

# Ethnic-Specific Food Combinations

**E**THNIC-SPECIFIC FOOD is cuisine that originated or is traditional in a specific region of the world. Think about those dishes your family traditionally makes for a holiday. Do those dishes reflect your family's heritage? Specific ingredients, spices, herbs, flavorings, seasonings, and condiments traditionally blend to create cultural dishes. Fusion cuisine is a combination of two or more of these ethnic or regional cuisines to create innovative and interesting new dishes: TexMex, Italian-American, or Euro-Asian.



## Objective:



Summarize traditional ethnic-specific food combinations and fusion cuisines.

## Key Terms:



achiote  
adobo sauce  
baguettes  
baklava  
battuto  
biscotti  
caffè latte  
chutney  
crêpes  
culinary herbs  
culinary spices  
curry  
dolma  
espresso

ethnic-specific food  
ethnic-specific food combinations  
flavorings  
fondue  
fusion cuisine  
Garam Masala  
ghee  
guacamole  
gumbo  
haute cuisine  
hibachi  
kebab  
Korean barbecue

lavash  
lemon grass  
pâté  
pesto  
salsa  
sashimi  
scharma  
sushi  
tahini  
tamales  
tamarind  
tempura  
terrine  
wok

# Food Combinations and Fusion Cuisines

## ETHNIC-SPECIFIC FOOD

**Ethnic-specific food** is cuisine that originated or is traditional in a specific region of the world. **Ethnic-specific food combinations** are those ingredients, spices, herbs, flavorings, seasonings, and condiments traditionally blended to create cultural dishes. In addition, most ethnic-specific recipes are served in combination with other foods. For example, Cajun or Creole cuisines often serve red beans and rice, which is an ethnic-specific food combination. Although certain aspects of a region's cuisine may vary, similarities exist. Spices and ingredients often remain the same among regions, and the preparation techniques may differ. Ethnic cuisines are influenced by factors, such as climate, religious customs, cultural customs, locally grown crops, fishes, and meat-producing animals, and neighboring countries and immigration.

## COMMON COOKING ELEMENTS

Spices, herbs, flavorings, and seasonings are common cooking elements in all cultures and all cuisines.

### Culinary Spices

**Culinary spices** are the dried part of a plant (other than the leaves) that are used to season and flavor a recipe. Spices are perfumes (aromas and flavorings), often of tropical origin. They are harvested from parts of a tree or plant that contains a rich flavor and aroma: bark, buds, roots, seeds, and twigs or stems.

- ◆ All spice perfumes eventually evaporate.
- ◆ Purchase spices in small quantities and store them in tightly sealed containers.
- ◆ Spices also begin to lose flavor—perfume—when ground. As much as possible, grind spices immediately before use.
- ◆ Most spices are categorized as hot, sharp, sweet, or spicy-sweet.
- ◆ Some spices contain insect larvae and must be checked regularly for hatchings.

### Common Culinary Spices

Common culinary spices are allspice, anise, caraway seeds, cardamom, cayenne, cinnamon, cloves, coriander (also known as cilantro), cumin, ginger, nutmeg and mace, paprika, and saffron.

## Allspice

Allspice is the dried berry of the pimento family. It is purchased whole or ground and is similar in taste to cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg, and pepper. Allspice is used extensively in the following cuisines: Caribbean, Middle Eastern, and Latin American.

## Anise

Anise (or aniseed) is typically purchased as a seed and is ground or used whole in Italian cooking, especially in biscotti cookies. It has a sweet and unmistakable taste used in European breads, cakes, and sweets. Sometimes the seeds (slightly toasted) are chewed after a meal to sweeten the breath, especially in Afghanistan and India.

## Caraway Seeds

Caraway seeds are technically a fruit and are similar in flavor to aniseeds. The seeds are usually purchased whole and are used in baking (especially in rye breads), in curries, and in sausage. Caraway seeds are used for pickling and brining foods, too. Caraway is used extensively in the following cuisines: German, Hungarian, and Austrian. Caraway is a key spice in the Arabic spice mixture Tabil and the North African paste Harissa.

## Cardamom

Cardamom is the dried fruit of a perennial herb originating from Ceylon and India. It is used in Greek and Indian cooking and in some Middle Eastern dishes.

## Cayenne

Cayenne is a pungent chili pepper spice—fresh or ground—that is hot and spicy. Cayenne pepper is used in Latin American, Tex-Mex, and Asian (especially Szechuan) dishes. In addition, cayenne compliments Cajun lobster and crab dishes in small quantities.

