



**FOOD**



## CULTURAL INFLUENCES

If people are willing to try others' food and include it in their diets they are making a positive statement about other cultures. We can learn a lot about other people's cultures by sitting down and enjoying a plate of food together. The mixing of different culinary cultures has shaped cooking styles (cuisines) throughout the region.

- Noodles, a Chinese invention, are one of the most popular regional dishes.
- Indian influence is strongest on the Malay Peninsula, with the use of spices such as cumin, coriander, ginger and caraway and ingredients such as coconut milk.
- Arab immigrants introduced the cooking technique of kebab – skewered pieces of meat roasted over charcoal – which is commonly used throughout Southeast Asia and in recent times on barbeques.
- The Dutch meal of rice table (*rijsttafel*), made up of rice and numerous small side dishes (most commonly egg rolls, sambals, satay, fruit and pickles), has become part of the Indonesian national cuisine.
- Europeans introduced vegetables such as maize, sweet potato, carrots, cauliflower, onion, potatoes, string-beans and the herb dill.
- 16th century traders brought chilli which became a key ingredient of Southeast Asian cooking.

...and you?

"My favourite dish is bakmi yamin (sweet sauce noodle) with bakso (meat balls) or pangsit (fried wonton). To accompany my lunch, I always drink cold water. Most of the time, I bring my own lunch to school. My favourite menu is steamed plain rice with cap cay (mixed vegetables)."

Riska, 17, F, Indonesia

"My lunch is rice with kangkung (spinach) and bean sprouts or noodles (beehoon or yellow noodles)."

Ranjini, 17, F, Singapore

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE DISH?

WHICH CULTURES INFLUENCE THE FOOD YOU EAT?

WHAT MEALS/DISHES OR INGREDIENTS HAVE YOU EATEN THIS WEEK THAT DIDN'T COME FROM YOUR COUNTRY?

# PIZZA

## GLOBAL CUISINE

American and European dishes and recipes have become common around the region.

- Pasta, pizza, salad and steak feature in a range of restaurants.
- Global chains, such as McDonalds, KFC and local copycats are found in most cities.
- French favourites such as ice cream, baguettes, yogurt and coffee are an essential part of modern Vietnamese, Cambodian and Lao cuisines. These dishes are now also commonplace in other countries, notably Australia and New Zealand.

Local tastes influence imported dishes. For example, pasta and salads are served with locally invented sauces containing chilli, ginger and fish-sauce instead of traditional European oil and vinegar-based sauces.

...and you?

"For supper we order a McDelivery twice a week. McSpicy Burger Meal, with french fries and Sprite."

Ranjini, 17, F, Singapore

"My home cooking is usually pizzas, sausages, buns and doughnuts because that is the only food I know how to cook."

Andrew, 18, M, Malaysia

"My favourite restaurant is the Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC). I love to eat KFC spicy chicken drumsticks with rice and chilli sauce. KFC also provides computers that are connected to the internet. We can use them for free."

Banuaji, 13, M, Indonesia

WHAT EUROPEAN OR  
AMERICAN FOOD  
IS AVAILABLE  
NEAR YOU?







## INGREDIENTS

- Rice is a staple food in Southeast Asian diets because it grows well with warm weather and plenty of water.
- The wet, warm conditions of many parts of Southeast Asia are good for growing leafy greens, such as "water morning glory" and other varieties of mustard or cabbage. They add to the nutritional value of rice-based meals.
- Meat and dairy products are basic foods in New Zealand and Australia because the geography and climate suit extensive cattle and sheep farming.
- Fruits such as pineapple, papaya, mango and banana grow well in the tropical climates, while apples and citrus grow in colder conditions further south.
- Fish and seafood are eaten everywhere and are an important source of protein.

### ...and you?

"I like fruit very much, watermelon, jackfruits, longan, grapes, peach, pomelo..."

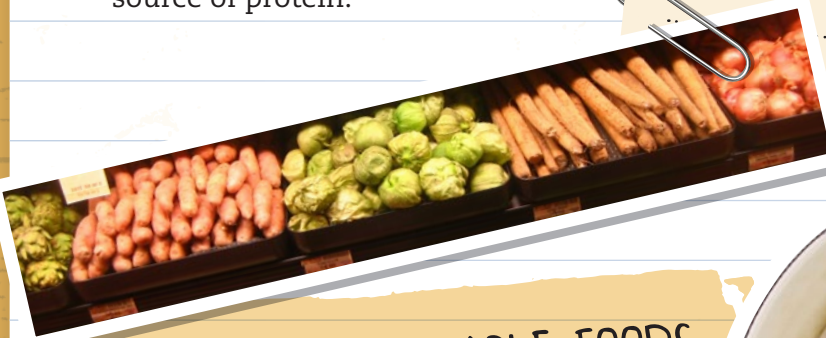
Trang, 16, F, Vietnam

"Our family grow our own produce and food, we have trees everywhere! Kamias (ginger lily), santol (a type of fruit)...we used to have a mango tree, avocado... We also have malunggay (moringa) and kangkong (water spinach)."

