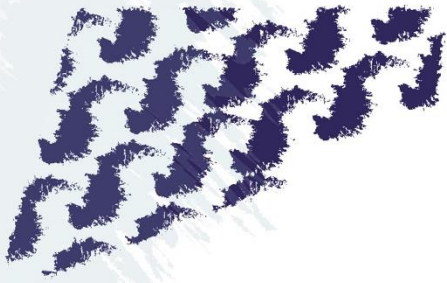


CULTURE is YOU



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Content Unit 4: Hungry for Culture? Food is Cult!



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4 Hungry for culture? Food is cult!

4.1 Introduction

Food culture reflects a society's way of life. It is part of our identity and our home. This includes what is eaten, how it is prepared and how it is consumed.

Food is not only a basic human need, but it also allows us to spend time with each other and strengthens our sense of belonging.

Food culture has evolved over many centuries, with each community having its own food culture. Think of Japan, whose people prefer to eat with chopsticks, African people who eat on the floor with their hands, or Europeans: who eat at the table with cutlery. It also includes trends such as "drive-in" and "take away", which are expressions of modern eating culture.

The diversity of culinary cultures requires individual rules of etiquette, but also knowledge of international dishes and current trends in the culinary arts. In this module, we will give you a brief but sophisticated insight into European cuisine and its table manners.

In this module you will learn about:

- the importance of food to culture
- the importance of eating together in social communities
- the diversity of table manners
- traditional food in the European Union
- the current time of day for meals and different meal types
- religious and cultural backgrounds when abstaining from certain foods
- fun and typical Nordic as well as Southern eating habits
- the change in food culture
- different food preferences and food trends from veganism to eating insects

4.2 It tastes better together

Quote

"The best parties take place in the kitchen." (unknown)

Eating together is an important social event, promotes interaction and strengthens the group structure. Eating in a group is always experienced as a positive experience. People have good conversations, share experiences, and take time to eat. The **positive effect** can be to **create and foster relationships**, but also to **break down hierarchies and** create **relaxation**.

In general, it can be said that those who eat together build empathy and get closer to each other. This is why company dinners are held and foreign politicians and aristocrats are invited to state banquets. A meal together is also often the first time that potential life partners and parents meet.

Note

From a **health perspective**, eating together reduces the risk of obesity, and social media use while eating, but also eating disorders and stress.

Let's now look at the importance of food in relation to customs, religions and festivals.

Over the centuries, **customs have developed all over the world that are primarily culinary in nature and are cultivated**. Each religion has its own dietary rules that apply in everyday life, on feast days and during Lent.

In Christianity, all foods and drinks are permitted, but nature should be treated with care. Some say grace before eating, many abstain from meat on Fridays and eat fish. **Bread and wine** are of **great importance in the church rite**. Fasting before major holidays, such as Easter and Christmas, is becoming less common. A variety of foods are served on feast days. At Easter, for example, these include lamb, ham, milk plait and dyed eggs (which are considered liquid meat). At Christmas, roast beef or pork, roast duck or simple sausages with potato salad are typical.

The 9th month of the **Islamic calendar** is Ramadan. During this time, there is a **religious obligation to fast** from dawn until sunset. Abstinence ends with iftar, the meal after sunset, with family and friends. The food eaten is mainly high in to keep you feeling full for a long time. Popular dishes include dates, poultry and fish, lentils, hummus and harira. In general, Muslims eat "halal" (Arabic for "permitted/permissible").

The **Jewish religion** fasts for 25 hours on "Yom Kippur", the tenth day of the 7th month. The service is followed by a family meal. Traditionally, this is preceded by "kreplach", stuffed dumplings like Italian ravioli. What is allowed is what is "kosher" (Hebrew for "fit").

There are no general rules in **Buddhism**. It is important to eat only when you are hungry, as wasting or throwing away food is considered taboo. Animals are also not to be harmed, which is why many followers of this religion are vegetarian or vegan. There is a strict rule for Buddhist monks: **they must beg for their food**.

Cattle and their meat are sacred in **Hinduism**. Hindus believe in reincarnation and that a human soul can be reborn in an animal. Therefore, many Hindus do not want to kill animals and are mostly vegetarians. Popular drinks include chai tea, lassi and coconut milk.