## Cinnamon

Cinnamon is dried (and sometimes ground) tree bark from Sri Lanka, Ceylon, Seychelles, and India. It is a sweet spice and is available as cinnamon bark oil. Cinnamon is used extensively in Europe in breads and pastries. It is also used in the Middle East in meat stews, such as Moroccan Tagine and Iranian Khorosht. Cinnamon is part of the traditional Garam Masala and is used extensively in aromatics dishes, such as pilaf. (NOTE: Garam Masala is the Indian equivalent of the French herbes de Provence or Chinese five-spice powder mixtures. All mixtures encompass rich, traditional cultural tastes.)

## Cloves

Cloves are the dried unopened flower bud of an evergreen tree (myrtle family). The spice is native to the Moluccas (Eastern Indonesia) shores. Yet cloves are now cultivated in Zanzibar, the Malagasy Republic, and Indonesian. Cloves are used frequently in India and Asian countries in a wide variety of sweet and savory dishes.

## Coriander

Coriander (cilantro) is a plant related to parsley. Coriander is native to Southern Europe and the Mediterranean. It is used in Latin American, Southeast Asian, and Indian cooking for meat, poultry, fish, and seafood dishes. Coriander seeds are used in cakes, breads, and stews. In addition, leaves are used in numerous Latin American dishes and salsas.

## Cumin

Cumin is a seed (whole and ground) spice of dried seed-like fruits. It appears to have originated in the Eastern Mediterranean and is now grown in India, China, Japan, and Indonesia. Cumin is used in pickling spices, as an ingredient in chili powder, in the Indian dish Garam Masala, and in curry powder. Mexican dishes use cumin in chili con carne.

## Ginger

Ginger is available in fresh (gingerroot and ginger leaves) and powdered forms. The fresh and dried differ in their flavor. Asian cuisines use the spice in both forms. The sweet-spicy powdered form is used extensively in cakes and pastries. Ginger oil is used to flavor ginger beer and ginger ale. It is also available in a pickled form.

## Nutmeg

Nutmeg and mace spices are from the nutmeg tree. The tree is native to the Moluccas shores in Indonesia and is grown in Grenada in the West Indies. The nutmeg fruit encloses the mace, and the mace encloses the nutmeg (the part of the fruit that is ground as powdered nutmeg). The chemistry of nutmeg is important to cooks and chefs. The aroma and flavor disappear quickly once a nutmeg is grated. Grate immediately before use. Nutmeg is used extensively in puddings, custards, cakes, and beverages. In France and Italy, nutmeg is used sparingly in Béchamel (French) and Besciamella (Italian) sauces.

## Paprika

Paprika is the dried ground mild-flavored fruit of the *Capsicum annuum* or pimento pepper. Paprika peppers were introduced to Hungary from the Bulgarians who got them from Turkey. Hungarian and Spanish paprika spices are ground from chili peppers and are popular with cooks and chefs. Now paprika is also grown in Mexico, Spain, and California. Paprika is important in Hungarian dishes (e.g., goulash). It is sweet in taste and is used as a coloring agent. In addition, paprika is used in seafood, sausages, rice, and other savory dishes.

## Saffron

Saffron is harvested from the orange-red stigmas of the crocus flower. It originated in Western Asia (India, Iran, and Afghanistan) and is now grown in Greece and Spain. The saffron threads are an intense yellow color that is also used as a dye. It is a spicy, pungent, bitter taste. As a result, only small amounts are used in culinary dishes. Saffron is a key ingredient in bouillabaisse, paella, challah bread, Milanese risotto, and pilaf dishes. It is the most expensive spice and is often substituted with turmeric or safflower. [NOTE: Saffron is a culinary spice used in

many cultures. At this writing, saffron is more expensive than gold by weight. It can cost up to \$2,000 per pound, depending upon the quality.]

## Culinary Herbs

**Culinary herbs** are leaves of plants that can be used either fresh or dried to season food; an herb is usually the green parts of the plant (leaves and some stems). Herbs are categorized into three subcategories: culinary, medicinal, and ornamental varieties. Culinary herb plants are categorized as an herb, as a spice, and/or as a vegetable: fennel is an example. Fennel's fronds are categorized as an herb, the seeds as a spice, and the bulb-like leaves as a vegetable. Herbs are used in small amounts to provide flavor, rather used as a main ingredient. NOTE: When cooking with fresh herbs, chefs use three times as much fresh herb when the recipe calls for dried herbs. Many culinary herbs are rich in vitamins. Hippocrates, the Father of Medicine, had a list of 400 herbs used for medicinal purposes.

