

Traditional European Foods

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ABSTRACT: The food of Europe is of a huge variety. Since it is not possible to cover all the delicious dishes in Europe, we consider one European nation and its iconic dish at a time. In each nation, we consider one dish that stands out as the most recognizable, most famed, and most sought-after by visitors. This is the food staple that people think of when they think or visit the country. This traditional dish also tells the story of a country's history, people, and culture. This paper compiles different popular European foods one can expect in restaurants and on the streets all over the continent.

KEYWORD: food, culture, staple foods, traditional European foods.

INTRODUCTION

Europe's landscape has been shaped by centuries of diverse farming and food traditions. Europe is commonly known for its kings, queens, castles, churches, stunning artworks, and towering images of nature. It is the home to some incredible foods. It is commonly believed that food tastes and traditions were as varied in Ancient Europe, as they are today.

Food may be a good reason to travel to Europe. Each European nation has its special dishes that are worth sampling for any traveler. Italian food is different than Greek and French food is different from the British. Every nation has its culture, history, and foods that have been developed over the centuries. There are Central European cuisines, Eastern European cuisines, Northern European cuisines, and Southern European cuisines. No matter what your taste are craving, you are sure to find delicious food from Europe to try [1].

TRADITIONAL STAPLES

Traditions are customs or beliefs taught by one generation to the next. Each culture, ethnic group or region has specific traditions. Specific eating habits play an important role in the traditional habits of many cultures. Traditional foods have played a major role in traditions of different cultures and regions for thousands of years, especially in Europe. The traditional foods of European nations are diverse, although there are common characteristics that distinguish them from those of other regions. European food tends to have more meats flour and starchy ingredients. Bread, beef lamb, maize (or corn) and potatoes are found in European

dishes. Historically, European cuisine has been developed in the European royal and noble courts. The knife was the primary eating implement (cutlery), and eating steaks and other foods that require cutting followed. The knife was supplanted by the spoon for soups, while the fork was introduced later in the early modern period. A person's diet varied depending on their social class. Maize and bread are common for all classes [2]. Red meats, chicken, and eggs are used sparingly. Dishes are based on grain products, such as rice, pasta, maize, and bread. Here we discuss the two main staples [3].

- *Maize*: This is one of the major crops of the world for feed, food, and industrial uses. Due to the large adaptability of maize, farmers have originated a wide variability of genetic resources with wide diversity of adaptation, characteristics, and uses. Maize (or corn) is mainly used in Europe for feed, but several food specialties were originated during these five centuries of maize history and became traditional food specialties. Compared with other cereals, maize contains a high level of soluble phenolic compounds.
- *Bread*: According to the Bible, bread is the staff of life. Bread is popular through the world as a staple food. Each region has its own speciality of bread. Bread is a basic food of the Mediterranean diet, wheat being the main cereal used for bakery. The iconic bread loaf ciabatta is often believed to be an ancient staple of the Italian table. In most Middle Eastern nations, bread is to eating what air is to life, and no meal is complete without it. However, in South Western Europe, whole meal maize flour is frequently used for ethnic maize leavened bread production for which the regional maize landraces are usually preferred. The maize flour cake became a substitute for wheat bread for the majority of the rural society and it was made of ground toasted maize, water, and salt. As fermented food, sugars are converted into organic acids in maize bread,

DIFFERENT EUROPEAN DISHES

Each country in Europe has a slightly different recipe. Several iconic dishes are presented in the taste atlas of Figure 1, which one discovers while exploring the old continent and its glorious food [4]. We only cover every European nation's best traditional dish. Representative dishes all over Europe are provided here [5-9].

