *espagnole*, velouté, béchamel, hollandaise, and tomato. Other characteristically French foods include soufflés, which are light egg dishes puffed by hot air; frogs' legs; and beurre blanc, a light and fragile butter sauce. A classic preparation is pot au feu, a one-pot dish made of meat (usually beef), poultry (usually chicken), and vegetables cooked in a rich broth. The liquid is strained, made into a sparklingly clear consommé, and served as a first course, with the meat and vegetables presented as a second course.

Confit

The technique of confiting has been used since ancient times to preserve meat, particularly poultry, in order to ensure food supplies for winter. Typically, the preparer cuts up the meat, salts it heavily, and poaches it, often in its own fat, until tender and fully cooked. The preparer preserves the meat in the cooking fat until it is eaten. The fat protects the meat from oxygen so that it does not spoil, but the preparer should store the item in a cool place, ideally under refrigeration. To serve, remove the meat from the fat and wipe it clean. Since the meat is fully cooked, diners can eat it cold; for instance, shredded atop a salad. Alternately, pan-sear or broil the meat, particularly to crisp the skin of confited poultry.

Although cooked and stored in fat, confited meats themselves tend to be quite lean. Even if fatty meat is confited, the fat melts away during the poaching process. Wipe away fat clinging to the surface before eating. Although it appears to be unhealthy, confited meat is actually quite nutritious and provides a vital source of protein during long, cold winters.

Contemporary chefs often confit nontraditional items, including vegetables and fruits. Olive oil is often used as the cooking and storing fat, and the items are not always salted. Unlike confited meat, confited produce tends to retain quite a bit of fat. Fruits and vegetables are very absorbent and soak up a great deal of fat. However, these items are generally eaten in very small amounts and therefore contribute a relatively small addition of fat to the total intake.

Italy

Cultural Influences

In 415 BCE, Greek invaders introduced olives, honey, and nuts to southern Italy, where they remain prominent ingredients today. In fact, olive oil is one of the two major cooking fats of Italy; the other is butter, more commonly found in northern Italy. Subsequently, Arab occupiers brought food like citrus, saffron, pasta, and couscous to Italy. Sicily, an island near the toe of the country's "boot," is especially known today for its use of these items, although each is used throughout Italy.

Not all those who brought new ingredients to the region invaded it. In fact, soldiers of the Roman Empire brought many new food techniques and ideas back to Italy from other conquered regions. The European Crusaders crossed and recrossed the area, bringing buckwheat and lemons back from what is today the Middle East. The Spanish brought rice, which they had obtained from their own Arab colonizers. And Venice was a trading center for centuries; coffee, sugar, and many spices first entered Italy through Venetian ports. The

“**Columbian Exchange**,” named for explorer Christopher Columbus, brought many new foods to Europe, such as tomatoes, peppers, potatoes, corn, and beans, all of which rapidly found homes in Italian cuisine. No other parts of Europe welcomed this exchange like Italy. Although for centuries most Europeans refused to eat tomatoes, fearing that they were poisonous, tomatoes were grown and eaten in Italy as early as 1544 AD.

[flavor]

Flavor Profile

Traditionally, Italian food has been characterized as “*la cucina povera*” (the cuisine of poverty). Simple, filling, and delicious dishes are made by using all ingredients as carefully as possible. Olive oil, semolina, and the extravagant use of vegetables define this cuisine.

[fast fact]

Did You Know . . . ?

Europeans erroneously thought that tomatoes were poisonous because the acid in the tomatoes reacted to the pewter used for service or tableware. The acid could cause the lead to leech out, resulting in lead poisoning.

Regional Ingredients and Dishes

Modern Italy did not become a unified country until 1861, so regional culinary traditions generally persist today. Northern Italy, close to Alpine Europe, is known for its abundant use of meat, especially beef, and dairy products such as milk, cheeses, and butter. Hearty starches, like polenta, potato gnocchi, and risotto are common, particularly during cold weather. *Risotto alla Milanese* is a northern rice dish made with saffron and often served with osso buco, a braised veal shank. Other northern dishes include minestrone alla Genovese, a thick vegetable soup finished with pesto, a hallmark of Genoa’s cuisine; and ***bollito misto*** (boh-LEE-toh MEES-toh). It is a Piedmontese stew including a variety of meat with vegetables subsequently cooked in the resulting broth (the words mean “mixed boil”). Another northern dish is ***bagna cauda*** (BAHN-yah KOW-dah), an olive oil-based dipping sauce flavored with anchovy and garlic and served warm with raw vegetables, especially cardoons, a member of the artichoke family.

The cuisine of central Italy is characterized by simple, fresh flavors with an emphasis on seasonality. Beef, goat, and lamb are often grilled, spit-roasted, or stewed. **Bistecca alla Fiorentina**, an enormous grilled steak (similar to a T-bone), at least two inches thick, is a Tuscan specialty. **Saltimbocca** (sahl-tihm-BOH-kuh) **alla Romana**, a popular Roman dish, is made of pounded scallops of veal sautéed with fresh sage and prosciutto. Fresh seafood is also important due to the vast coastlines. *Brodetto* may be the oldest Mediterranean fish soup, predating the French bouillabaisse (BOOL-yuh-BAYZ). The region is also known for its vegetables, fruits, and legumes, particularly white beans and tomatoes.

Southern Italy with its mountainous and arid climate is perfect for goats and sheep, used both to make cheeses and as foods in their own rights. The famous *mozzarella di bufala*, made of the milk of water buffaloes, comes from here. Fresh vegetables and seafood are also important, as is the use of local olives and olive oil. A famous dish is **vitello tonnato** (vee-TEHL-loh tohn-NAH-toh), a Neapolitan dish of cold veal with tuna sauce. Another Naples dish is *spaghetti alla vongole*, or with clams. Macaroni in tomato sauce originated in nearby Campania. Naples was also the birthplace of pizza. The southern islands of Sicily and Sardinia have similar culinary traditions, although they incorporate more sweet flavors into their savory dishes. **Pasta con le sarde**, a dish of pasta in a sardine sauce with raisins and fennel and topped with fresh sardines, is a good example of this tradition of *agrodolce* (sour-sweet), a remnant of Arabian influence.

Although pasta is widely used throughout Italy, dried pasta is found in the south, made with semolina flour and water. Fresh pasta made with eggs and a softer wheat flour is common in the north. Emilia-Romagna, a northern province, is renowned for its famous exported foods like *prosciutto* (proh-SHOO-toh) *di Parma* (a type of cured ham), *aceto balsamico tradizionale* (artisanal balsamic vinegar), and Parmigiano-Reggiano (the famed “Parmesan cheese”). Truffles are also found in Italy, with white truffles in northern Piemonte and black truffles in southern Umbria.

[techniques]

Italian Cooking Methods

Italian cooking methods include braising, boiling, roasting (either on a spit or in a wood-burning oven), grilling, and deep-frying.

[on the job]

Food Policy Analysts

Food policy analysts (FPAs) typically work for research institutes; nonprofit organizations; or state, local, or even international governments. Food policy analysts are in many ways like other types of policy analysts. They review proposed policies or legislation and explain what would happen if the policies or legislation were enacted. They organize, review, research, and revise these rules, making sure that newly proposed ideas are legal and that the new ideas promote the organization's mission and goals. If the new proposals do not meet these criteria, policy analysts offer alternative proposals for consideration.

What's special about food policy analysts is that they focus on the importance of food to the world. They may study the effects of new import-export laws on agriculture, or they may study the effects of proposed anti-hunger plans in a particular region. Some FPAs focus on security issues, such as global food shortages and possible political instability. Generally speaking, FPAs must know any national and international laws and policies that can affect food.

Food policy analysts usually have bachelor's degrees, often in political science, public policy, or economics. Many have master's or doctoral degrees. Some experience in policy analysis, even schoolwork, is generally required. Career paths may include heading a major nonprofit organization or appointment to a political position. In fact, it has even been suggested that a "Secretary of Food" be added to the U.S. Cabinet, which advises the president on a variety of issues.

[fast fact]

Did You Know . . . ?

Pizza, as we know it today, originated in Naples, Italy, sometime around the sixteenth century. It was considered street food for people of lesser means and was flavored with garlic, oil, anchovies, and mozzarella cheese.

Spain

Cultural Influences

Spain is bordered on several sides by water, allowing easy trade with both nearby neighbors and distant lands. Spain has historically been a strong naval power, and its government sponsored many expeditions in search of gold, spices, and new lands to conquer.

However, Spain's history is also one of occupation. Spain was at one time a Roman province; occupied by Visigoths, a Germanic people; and controlled by Arabs. An Arabian influence on Spanish cuisines persists today. The Arabs introduced citrus fruits (including the famous Valencian oranges), almonds, sugarcane, rice, saffron, and a wide variety of vegetables and spices. More important, perhaps, was the "medieval green revolution" brought about by the introduction of irrigation methods. During the same period, Sephardic Jews were building a complex cuisine of their own in Spain, which bore certain similarities to the sweet-and-sour dishes introduced by the Arabs.

[Flavor]

Flavor Profile

Spanish favors are earthy and complex, with unusual flavor combinations and contributions from a number of cultures.

Regional Ingredients and Dishes

Spain's geography covers a wide variety of terrains, so naturally its regional cuisines vary considerably. One constant is the *cocido*, a boiled one-pot meal incorporating meat, legumes (usually beans), and green vegetables. Every region (and many a town) has its own version of this dish, which likely originated in Roman times.

