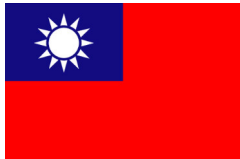


CHINA, HONG KONG & TAIWAN



History

Hong Kong

- British Colony until from 1842 to 1997
- Now as Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) of People's Republic of China
- Language spoken: Cantonese, English as a second language (compulsory)

China

- Formal name as People's Republic of China (PRC) since 1912
- Joined WTO in 2001
- Language spoken: most Mandarin with many other dialects

Taiwan

- Started calling for independence from China since 1895
- Legitimately still part of China
- Language spoken: Mandarin / Taiwanese

Immigration

- Chinese immigrants in the US increased dramatically after 1965 with the elimination of restrictions
- Most Chinese American reside in California, New York, Texas, Washington D.C. and the Northeast
- The 2000 U.S. Census reports that Asian Americans comprise about 4.4% (12.5 million) of the American population and projects that this will grow to 9.3% (37.6 million) by 2050.
- Massachusetts' largest Asian Americans & Pacific Islanders (AAPI) ethnic group is Chinese

Health Concerns of Immigrants

- In Hong Kong/China/Taiwan, having one's own vehicle is not the norm and more than half of the population depends on the public transport systems. Life is more active and diet is lower in fat and contains less meat. However, upon arrival in the US, most people drive which makes them less active and adapting to the Western diet increase the total calorie and fat intake.
- High blood pressure is commonly found in Chinese adult population due to high sodium condiments used in cooking
- Diabetes is rated as the top 5 leading cause of death in the US in 2001 in AAPI.
- Language and cultural barriers, stigma associated with certain conditions and lack of health insurance are the major barriers leading to poor health outcomes in the Asian Americans.
- Chinese see doctors when they are sick, most of them don't have the concept of preventative medicine.
- Many use traditional Chinese medicines (especially the elderly)
- Use of herbal remedies common: *gingko*, *gingseng*, *reishi*, *dong quai* etc
- Overweight children in US

Food Management Practices

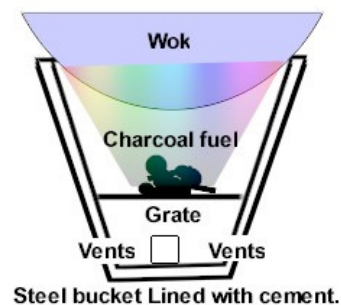
- Women do food shopping, prepare and serve the food.
- Food is usually not eaten raw with the exception of fruits. Meat is always cooked thoroughly in Chinese cooking.
- The wok is the major utensil used in Chinese cooking; it is designed with a round bottom that fits perfectly over a traditional Chinese 'stove' - often made of clay or mud which burned wood or charcoal.



an iron wok



a traditional clay stove



how it works

- Food is eaten with chopsticks; soup with flat-based spoon



chopsticks



flat-based soup spoon

- All dishes are put in the center of the table and shared among the table, each person has his/her own bowl of rice, and everyone can pick food from the dishes according to their preferences.



- If a food on the table that one can't be reached, the bowl is passed along the table and the person who is closer to the food helps fill out the bowl. Shared dishes are seldom moved or lifted at a Chinese dinner table.
- Meal is a form of reunion
- Appetizer and dessert are not served daily in a home meal basis. However, they are essential in formal dinners like wedding banquets and birthday banquets.
- At formal dinners or certain festivals, foods or dishes with symbolic meanings are usually served.
- Belief in Chinese food therapy: certain foods have healing functions; food is more than just providing energy.
- Chinese Americans usually shop in grocery stores in Chinatowns or Chinese Supermarkets which sell Asian food.
- The concept of Yin (cold) and Yang (hot)
 - Certain foods have yin/cold properties, others have yang/warm properties
 - Target: consume a diet that contains a healthy balance between the two
 - Healthy balance between the yin and yang in the body is used in treating illnesses
 - heartburn, caused yang/warm → consume yin/cold food to balance to 2 forces

- Cooking Methods
 - Yin/cold qualities: Boiling, Poaching, Steaming
 - Yang/warm qualities: Deep-frying, Roasting, Stir-frying
- Foods
 - Yin/cold food: bean sprouts, cabbage, carrots, crab, cucumber, duck, tofu, watercress
 - Yang/warm food: bamboo, beef, chicken, eggs, ginger, glutinous rice, mushrooms

Agricultural and Staple Food

- Staples: Rice (Southern part of China), Noodle & steamed buns (Northern parts of China)
- Soup is usually served at the start of a meal or at the end of a meal.
- Typical food on the table: beef, pork, fish (steamed with the bones), tofu
- Major vegetables: Chinese Cabbage, Bok Choy, Chinese Broccoli, Chinese Spinach, eggplant, cucumber
- When meat is served, it is not served in the form of a big piece of meat like steak or chop. Meat is sliced into bite-size pieces and stir-fried with vegetables.
- Cooking style: steaming, stir-fry, boiling, stewing, roasting, deep-fry (least common)
- Common condiments: soy sauce, oyster sauce, *hoisin* sauce, garlic, ginger, rice wine, bean curd, shrimp sauce.
- Diet relatively high in fiber, lower in protein and fat compared to American diets



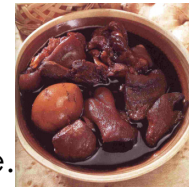
- Beverage is not an essential part of a meal, cold beverages are believed to be harmful to digestion of hot food
- Besides soup, if any other beverages are served, they would be hot tea or hot water.
- Tea is believed to help in the digestion of greasy foods.
- Dim sum: snacks served in steaming bamboo baskets and eaten with pots and pots of Chinese tea for breakfast or lunch in Chinese restaurants. e.g. Steamed pork buns, shrimp dumplings, beef balls, steamed spare ribs, etc. Picture at left.