Outside of religious customs and fasting periods, there are culinary festivals, food festivals and theme days all over the world. Here are some of the European ones:

- **The Lemon Festival in Menton (France)**
Volunteers use around 145 tonnes of lemons and oranges to make giant themed figures that parade that are carried on floats along the promenade during the festival processions.
- **Wachau Apricot Festival (Austria)**
Every year in July, the Wachau region is dedicated to apricots. Over three weekends, delicacies such as apricot dumplings, apricot sparkling wine, apricot cake and apricot liqueur are on offer. The culinary delights are framed by huge apricot decorations along the 700-metre-long pedestrian zone in Krems an der Donau.
- **Prosciutto festival in San Daniele (Italy)**
At the end of August, everything in this small town in Friuli-Venezia Giulia revolves around the famous prosciutto. Whether prosciutto with melon, prosciutto with grissini or served in combination with delicious Friulian cheese and typical wine from this region - prosciutto is at the centre of this three-day festival.
- **Almond Tree and Wine Festival in Hustopeče (Czech Republic)**
Set in the largest almond orchard in Central Europe, this festival takes place at the end of March, when the almonds are in blossom. There are sweet and savoury almond specialities on offer, walks along the Almond Trail and the wine growers open their cellars.
- **Europa na widelcu in Wroclaw (Poland)**
"All of Europe on the Fork" is the motto of this annual food festival, with a parade of chefs, cooking competitions, show cooking, concerts, and lots of regional delicacies. The festival's Europe Meal is famous and much sought-after.
- **Paella Festival in Valencia (Spain)**
Every year, during the rice harvest at the end of September, the people of Valencia celebrate the International Day of Paella, the cultural heritage of the Iberian Peninsula.

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With more than 8 million searches a year on the Internet, paella is the fourth most popular dish in the world, and to be called "Paella Valenciana" - must contain ten authentic ingredients.

Hint

You can find more festivals and traditions at:

<https://www.europeana.eu/de/exhibitions/celebrations-in-europe>

Regardless of religion, **festivals** are **celebrated all** over the world and **always have a culinary background**. They can be harvesting festivals, but also New Year's receptions, carnivals, maypole festivals, Halloween, St Patrick's Day, national holidays, Fat Thursday, Russian Butter Week, the Japanese Cherry Blossom Festival, Midsomer in Sweden or Holi in India, to name but a few.

4.3 Food and customs from North to South

To meet social and cultural demands when eating out, you should follow a few important rules.

Let us first look at the differences in Europe:

Let's take **breakfast** as an example.

Nordic tables offer sausage, cheese, eggs, and bread, but also sausage and beans. This is accompanied by coffee (preferably filter coffee), cocoa or tea.

If you compare this with **southern Europe**, you will see that breakfast there is very sparse, mostly just coffee (short and strong) and sweet pastries.

Many of **the northerners**, with their short summers and long winters, eat a **high-calorie** diet; many foods are preserved by smoking, salting, or drying. The **main meal is dinner**, with only a **small snack at lunchtime**, usually eaten standing up.

In the **warmer, southern countries**, **fresh fruit, and vegetables** as well as **fish and seafood** or **meat** dominate the diet. Pasta, rice, and potatoes are considered side dishes and are eaten in small quantities. In Italy, even pasta dishes are prepared with only 100 g per person. (Compare Austria: 200 - 250 g). **Dinner is usually the main meal** and - by Central European standards - is eaten very late (after 9 p.m.).

Throughout Europe, people eat with cutlery consisting of a knife, fork, and spoon. A variety of special cutlery, such as fish cutlery, lobster tongs and ice-cream spoons, complements the classic cutlery set. For example, fish cutlery, lobster tongs and ice-cream spoons complement the classic cutlery set.

Eating large portions and talking **with your mouth full** is **frowned upon**, as is **burping, smacking, or jingling, and waving** cutlery and plates around. Foods such as chicken thighs, prawns or burgers are only eaten with the hands if finger bowls (small bowls of water and lemon) and a small towel or a fresh-keeping cloth are provided. Bread is an exception. In this case, small pieces are picked off and brought to the mouth in portions.