The northern regions are notable for seafood cookery, often including cod or salt cod. Elvers, which are baby eels, are also popular. These and other seafood, including octopus and spider crabs, are often cooked in a bath of olive oil. Galicia, in the northwest, has a Celtic-influenced cuisine unknown in the rest of Spain, while Basque cuisine reflects its proximity to the Pyrenees Mountains and to France. A famous Austrian dish is *fabada*, a thick soup of fava beans, pig trotters, pork fat, and blood. Toward the east, Catalan cooking is an entire cuisine unto

itself; many dishes are based on game or seafood. A popular sauce is *picada*, made with toasted and ground nuts, toasted bread, garlic, and fresh herbs.

The northern interior is famous for agriculture. *Pimientos del piquillo*, sweet red peppers, are grown here; they are fire-roasted and then peeled and jarred. Wheat and a wide variety of fruits and vegetables also thrive here, including the beans of Ávila. Aragon is noted for dishes cooked *al chilindrón*, or with a sauce of tomatoes, onion, and peppers. *Castilla-Leon* is known for hearty, plain food, like roast suckling pig, tortillas (thick egg dishes, similar to the Italian frittata), and blood sausages. Farther south, the central plains are sheep-producing lands known for *manchego* cheese. Saffron and garlic are also cultivated here. In the western part of this region, Extremadura is home to *jamón Ibérico*, a famous Spanish cured ham, and *pimentón de la Vera*; both products are legally protected from imitation.

The southeast coast is famous for citrus, saffron, and rice production. **Paella** (pi-AY-yuh), which originated in Valencia but now has countless varieties, is based on rice, olive oil, and saffron cooked in one pot over an open flame. Other ingredients may include chicken, rabbit, snails, seafood, green beans, peas, or sausage among others. Southern Spain also produces cured hams, and, since it is coastal, it's known for seafood fried in olive oil. Gazpacho (gahz-PAH-choh) originated here long before the Columbian Exchange brought tomatoes or peppers; early versions included garlic, almonds, and even white grapes. Tortillas are also popular here, as are tapas, which are small, usually savory snacks associated with bar food. In fact, the original "tapa" was a slice of bread laid over one's wine glass to prevent insects from entering it.

[fast fact]

Did You Know . . . ?

Saffron is the world's most expensive spice (by weight). A pound of saffron requires 50,000 to 75,000 saffron crocus flowers.

[techniques]

Spanish Cooking Methods

Spanish cooking methods include braising, baking, boiling, and—of course—making paella.



ESSENTIAL SKILLS ESCABECHE

This is a classic preparation of fried fish that dates back to at least the fourteenth century. *Escabeche* (es-keh-BEHSH) has been found in many countries, including Spain, France, Algeria, and the Philippines. To prepare, cool and cover the fish with a vinegar-based marinade, which is often spicy.

- 1 Brine the chosen fish fillets in saltwater for 30 minutes.
- 2 Toast aromatics (garlic, bay leaf, and so forth) in hot olive oil.
- 3 Sear the brined fish on each side and then set aside to cool.
- 4 Sweat onions in the hot oil and then add vinegar, broth, and other seasonings.
- 5 Reduce the liquid and strain.
- 6 Pour the hot marinade over the fish, cool, and store in the refrigerator.
- 7 Marinate for 24 hours before eating.

Summary

In this section, you learned the following:

- France's culture and cuisine have been shaped by the numerous invaders, peaceful and otherwise, who have passed through over the centuries. Perhaps the event that most profoundly affected the development of French cuisine was the 1533 AD marriage of Henri II to the Italian Catherine de'Medici. She was so disappointed in the simple, rustic food popular in France at that time that she brought in cooks from Italy. The Industrial Revolution of the nineteenth century began to break down regional barriers throughout France as improvements in transportation allowed products to be shipped nationwide. These changes, along with advances in technology, gave chefs new opportunities for demonstrating their skills and creativity. The result was the development of haute cuisine, characterized by highly refined dishes. The flavor profile of French cuisine consists of fresh and refined food items that taste of themselves without overwhelming or complex spices. Reduction, deglazing, and confiting are signature French cooking methods.
- In 415 BCE, Greek invaders introduced olives, honey, and nuts to southern Italy, where they remain prominent ingredients today. In fact, olive oil is one of the two major cooking fats of Italy; the other is butter, more commonly found in northern Italy. Not all those who brought new ingredients to the region invaded it. In fact, the Roman Empire, which fanned out from contemporary Italy, introduced new foods, techniques, and ideas from the regions its soldiers had conquered. Traditionally, Italian food has been characterized as "*la cucina povera*" (the cuisine of poverty), which is simple, filling, and delicious dishes made by using all ingredients as carefully as possible. Olive oil, semolina, and the extravagant use of vegetables define this cuisine. Braising, roasting, and grilling are common cooking methods in Italy.
- Spain is bordered on several sides by water, allowing easy trade with both nearby neighbors and distant lands. The Columbian Exchange, named for explorer Christopher Columbus, brought many new food items to Spain, such as tomatoes, peppers, and beans. However, Spain's history is also one of occupation. Spain was at one time a Roman province occupied by a Germanic people, the Visigoths, and also controlled by Arabs. Arabian influence on Spanish cuisines persists today. The flavor profile is earthy and complex, with unusual flavor combinations. Braising, baking, and paella are common cooking methods in Spain.

Section 1 Review Questions

- 1 List three signature cooking methods in French cuisine.
- 2 Explain one way in which French and Italian cuisines differ.
- 3 What is the flavor profile of Spanish cuisine?
- 4 What is one cooking method that is particularly Spanish?
- 5 Do you think French cuisine's association with being highly refined is deserved? In what ways does it make sense? In what ways has it become a stereotype?
- 6 Explain the impact of the "Columbian Exchange" on European cuisine, most notably that of France, Spain, and Italy.

Section 1 Activities

1. Study Skills/Group Activity: Unexplored Europe!

Working with two or three other students, select a European country that is not covered in this chapter. Prepare a group presentation, including a handout, on this country's cuisine.

2. Activity: Researching Methods

Select one of the following cooking methods: reduction, deglazing, paella, or confit. Then, research where the method originated, why it first was used, and how the process works today. Finally, explain a modern dish in which this cooking method is used. Your findings should be summarized in a one-page report.

3. Critical Thinking: The Ethics of *Sous-Viding*

Research the history of *sous-viding*. How did it come about? What are the pros and cons of cooking in this manner? Write a two-page report describing your research.

SECTION 2 THE MEDITERRANEAN

It can be difficult to determine which countries actually belong in this region. France, Italy, and Spain all border the Mediterranean Sea, and all have regions with “typical” Mediterranean foodways. Moreover, the Mediterranean Sea is long enough that countries from Morocco to Syria can be legitimately included in this category. However, this text focuses on three countries—Morocco, Greece, and Tunisia—that reflect traditional Mediterranean cuisines.

Study Questions

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

- What are the cultural influences and flavor profiles of Morocco?
- What are the cultural influences and flavor profiles of Greece?
- What are the cultural influences and flavor profiles of Tunisia?

Morocco

Cultural Influences

The countries of North Africa, known collectively as the **Maghreb**, share a fairly similar set of cultural influences. Morocco, has been a center for trade since the twelfth century, when the Phoenicians established trading posts on the coast, through which sausage was introduced to the region. The Carthaginians followed suit a few centuries later, bringing with them wheat and semolina. The native Berbers developed couscous from semolina, creating what would become their staple starch. But the Arabs, who occupied Morocco during the seventh century, had perhaps the most pronounced and long-lasting effect on Moroccan cuisine. They introduced saffron, ginger, cumin, and cinnamon, as well as the principle of combining sweet and sour tastes. All of this radically transformed the somewhat bland cuisine of the area and established a distinctive culinary tradition.

Other colonizers followed. Around the fourteenth century, the Ottoman Empire brought new developments in pastries and sweets, apparent today in the prominent use of sugar and honey in very sweet dessert items. **Pastilla** (pah-STEE-yuh) is a delicacy made by layering sheets of delicate pastry, known as *warqa*, with almonds and pastry cream. The Spanish expulsion of Moors and Jews in 1492 caused many to flee to nearby Morocco and Tunisia, where they and their foodways were welcomed. These newcomers brought with them agricultural techniques, such as irrigation, that were perfectly suited to the North African climate. Soon after, the Columbian Exchange introduced new products like tomatoes and peppers. Much later, Morocco was occupied by the British, French, and Spanish in turn. In 1912, it became a French protectorate, but became independent in 1956. These European influences brought new ingredients to Morocco, such as pasta and tea. When combined with mint, tea became an important part of the Moroccan culture.

[flavor]

Flavor Profile

Sweet, sour, and spicy, the complex Moroccan cuisine has been influenced by a variety of occupiers and trading partners for thousands of years. Rich, full-flavored stews, steamed dishes, and roasts dominate the cuisine.

Regional Ingredients and Dishes

Two spice mixtures are particularly representative of Moroccan cuisine: *la kama* and *ras-el-hanout*. **La kama** is a blend of black pepper, turmeric, ginger, cumin, and nutmeg used to season soups and stews. *Ras-el-hanout* is used throughout the Maghreb; the exact ingredients frequently vary, but some common additions include rose petals, black peppercorns, cardamom, clove, and fennel. Use this mixture to flavor rice, stews, and *tagines*.

Tagines are also commonly eaten in Morocco. They are meat stews cooked for a long time, usually based on lamb, fish, game, or chicken, and often served with preserved lemon, another popular flavor in Morocco. Chefs of this cuisine often combine sweet and savory ingredients in the same dish. The word “*tagine*” also refers to the earthenware or metal cooking vessel used to make these stews. It has two parts: a shallow basin and a tall, conical lid, which allows for the dish to self-baste as steam is trapped and then condenses to form water. At major festivals, several *tagines* may be served, one after the other. Traditionally, the final *tagine* is made of lamb, honey, and onions.

