

American cuisine

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- American cuisine is a style of food preparation originating from the United States of America. European colonization of the Americas yielded the introduction of a number of ingredients and cooking styles to the latter. The various styles continued expanding well in to the 19th and 20th centuries, proportional to the influx of immigrants from many foreign nations; such influx developed a rich diversity in food preparation throughout the country.



History

- Seafood
- Saltwater fish eaten by the American Indians were cod, lemon sole, flounder, herring, halibut, sturgeon, smelt, drum on the East Coast, and olachen and salmon on the West Coast. Whale was hunted by American Indians off the Northwest coast, especially by the Makah, and used for their meat and oil.[1] Seal and walrus were also utilized. Eel from New York's Finger Lakes region were eaten. Catfish seemed to be favored by tribes, including the Modocs. Crustacean included shrimp, lobster, crayfish, and dungeness crabs in the Northwest and blue crabs in the East. Other shellfish include abalone and geoduck on the California coast, while on the East Coast the surf clam, quahog, and the soft-shell clam. Oysters were eaten on both shores, as were mussels and periwinkles.



History

- Cooking methods
- Blue crab was used on the eastern and southern coast of what is now the U.S. mainland.
- Early Native Americans utilized a number of cooking methods in early American Cuisine, that have been blended with early European cooking methods to form the basis of American Cuisine. Grilling meats was common. Spit roasting over a pit fire was common as well. Vegetables, especially root vegetables were often cooked directly in the ashes of the fire. As early American Indians lacked the proper pottery that could be used directly over a fire, they developed a technique which has caused many anthropologists to call them "Stone Boilers". They would heat rocks directly in a fire and then add the bricks to a pot filled with water until it came to a boil so that it would cook the meat or vegetables in the boiling water. In what is now the Southwestern United States, they also created ovens made of adobe called hornos in which to bake items such as breads made from cornmeal and in other parts of America, made ovens out of dug pits. These pits were also used to steam foods by adding heated rocks or embers and then seaweed or corn husks (or other coverings) placed on top to steam fish and shellfish as well as vegetables; potatoes would be added while still in-skin and corn while in-husk, this would later be referred to as a clambake by the colonists.



History

- Colonial period
- When the colonists came to America, their initial attempts at survival included planting crops familiar to them from back home in England. In the same way, they farmed animals for clothing and meat in a similar fashion. Through hardships and eventual establishment of trade with Britain, the West Indies and other regions, the colonists were able to establish themselves in the American colonies with a cuisine similar to their previous British cuisine. There were some exceptions to the diet, such as local vegetation and animals, but the colonists attempted to use these items in the same fashion as they had their equivalents or ignore them if they could. The manner of cooking for the American colonists followed along the line of British cookery up until the Revolution. The British sentiment followed in the cookbooks brought to the New World as well.
- There was a general disdain for French cookery, even with the French Huguenots in South Carolina and French-Canadians. One of the cookbooks that proliferated in the colonies was *The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy* written by Hannah Glasse, wrote of disdain for the French style of cookery, stating “the blind folly of this age that would rather be imposed on by a French booby, than give encouragement to a good English cook!” Of the French recipes, she does add to the text she speaks out flagrantly against the dishes as she “... think it an odd jumble of trash.”[5] Reinforcing the anti-French sentiment was the French and Indian War from 1754-1764. This created a large anxiety against the French, which influenced the English to either deport many of the French, or as in the case of the Acadians, they migrated to Louisiana. The Acadian French did create a large French influence in the diet of those settled in Louisiana, but had little or no influence outside of Louisiana.



History

- Common ingredients
- The American colonial diet varied depending on the settled region in which someone lived. Local cuisine patterns had established by the mid 18th century. The New England colonies were extremely similar in their dietary habits to those that many of them had brought from England. A striking difference for the colonists in New England compared to other regions was seasonality. While in the southern colonies, they could farm almost year round, in the northern colonies, the growing seasons were very restricted. In addition, colonists' close proximity to the ocean gave them a bounty of fresh fish to add to their diet, especially in the northern colonies. Wheat, however, the grain used to bake bread back in England was almost impossible to grow, and imports of wheat were far from cost productive. Substitutes in cases such as this included cornmeal. The Johnnycake was a poor substitute to some for wheaten bread, but acceptance by both the northern and southern colonies seems evident.

As many of the New Englanders were originally from England game hunting was often a pastime from back home that paid off when they immigrated to the New World. Much of the northern colonists depended upon the ability either of themselves to hunt, or for others from which they could purchase game. This was the preferred method for protein consumption over animal husbandry, as it required much more work to defend the kept animals against American Indians or the French.