Common culinary herbs are anise leaves, basil, bay leaves, carrot, chervil, chives, cilantro (coriander leaves), dill leaves or dill seed, fennel seeds, hyssop (licorice and mint flavor), lavender flowers, lemon grass, marjoram, mint, oregano, parsley, rosemary, sage, savory, tarragon, thyme, and herbes de Provence (a mixture of summer herbs including dried thyme, marjoram, savory, and other herbs including dried lavender). The dried lavender gives the herbes de Provence mixture a distinctive taste.

## Flavorings

**Flavorings** are extracts or essences (macerated and distilled and then bottled) added to food to improve flavor. **Seasonings** are



FIGURE 1. Fennel fronds (fern-like leaves) are categorized as an herb, the seeds as a spice, and the bulb-like leaves as a vegetable.



FIGURE 2. Culinary herbs are leaves of plants that can be used either fresh or dried to season food. An herb is usually the green parts of the plant (leaves and some stems). Herbs are categorized into three subcategories: culinary, medicinal, and ornamental varieties.



items used to heighten or temper the food to which they are added. Unlike flavorings, seasonings do not add flavor.

Common flavorings are almond (extracts and oils), coffee essence, fruit flavors, mint or peppermint oil, orange-flower water, rose water, and vanilla (bean pods and extracts). Vanilla is second in expense by weight to saffron.

Common seasonings are salt (table, kosher, sea, etc.), garlic, mustard, onion, pepper, vinegars, and wine. Also, some types of dressings, herbs, sauces, and spices can be used.

## East Asian Combinations

East Asian cuisines—Japanese, Korean, and Chinese—are influenced by cultural traditions, politics, and religion. Because much of the region has access to extensive coastline, seafood is plentiful and popular. Japan (an island) has many ingredients rarely used outside of its borders.

### Spices, Herbs, Flavorings, and Seasonings

- ◆ Spices: Cinnamon, cardamom, cumin, ginger, coriander, star anise, cloves, nutmeg, and mace are used in East Asian cuisine. Traditionally, these spices were popular for medicinal purposes (e.g., cleansing the breath and aiding digestion).
- ◆ Herbs: Sweet and Thai basil and mint
- ◆ Flavorings and seasonings: The juice and pulp of lime, lemon grass, and garlic often are added to dishes to increase flavor and to season dishes.

### Ingredients

Rice is easily grown and is a staple (main crop) in East Asian countries. Fresh produce (e.g., bok choy, bamboo shoots, cabbage, bean sprouts, water chestnuts, and mushrooms) is commonly used in food preparations. Seafood, pork, and chicken are used in recipes. They are, however, often a small portion of the dish compared to the proportions of rice and vegetables.

### Traditional Dishes

Most dishes are simply prepared (quick and easy cooking steps), with greater attention given to the flavorings. A **wok** is a bowl-shaped metal pan used in the quick, hot cooking process. A **hibachi** is a small, portable grill used for grilling food over charcoal. Common East Asian dishes are:

- ◆ **Korean barbeque** is thinly cut, marinated strips of beef, pork, or chicken grilled on a hibachi by the guests at their table.
- ◆ **Sashimi** is paper-thin slices of raw fish, garnished with shredded vegetables, and served with grated fresh ginger and horseradish: a Japanese specialty. Just before eating, the sashimi is dipped into a sauce.
- ◆ **Sushi** is a raw seafood preparation in which “fingers” of vinegared rice with pieces of very fresh fish or other seafood is laid along them, and served with thin slices of vinegared ginger (gari) and hot green tea.



**FIGURE 3.** Sashimi is paper-thin slices of raw fish, garnished with shredded vegetables, and served with grated fresh ginger and horseradish. Sushi is a raw seafood preparation in which “fingers” of vinegared rice with pieces of fresh fish or other seafood is laid along them. It is served with thin slices of vinegared ginger and hot green tea.

- ◆ **Tempura** is a Japanese dish in which fish or vegetables are fried in a light batter. There is an ice cream version of tempura—a Japanese version of Baked Alaska.

### French Combinations

French cuisine is shaped by a rich history with influences from many foreign countries. Immigrants from around the world brought unique spices, new recipes, and different cooking methods. French chefs created complex recipes and rural peasants created simple foods; both influenced today’s French cuisine. The addition of butter and cream to many dishes is a key characteristic of traditional French haute cuisine. **Haute cuisine** is literally means “high cooking;” artful and elaborate cuisine.