Couscous (KOOS-koos) is the national dish of Morocco. Chefs steam the tiny grains in a **couscoussière**, a specialized earthenware or metal vessel. They place raw couscous in a perforated pot, which they then place atop another pot containing simmering water, stock, or stew. Couscous is usually served with a spicy stew; diners form the grains into balls and eat them by hand. Chicken, raisins, and chickpeas are popular stew ingredients.

Several other dishes are also popular for festivals. **B'stilla** (similar to the *pastilla* mentioned previously) is a pie of minced stewed pigeon flavored with *ras-el-hanout* that is layered with *warqa*, a thin sheet of pastry resembling phyllo, as well as with sugar and crushed almonds. Some pies can have up to fifty layers. **Choua** and **meshoui** are also common. The first is a steamed forequarter of lamb, flavored with cumin, while the latter is a whole roasted lamb. **Harira**, on the other hand, is an everyday dish. It is a thick stew of chickpeas, rice, meat (usually lamb), and vegetables, eaten with salad or bread.



ESSENTIAL SKILLS COUSCOUS

Morocco's national dish, couscous, is also found throughout the countries of Northern Africa. Instead of a *couscoussière*, put a small-holed metal colander (or a regular metal colander lined with cheesecloth) into a stockpot, using aluminum foil as a lid.

- 1 Add couscous to cold water and let it swell for 10 minutes.
- 2 Place the couscous in the colander over a stockpot half filled with water.
- 3 Steam the couscous for 10 minutes, and then remove the colander and empty the water.
- 4 Sauté onions and aromatics in the stockpot, and then add chunks of meat and a large amount of water.
- 5 Return the couscous-filled colander to the top of the stockpot, cover it with foil, and simmer 30 minutes.
- 6 Add a disjointed chicken to the stockpot and simmer another 30 minutes.
- 7 Add vegetables to the stockpot and simmer until tender.
- 8 Place the couscous in the center of a serving platter, and then push it outward, creating a cavity in the center.
- 9 Place the meat and vegetables into the center of the platter and serve.

[techniques]

Moroccan Cooking Methods

Moroccan cooking methods focus on *tagine*, *couscoussière*, steaming, and spit-roasting.

Greece

Cultural Influences

In ancient times, the Greeks were extremely interested in cuisine. In fact, some scholars believe that **Archestratos**, writing in 330 BCE, produced one of the world's first cookbooks. Good chefs were prized, and scholarly treatises were written on the art and science of cookery. The ancient Greeks were also explorers. By 2000 BCE, they had established trade relationships with the Minoans in Crete and later rivaled the Phoenicians for dominance in the area. Subsequently, Roman occupiers (knowing a good thing when they saw it) employed Greek chefs in their homes in both occupied Greece and imperial Rome. During these periods of trading and occupation, culinary goods and ideas were exchanged between Greece and its neighbors/captors.

[flavor]

Flavor Profile

The flavors of Greece are fresh, clean, and simple. Olive oil, lemon, and mountain herbs are characteristic flavoring agents.

The Ottoman Empire took over the region in the fifteenth century. The Ottomans, who had been strongly influenced by Persian cooking techniques, brought spicy, fruity elements to the region. Their rule lasted nearly four centuries (independence came in 1829), long enough that even today Greek and Turkish cuisines, both the dishes and the names, are very similar. During this period, the Columbian Exchange brought what would become important products, like tomatoes and peppers, to Greece.

Greece, a mountainous country, is surrounded on most sides by the Mediterranean and Aegean Seas; these factors have strongly affected its culinary culture. On the one hand, the presence of the mountains prevented the filtration of European influences into the country. On the other hand, trading vessels crossing the Mediterranean could readily stop in Greek territory to exchange both ideas and ingredients.

Regional Ingredients and Dishes

Greece's abundant olive trees, which thrive in the dry, rocky terrain, have perhaps made the most basic contribution to its cuisine and to its culture. Olives have been cultivated in Greece for thousands of years and are considered essential to the country's well-being. Olive oil is the universal fat, and cured olives, especially kalamata and *Naphlion* olives, are both widely eaten and exported.

In this region, food preparers commonly use herbs since so many flourish in the Mediterranean climate. Oregano, dill, and thyme are especially popular. Garlic is also prevalent, and food preparers use milder spices, like cinnamon and cloves, in meat dishes in northern Greece. People in this region, commonly gather *horta*, or wild greens, and eat them raw or lightly steamed.

One dish that has become synonymous with Greece is **moussaka** (MOO-sah-kah), a casserole of lamb and eggplant that is often covered with a layer of béchamel sauce or beaten egg before baking. Lamb and eggplant are both common ingredients in Greece. The mountainous regions are excellent for goat and sheep cultivation, and eggplant and other vegetables thrive in the Mediterranean heat. Food preparers often stuff vegetables with other vegetables or lamb. Seafood is also very important due to the vast coastline; octopus, squid, and a variety of finfish are popular with diners. Products like feta, yogurt, and other popular protein sources are derived from goats' milk and sheep's milk.

Olive oil and lemon juice are the two most important flavoring agents used in Greek cuisine. Chefs almost always flavor dips and sauces with one or both, and olive oil and lemon juice are crucial elements in livening up what could otherwise be a bland cuisine. Popular dips include hummus and *taramasalata*. **Hummus** consists of puréed chickpeas seasoned with lemon juice, olive oil, and sesame-seed paste. *Taramasalata's* main ingredient is smoked cod roe, which is also puréed and combined with lemon juice, bread, and olive oil. These dips are often part of **mezze** (meh-ZAY), Greece's version of hors d'oeuvres or antipasto. The two primary sauces are **skorthalia** and **avgolemono**

(ahv-goh-LEH-moh-noh). The first is a combination of olive oil, garlic, and bread that accompanies fried fish or cooked vegetables; The latter is a lemony egg sauce that is often used to finish seafood soups and stews.

To make **baklava** (BAHK-lah-vah), a highly honey-sweetened pastry, layer thin sheets of phyllo dough with chopped nuts, bake in large sheets, and cut into diamonds. This phyllo dough, which is used in savory preparations as well, is identical to Morocco's *warqa* and Tunisia's *malsoufa*. This is not the only bread-like product, though. Owing to centuries of wheat cultivation, an enormous variety of flatbreads is present not only in Greece, but throughout the Mediterranean and Middle East. Pita is the most popular in Greece. Open the circular bread to form a pocket for stuffing or leave it intact to dip into other food items, especially while enjoying *mezze*.

[techniques]

Greek Cooking Methods

Greek cooking methods include boiling, simmering, spit-roasting, and baking.

[trends]

Gastro-Tourism

Gastro-tourists, or “gastronauts,” travel for the sole purpose of experiencing the food and drink of a particular area. People have traveled to taste different food items for centuries, but it is becoming increasingly popular today, thanks in part to television channels like the Food Network and the Travel Channel, which highlight gastro-tourism.

The National Restaurant Association and the Travel Industry Association of America did a joint survey that found that 25 percent of leisure travelers base their travel plans on food. Some travel agencies also specialize in gastro-tourism, and a number of countries are now establishing official programs to promote regional specialties and unusual ingredients.

Cooking schools are also getting in on the act. Tourists can now attend culinary programs in a wide variety of countries that work with the International Culinary Tourism Association. Alternatively, travelers can simply pick a country and cuisine that appeals to them and then experience it by exploring the markets, shops, and restaurants there. The options are limitless.

[fast fact]

Did You Know . . . ?

Olive oil has uses that go way beyond the culinary. Olive oil is also used in cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, and soaps. It was even used as a fuel in traditional oil lamps.

Tunisia

Cultural Influences

The Tunisian experience of occupation and colonization is very similar to the Moroccan experience up until modern times. The two share a common colonial heritage with the rest of the Maghreb; a series of traders, refugees, and occupiers arrived on their shores, bringing with them their own food, techniques, and recipes. Even the two countries' final colonial experience was similar: Tunisia was placed under French government in 1881, some 30 years before Morocco, but both gained independence in 1956.

Regional Ingredients and Dishes

Clear connections can be made between French and Tunisian food. A popular salad, made of roasted peppers and tomatoes and garnished with tuna and hard-boiled egg, is known as **salade composé** (suh-LAHD com-poh-ZAY), a French name. Another common dish is **chakchouka** (SHAK-shoo-ka), a ratatouille (a vegetable dish of southern France) made with brown sugar and topped with beaten egg. Finally, *brik à l'oeuf*, tuna and hard-boiled egg wrapped in *malsouga* and baked or fried, is another French name for a popular appetizer.

Spicy condiments are a major component of Tunisian cuisine. Food preparers often serve grilled steaks with a spicy condiment. Tunisians enjoy *ras-el-hanout* here as in the rest of the Maghreb, but more important is **harissa** (hah-REE-suh), a highly spiced paste of chilis, coriander, garlic, and olive oil guaranteed to enliven any meal. A similar preparation is **tabil** (TAY-bul), which combines chilis, coriander, caraway, and garlic and is often used to flavor beef or veal.

Chermoula is a mixture of pureéd onion and garlic mixed with pungent spices like chili and saffron. Ginger and pickled lemon are also tremendously popular flavors here.

Flavor Profile

Tunisia cuisine features spicy and pungent flavors like chili and ginger. Vegetables and seafood are important elements of this cuisine.

Many ingredients in the Tunisian pantry are similar to those elsewhere in the Maghreb: lamb, spicy *merguez* sausage, flatbreads, a wide variety of vegetables, and especially couscous. The strong regional preference for sweet foods is found here as well, expressed as a passion for honey and fruits, especially dates. But Tunisia parts ways with its companions in other aspects.

