

Eating customs around the world



1. Special Specialities

What is your favourite kind of food?

What kinds of food don't you like?

Would you eat the following specialties?

- roast suckling pig (eg Spain, Germany)
- sheep's head (eg some Mediterranean countries)
- haggis (roasted lung, stomach, liver and heart of lamb or sheep mixed with onions, oatmeal, herbs and spices, stuffed inside a bag made from the animal's stomach) (Scotland)
- octopus (eg Spain)
- sushi (a type of rice seasoned with vinegar and are garnished with raw fish or vegetables) (eg Japan, now popular in Europe, too)
- frog legs (eg France)
- snails (eg France, Spain)
- surströmming (small Baltic herring that is salted, fermented and further fermented in a tin. It has a pungent [strong] smell) (Sweden)
- tripe (eg France, Spain, some German-speaking regions)
- guinea pig (in some Latin American countries)
- insects (in some Asian and Latin American countries)

2. Read the following case study and answer the questions.



Photo by Matthew T Rader on Unsplash

A group of German teenagers is taking part in a language course in England. At a party, they are offered a dish called "toad in the hole". It consists of sausages in a batter. The students enjoy the dish until one student tells them that a toad is an amphibian similar to a frog. Most of the students then refuse to finish their plate. Later they find out that "toad in the hole" is just a name and that the dish is not made of toads.

Would you have finished the dish if you thought it was made of toads?

Why wouldn't you eat certain type of food

- because of the way it looks, smells or tastes?
- because you find the idea of eating this type of food unappetizing or unethical?

If you were invited for dinner and didn't like a food item, what would you do to avoid offending the host?

3. Comparing eating habits and table manners

Eating customs vary across cultures. Below you will find some information on table manners in different countries. Which are similar or different in your culture?

In China	In my culture
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - During a meal, sometimes up to 20-30 courses are served. It is therefore recommendable just try a few bites or a spoonful of each dish. - Eating everything and leaving a 'clean plate' makes your hosts believe that you didn't get enough food, which is a terrible insult in China. - Your host will be offended if don't try a dish. For this reason, even if you find the dish unappetising, at least try a small portion to be polite. - The tea drinking ritual known as 'yum cha' is an important part of Chinese business entertaining. Its aim is to build rapport with business partners before a meeting or during meals. - If you do not want more tea, leave some in your cup. - If you are served food for which you don't need utensils such as a spoon or chopsticks, a bowl of tea is often provided that is used for dipping your fingers in it to clean them. 	
In India	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is important to wash your hands both before and after a meal. In Hindu homes, you are also expected to rinse out your mouth. - The left hand is considered unclean, so only eat with your right hand. However, it is possible to pass dishes with your left hand. 	
In Mexico	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Mexican breakfast usually is a hearty meal similar to brunch that includes fruit, meat, and eggs. - Lunch is the main meal of the day. A business lunch often lasts several hours. 	

In Japan	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Slurping when eating your noodles or drinking tea shows that you are enjoying them. - If you do not want to try a food item, you need to make a plausible excuse. For example, you can claim that health reasons prevent you from trying a dish. In this way, everyone can "save face." - Use both hands to hold a bowl or cup that you would like to be refilled. - When you are a guest, don't serve yourself. Wait for the host or another person to refill your drink. - If you don't need your chopsticks, put them on the chopstick rest. 	

4. What questions are important regarding eating habits and table manners before socialising with somebody from a different culture?

Example: When are the mealtimes?

5. Activity 3 – Vocabulary – English – German

course = Gang	dip = eintauchen
recommendable = empfehlenswert	rinse = spülen
offend = beleidigen	chopsticks = Stäbchen
insult = Beleidigung	chopstick rest = Stäbchenhalter
polite = höflich	slurp = schlürfen
build rapport = eine Beziehung herstellen	

For some concise tips on dining customs around the world see

<https://theculinarytravelguide.com/dining-etiquette-around-the-world/>