### Spices, Herbs, Flavorings, and Seasonings

- ◆ Spices: Nutmeg and saffron are used extensively in French cooking.
- ◆ Herbs: Fennel (both an herb and a vegetable), French tarragon, herbes de Provence, lavender, marjoram, rosemary, sage, and thyme
- ◆ Flavorings and seasonings: Almond, garlic, onion, orange-flower water, pepper, rose water, salt, and vanilla

### Ingredients

Local produce is used in many dishes. Freshness is valued, so the types used will vary according to the season. Specialty cheeses (e.g., brie, Roquefort, Camembert, and Comté) are made in France and are used in many recipes. Fish and snails (escargot) are eaten in many areas, especially those that border the Atlantic Ocean. Commonly eaten meats are chicken, duck, and rabbit.

## Traditional Dishes

- ◆ **Baguettes** are long sticks of crusty bread served at almost every meal. Baguettes are made from lean dough and are distinct because of the thick outer crust.
- ◆ **Crêpes** are thin pancakes often served with a savory or sweet filling. A popular crêpe dessert is Crêpe Suzette, which is crêpes layered with a caramelized mixture of sugar, butter, orange juice, zest, and Grand Marnier liqueur. The dessert is served flambé (flaming).
- ◆ **Fondue** is the French term for “melted” and the name of a dish made of melted cheese. Typically, cubes of bread are dipped into the hot cheese mixture. The mixture is kept hot over a burner.
- ◆ **Pâté** is an appetizer that was originally a pastry casing filled with savory meats, spices, and herbs baked in the oven and served hot or cold. Sometimes it is called a “pie.” **Ter-rines** (similar to pâté) are ingredients layered in a loaf-shaped pan. Meat, poultry, vegetables, seafood, and sometimes fruits are layered to allow an attractive presentation when sliced.



**FIGURE 4.** A popular crêpe dessert is Crêpe Suzette. The crêpe is layered with a caramelized mixture of sugar, butter, orange juice, zest, and Grand Marnier liqueur. The dessert is served flambé (flaming).

## Indian Combinations

Indian cuisine is influenced by cultural traditions and religion. India is larger than all of Europe and has a variety of cuisines. It has five major faiths, 15 major languages, and more than 1,500 minor languages and dialects. India has 17 states, each as different in cuisine and culture as those of European neighbors. Many neighboring countries—Indonesia, Malaysia, Portugal, and Turkey—have influenced Indian cuisine. The British created a new cuisine known as Anglo-Indian.

Important elements of Indian cuisines include coconut milk and lime juice. Regardless of the variety of states and climates, there are commonalities among the Indian cuisines: cereal, milk products, platters, and vegetarian cuisines. Also, some type of bread is served at almost every Indian meal: naan and luchi breads are made from flour, while chapatti bread is made from chickpeas.

## Spices, Herbs, Flavorings, and Seasonings

- ◆ **Spices:** In India, spices were originally chosen for use for their medicinal purposes. Later, they were chosen for nutritional value and flavor. Ginger is the most important spice, and garlic is the most important seasoning. Other spices important in Indian cooking are chil-



ies, turmeric, cloves, cardamom, cumin, and coriander. It is common for a chef/cook to blend many spices into a curry to flavor a dish. The basic spices for Indian curry dishes are chilies, turmeric, cloves, cardamom, cumin, and coriander. It is common for a chef/cook to blend many spices into a curry to flavor a dish. The basic spices for Indian curry dishes are chilies (often very hot), ginger, garlic and onions, cloves, poppy seeds, and **tamarind** (the fruit pulp of the tamarind tree).

- ◆ Herbs: **Lemon grass** is a lemon-flavored grass plant common in Southeast Asia that is now grown in Florida. It is a popular ingredient in Indonesian, Indian, and Malaysian cooking. Another name for the lemongrass herb is citronella. Other herbs used in Indian cooking are coriander leaves, parsley, and mint.
- ◆ Flavorings and seasonings: Coconut milk and curries are flavorings. Garlic and onion, however, are seasonings.
- ◆ Ingredients: Cereal is the main component of meals, and savory dishes are accompaniments rather than main dishes. Lentils, pulses, and vegetables are important. Rice, millet, chickpeas, and kidney beans are also staple ingredients. Milk products—ghee (clarified and evaporated butter), yogurt, and panir (pickled cheeses)—are visible features of Indian dishes.

An Indian meal is typically a platter of cereal grain, rice, and bread surrounded by small containers of savory accompaniments. Vegetarian cuisines are numerous in India; they are more a social practice than a health practice. Seafood, chicken, and vegetables are often served. The eating of beef and pork is forbidden in many parts of India for religious reasons. Gravies, which are usually made with dairy and numerous spices, may include nuts and chilies.