Northwest Tunisia is known for its wild boar and edible fungi, both of which are popular ingredients. Fishermen catch spiny lobsters off the island of Galita. Cooking methods differ, too. Tunisian cooks prepare couscous by steaming it in a covered pot until it becomes tender and moist, while Moroccans use a *couscoussière* to ensure that the couscous will be fluffy and light. To make what is called a *tagine* in Tunisia, first make a stew (usually of veal or lamb, plus onion and sweet spices), then thicken it with a starchy food like chickpeas or potatoes, add vegetables and herbs for still more flavor, and finally add egg and cheese to the mix. Bake the dish until it is set, and then turn it onto a platter to be cut into squares. *Tagine* is a common dish in both Tunisia and Morocco.

Tomatoes are particularly prominent in the Tunisian diet, as are eggs, olives, and pastas. Seafood (not just tuna and spiny lobster) is abundant. Grilling with lemon juice or deep-frying are popular cooking techniques. *Poisson* (pwah-SOHN) *complet* is a specialty: grill, sauté, or deep-fry the desired fish and then serve with potato chips and a mixture called *tastira*. This is made of grilled peppers, onion, garlic, and tomato, all chopped finely and topped with a poached egg.

[techniques]

Tunisian Cooking Methods

Tunisian cooking methods include steaming, simmering, grilling, roasting, and—of course—using a *tagine*.

[nutrition]

Mediterranean Diet

During the 1990s, Dr. Walter Willett of Harvard University presented research results indicating that people living in the Mediterranean area, although consuming relatively high amounts of certain fats, actually had much less cardiovascular disease than people consuming the typical American diet with roughly the same amounts of different fats. The Mediterranean diet, as it came to be known, emphasizes the abundant consumption of fruits, vegetables, and grains, along with olive oil. “Mediterranean dieters” consume animal proteins, especially red meat, in small quantities, and enjoy dairy products and wine in moderation. Of course, this is not the diet consumed by all Mediterranean people, but the label has stuck nonetheless.

Olive oil, the major fat consumed, is thought to be an important factor in the low rates of cardiovascular illness, as are the high quantity of plant fiber, low amount of saturated fat, and low intake of processed food. Olive oil contains monounsaturated fatty acids, which makes it a heart-healthy fat. Genetics and lifestyle may also play a role. Other research has found that risks for developing cancer, diabetes, Parkinson’s disease, and Alzheimer’s disease are lower for those following this diet. One study, the Lyon Diet Health Study, found that the Mediterranean diet was associated with a 70 percent decrease in mortality from all causes. For these reasons, as well as the weight loss typically associated with it, the Mediterranean diet became wildly popular outside its homeland and continues to be important today.

Summary

In this section, you learned the following:

- Morocco has been a center for trade since the twelfth century when the Phoenicians established trading posts on the coast and introduced sausage to the region. The Arabs, who occupied Morocco during the seventh century, had perhaps the most pronounced and long-lasting effect on Moroccan cuisine. They introduced saffron, ginger, cumin, and cinnamon, as well as the principle of combining sweet and sour tastes. All of this radically transformed the somewhat bland cuisine of the area and established a distinctive culinary tradition. Other colonizers followed. Around the fourteenth century, the Ottoman Empire brought new developments in pastries and sweets. The Columbian Exchange introduced new products like tomatoes and peppers. European influences brought new ingredients to Morocco, such as pasta and tea. Moroccan cuisine is sweet, sour, spicy, and complex. Signature cooking methods are *tagines* and *couscoussières*.
- In ancient times, the Greeks were extremely interested in cuisine. Good chefs were prized, and scholarly treatises were written on the art and science of cookery. The Ottoman Empire took over the region in the fifteenth century. The Ottomans, who had been strongly influenced by Persian cooking techniques, brought spicy, fruity elements to the region. During this period, the Columbian Exchange brought what would become important products, like tomatoes and peppers, to Greece. The flavor profile is fresh, clean, and simple. Olive oil, lemon, and mountain herbs are characteristic flavoring agents. Boiling, simmering, and spit-roasting are all common cooking methods.
- The Tunisian experience of occupation and colonization is very similar to the Moroccan experience up until modern times. The two share a common colonial heritage with the rest of North Africa; a series of traders, refugees, and occupiers arrived on their shores bringing with them their own foods, techniques, and recipes. Tunisia was placed under French government control in 1881 AD, some 30 years before Morocco, but both gained independence in 1956. Clear connections can be made between French and Tunisian food. The Tunisian flavor profile is spicier and more pungent. Chili and ginger are commonly used, and vegetables and seafood are important elements of this cuisine. Grilling, simmering, and *tagine* are common cooking methods.

Section 2 Review Questions

- 1 What is the flavor profile of Moroccan cuisine?
- 2 What are two common cooking methods of Moroccan cuisine?
- 3 What are two staple ingredients in Greek cuisine?
- 4 What are two ingredients commonly used in Tunisian cuisine?
- 5 The Arabs had perhaps the most pronounced and long-lasting effect on Moroccan cuisine. They introduced saffron, ginger, cumin, and cinnamon, as well as the principle of combining sweet and sour tastes. Identify two Moroccan dishes that combine sweet and sour tastes. What spice or ingredient causes the sweet taste in each? What causes the sour taste?
- 6 How does Tunisian cuisine compare to Moroccan cuisine?
- 7 Why do you think the flavor profile of Greek cuisine is characterized as “fresh, clean, and simple”? Explain the common ingredients and preparations in Greek cuisine that would allow for such a description.

Section 2 Activities

1. Study Skills/Group Activity: Exploring the Mediterranean

Working with two or three other students, select a Mediterranean country that is not covered in this chapter. Create a poster or Web page about the country's cuisine, important ingredients, and typical dishes.

2. Independent Activity: Looking Deeper into Couscous

Often, the evolution of a region's cuisine can tell a lot about its history. Research couscous. Where does the name derive from? Why was it originally created? How and why has it changed over the years? How does it differ in different countries? There are different colors of couscous. Do they taste different? Report your findings in a one-page report.

3. Critical Thinking: The History of Olive Oil

Research the role olive oil has played in Mediterranean history. How has it shaped the region in both economic and cultural ways? Describe your findings in a two-page paper or in a chart.

SECTION 3 THE MIDDLE EAST

Some Middle Eastern countries border the Mediterranean and several share similar culinary characteristics with Mediterranean nations. This can cause some confusion over boundary lines. A commonly drawn distinction is that Mediterranean cuisines are often sea-based, and Middle Eastern cuisines are often land-based. This section follows that pattern.

Study Questions

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

- What are the cultural influences and flavor profiles of the Egypt?
- What are the cultural influences and flavor profiles of the Iran?
- What are the cultural influences and flavor profiles of the Saudi Arabia

Egypt

Cultural Influences

Egypt is part of the “Fertile Crescent.” The rich Nile Valley and its delta are prime agricultural land, and the river floods annually to ensure a consistent harvest. However, most of the country is desert, and Egypt today imports more than 60 percent of its food. Most people still adhere to traditional diets, although they are influenced to some extent by the variety of cultures that have controlled or been controlled by Egypt throughout the centuries.

[Flavor]

Flavor Profile

Egypt’s agriculture-based cuisine follows traditional foodways, especially in its heavy use of olive oil and wheat. Bread, vegetables, and legumes are central to the typical Egyptian diet, and most flavorings are simple and straightforward: lemon juice, parsley, and sesame.

Egypt became an international power about 3,500 years ago, overpowering neighboring regions and some Mediterranean areas. However, Egypt was also in turn invaded by Libyans, Nubians, and Assyrians, all of whom were later expelled. Egypt was governed by various invaders for more than 2,000 years; Greco-Macedonians, Romans, Arabs, and ultimately Turks all played a role. Egypt was absorbed by the Islamic Empire in 639 AD and by the Ottoman Empire in 1517 AD. Traders and colonizers introduced new foods, such as rice and a variety of fruits from India, China, and Persia. Garlic, tahini, and chickpeas all remain staple parts of the Egyptian cuisine today.

In 1914, Egypt briefly became a British protectorate before declaring independence in 1922. A 1952 revolution against the Kingdom of Egypt, which had resulted from its remaining ties to Britain, established full independence in 1956. European culinary habits appear to have had only a limited effect on Egypt's cuisine with the major exception of macaroni with béchamel sauce, a popular dish with penne pasta and a layer of spiced meat and onions.

All in all, Egyptian cuisine resembles that of other parts of the Middle East and the Mediterranean, but it maintains its own identity. Onions, which have been an essential ingredient since the pyramids were constructed, remain fundamental to contemporary diets, as do wheat and olives.

Regional Ingredients and Dishes

Despite changing economic and demographic patterns, Egyptians still eat much as they always have, enjoying fish and seafood along the coast and in Alexandria, but savoring a soil-based cuisine everywhere else. Vegetables, legumes, and wheat are heavily used. Unique among Middle Eastern countries, Egyptian cuisine is predominantly vegetarian and even vegan. The national dish is *ful medames*. To make *ful medames*, soak, boil, and simmer fava beans eight to ten hours and then mix with oil or clarified butter, onions, and spices such as coriander, cumin, and caraway. Alternatively, add garlic and tahini. Egyptians usually eat *ful medames* as a breakfast dish; it has enough calories to fuel a long day of labor. Make Egyptian falafel with fava beans by crushing them and forming a patty before deep-frying. Falafel is made with chickpeas in most other countries.

As in other countries, flatbreads are popular. A common variety in Egypt is *ish baladi*, which is sprinkled with **duqqa** (DOO-ka), a spice mixture that often includes sesame, dried mint, coriander, and cumin, among others. *Eish baladi* and other flatbreads may be dipped into **baba ghanoush** (bah-bah gah-NOOSH), a combination of eggplant, chickpeas, lemon juice, parsley, cumin, and olive oil that has relatives throughout the Middle East. Either of these may be considered street food. **Shawarma**, shredded meat served in a pita with tahini and analogous to the Greek gyros, may also be a street food.