The cutlery should lie **loosely in the hands and be gripped at** the back. If the cutlery is crossed over the plate, it means that you are taking a short break from eating. If the knife and fork are parallel at the 5 o'clock position, it means that the meal is finished. The halved napkin should be placed on your lap with the open side facing your stomach. Use it to dab your mouth after the meal or during the meal when you reach for your glass. When the meal is finished, place the napkin to the left of the plate.

Important

If you find yourself in an unfamiliar situation, observe the guests around you and take them as an example when dealing with them at the table. Then you can't go wrong!

Let's now take a closer look at some of Europe's culinary highlights, starting in the north-east.

Polish cuisine is known for its simple, hearty dishes, with different food on the coast (north) and in the south (Tatra Mountains). Poland is famous for its "**pierogi**" (dumplings), "**bigos**" (meat stew with cabbage and mushrooms), "**rosol**" (chicken soup with chowder), "**golabki**" (cabbage rolls), "**barszcz**" (beetroot soup). For a sweet treat, try "**Naleśniki**" (Polish crepes), "**Szarlotka**" (apple pie) or "**Kolacz**" (cottage cheesecake).



It can be accompanied by a cold beer, vodka, Gdansk Goldwasser (a rather expensive drink), slivovitz (i.e. plum vodka) or Wściekły Pies (a mixture of vodka, raspberry syrup and Tabasco).

Czech cuisine is very similar to Polish one but there are differences. With a per capita consumption of 135 litres, the **Czech Republic** is **Europe's leading beer consumer**. Famous beer brands include "Starobrno" from Brno, "Budvar" from Budweis, and "Plzeňský prazdroj" from Pilsen. If you want to abstain from alcohol, you can try "Kofola", an herbal lemonade.

Tripe soup ("Dršťková polévka") or "**Kapustnica**" (sauerkraut soup) are traditional Czech dishes. These dishes are often followed by "**Vepřo-knedlo-zelo**" (roast pork with cabbage and dumplings), "**Hovězí Guláš**" (beef goulash) or "**Smažený Sýr**" (baked cheese). **Sweet treats include**. 'Hořické trubičky' (wafer rolls filled with honey, nuts, and cinnamon), 'Kolatsche Valašský frgál' (round yeast cake filled with curd cheese, poppy seeds or plum) or **Karlovy Vary wafers** with nut or cocoa flavour.



Austrian cuisine is influenced by the K&K Monarchy - Hungary, Bohemia, Italy and the Balkans. In addition to the classic Viennese cuisine, there are many provincial specialities. Typical starters include **beef soup with frittatas** or **semolina dumplings**, "**Kaspressknödel**" or **liver dumpling soup**.

Traditional main courses include "**Wiener Tafelspitz**" (boiled beef with roasted potatoes and bread horseradish), the "**Wiener Schnitzel**" (made of veal), the "**Zwiebelrostbraten**" (braised beef with onions), the **stuffed veal breast**, **Butterschnitzel** (minced veal), **offal**, "**Paprikahendl**" (chicken in paprika cream sauce), "**Martini-Gansl**" (goose stuffed with bread rolls), "**Eiernockerln**" (dumplings with egg), "**Krautfleckerln**" (short pasta with caramelised white cabbage).

Traditional dishes from the provinces include Styrian **beetle bean salad**, Carinthian "**Kasnudeln**", Tyrolean "**Speckknödeln**", Vorarlberg "**Käsespätzle**", "**Salzburg Mozartkugel**", Upper Austrian "**Mostbraten**", "**Waldviertler Kartoffelknödeln**" (Lower Austria) and "**Burgenland Fogos**" (pike perch from Lake Neusiedl).

If that's too tart for you, you can eat your fill up on **Austrian desserts and pastries**. Think "**Kaiserschmarrn**", "**Palatschinken**", "**Salzburger Nockerln**" apricot dumplings, "**Sachertorte**", apple strudel, "**Reindling**" and much more.



In addition to **regional soft drinks and juices**, beer and wine are drunk in Austria. Numerous breweries produce about 9.8 hectolitres of beer per year. Austria's wine regions are located in Lower Austria, Burgenland and Styria.

In the southwest of Europe lies **Spain**, whose cuisine is characterised by **fish, tapas and paella**. However, the Levantine culture has also had a strong influence due to the eventful history of the Iberian Peninsula. The food is rich in **stews** with pulses, **meat and fish, seafood and**, of course, **lots of vegetables**. Spain, especially the province of Almeria, is known as the vegetable garden of Europe. Cucumbers, tomatoes, courgettes, aubergines, etc. are grown, as well as citrus fruits, peaches, nectarines, and melons.