History

- Livestock and game
- Commonly hunted and eaten game included deer, bear, buffalo and wild turkey. The larger muscles of the animals were roasted and served with currant sauce, while the other smaller portions went into soups, stews, sausages, pies, and pasties. In addition to game, colonists' protein intake was supplemented by mutton. The Spanish in Florida originally introduced sheep to the New World, but this development never quite reached the North, and there they were introduced by the Dutch and English. The keeping of sheep was a result of the English non-practice of animal husbandry. The animals provided wool when young and mutton upon maturity after wool production was no longer desirable. The forage-based diet for sheep that prevailed in the Colonies produced a characteristically strong, gamy flavor and a tougher consistency, which required aging and slow cooking to tenderize.

History

- Fats and oils
- A number of fats and oils made from animals served to cook much of the colonial foods. Many homes had a sack made of deerskin filled with bear oil for cooking, while solidified bear fat resembled shortening. Rendered pork fat made the most popular cooking medium, especially from the cooking of bacon. Pork fat was used more often in the southern colonies than the northern colonies as the Spanish introduced pigs earlier to the South. The colonists enjoyed butter in cooking as well, but it was rare prior to the American Revolution, as cattle were not yet plentiful.

History

- Southern variations
- In comparison to the northern colonies, the southern colonies were quite diverse in their agricultural diet and did not have a central region of culture. The uplands and the lowlands made up the two main parts of the southern colonies. The slaves and poor of the south often ate a similar diet, which consisted of many of the indigenous New World crops. Salted or smoked pork often supplement the vegetable diet. Rural poor often ate squirrel, possum, rabbit and other woodland animals. Those on the “rice coast” often ate ample amounts of rice, while the grain for the rest of the southern poor and slaves was cornmeal used in breads and porridges. Wheat was not an option for most of those that lived in the southern colonies.
- The diet of the uplands often included cabbage, string beans, white potatoes, while most avoided sweet potatoes and peanuts. Non-poor whites in the uplands avoided crops imported from Africa because of the perceived inferiority of crops of the African slaves. Those who could grow or afford wheat often had biscuits as part of their breakfast, along with healthy portions of pork. Salted pork was a staple of any meal, as it was used in the preparations of vegetables for flavor, in addition to its direct consumption as a protein.
- The lowlands, which included much of the Acadian French regions of Louisiana and the surrounding area, included a varied diet heavily influenced by Africans and Caribbeans, rather than just the French. As such, rice played a large part of the diet as it played a large part of the diets of the Africans and Caribbean. In addition, unlike the uplands, the lowlands subsistence of protein came mostly from coastal seafood and game meats. Much of the diet involved the use of peppers, as it still does today.[21] Interestingly, although the English had an inherent disdain for French foodways, as well as many of the native foodstuff of the colonies, the French had no such disdain for the indigenous foodstuffs. In fact, they had a vast appreciation for the native ingredients and dishes.

History

- 20th century—21st century
- Some corporate kitchens (for example, General Mills, Campbell's, Kraft Foods) develop consumer recipes. One characteristic of American cooking is the fusion of multiple ethnic or regional approaches into completely new cooking styles. Asian cooking has played a particularly large role in American fusion cuisine.
- Similarly, while some dishes that are typically considered American have their origins in other countries. American cooks and chefs have substantially altered these dishes over the years, to the degree that the dishes now enjoyed the world over are considered to be American. Hot dogs and hamburgers are both based on traditional German dishes, brought over to America by German immigrants to the United States, but in their modern popular form they can be reasonably considered American dishes.
- Many companies in the American food industry develop new products requiring minimal preparation, such as frozen entrees. Many of these recipes have become very popular. For example, the General Mills Betty Crocker's Cookbook, first published in 1950 and currently in its 10th edition, is commonly found in American homes.
- Pre-packaged American meals tend to be high in carbohydrates, fat, sodium, and various preservatives. However, they also tend to be vitamin fortified. Examples of pre-packed American meals include various casserole type dishes such as Hamburger Helper, as well as bakable and microwavable foods such as Hot Pockets, frozen pizzas, frozen burritos, and various types of TV dinners.
- A wave of celebrity chefs began perhaps with Julia Child in the 1980s, with many more following after the rise of cable channels like Food Network. Trendy food items in the 2000s and 2010s (albeit with long traditions) include cupcakes, macaroons, and meatballs.