### Traditional Dishes

- ◆ **Curry** is an Indian term for sauce and (most commonly) “spiced food.” Many people consider curries “hot,” but Indians do not. For example, India prepares many versions of curry dishes. Some contain up to 50 hot chilies, and others only five. Chilies are often milder in the north and hotter in the south. Typically, curries are a mixture of onion, garlic, ginger, tomatoes, and various spices.
- ◆ **Chutney** is spicy relish eaten as a side dish. It is an Indian term spelled “chatni.” Chutney is prepared with parsley (or mint), fruits, and vegetables processed into a thick spread. Regionally, coconut chutney is prepared in the south, and herb chutneys are prepared elsewhere.



**FIGURE 5.** Curry is an Indian term for sauce and most commonly as “spiced food.” This is a lamb curry served with naan bread. Curry dishes typically include onion, garlic, ginger, tomatoes, and many spices.

- ◆ **Garam Masala** is a blend of ground spices used in Indian cuisine. All ingredients, except the nutmeg, are placed in a dry skillet and toasted until darkened and aromatic. Then the nutmeg is added, and the mixture is ground for use in numerous Indian dishes. The basic components include coriander, cumin, cardamom, cloves, black pepper, cinnamon, and nutmeg.
- ◆ **Ghee** is a type of clarified butter widely used in Indian cooking; clarified butter is simmered to brown the milk solids and produce a slightly nutty flavor. However, cooking in oils (e.g., coconut, mustard, and peanut) is popular.

## Italian Combinations

Italy has an enormous wealth of local culinary traditions. For example, Naples is a port city that boasts Catalan cuisine that is famous for aioli (an emulsion of garlic and olive oil), pork dishes, and for pizza. Neighboring countries brought their traditions and recipes into Italy and influenced the way Italians cook. Italian cuisine is usually simple in preparation and in ingredients. Different types of pasta, named for their shapes, are served with tomato sauce, white cheese sauce, or pesto herb sauces.

### Spices, Herbs, Flavorings, and Seasonings

- ◆ Spices: Cinnamon, nutmeg, and cloves (especially for sausages)
- ◆ Herbs: Herbs are more commonly used in Italian cooking than are spices. The most commonly used herbs are basil, parsley, thyme, rosemary, and oregano.
- ◆ Flavorings and seasonings: Lemon juice, garlic, olive oil, onion, black pepper, salt, vinegar, and wine

### Ingredients

- ◆ More than 400 types of cheeses are made in Italy; it is a staple in Italian dishes. The most widely used cheeses are Parmesan, mozzarella, Grana Padano, Provolone, and Asiago.
- ◆ Tomatoes and tomato products (paste, juice, and sauce) are used in many dishes.
- ◆ Olives and olive oil are staples. Lard is also a common fat used in Italian cuisines.
- ◆ Fish (particularly cod), sausage, and pork are commonly used proteins.
- ◆ Semolina flour is used to make pasta.

### Traditional Dishes

- ◆ **Biscotti** are twice-baked crunchy biscuits (cookies) often eaten with a milk and coffee drink called caffè latte. Italian biscotti usually contain chopped or ground nuts.
- ◆ **Caffè latte** is a serving of espresso combined with about three times as much hot milk topped with froth.
- ◆ **Espresso** is a roast type for coffee and a method of brewing coffee in which water is forced under pressure through a compressed bed of finely ground coffee.
- ◆ Minestrone soup (zuppa) is a hearty Italian soup full of vegetables and pasta in a tomato or Scotch broth and sprinkled with Parmesan cheese.

- ◆ Pasta is a noodle made from flour and water. It sometimes includes salt and eggs. Pasta is molded into numerous shapes. For example, ravioli and tortellini pasta shapes are filled with various ingredients, cooked, and served with a tomato or cream sauce. Fresh pasta is made with eggs, but dried pasta is made without eggs.
- ◆ **Pesto** is an uncooked sauce that includes a blend of olive oil, pine nuts, basil, and often Parmesan cheese. It originated in Genoa.
- ◆ Pizza is a flat disk of bread that is a base for toppings.
- ◆ Polenta is thick corn porridge and is solid when cold. It is a staple dish of Northern Italy.

## Latin American Combinations

Latin American countries include Mexico and those in Central and South America, some Caribbean nations, and Spain. Latin American natives built irrigation systems to water their crops; this allowed for a greater variety and quantity of crops to be grown. Africans brought culinary customs and recipes that influenced many Latin American cuisines. Latin American dishes vary from country to country, but they share similarities. Dishes of rice and beans are commonly served together in Latin American homes and restaurants. The type of bean and the cooking method differ, depending upon the region in which the dish is prepared. Corn (maize) and wheat are common flours for tortillas and tamales. Chilies are used in all regions of Latin America.