Melohkia refers both to a mucilaginous green vegetable and a soup flavored with this vegetable. This is a working-class dish that can be made more elaborate with garlic, coriander, and even rabbit. *Kushari* is also a common dish made with rice, lentils, and macaroni. At the other end of the scale, *hamam mahshi* consists of pigeon stuffed with rice or wheat and herbs and then roasted or grilled. Although Egyptians who live inland don't eat much animal protein, favorites include pigeon, eggs, and even camel, which is tenderized with crushed onion and cumin before cooking.



ESSENTIAL SKILLS FLATBREADS

Leavened flatbreads made of wheat are common to many culinary traditions throughout the Mediterranean, the Middle East, and Asia.

- 1 Combine sugar and yeast with warm water and stir until dissolved; cover and allow to froth.
- 2 Combine flour and salt, and then add yeast mixture and any dairy or flavoring ingredients desired.
- 3 Knead the dough until a smooth ball forms.
- 4 Thinly coat the dough with oil and cover it with a towel to double in size.
- 5 Divide the dough into portion-sized balls.
- 6 Roll the dough into circles and brush it with melted butter or oil.
- 7 Bake or pan-fry until it is puffed and lightly browned.

[techniques]

Egyptian Cooking Methods

Egyptian cooking methods include baking (clay ovens), braising, and roasting.

Iran

Cultural Influences

Iran, or Persia, is one of the world's oldest continuous civilizations, having been established around 7000 BCE. Although around 500 BCE it was a territorial power controlling land from Russia to Egypt and from Greece to India. Iran was later occupied itself, falling to the Islamic Empire around 652 BCE. However, Iranians adopted Islam without adopting Arabian practices, maintaining a distinct Persian identity.

A bigger influence on Iranian culture and cuisine came from its presence on the ancient Silk Road between China and modern Italy. This Silk Road was a conduit for both ideas and ingredients such as long-grain rice, citrus fruits, and eggplant, all of which remain essential in the Iranian diet today. Persia reciprocated by sharing its own ingredients, like rosewater, pomegranates, and spinach, with other cultures.

[flavor]

Flavor Profile

The key word for Iranian cuisine is “balanced.” A good mixture of vegetables, dairy products, meat, herbs, and vegetables is presented at every meal. Pungent ingredients and sweet-and-sour combinations are popular in this very complex and aromatic cuisine.

Regional Ingredients and Dishes

Iranian food relies on traditional ingredients, such as wheat and lamb, into which more recent imports, such as rice and lemon, have been incorporated. The basic meal pattern is to have rice, a meat, and some combination of onion, vegetables, herbs, and nuts. Cooks often combine the meat and onion mixture as a stew and ladle it over the rice. Serve this dish with a platter of fresh herbs (which may include tarragon, costmary, dill, and mint), *panir* (a feta-like cheese), bread, cucumber, tomato, onion, yogurt, and lemon juice to achieve the balance of flavors so important in Persian cuisine.

Three major types of rice cookery are practiced in Iran. *Chelow*, or parboiled white rice, is gently steamed with other ingredients, like vegetables or dried fruit, to produce *polo*. If *polo* is prepared properly, a desirable golden crust known as *tah-dig* forms on the bottom of the pan. *Polo* is made by the characteristic soak-boil-steam technique, producing a light, fluffy rice. **Katteh** is made with raw rice, which absorbs all the liquid in the pot and is, therefore, moist and clumpy. *Katteh* is a traditional breakfast dish in the Gilan Province in the north. Finally, *damy* is made like *katteh*, except that other ingredients like legumes or grains are added with the raw rice.

Stuffed meat and vegetables, known as *dolmehs*, are popular, as are kebabs, ground meat molded around a stick and grilled. Kebabs are often served with leavened wheat flatbreads such as *taftun* or *sangak*. A similar dish common in central Iran is *biryani* in which ground lamb is cooked in a pan over an open fire before it is served with *taftun*. *Fesenjan*, a casserole of lamb cooked with walnut sauce and flavored with pomegranate, is also common in that area.

Desserts tend to be extremely sweet, and many are inspired by French pastries, such as the Napoleon, similar to the mille-feuille (meel-FWEE) and flavored with rosewater. Others may even include meat, as in *koresh-t-e-mast*, a yogurt stew incorporating sugar, minced lamb or chicken, saffron, and orange peels, served at weddings and celebrations in central Iran. Baklava is also popular in Iran.

Important flavoring elements include nuts, especially walnuts, pistachios, and almonds; fruits, such as pomegranates, dates, mulberries, and citrus fruits; rosewater; saffron; and sumac, an acidic “berry” used in dried or powdered form throughout the region. Traditionally, the fat of fat-tailed sheep or clarified butter were the most commonly used fats in Iran, but today vegetable oils are more often used. Vegetables and seafood play a prominent role in Iranian cuisine. Northern Iran is known for producing caviar, made of salted fish roe.

[techniques]

Iranian Cooking Methods

Iranian cooking methods include the three-step rice method (soak-boil-steam), braising, grilling, and baking.

[fast fact]

Did You Know...?

Tahini originated in ancient Persia, which is now known as Iran. The first mention of it is found in an Arabic cookbook circa the thirteenth century.

Saudi Arabia

Cultural Influences

The food of this region has been influenced by a variety of sources, including trade with the Horn of Africa, India, Iraq, and the Mediterranean. The Persian Empire, which occupied the area around 550 BCE, introduced ingredients like saffron and rosewater, while Alexander the Great's regime brought Greek and Indian food to the region. The Islamic Empire later incorporated contemporary Saudi Arabia into both its territory and culinary traditions.

Regional Ingredients and Dishes

The typical Saudi Arabian meal involves a large communal platter heaped with rice and garnished with meat and vegetable dishes, flatbreads, and fresh pickles. *Khouzi*, which may be the country's national dish, typifies this ideal. To make *khouzi*, bake or spit-roast a whole lamb stuffed with chicken, egg, rice, saffron, and onions, and serve it on a bed of rice flavored with almonds and clarified butter. Flavor the stuffing with *baharat*, a common spice mixture made with black pepper, cardamom, coriander, cassia, clove, nutmeg, and paprika; it is floral and aromatic, without any "hot" flavors.

Baharat is one of two extremely popular seasonings in Saudi Arabia; the other is *loomi*, or dried *Omani* lime, which lends an acidic flavor to meat dishes. Another important flavor is cinnamon, which is used in meat dishes. Other characteristic ingredients include saffron, tamarind, tomato (used for a tangy, fruity acidity), and tahini. As in nearby countries, lemon juice and olive oil are widely used.

[flavor]

Flavor Profile

Saudi Arabia has a complex, herby, and vegetable/plant-based cuisine. Fruity and mildly acidic flavors are popular, as are mixtures of sweet and savory spices.

Vegetables are prominent and include eggplant, cucumbers, zucchini, and okra. Rice is the most popular grain, but wheat, including bulgur and couscous, are also common. Dates are extremely important and have been cultivated in Saudi Arabia for more than 4,000 years. Use them in both sweet and savory items, although date molasses is primarily used in desserts. Figs, melons, and pomegranates are also common fruits. Fresh herbs are used abundantly in Saudi Arabian cuisine, including parsley, mint, and cilantro. Dairy products, usually made from sheep's milk, include *laban* (yogurt) and *labneh* (strained yogurt). They are usually put into dishes or served as accompaniments, not consumed on their own. Seafood, especially prawns, is widely consumed in coastal areas, but not elsewhere.

A common lamb dish, one that falls under the category of "street food," is *kebab meshwi*, or ground lamb molded around a stick and grilled. Bread commonly accompanies kebabs and shawarma (similar to the Egyptian shawarma and Greek gyro). *Mafrooda*, a leavened wheat flatbread, is a popular choice, but hollowed-out rolls are also used. Roasted chicken dishes are also popular street food.

[techniques]

Saudi Arabian Cooking Methods

Saudi Arabian cooking methods include baking, spit-roasting, grilling, and pickling.

[nutrition]

Fat-Tailed Sheep

Fat-tailed sheep account for a quarter of the world's sheep. They are found throughout most of Africa, the Middle East, and parts of Asia. These animals store fat in their tails. This tail fat is desirable for cooking. It is soft because it is kept away from the body's heat and surrounded by cooler air. Therefore, it melts more quickly than harder fats. Harder fats are also slightly less enjoyable when eaten. Hard fat has a higher melting point than soft fat, meaning that it hardens more quickly than soft fat. So as food cools, the hard fat they are cooked in begins to congeal, making them disagreeable to eat. Soft fat is much less likely to cause this result.

Historically, these large pieces of mutton-flavored fat were essential to nomad nutrition since fat was otherwise not a major component of the traditional diet. Although the use of tail fat has declined in recent years, these sheep are still common today. Their meat is lean (since most of the fat accumulates in the tail), and global demand for leaner meat continues to increase. The fat-tailed sheep is, therefore, quite versatile. It has provided fat when that was nutritionally desirable, and now it provides lean protein when that is nutritionally desirable. No wonder fat-tailed sheep account for so much of the world's sheep population!