Spaniards eat a light breakfast, often having a coffee standing up in a bar. Lunch and dinner are often eaten hot and usually consist of a main course and dessert. Spain is famous for its **tapas - small appetisers served as a starter or with an aperitif**. These include olives, almonds,

Cultural reasons for refusing food can be **ethical reasons, for example**. In Europe, no one would think of cooking their dog. Or to hunt a squirrel and put it on the barbecue. However, in other cultures (South America and China) these dishes are considered delicacies. In general you have to be of legal **age to serve alcohol**. Some states in the USA are even stricter. There it is illegal to drink alcohol in public. Finally, we would like to introduce you to a typical Italian culture, the cappuccino. Cappuccino is drunk by the Italians only in the morning. If someone orders such a cappuccino after 10:00 a.m., you know they are tourists.

True to the motto "*other countries, other customs*", when you travel you will always discover something that contradicts your own culture. Let's take a look at different eating habits.

4.4 Fun Facts – from Plum Pudding to Stockfish

When you are travelling, learning about local specialities, and eating and drinking habits is part of the insider knowledge. We would like to introduce you to some of these customs and terms.

Hungry for culture? Food is cult! - Fun Facts – from Plum Pudding to Stockfish

Did you know that ...

"Kalter Hund" (translated as cold dog) is not a deceased creature, but a German layered dessert made of biscuits and chocolate?

"Tiramisu" and "Saltimbocca" mean as much as "pull me up" and "jump in my mouth"?

"Risibisi" is the Italian name for pea rice?

"Spotted Dick", is not a spotted dog's tail, but a baked pudding?

"Bubble and squeak" are not a squeaky bubble but an English dish of mashed potatoes, ham and egg?

"Stockfish" is not fish on a stick, but another name for air-dried cod?

the "bagel" from the Yiddish "bejgl" has its roots in Krakow (PL)?

the English "plum pudding" does not contain plums? In the Middle Ages, plums were generally considered to be dried fruits, hence the name.

"Surströmming", a Swedish speciality in the form of a fermented herring, can only be eaten outdoors? The foul smell is the reason.

"Diesel" means not only fuel at the pump but also beer and coke?

"Haggis", a popular Scottish dish, is boiled sheep's stomach and offal?

"Dead Granny" has nothing to do with German kinship, but it is cocoa with rum?

"Vodka" was not invented in Russia, but in Poland?

the "Franzbrötchen", a yeast pastry with cinnamon and sugar? Franz stands for French, who brought the recipe to Germany during the occupation.

"Aquavit" the Nordic name for clear schnapps, means "water of life"?

"Utopenci", which means "drowned", does not require a rescue operation, but is a typical Czech dish of sausages in vinegar solution?

"Radler" is not a term for sporty men, but can be ordered as beer with lemonade?

4.5 Changing food culture

The arrival of refrigerators in European households in the mid-1960s made **traditional preservation methods** (salting, drying, smoking) become **unattractive**. The freezer allowed the introduction of frozen foods.

From the 1960s onwards, people travelled to the south and north, increasing their **appetite for foreign food**. At home, people wanted to keep their holiday memories alive, and so by the 1970s, French fries and frozen pizzas were part of every German household. Per capita consumption of frozen food rose from 400g in the 1960s to 16 kg in 1990.

In 1955, the first fast-food restaurant opened in Germany, with the slogan "Today the kitchen stays cold, we're going to the Wienerwald" - a restaurant chain specialising in chicken dishes. The first McDonald's opened in Austria in 1977.

With the energy crisis in 1973 and the founding of the Green Party in the 1980s, there was a change in the way people thought about food. Consumption of organic food increased significantly, but only a few people could afford the high prices.

New products that were marketed as light and that made people believe that they were low in calories had a big impact. There was also an increase in convenience products, ready-made meals that could be quickly and easily prepared in the microwave.

The 1990s saw the emergence of "**functional food**", food that was not only intended to satisfy hunger but also to have a medicinal effect. Additives such as vitamins, minerals and herbs boosted sales. Probiotic yoghurt, aloe vera and ginkgo were the biggest sellers on the market.