Food Practices Related to Life Cycle and Major Celebrations

- Illness: porridge / Congee (*jook*), which is a gelatinous rice soup, is commonly made when a person is sick. Picture at right.
- Menstruation: cold food and beverages are not encouraged during menstruation since it is believed to cause extra blood loss and cramping.



- Postpartum:
 - Parents announce the new baby by sending red eggs to family and close friends. An odd number of eggs signifies a boy; even number for girls. Picture at right.
 - Ginger vinegar soup made with pig's feet is a traditional food which is believed to help restore calcium and iron reserves. Picture at right.
 - Postpartum Chinese women avoid yin/cold food (i.e. uncooked vegetables, salads or fruits) and yang/hot foods (i.e. hot water, soups, ginger, wine and food that are high in protein) are encouraged.



- Birthdays
 - Longevity buns in the shape of a peach are eaten during birthdays of the elderly. Chinese culture, peach is long associated with longevity. These buns are filled with lotus or red bean paste. Pictures at right.
 - Longevity Noodle is a must-have at every birthday banquet. As the name implies, its long shape symbolizes longevity. One is not supposed to cut the noodles as he/she eats them.
- Chinese New Year:
 - Food plays an important role during the Chinese New Year, and probably more food is consumed at this celebration than any other time of the year. Vast amounts of traditional food are prepared for family and friends and it is a way of bringing everyone in the family together.
 - Traditional food on a Chinese New Year dinner table:
 - Fish -- the pronunciation of fish makes it a homophone for "more than enough", or "extra".
 - Black moss seaweed -- a homonym for exceeding in wealth
 - Chicken -- for prosperity, must be presented with a head, tail and feet to symbolize completeness.
 - Oysters -- Receptivity to good fortune
 - Prawns -- liveliness and happiness



When visiting relatives, it's customary to offer guests tea, along with a round or octagonal tray filled with a variety of treats, from nuts to sweets. This is known as *chyuhn haap*, or the Tray of Togetherness. The tray usually contains an inner set of eight compartments to help keep the goodies separated. Each compartment is filled with special symbolic foods:



- Lotus Seeds -- fertility
- Red Melon Seeds--red; for happiness, joy, honesty and sincerity
- Kumquat--gold; for prosperity
- Sticky Cake (*Nian Gao*) its pronunciation is a homophone for "a more prosperous year".
- Turnip cake-- prosperity and rising fortune, also served as dim sum all year long. Picture at left.

Dragon Boat Festival:

- Commemoration of a popular Chinese patriot who in the 3rd century in protest of a corrupt government threw himself into the Mi Lo River in despair. Now, it is celebrated by boat races in the shape of dragons. People eat rice dumplings wrapped in bamboo leaves filled with pork, mushrooms, chestnuts, etc (savory) or red-bean paste (sweet).



Moon cake with lotus paste and egg yolks



rice dumplings wrapped in bamboo leaves.

Mid-Autumn Festival:

- During the festival, people eat special sweet cakes known as "Moon Cakes" made of ground lotus and sesame seed paste, egg-yolk and other ingredients.
- Along with the cakes, shops sell colored Chinese paper lanterns in the shapes of animals, and more recently, in the shapes of airplanes and space ships.
- On this family occasion, parents allow children to stay up late and take them to high vantage points such as The Peak to light their lanterns and watch the huge autumn moon rise while eating their moon cakes.
- Public parks are ablaze with many thousands of lanterns in all colors, sizes and shapes.

Winter Solstice Festival:

- The second most important festival in the Chinese calendar.
- Celebrated on the longest night of the year. Winter Solstice Festival is the day when sunshine is weakest and daylight shortest.
- The coming of winter is celebrated by families and is traditionally the time when farmers and fishermen gather food in preparation for the coming cold season. It is also a time for family reunions.
- The festive food of *Dong Zhi* is rice-flour dumplings, sweet or savory, as their round shape symbolizes reunion of family members. They are usually eaten after a sumptuous family dinner



savory rice-flour dumplings



sweet rice-flour dumplings

Communication Style

- Do not talk to and try to avoid eye contact with strangers
- Comfortable with more physical distance
- Do not hug each other like people in the Western Countries do
- Physical contact between the opposite sexes is considered inappropriate except in couples
- Parents of elderly in the families have authority on the younger ones

Fun Facts that most people don't know

- Americanized Chinese foods that are not typically served at traditional Chinese restaurants:
 - Moo shu pork
 - Chop suey
 - Chicken fingers
 - Crab Rangoon
 - Fortune cookies

Written by Helen Ng, FSC graduate student and native of Taiwan.