Summary

In this section, you learned the following:

- Egypt is part of the “Fertile Crescent.” The rich Nile Valley and its delta are prime agricultural land, and the river floods annually to ensure a consistent harvest. However, most of the country is desert, and Egypt today imports more than 60 percent of its food.
- Most people still adhere to traditional diets, although influenced to some extent by the variety of cultures that have controlled or been controlled by Egypt throughout the centuries. Egypt was absorbed by the Islamic Empire in 639 and by the Ottoman Empire in 1517. Traders and colonizers introduced new food items such as rice and a variety of fruits from India, China, and Persia. Garlic, tahini, and chickpeas remain staple parts of the Egyptian cuisine today. Onions, which have been an essential ingredient since the pyramids were constructed, remain fundamental to contemporary diets, as do wheat and olives. Egypt’s agriculture-based cuisine follows traditional foodways, especially in its heavy use of olive oil and wheat. Bread, vegetables, and legumes are also central to the typical Egyptian diet, and most flavorings are simple and straightforward: lemon juice, parsley, and sesame. Baking in clay ovens, braising, and roasting are common cooking methods.
- Iran, or Persia, is one of the world’s oldest continuous civilizations, having been established around 7000 BCE. Iranians adopted Islam without adopting Arabian practices, maintaining a distinct Persian identity. A major influence on Iranian culture and cuisine came from its presence on the ancient Silk Road between China and modern Italy, a conduit for both ideas and ingredients such as long-grain rice, citrus fruits, and eggplant, all of which remain essential in the Iranian diet today. Persia reciprocated by sharing its own ingredients—like rosewater, pomegranates, and spinach—with other cultures.

Summary *(continued)*

- The key word in Iranian cuisine is “balanced.” A good mixture of vegetables, dairy products, meat, herbs, and vegetables is presented at every meal. Pungent ingredients and sweet-and-sour combinations are popular in this very complex and aromatic cuisine. Popular cooking methods are the three-step rice method of soak-boil-steam; braising; and grilling.
- The food of Saudi Arabia has been influenced by a variety of sources, including trade with the Horn of Africa, India, Iraq, and the Mediterranean. The Persian Empire, which occupied the area around 550 BCE, introduced ingredients like saffron and rosewater, while Alexander the Great’s regime brought Greek and Indian food to the region. The Islamic Empire later incorporated contemporary Saudi Arabia into both its territory and culinary traditions. The flavor profile is complex, herby, and vegetal. Fruity and mildly acidic flavors are popular, as are mixtures of sweet and savory spices. Common cooking methods are grilling, spit-roasting, and pickling.

Section 3 Review Questions

- 1 How is the cuisine of Egypt unique among most of the other Middle Eastern countries?
- 2 What is the flavor profile of Iranian cuisine?
- 3 What is the three-step method for cooking rice in Iranian cuisine?
- 4 What is the flavor profile of Saudi Arabian cuisine?
- 5 Pickling is one of the common cooking methods in Saudi Arabia. Identify two dishes that are prepared by pickling and provide the recipes.
- 6 Which cuisine do you feel best captures the “essence” of the Middle East? Explain your rationale.
- 7 What similarities do you see between the cuisine of the Middle East and that of the Mediterranean? What are some differences? Explain your answer in two paragraphs.

Section 3 Activities

1. Study Skills/Group Activity: Exploring the Middle East

Working with two or three other students, select a Middle Eastern country that is not covered in this chapter. Pick a typical recipe and then research its origins. Prepare the dish for your classmates, along with a brief presentation of your findings.

2. Independent Activity: Comparing Cuisines

Compare and contrast the cuisine of Greece with the cuisine of Saudi Arabia. What are the similarities? What are the differences? Why would there be similarities or differences? Write two paragraphs.

3. Critical Thinking: Middle Eastern Dinner

Create a three-course menu using ingredients and cooking techniques of the Middle East. Be sure to include the full recipe for each course you create and a full explanation of the cooking method you chose.

SECTION 4 ASIA

As with the Mediterranean and the Middle East, it can be difficult to determine the actual borders of Asia. Some feel that Asia includes not only the entire Middle East, but a significant part of the Mediterranean as well, extending as far west as Cyprus. Other definitions may include or exclude Australasia, Oceania, the Middle East, and the Mediterranean. Even using the most restrictive parameters, though, Asia contains a huge amount of the world's population and hundreds of its languages, so it's no surprise that so many of the continent's cuisines are world renowned. This section focuses on three of the best known in the United States: Chinese, Japanese, and Indian.

Study Questions

After studying Section 4, you should be able to answer the following questions:

- What are the cultural influences and flavor profiles of China?
- What are the cultural influences and flavor profiles of Japan?
- What are the cultural influences and flavor profiles of India?

China

Cultural Influences

China has a long, extensive history with food. The Chinese were the first to control fire and apply it to the cooking of food. Traditionally, foods in China have meaning beyond the nourishment they provide. Chinese cuisine is based on the yin and yang philosophy of the **Tao** (DOW), the belief that a single guiding principle orders the universe. Foods should not be forced to become something they are not and should be kept in their most natural and pure states. The Chinese believe that every food has an inherent character ranging from hot to cold. For example, cooked soybeans are hot, vinegar is mild, and spinach is cold. The Chinese often say that they eat the symbol, not the nourishment.

Flavor Profile

Ginger, green onion, soy, and garlic are key flavors in Chinese cuisine. Two coexisting principles, “eat to live” and “eat for pleasure,” describe grains as a source of nourishment, and vegetables and meat as sources of enjoyment.

Chinese religious belief divides the world into five parts: earth, wood, fire, metal, and water. These correspond to the five flavors: sweet, sour, bitter, pungent, and salty. Each of these affect different parts of the body: stomach, liver, heart, lungs, and kidneys. Such relations among the natural elements of nature, food, and the human body lead to the Chinese principle of balance. Unlike a western meal with its division of meat, starch, and green vegetables, a Chinese recipe carefully combines *tan* (grains and rice) with *ts'ai* (vegetables and meat). Think for a moment of broccoli beef or sweet-and-sour pork; these classic dishes are good examples of combining *tan* and *ts'ai*.

Buddhism, in particular, has been a fundamental influence on Chinese lifestyles and cuisine. This religion emphasizes balance, serenity, and peace, which has led to the rise of vegetarianism and the simultaneous development of a number of innovative meat substitutes, especially those based on bean curd, in order to respect the lives of animals, which would otherwise be eaten. However, vegetarianism has not prevailed in all parts of China. In the north, for instance, Mongolian invasions have left a notable taste for lamb and mutton, and fresh seafood is essential in the coastal south and southeast.

Trade has been another major factor in Chinese cuisines. Like so many other countries in this chapter, China was on the Silk Road, with well-established trade routes west to Rome and south to India. Ginger, eggplant, and peppers were introduced through this network. After China opened its borders to western influences in 1911, trade across the Pacific Ocean swelled as the Chinese discovered European-style desserts and cooking equipment.

China has the largest population in the world. The country is vast with many different climates: the cold mountains in the north, the coastal regions in the southeast, and the desert steppe in the west. A number of different languages and dialects as well as native cooking styles have developed over the centuries. Three of these cuisines are especially important to us since they are the most well known in the United States: **Mandarin**, **Szechwan-Hunan**, and **Canton**. It's best to discuss Chinese cuisine in the context of these three regions.

Regional Ingredients and Dishes

Before discussing specific regions, some general notes should be mentioned about Chinese cuisine as a whole. First, chopsticks, and to a lesser extent spoons, are the primary eating utensils of China. Therefore, carefully present dishes with no large pieces that could prove inconvenient to eat. Even foods cooked whole, like steamed fish, are sliced in the kitchen before presentation. The use of chopsticks fits well with the common technique of stir-frying; ingredients that are cut into small pieces for quick cooking are easily picked up with chopsticks.

Some unusual cooking methods should be noted here as well. For **velveting**, coat prepared meats with cornstarch and egg whites before stir-frying to retain moisture and improve sauce adherence. Prepare **lacquered meats** by brushing multiple layers of a flavorful, sweet marinade onto a cut of meat before roasting it. Finally, for **red-cooking**, stew meat or fish in a broth of soy sauce and water to develop a rich color and succulent taste.

Mandarin

Mandarin is the cuisine of the northern region of China. Mandarin cuisine refers to the elaborate and delicate specialties prepared for the elite members of the imperial court in Peking. Typical ingredients include soy bean paste, dark soy sauce, rice wine, and onions, including garlic, leeks, scallions, and chives. Unlike other parts of China, northern China favors wheat, not rice, as the standard starch. Foods such as dumplings, noodles, and steamed buns filled with pork or minced garlic and scallions are frequently found on the menu. This region is famous for bird's nest soup, Peking duck, and *moo shu* pork.

Szechwan-Hunan

The cuisine from the neighboring provinces of Szechwan and Hunan is best known for its hot, spicy food. The introduction of hot chili peppers 150 years ago from South America greatly changed the cooking style of this region. Once again, balance is an important factor in the cuisine. A well-trained chef uses the hot spices to enhance the flavor of food. As the heat fades away, the underlying five flavors described by the Tao should come forward.

Aside from chilis, cooks also use Szechwan pepper, garlic, scallions, five-spice powder (a blend of anise seed, Szechwan pepper, fennel seed, cloves, and cinnamon), mushrooms, ginger, and fennel. The primary meat items used are chicken and pork. Due to its distance from the sea, fish plays a very small part in Szechwan-Hunan cuisine. Examples of this cuisine with which most are familiar are *kung pao* chicken (Hunan) and hot and sour soup (Szechwan).

Canton

The city of Canton is situated on the Pearl River, 90 miles inland from the South China Sea. Because of this important location, it became an international trading center. This cuisine was the first to be introduced to the United States. The Chinese men who immigrated to California during the gold rush and later to work on the building of the transcontinental railroad brought with them their cooking techniques. Many of their native dishes remained the same. The cuisine of this region strives for color harmony as well as a yin and yang balance. The most notable dishes are sweet-and-sour pork, egg foo yung, and lemon chicken.



