

Chinese

About the Culture

- China is the largest Asian country, 3rd largest country in the world, and has the largest population of any country in the world.¹
- Due to its size, it has some of the most diverse ecological systems resulting in large and varied agricultural production.¹
- A majority of the population are Chinese (Han) but there are 55 minority ethnic groups throughout the country with individual languages and cultural practices.¹
- Physical exercise is an important part of daily activity and includes many types of movement including tai chi chuan, walking/jogging, dancing, and alternative forms of martial arts.¹



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Eating Customs and Traditions

- Food is an important part of daily life, not only for the act of eating but the belief that good food can bring harmony to family and relationships.²
- Fresh food acquired through daily shopping trips is vital to the cultural emphasis on food's texture, flavor, color, and aroma rather than nutritional value.²
- Strong belief in balancing "yin" (cold foods) and "yang" (hot foods) in diet to promote health and balance while averting illness, rather than eating within the five food groups.²
- Fresh seasonal fruit is typically consumed after dinner, with processed sweets such as cookies or cakes eaten during special occasions.²
- Banquet dining is common for holidays and special occasions, where guests sit around a communal table and share the meal family style.²

Cultural Ingredients

- Regional cuisines vary throughout China based on geographical and cultural differences, resulting in individual cooking methods and eating habits.²
- Due to high rates of lactose intolerance, dairy is not typically consumed but instead substituted with soymilk and tofu.²
- Daily meals consist of rice, soup and three to four side dishes made of fresh vegetables or meat.²
- Fresh fruits and vegetables are typically consumed, with canned or frozen items seldom eaten.²
- Deep frying is not common in Chinese cuisine, with preferred cooking methods being steaming and stir-frying.

SNAP-Ed Cultural Awareness Toolkit—Chinese

Adapting SNAP-Ed Curriculum to Reflect Dietary Patterns

- Based on regional differences, identify where in China participants' families are from, focusing on regionally based cooking and eating habits.
- Focus conversations on fortified soy products instead of animal dairy products to increase calcium and protein intake.²
- Continue promotion of fresh fruits and vegetables, with applicable resources for acquiring culturally relevant items with SNAP benefits.
- Emphasize use of common cultural cooking methods such as steaming and stir-frying.
- Inquire about different types of "yin" and "yang" foods in order to center discussion around maintaining health balance.

RECIPE RESOURCES

Live Well:

<https://wasnap-ed.org/live-well/recipes/>

Eat Smart, Move More:

<https://eatsmartmovemoreva.org/category/recipes/myplate-inspired-dishes-from-around-the-world/>

POPULAR FOODS	DESCRIPTION, SEASON, AND STORAGE
Cantonese	<p>Most commonly available style of Chinese regional cuisine in the US.</p> <p>Tropical climate focuses on fresh fruits, vegetables and meat. Cooking times are of critical importance and food should be tender and moist while being seasoned appropriately.</p> <p>Steaming and stir-frying are most common cooking methods, preserving freshness.</p> <p>Emphasis on garnishing and presentation.</p> <p>Staple foods: rice, sweet potatoes, chicken, fresh fish, shellfish, beef, pork, taro, water chestnuts, tropical fruit (i.e., lychee, mango)</p> <p>Seasoning and spices: oyster sauce, hoisin sauce, fermented black bean sauce</p> <p>Common dishes: beef with oyster sauce; steamed chicken with ginger and scallions; steamed fish; curry with chicken</p>
Szechuan	<p>Dishes are typically spicy but also focus on sweet, sour, bitter, hot, salty, aromatic, and fragrant flavor balances.</p> <p>Stir-frying, roasting and simmering are the most common cooking methods.</p> <p>Staple foods: rice, noodles, beef, lamb, pork, tofu, green onions, mustard greens</p> <p>Seasoning and spices: Sichuan peppercorns, Chinese five-spice powder, chilis (whole, paste, and oil), garlic, sesame seeds/paste, preserved and pickled vegetables</p> <p>Common dishes: hot chili eggplant; twice-cooked pork; Szechuan beef; Ma Po Tofu; Kung Pau Chicken; tea-smoked duck; Hot Pot</p>

References

1. Suzuki C. China. Encyclopædia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/place/China>. Published 2022. Accessed March 3, 2022.
2. Lin K. Chinese Food Cultural Profile. EthnoMed. <https://ethnomed.org/resource/chinese-food-cultural-profile/>. Published April 21, 2020. Accessed March 3, 2022.