Chilies range from mild to exceptionally hot. Chili powder is a staple spice made from dried, ground chilies. Many flavorings used in Latin American recipes are a combination of spices that are ground together into a powder. **Achiote** (seeds or annatto seeds) is a mildly flavored, rust-colored spice harvested from the annatto shrub used to add a yellow color and a sweet, peppery taste to foods such as rice and potatoes. It is native to Latin America.

## Spices, Herbs, Flavorings, and Seasonings

- ◆ Spices: Chili peppers (fresh, dried, and powdered) and achiote
- ◆ Herbs: Cilantro (coriander) and oregano
- ◆ Flavorings and seasonings: Garlic, onion, salt, various peppers

## Ingredients

Maize (corn), rice, beans, tomatoes, potatoes, peppers, tropical fruits, and yucca are popular ingredients.

## Traditional Dishes

- ◆ **Adobo sauce** is a mixture of red peppers, oregano, garlic, salt, and vinegar to flavor dishes.
- ◆ **Guacamole** is a Mexican side dish made from mashed avocado and small amounts of lemon or lime juice. It often contains oil, onion, and garlic and is topped with chopped tomatoes.

- ◆ **Salsa** (the Spanish term for sauce) is a condiment typically made from tomatoes, onions, chili peppers, and spices. Optional additions to basic salsa are cilantro and avocado. Salsa is used in all Latin American countries. However, ingredients vary depending on the local produce and chilies of the region. Many are made with tomatoes and onions.
- ◆ **Tamales** are a traditional Mexican dish made from corn meal dough (masa) spread into a cornhusk and filled with a minced and seasoned meat mixture. The cornhusk is wrapped around the masa and steamed until fully cooked.

## Middle Eastern Combinations

Middle Eastern countries include Egypt, Israel, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, and United Arab Emirates. Crops grown in the region and religions have influenced the cuisine. Wheat was first cultivated in the Middle East and continues to be used in many recipes today. Fruits and nuts indigenous (native) to the area are also used in Middle Eastern dishes. Trade with other countries brought new spices, ingredients, and cooking techniques to the region.

### Spices, Herbs, Flavorings, and Seasonings

- ◆ Spices: Cumin, nutmeg, saffron, sesame seeds, and turmeric
- ◆ Herbs: Coriander, dill, garlic chives, grape leaves, lemon basil, marjoram, parsley, and tarragon
- ◆ Flavorings and seasonings: Lemon juice, onion, and rose water

### Ingredients

Wheat, barley, maize, and rice are common Middle Eastern ingredients. Wheat is made into bread, while other forms of wheat become couscous (a dish of steamed semolina usually served with meat or vegetables) and burghul (bulgur or cracked wheat). Lentils and many types of beans are staples. Hummus is a popular dish made from chickpeas. Vegetables, such as lettuce and grape leaves, are common. Fruits and nuts—almonds, apricots, lemons, nectarines, peaches, pistachios, pomegranates, and walnuts—are commonly used. Olives are also commonly used. Meat is scarce and expensive, so it is eaten sparingly. Lamb, mutton, and goat are most common. Chicken, beef, game, and fish—fresh and dried (tuna, swordfish, and shrimp)—are also eaten. Pork is not eaten for religious reasons. Yogurt and cheeses are incorporated into many recipes.

### Traditional Dishes

- ◆ **Baklava** is a pastry made by layering phyllo (filo) dough brushed with butter and covered with nuts (pistachios, almonds, or walnuts), honey or sugar syrup, and a little lemon juice to create a traditional dessert.
- ◆ **Dolma** is typically a mixture of rice, ground beef, and spices stuffed in grape leaves and cooked in a tomato broth.
- ◆ **Kebabs** are small chunks of meat grilled on a skewer.



## DIGGING DEEPER...

### UNCOVERING ADDITIONAL FACTS: Discover Local Ethnic-Specific Restaurants

Research a country or region of interest to you. In your town, visit an ethnic restaurant from that country or region. Read the menu. Which words are new to you? Which ingredients are new to you? Ask the wait staff to recommend traditional dishes for you to try. Choose a dish that sounds interesting. When your meal is served, notice how it is served. Do the plates or bowls look different than you are used to? Taste the food carefully; try to recognize the ethnic or regional spices or ingredients typical for that country or region. How are the flavors different than those you have tasted before? Would you order this dish again? Try the ethnic-specific restaurants in your town.