ESSENTIAL SKILLS RED-COOKING

Red-Cooking, a long, slow braising in a mixture of soy sauce and water, is a common technique throughout much of China for the flavorful, moist stew it produces.

- 1 Sweat ginger and other aromatics in hot oil.
- 2 Add chunks of meat and sear.
- 3 Add water, dark soy sauce, and broth and bring to a boil.
- 4 Cover and simmer one hour or longer.
- 5 Add vegetables, light soy sauce, more dark soy sauce, and brown sugar.
- 6 Simmer uncovered 30 minutes or until the vegetables are tender and meat pieces are extremely tender but still intact.
- 7 If desired, remove the meat and vegetables, strain out aromatics, and reduce the sauce.
- 8 Serve hot with rice or noodles.

[techniques]

Chinese Cooking Methods

Chinese cooking methods include stir-frying, steaming, red-cooking, lacquering, and velveting.

[fast fact]

Did You Know...?

Soy sauce, which originated in China, is a liquid made by fermenting soybeans and roasted wheat or barley in brine. Its use as a condiment traces back at least 2,500 years.

Japan

Cultural Influences

Japan's close neighbors, China and Korea, have traditionally played major roles in its culture through both trade and religion. Buddhism entered from China in the sixth century, and meat eating and animal slaughter were soon (although ineffectually) banned. In the twelfth century, Zen Buddhism, tea, and frying also arrived, radically changing Japanese culture. An entire set of ceremonies, as well as an entire cuisine (*cha kaiseki*), soon arose around tea drinking, and a vegetarian cuisine in keeping with Zen Buddhism (*shojin ryori*) quickly developed.

[flavor]

Flavor Profile

Characteristic flavors of Japanese food include ginger, miso (a fermented soybean paste), shoyu (soy sauce), wasabi (a hot herb similar to horseradish), and most important, dashi. Dashi is a flavorful broth made of dried, smoked, and cured bonito (a type of tuna), and dried *konbu* (a type of seaweed). Soy, tea, and rice are all essential ingredients.

Trade with Westerners has also affected Japanese culture. During the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries AD, explorers and traders, especially Portuguese, introduced ingredients like tomatoes, sweet potatoes, and peppers. They also introduced cooking techniques like baking and deep-frying, which was quickly adopted as tempura (teh-POOR-uh). However, the country was closed to Westerners in the early seventeenth century as a result of interference in political affairs. Japan was almost entirely isolated until it reopened to trade in 1853 AD. Today, Japanese cuisine is strongly influenced by Western cultures and cuisines.

Regional Ingredients and Dishes

Although Japan is an island nation, the cuisine is largely based on agriculture. Rice cultivation is fundamental to the society itself. The word for cooked rice, **gohan** (goh-HAHN), also means meal, demonstrating its essential nature to the cuisine. The other major agricultural product is soybeans. They are used in a variety of culinary forms, with tofu (TOH-foo), shoyu (SHOH-yoo), and miso (MEE-soh) being perhaps the most prominent. With rice providing the carbohydrates and soy providing the protein and fat, the Japanese could enjoy a virtually complete protein and adequate calorie diet with just these two ingredients. However, plenty of other foods are available to the Japanese despite the country's space limitations. A broad range of seafood, including sea vegetables, is part of the diet. Other important flavors include wasabi, sesame, vinegar, daikon radish, and shiitake mushrooms.

The Japanese prioritize quality over quantity in their food, prizing each ingredient individually. Visual appeal is as important as the food itself, so preparation and presentation are meticulous. This stems from the Zen Buddhist principle of **wabi sabi**, which means quiet simplicity merged with quiet elegance. Accordingly, seasonality, even microseasonality, is an important principle in Japanese cuisine. Ingredients are used only at their peak, both to extract maximum enjoyment for the diner and to show respect for the item's life cycle.

[techniques]

Japanese Cooking Methods

Japanese cooking methods focus on tempura, sushi, sashimi, bento, steaming, *nabemono* (one-pot dishes), teriyaki, *tsukemono* (salt-pickling), and *yakimono* (grilling and pan-frying).

Northern Japan, Hokkaido, produces not only most of the seafood consumed domestically, but also cultivates sheep and a wide variety of vegetables. Wheaten ramen noodles were developed here. Farther south lies the rice belt, where various mountain vegetables as well as *maitake* mushrooms are also found. Buckwheat soba noodles are popular here, as are hot-pot dishes using local seafood. Tokyo and its surrounding area are famous for *nigiri-sushi* (seasoned rice topped with raw fish), seafood, and soybean products. Kansai, in the west, produces a wide variety of food: vegetables, rice, fruit, and the famous Kobe beef. *Sukiyaki*, a dish of beef and vegetables cooked in shoyu, originated here, and udon noodles are a specialty. In the south, Kyushu grows a number of different vegetable and fruit crops, including onions and strawberries, and is a major producer of shiitake mushrooms.

[nutrition]

Tofu

Soybeans and rice are the two staple agricultural products of many Asian diets. Soybeans provide protein and fat. Rice provides needed carbohydrates. Soybean protein absorption is improved by making the fermented soybean curd, tofu.

Tofu, or bean curd, is a soft or firm cheese-like product, high in available protein and versatile enough to handle nearly any cooking method. To make tofu, soak soybeans in water and then grind and boil them. After a careful straining, combine the resulting warm liquid with either calcium sulfate or lye, which causes the proteins to solidify. Then pour or ladle this soft substance into molds and press it to develop the desired amount of firmness. The tofu is now ready to sell, cook, or even eat as is. When combined with rice, it can make a nearly perfect meal from a nutritional standpoint.

India

Cultural Influences

Since the fourth century, Hinduism has evolved as the dominant faith in India. Hinduism promotes vegetarianism and discourages meat consumption. Today, 80 percent of Indians belong to the Hindu faith. But India has had many cultural influences.

In the eighth century, the Islamic Empire spread into northern India, where several separate kingdoms were eventually established. In 1562 AD, these were unified as the Moghul Empire. This culture was strongly influenced by Persia, and rulers emulated the Persian cuisine with the Indian ingredients at hand. Lamb and even kebabs (kuh-BOB) were popularized, as were polos and biryanis. Meat dishes cooked with cream, nuts, and dried fruits also became prominent. All these remain part of contemporary Indian cuisine.

Trade affected the development of Indian cuisine as well. The Arabs were able to control the lucrative spice trade from the seventh century onward, as they were the only traders with a clear-cut path to India. They brought food items from along the Spice Road in exchange. In 1498 AD, however, Vasco da Gama discovered a sea route to India, breaking the Arab stranglehold. The Portuguese were followed by other explorers (from Britain, France, Holland, Denmark, and Spain), bringing new ingredients like peppers, potatoes, and cashews.

[flavor]

Flavor Profile

Complex, aromatic, and subtle spice mixtures characterize Indian cuisine. Grains, legumes, and vegetables are combined in both spare and luxurious ways, using a wide variety of cooking techniques.

The British left the most profound impact of all on Indian cuisine. In the early eighteenth century, the British East India Company was formed to compete in the spice trade. It rapidly became very successful, causing its senior employees to become decadent and food obsessed. Having defeated their rivals by the middle of the next century, the British established a new empire, the British Raj. They introduced cutlery, dining tables, and French cooking techniques to India, blending the latter with Indian methods to develop a distinctly Anglo-Indian cuisine. Today, a strong relationship persists between the two countries, although India gained independence some 60 years ago.

Regional Ingredients and Dishes

As the second-most populous country in the world, India has an enormous diversity of ingredients, flavors, and cooking techniques, so only a very few can be addressed here. Of course, most of us think of curry when we think of traditional Indian cooking. Curry is not really a spice; it is a dish. Some specific spices used in curry dishes include turmeric, cumin, coriander, and red pepper.

Kashmir, in Northern India, retains many of the foodways left behind by the Moghuls. Hearty, dry dishes are popular, often based on goat, lamb, or sheep. *Rogan josh* is a popular dish, a rich combination of steamed lamb in a spicy yogurt sauce, enriched with ground almonds. **Masalas** (mah-SAH-lahs), spice mixtures that preparers grind and fry before they add them to dishes, are important in Kashmiri cuisine. **Garam masala** (gah-RAHM mah-SAH-lah) is particularly enjoyed; it includes a variety of strong-tasting spices such as black cardamom, black pepper, and clove, so it is generally considered too overpowering to use in fish or vegetable dishes. Saffron, ghee (a clarified semifluid butter), and dried fruits are also common.

The nearby Punjab enjoys a cuisine based on wheat, vegetables, and dairy. Many Punjabis belong to the vegetarian Sikh religion, though other residents consume meat. Tandoori cookery is important here, as in Kashmir. One famous dish is *raan mussalam*, or leg of lamb roasted in a tandoori (tahn-DOOR-ee) with a marinade of papaya and yogurt. Delhi, on the other hand, mixes Moghul and Punjabi cuisine, so a characteristic dish is a spicy korma, which is seafood or meat cooked with a spicy, yogurt-based sauce, usually reserved as a celebratory food.

In the region of Rajasthan, cuisine emphasizes the use of dals, or pulses, although it is not an especially vegetarian state. Cooks of this region often marinate skewered meat in yogurt and spices before grilling, as in the Middle East, and elaborate chicken and meat dishes with rice are popular for festivals. In Gujarat, however, the presence of Jainism, an ancient religion, ensures a healthy

vegetarian cuisine. Stir-fried vegetables with mustard and chili or saucy curries served with chutney are typical. Finally, West Bengal is noted for its use of *panchphoron*, or “five-spice.” It is a pungent combination of cumin, fennel, fenugreek, mustard, and onion seed. *Mangsho jhol*, a lamb curry, is popular here, as are cheese patties cooked in syrup.