By the turn of the millennium, even Eastern Europe had overcome food shortages. This led to a dietary reversal. **Voluntary starvation** came into vogue. Fasting and cleansing became the trend par excellence. Fitness centres and fasting hotels sprang up. Metabolic nutrition, "low carb" (low carbohydrate) "low fat" (low fat) sugar as the body's poison No. 1, were the themes of this nutritional cycle.

BSE, the cattle epidemic of 2001, BSE, the cattle epidemic of 2001, made people more critical about their meat consumption. In 2005, it emerged that rotten meat had been relabelled and placed on the market. This was followed in 2011 by the EHEC scandal, which sickened around 4,000 people across Europe. In 2013, horsemeat-ready meals were discovered. **All these scandals have led to a drastic decline in meat consumption** over the last two decades. Organic meat is bought, if at all, from certified farms.

Environmental concerns, global water shortages and factory farming are all reasons why more and more people are switching to a plant-based diet. In addition, new medical evidence shows that meat consumption is responsible for negative effects such as high blood pressure and high cholesterol levels. This can lead to cardiovascular diseases such as stroke. Finally, let's take a look at the different diets of the 21st century.

We distinguish whether someone voluntarily abstains from certain foods or has to abstain from foods due to allergic reactions.

Let's start with those diets that lead to restrictions for health reasons:



The most common **allergenic foods** are Cow's milk, celery, fish, wheat, peanuts, soya, and hen's egg.

If someone is allergic to one or more of these substances, they can cause symptoms ranging from tingling of the lips to shortness of breath and inflammation of the gastrointestinal tract. It is therefore important to be very careful when dealing with allergies. To prevent the risk of illness, from 2014 all food manufacturers across the EU will have to be able to provide a list of ingredients and allergen information for products - both packaged and unpackaged.

Alternative diets are the umbrella term for all diets in which **meat consumption is reduced or eliminated**.

Let's take a closer look at some of them:

Vegetarianism	Food from animals that have been killed is avoided. This includes meat, fish and products made from them such as sausages and smoked fish, tinned meat, and fish.
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Veganism	The extended form of vegetarianism. In this diet, animal products are generally avoided. This includes not only eggs and honey, milk, and cheese but also leather.
Paleo	also known as the Stone Age diet - meat, fish, eggs, fruit, vegetables, seeds, and fats are allowed. Cereals, sugar, legumes, and dairy products are forbidden.
Clean Eating	The basis is nutrition with natural products, without additives/e-numbers. The food is taken in 5-6 small portions throughout the day.
Raw food	Fruit, vegetables, seeds, herbs, and nuts may be heated to a maximum of 42°C, otherwise important vitamins and nutrients are lost. This type of diet is considered healthy, but also very one-sided.
Fruganism	Neither animals nor plants must suffer from this dietary style. Fruitarians only eat what falls from the tree. Vegetables and fruits that grow in the ground, such as potatoes or onions, are also taboo.
Low carb	The reduction of carbohydrates is the focus of this form of diet. A maximum of 150 g per day is allowed, otherwise, proteins and fats (in the form of fish and meat, milk and tofu) are the order of the day.

As you can see, there are no limits to creativity in nutrition. The important thing is to eat a balanced diet, exercise and not exceed the daily maximum amount of kcal. This way you stay healthy and relieve your body. With this in mind, we wish you:

"Stay or get well!"

4.6 Summary

Imagine someone in your circle of friends is homesick. What is the quickest way to cheer that them up? With a meal from home and company. Because **eating together**, accompanied by good conversation, not only promotes a **sense of togetherness** but also **lowers the pulse and brings satisfaction**. Eating together brings people together and strengthens group dynamics whether the meal is eaten at home or at work.

In order to ensure a **cultivated atmosphere at the table**, **table manners are** required, which regulate the use of cutlery, glasses and plates, as well as **knowledge of foreign dishes, customs and unusual terms**. Chapter 4.3 gave you a rough idea of what to expect.

You are familiar with the **development of food culture** from the post-war period to the present day and have learnt that **diets** must be chosen not only for health reasons but often also for allergic reasons. In the final chapter, you will have learned more about allergens and different diets.

The diversity of diets in the 21st century offers a wide range of specialities that everyone can enjoy to their heart's content. The important thing is to eat healthily and stay active.

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