Neama, 15, F, Philippines

"The family vegetable garden has pumpkin, lettuce and silverbeet. Dad planted an orchard ten years ago which is now producing good apples, oranges and mandarins. We also get eggs from our three chickens."

Molly, 15, F, New Zealand



WHAT ARE THE STAPLE FOODS  
IN SOUTHEAST ASIA  
AND AUSTRALASIA?  
WHY DO THEY DIFFER?



WATER MORNING GLORY



## COOKING & EATING

What we cook often affects the kind of utensils we have. For instance, dishes common to Southeast Asia often require:

- a large oval iron pan (wok)
- a heavy cleaver and sharp knife for both delicate and heavy-duty cutting
- a mortar and pestle to process the spices
- a gas stove (which is replacing the traditional wood-fed hearth)
- an electric rice cooker.

As Southeast Asian dishes become popular in Australia and New Zealand, more of these utensils, such as woks and rice cookers, can be found in Australian and New Zealand kitchens.

Eating and meal times provide important opportunities to share.

- Throughout the region food is often served in shared pots and plates then dished into personal bowls or plates.
- Most Southeast Asians, Australians and New Zealanders use cutlery, particularly forks and spoons, and eat from plates.
- Unlike other Southeast Asian countries, chopsticks are the traditional eating utensil in Vietnam. However, through Chinese migration, chopsticks have become increasingly popular elsewhere, especially for eating noodle dishes.
- It is considered good manners throughout the region for diners to pay attention to their fellows, avoiding gluttony and doing their best to ensure that the meal is shared.
- In the Southeast Asian countryside, meals are usually eaten on the floor or on a mat and food is served on a large tray.
- In urban settings across the region, people use tables and chairs when eating. Typically, Southeast Asian tables and trays are round, making all diners equal, whereas Australian and New Zealand tables were traditionally rectangular, with the senior family member or host sitting at “the head of the table”.







## MEALS

- People throughout Southeast Asia, Australia and New Zealand most commonly eat a home-cooked breakfast. In Southeast Asia this traditionally consists of a simple dish such as noodles or rice porridge. In Australia and New Zealand it is usually oat porridge, toast or cereal.
- Traditionally in Southeast Asia the main meal of the day is lunch (usually rice and a variety of accompanying dishes), while in Australia and New Zealand the main meal is dinner, often a meat, a carbohydrate (such as rice, potatoes or pasta) and vegetables (cooked or fresh).



### ...and you?

"For breakfast I eat toast or cereal, something like weetbix. For dinner we have a mix of stir-fry, soup and pasta dishes. We also have salad in summer."

Joshua, 17, M, Australia

"Breakfast: rice with fried egg and milk

Lunch: rice or noodle

Dinner: rice, fish, pork, mixed vegetables"

Jintana, 14, F, Thailand

"My favourite food is Mum's home-made Indian Curry."

Anneke, 15, F, New Zealand

"Lunch is what we call economy rice i.e. rice with a meat and two vegetable dishes. There is a variety of fish, vegetable, chicken, pork egg etc dishes which are ready cooked and you take your pick. Dinner is a home-cooked meal by my mum: usually rice and a few dishes either fish or chicken and vegetables. Supper is roti canai at one of the mamak stalls close to home."

Andrew, 18, M, Malaysia

WHAT FOODS ARE EATEN  
ACROSS SOUTHEAST ASIA  
AND AUSTRALASIA?

# SPICES

Although the different meals in Southeast Asia are based on similar ingredients and cooking techniques, it is spicing that makes the difference.

For example, *Pad Thai* (a Thai dish) and *Mee Goreng* (a Malay dish) have many of the same ingredients but are differentiated by their seasoning.

Spicing can incorporate sweet, sour, salty and hot tastes in a single dish (or in the meal as a whole, as in Cambodia). Spicy dishes are generally eaten with plain rice or noodles.

- Thai and Lao food is very spicy
- Khmer food is relatively mild
- Malay cuisine is defined by *sambal* (the local chilli paste made of chilli, shrimp-paste powder, salt, sugar and sour tamarind pulp)
- Vietnamese often bite into fresh chilli while eating to accommodate personal preferences for the intensity of spiciness.