- ◆ **Lavash** is flexible, thin bread cooked on the wall of a tandoor (a cylindrical clay oven). It keeps well and is used to eat food by hand (rather than using flatware).
- ◆ **Schwarma** is a sandwich made of strips of meat cooked rotisserie style and shaved into thin pieces; it is the Middle Eastern version of a Greek gyro. The pieces of roasted meat are served in a pita or other flatbread. Vegetables and sauce are added to finish the sandwich.
- ◆ **Tahini** is a paste made from sesame seeds used in the making of hummus and baba ghanoush (an appetizer spread made of eggplant, tahini, garlic, olive oil, and lemon).

## FUSION CUISINES

**Fusion cuisine** is a combination of two or more ethnic or regional cuisine techniques and ingredients to create innovative and interesting new dishes. The most popular fusion cuisines continue to be those that combine European and Asian elements. Long before it was popular and trendy, countries were sharing culinary ideas. Ethnic-specific cuisine has changed over time because of climate, economic, and social change. As the world becomes even more accessible through international travel and the Internet, ethnic-specific cuisine continues to change.

Fusion restaurants tend to be most popular in ethnically diverse population centers, as there is a wider audience for the dishes. Common fusion dishes are mushroom and cheese salad; wilted greens and vegetables; toast with mushrooms, herbs, and yogurt; and tuna, guacamole, and ricotta cake. Fusion cooking methods are changed and adopted/adapted according to the place where the dish is prepared. The following cooking methods and techniques are often “edited” by the chef/cook to meet regional or ethnic preferences and expectations: grilling, stewing, baking, roasting, and stir-frying.

### **Euro-Asian Fusion Cuisine**

Euro-Asian is one of the most popular versions of fusion cuisine. The staple elements (foods and techniques) are so different that the melding of the two makes an interesting com-





## FURTHER EXPLORATION...

### ONLINE CONNECTION: Wolfgang Puck

Wolfgang Puck is a famous chef who grew up in France. In 1973, he came to the United States. He opened his first restaurant, SPAGO, in 1982. Chef Puck creates original culinary concepts and has opened many restaurants in his career.

Wolfgang Puck is considered the creator of modern fusion cuisine. When he opened CHINOIS, fusion cuisine was new in restaurants. He creates exciting dishes, and his businesses continue to grow. Read more at <http://www.wolfgangpuck.com/>.

ination. For instance, Vietnamese spring rolls may appear on a French menu, and a wasabi reduction sauce may be paired with a steak or a braised beef roast. Wolfgang Puck is regarded as one of the pioneers of fusion cuisine. He opened CHINOIS in Santa Monica, California, where he paired French and Asian elements into the menu offerings. The restaurant features the following Euro-Asian dishes (served family style): Whole Sizzling Catfish with Ponzu Dipping Sauce, Shanghai Lobster, CHINOIS Chicken Salad, and Mongolian Lamb with Cilantro-Mint Vinaigrette.

### Louisiana-Creole Fusion Cuisine

Louisiana-Creole is one of the first fusion cuisines and is linked to New Orleans, Louisiana. It combines French, Portuguese, Italian, Native American, African, Caribbean, and southern cooking. It began as far back as 1815. Aristocratic recipes were altered using Spanish and Italian ingredients and seasonings. Also, tomatoes and rice were introduced. Italians brought pasta and sauce that was incorporated into the traditionally French cuisine of New Orleans. Africans combined their cooking techniques with the already changing cuisine. The peppers they brought added “heat” to otherwise mild dishes. Caribbean cuisine also influenced Louisiana-Creole dishes. Gumbo is an example of the different cuisines being combined. Examples of Louisiana-Creole dishes are gumbo, Aztec corn soup, three-milk flan, and mashed sweet potatoes with pineapple. **Gumbo** is a thick soup containing vegetables and different meats or seafood. Okra from Africa, tomatoes from the Spanish and Italians, and the traditional French roux (butter and flour used for thickening) are all present in gumbo.



**FIGURE 6.** Gumbo is a thick soup containing vegetables and different meats or seafood. The gumbo pictured here contains pork, okra, and vegetables; it is a classic example of Cajun cuisine.

## East-West Asian Fusion Cuisine

East-West Asian fusion cuisine often uses traditional ethnic-specific ingredients and adds spices and flavorings from another region. Because they share the same continent, it was inevitable that India and East Asian countries (Japan, China, and Thailand) would eventually share recipes. It was a natural progression as people traveled more widely and more frequently. Popular Indian-Chinese dishes are Manchurian chicken, hakka noodles, Hunan chicken, and sweet corn soup.