An important cooking method in northern India is **dum**, a type of steaming in which preparers cover the cooking pot and seal it with strips of dough. They place the pot directly over heat with hot coals atop it. This concept is also found in European peasant cuisines.

Tropical southern cooking tends to be lighter and hotter than its northern counterpart. Goa, an island overtaken by the Portuguese in the early days of colonialism, retains several characteristics of Portuguese cuisine today, such as the use of pork, vinegar, and cashews. Fish curry is prominent, as is vindaloo (VIHN-dah-loo), a spicy meat stew with hot peppers and vinegar. Kerala, the only state in India where it is legal to sell beef, uses a wide variety of spices and tropical flavors—coconut, ginger, cardamom—in its cuisine. Seafood and stews are popular.

Some other important culinary elements include flatbreads and crackers, like chapati (chah-PAH-tee), naan (NAHN), paratha (pah-RAH-tah), and *poppadum* (PAH-pah-duhm). These may be made of lentils, chickpeas, or wheat. Dal, or dried legumes and pulses, are virtually ubiquitous throughout India, as they are in many parts of the Middle East. *Pulao* and biryani reflect their Persian ancestry. *Pulao* is a one-pot dish of vegetables, fruit, nuts, spice, and meat, fish, and/or yogurt. Biryani, also a one-pot meal, involves basmati rice, meat, vegetables, and spices. Both are elaborate dishes, reserved for special occasions.

Finally, some cooking techniques uncommon outside India should be noted. *Tarka* is the technique of scattering dry whole or ground spices into hot oil or ghee until they pop, flavoring the oil. *Bhuna* is similar to stir-frying, but with a small amount of water added. *Korma* is a yogurt-based braise including spices and nuts, using meat or seafood (for celebrations). *Talana* involves deep-frying items after dunking them in a legume-based batter.

[techniques]

Indian Cooking Methods

Indian cooking methods include steaming, *dum*, tandoor, *tarka*, *bhuna*, korma, and *talana*.

[what's new]

Technology and Rice Cultivation

Rice is a staple food throughout much of the world. It is grown in more than 100 countries in a wide range of environments. Perhaps 100,000 varieties exist, although “only” 8,000 have been used for food in contemporary times.

Traditionally, the best varieties provided small but regular yields if managed properly. Because of its importance, research in rice breeding and cultivating is ongoing in an effort to find varieties that can combine high yields and nutritional value with growing conditions and requirements suited to particular areas. The “Green Revolution” of the 1960s and 1970s was a part of this work, resulting in the much-planted IR36 variety.

But growing rice remains a blend of ancient and modern technologies. In much of southern and eastern Asia, rice is grown the traditional way. Tiny, terraced fields are usually flooded with water from either rainfall or irrigation. The fields are then planted with rice seedlings and are cultivated and harvested by hand. This method helps preserve traditional local habitats.

In other places with larger fields and more money available, germinated rice seeds are tossed over a prepared field from an airplane, and computers and heavy equipment are used to manage and harvest the crop. New technologies and new rice varieties are on the horizon as researchers and farmers seek to provide more food for a rapidly growing global population.

Summary

In this section, you learned the following:

- Chinese cuisine is based on the yin and yang philosophy of the Tao, which is the belief that a single guiding principle orders the universe. Foods should not be forced to become something they are not and should be kept in their most natural and pure states. The Chinese believe that every food has an inherent character ranging from hot to cold. Chinese religious belief divides the world into five parts: earth, wood, fire, metal, and water. These correspond to the five flavors: sweet, sour, bitter, pungent, and salty. Each of these affect different parts of the body: stomach, liver, heart, lungs, and kidneys. Such relations among the natural elements of nature, food, and the human body lead to the Chinese principle of balance. Ginger, green onion, soy, and garlic are key flavors in Chinese cuisine. Two coexisting principles, “eat to live” and “eat for pleasure,” describe grains as a source of nourishment and vegetables and meat as sources of enjoyment. Chinese cooking methods are varied, including velveting, lacquering, and stir-frying.
- Japan’s close neighbors, China and Korea, have traditionally played major roles in its culture through trade and religion. Buddhism entered from China in the sixth century, and meat eating and animal slaughter were soon (although ineffectually) banned. In the twelfth century, Zen Buddhism, tea, and frying also arrived, radically changing Japanese culture. Trade with Westerners has also affected Japanese culture. Today, Japanese cuisine is strongly influenced by Western cultures and cuisines. Characteristic flavors of Japanese food include ginger, miso, shoyu, wasabi, and most important, dashi. Soy, tea, and rice are all essential ingredients. Popular Japanese cooking methods include tempura, sushi, and teriyaki.
- Since the fourth century, Hinduism has evolved as the dominant faith in India. Hinduism promotes vegetarianism and discourages meat consumption. Today, 80 percent of Indians belong to the Hindu faith. But India has had many other cultural influences. The British left the most profound impact of all on Indian cuisine. They introduced cutlery, dining tables, and French-cooking techniques to India, blending the latter with Indian methods to develop a distinctly Anglo-Indian cuisine. Complex, aromatic, and subtle spice mixtures characterize Indian cuisine. Grains, legumes, and vegetables are combined in both spare and luxurious ways, using a wide variety of cooking techniques. Tandoor, *khuma*, and korma are among many varied cooking methods in India.

Section 4 Review Questions

- 1 What are three signature Chinese cooking methods?
- 2 Name three flavors characteristic of Japanese cuisine.
- 3 What are three signature Indian cooking methods?
- 4 How would you explain the flavor profile of Indian cuisine?
- 5 In what way do you feel Japanese cuisine has been most influenced by China?
- 6 Of the three cuisines covered in this section, which two do you feel are most similar to each other? Why? Explain your choice in two paragraphs.

Section 4 Activities

1. Study Skills/Group Activity: Exploring Asia

Working with two or three other students, select an Asian country that is not covered in this chapter. Compare its cuisine to the cuisine of a country discussed in this section (China, Japan, or India). Write a two- or three-paragraph report on your findings.

2. Independent Activity: Researching Korma

Often the evolution of a region's cuisine can tell a lot about its history. Research the Indian cooking method korma. From where does the name derive? Why was it originally created? How and why has it changed over the years? Report your findings in a one-page report.

3. Critical Thinking: Asian Dinner

Create a three-course menu using ingredients and cooking techniques of Asia. Be sure to include the full recipe for each course you create.

Apply Your Learning



Portioning

Select a recipe that is typical of one of the countries discussed in this chapter. For instance, you could choose a risotto recipe since risotto is characteristically served in Italy. Provide the quantities of each ingredient used and the number of portions served. Now calculate the correct quantities of each ingredient needed to produce (a) 3 portions, (b) 12 portions, and (c) 25 portions. Please show your work, including the original recipe.



Revisiting Trade Routes

Two historic trade events mentioned frequently in this chapter are the Columbian Exchange and the Silk Road. Research how they started, how they evolved over time, and how they affected the cuisines of those countries that were involved. Write a two-page report summarizing your findings.



Cured Meat

Many cuisines discussed in this chapter involve cured meat, or meat that is often not cooked before eating. Why would this be safe? Why would these techniques be used instead of cooking? Select a cured meat that is used in one of these cultures and describe in two paragraphs the process for manufacturing it.

Now obtain a piece of cured meat from a local grocery or delicatessen. What are its characteristics? How do its appearance, texture, and aroma differ from an equivalent piece of raw meat? How do its appearance, texture, aroma, and flavor differ from an equivalent piece of cooked meat? Describe your findings in three paragraphs.

Critical Thinking

Globalized Cuisine

How has globalization changed international eating patterns? How has agricultural production changed? What sustainability issues have emerged from these changes? How have health concerns shifted? Consider and research these issues and any others that you deem relevant and write a two-page paper on your findings.

Exam Prep Questions

- 1 What is haute cuisine?
 - A. Mild and bland food
 - B. Highly refined dishes
 - C. Hot and peppery food
 - D. Simple, rustic cooking
- 2 What kind of flour is most frequently used in Italian cuisine?
 - A. Durham
 - B. Semolina
 - C. Bleached
 - D. All-purpose
- 3 What two words best characterize the flavor profile of Spanish cuisine?
 - A. Rich and mild
 - B. Simple and light
 - C. Hot and peppery
 - D. Earthy and complex
- 4 What starch is most commonly used in Moroccan cuisine?
 - A. Rice
 - B. Lentils
 - C. Potatoes
 - D. Couscous
- 5 What two ingredients are the two most important flavoring agents in Greek cuisine?
 - A. Garlic and butter
 - B. Lemon and butter
 - C. Olive oil and lemon
 - D. Peppers and olive oil
- 6 *Ful medames* is the national dish of
 - A. China.
 - B. Egypt.
 - C. Tunisia.
 - D. Saudi Arabia.
- 7 What one word best describes Iranian cuisine?
 - A. Mild
 - B. Spicy
 - C. Complex
 - D. Balanced
- 8 What are the three steps involved in the three-step rice cooking method of Iran?
 - A. Boil, bake, rinse
 - B. Soak, boil, steam
 - C. Steam, bake, chill
 - D. Soak, sauté, bake

Exam Prep Questions *(continued)*

- 9 The Chinese cooking method of velveting involves doing what to meat?
- A. Marinating it in soy sauce and ginger overnight
 - B. Chopping it up and frying it quickly on high heat
 - C. Coating it in cornstarch and egg white before frying
 - D. Marinating it in crushed garlic for one hour before roasting
- 10 What two words best describe the flavor profile of Indian cuisine?
- A. Light and spicy
 - B. Mild and earthy
 - C. Simple and piquant
 - D. Complex and aromatic