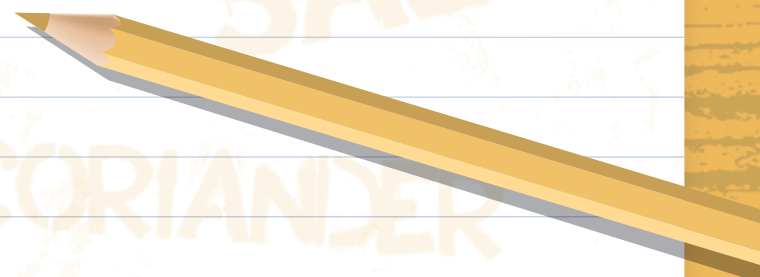


Popular Southeast Asian spices are: ginger, galangal, cumin, turmeric, garlic, shallots, star-anise, lemongrass and black pepper. Other spices that are used include:

- Nutmeg, cloves, cinnamon and cardamom are not so common in daily cooking but are added to special dishes.
- Lemon, lime, green tamarind, pineapple, tomato and unripe fruits, such as star fruit and bananas, are used to create a sour taste. Sour fish soup is a common dish across Southeast Asia.
- Shrimp and fish, such as anchovies, are mixed with salt and spices and fermented into shrimp-paste or fish-sauce. They are one of the main sources of flavour in Southeast Asia.
- Spices are also used in Australian and New Zealand dishes however this is traditionally to a lesser extent than in Southeast Asian cuisine.



TAMARIND  
CHILLI  
SALT  
CORIANDER







FISH-SAUCE

Aromatic herbs such as basil, mint, corianders and other local herbs are widely used in Southeast Asian, Australian and New Zealand cooking. These herbs are either cooked with the other ingredients or used to garnish cooked dishes.

- Spring-rolls originated in Southeast Asia. They are stuffed with raw herbs or eaten rolled in lettuce leaves with fish-sauce based dips or peanut sauce.

- Mainland Southeast Asian sour salads (Vietnamese goi, Thai-Lao laap, Khmer lab) use shredded green papaya, green mango or banana flower as the main ingredient, mixed with a variety of aromatic greens and dried seafood or meat. They are seasoned with lime-juice, sugar, chilli, garlic, peanuts and fish-sauce or shrimp-paste.



HERBS



SOUR SALADS



## TAKE-OUT / FASTFOOD

- In Southeast Asia, people often purchase light meals from street stalls.
- Many different dishes are served at these stalls, including salads, noodle soups, filled bread rolls and satay.
- In Australia and New Zealand, people have also long enjoyed fastfood. Common types of fastfood are meat pies and fish-and-chips (fish covered in batter and deep fried).
- There are also now a lot of Southeast Asian restaurants – dine-in and take-out – in New Zealand and Australian towns.



### Food preparation

"Mom usually cooks for the family, but often dad will cook on weekends."

Angela, 16, F, Philippines

"My mom usually organises the family's food."

Nuraini, 17, F, Malaysia

"My mother organises the grocery list and shopping, but cooking is quite equally shared between my parents. Sometimes one of us kids takes charge of that night's cooking."

Taimus, 17, M, New Zealand

WHO PREPARES YOUR FAMILY'S FOOD?



## FOOD CONNECTS THE REGION

Migrants from different ethnic and religious backgrounds brought their foods, ingredients and recipes with them. They set up ethnic restaurants, originally intended for their own community.

Today, restaurants and eateries featuring different ethnic foods as well as local food line the streets of cities throughout the region.

- In Australasia, even small towns and suburban centres feature a few Asian restaurants, with the larger urban centres boasting entire streets devoted to ethnic restaurants.
- Australian and New Zealand restaurants and pubs (bars) can be found in most Southeast Asian urban centres.

### ...and you?

"My favourite restaurants are Punkawallah (Indian), The Thai House and Butlers Reef, a seafood restaurant."

Molly, 15, F, New Zealand

"My favourite restaurant is Oishi (Japanese), MK (Thai and Chinese) and McDonalds."

Garn, 16, M, Thailand

### ...and you?

"We buy our food from the supermarket but sometimes at the palengke (wet market) or talipapa (street market) nearby."

Angela, 16, F, Philippines

"We buy a lot of the family's bread, vegetables and fresh produce from street stalls. The bulk of the groceries are bought from the supermarket, but specialty items come from the butcher or a deli."

Molly, F, 15, New Zealand

The range of ingredients available at local supermarkets and grocery shops has increased to cater for different cuisines. Many of the tropical fruits found in street markets in Kuala Lumpur are also available seasonally in Australian and New Zealand supermarkets.