## TexMex Fusion Cuisine

TexMex is the mixture of food popular in Texas and Mexico. It is a mix of northern Mexican peasant food and Texas farm and cowboy cooking. It is often described as simple, informal, and easy to prepare. Mexican cuisine is popular internationally. When incorporating elements of Texan cooking, it becomes TexMex cuisine. Many TexMex dishes are eaten with hands rather than utensils. Popular Tex-Mex dishes are quesadillas, nachos, tortilla chips and salsa, chalupas, fajitas, chile con carne, and mango-papaya salsa.

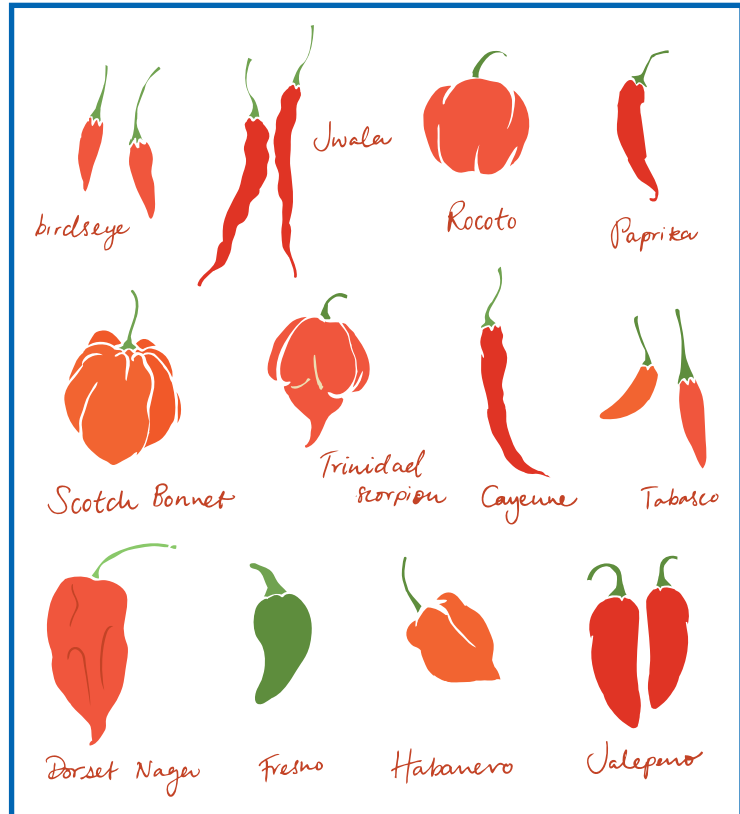


FIGURE 7. Popular Tex-Mex dishes are quesadillas, nachos, tortilla chips and salsa, chalupas, fajitas, chile con carne, and mango-papaya salsa. Find out what kind of chili pepper is used in each of these popular TexMex dishes.

## Italian-American Fusion Cuisine

Italian-American fusion cuisine melds together traditional Italian dishes with available American foods. For example, most Italian foods are simple and may not include meat. In America, however, good quality and inexpensive meats were available to Italian chefs. The addition of meat to traditional Italian dishes is an example of Italian-American fusion. Wine pairing is another key characteristic of this fusion cuisine. Italian-American foods are typically prepared with fresh ingredients and a **battuto** flavor base. **Battuto** is a mixture of finely chopped raw ingredients—parsley, garlic, celery leaves, and onion—sautéed with a pancetta-infused oil and butter mixture. This process is the first step in making Italian soups and stews. Examples of Italian-American fusion cuisine are spaghetti with meatballs, lasagna, eggplant Parmesan, toasted ravioli, baked ziti, pasta primavera, and tiramisu.

## Summary:

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Ethnic-specific food is cuisine that originated or is traditional in a specific region of the world. Cuisine is influenced by many factors, including climate, religious beliefs, cultural customs, local-grown crops, as well as neighboring countries and immigrants. Combining two or more ethnic cuisines together was and still is a natural occurrence in many regions of the world.

Fusion cuisine is a combination of two or more ethnic or regional cuisines' techniques and ingredients to create innovative and interesting new dishes. Fusion cuisine became a trend in restaurants in the 1980s.

## Checking Your Knowledge:

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1. Describe three ethnic-specific food combinations.
2. Describe three traditional French dishes.
3. Describe Indian curry.
4. Describe how tamales are made.
5. Describe Euro-Asian and TexMex fusion cuisines.

## Expanding Your Knowledge:

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Assemble a Fusion Cuisine Cookbook—hard copy and/or online. Begin your cookbook research online. However, make sure you visit your local library. Then prepare some of the recipes and conduct a critical taste test.

## Web Links:

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### Fusion Recipes

<http://ifood.tv/fusion>

### Food in Every Country

<http://www.foodbycountry.com/index.html>

### Recipes by Region of the World

<http://www.whats4eats.com/regions>