1. *Italy* never misses on the list of the best countries for food. Italia proudly comes with a wide range of the best food dishes in the world. Italy is one of the world's most adamantly food-oriented nation. Italian dishes are a favorite for millions of people all over the world. Choosing the most popular dish from Spain can be hard as there is just so much choice. Italy is home to a host of several iconic dishes. Pizza, pasta, tortilla española, gazpacho, and patatas bravas stand out. Italian cuisine is a perfect mixture of colors and incredible taste. Italians love to eat meat, fish, vegetables, pasta, pizza, spaghetti, rice, or bread for dinner with passion for each dish that is served to them. A simple pasta meal by an Italian chef will be finger licking sweet. Although pizza is a popular food across the world, no one makes it quite like the Italians. Italy is the birthplace of pizza. Figure 2 shows Italian pizza [5]. Different toppings can be added to alter the taste of the pizza. Pizza and pasta are the ultimate food experience for any visitor.
2. *Britain* has one of the most quintessential meals around. It is beer-battered fried fish and crispy French fries. For dessert, serve up a scoop of raspberry ripple, or another frozen treat from around the world. Fish and chips constitute a fairly standard dish served with mushy peas. While this may not be everyone's favorite food, it is certainly one of the country's most traditional. Fish and chips are an important component of English culture. Common accompaniments may include mushy peas, curry sauce, and gravy. The traditional British dish is shown in Figure 3 [8]. It is known as the full breakfast. It appears everywhere with a few essentials and some regional additions.
3. *France* is the home of French fries, which are a favorite for the majority of people all over the world. Their staple food is cheese, while their famous delicacies include Bisque, Macarons, and terrine. Beef bourguignon is a meal the whole family will love. Traditionally cooked for hours, cassoulet recipe offers

the same homey taste in less time. One can describe French cuisine is one word: contemporary. France has its wide list of first-class cheeses such as Munster cheese, Brie, Camembert, and Roquefort. Snails are regarded to be a delicacy in France and can be quite expensive. Land snails are cooked in garlic and parsley butter. Foie gras is another famous dish made of the liver of a duck or goose. The croissant is as indelible to French tradition as the Eiffel Tower. The croissant was invented when a Frenchman challenged the idea that no more butter could possibly fit into a piece of dough. A properly made croissant should be puffy, flaky, slightly sweet, and elastic. French croissants are displayed in Figure 4 [9].

4. *Germany*: “Wurst” is the German word for sausage. Germany is the home of sausages as the country has around 1,500 types of sausages. There is a sausage for every time of year and every occasion. The currywurst dish basically combines two of the finest ingredients to grace this earth: chips and sausage. The currywurst is fried pork sausage cut into slices and seasoned with curry ketchup. This simple yet tasty fast food is a must-try for those who visit Germany. The Germans themselves eat an estimated 800 million currywursts a year. They even have a museum dedicated to currywurst in Berlin. Variety of sausages includes bratwurst (made from minced pork and beef) and blutworst (made from blood sausage). Bratwursts are meaty and fatty. They are dark, spicy, and fatty. They are definitely a German sausage to win your heart. Other German favorites include spaetzle, type of pasta made from fresh eggs, and pretzels. To enjoy your burgers or hot dogs, put them in pretzel buns. German Pretzels are shown in Figure 5 [9]. They are usually served for appetizers and there are many ways to eat them.
5. *Russia*: This is the largest nation in the world. Picking the most delicious dish is not easy. Pelmeni is made of soft dough and filled with meat and served with sour cream. You can find them virtually everywhere, especially in Moscow. Pelmeni is shown in Figure 6 [7]. When you visit Russia, you will find borsch on the menu. But this dish originates from Ukraine. Borsch is essentially a vegetable soup made with beetroot and usually served with sour cream. Sometimes the simplest recipes happen to be the best. That is the case with the Russian blini. These delicate, small pancakes might not look like much, but they are buttery and incredibly tender.
6. *Netherlands*: As a seafaring country, it comes as no surprise that most popular Dutch delicacy is raw herring. Herring is often served as a snack, may be with pickles and onions. During the Middle Ages, the Dutch began to salt and smoke herring. The preservation procedure was refined over the years and vinegar was added to the mix. Make sure you try herring when you visit the country of bikes, cheeses, and tulips. Another traditional Dutch dish is stamppot, which translates to “mash pot.” It consists of mashed potatoes mixed with other vegetables, served with various types of meat. In addition to potatoes, it can contain sauerkraut, endive, kale, spinach, carrot, and onion, or other vegetables. A typical dish on herring is shown in Figure 7[10].
7. *Belgium*: Belgium is considered the home of the iconic waffle. Waffles are made from a kind of batter that is baked into a waffle iron. They are served with sweet toppings such as icing sugar, strawberries, cinnamon, etc. There are two main types of waffles: the Brussels waffle and the Liège waffle. The Brussels waffle is usually rectangular and comes with sweet toppings, whereas the Liège waffle is usually oval and made with a brioche-type dough. There are over a dozen kinds of waffles in Belgium, giving visitors plenty of choice to make. Waffles in Belgium seem to taste better. Every visitor should try waffles with chocolate and strawberries. For the toppings, you cannot go wrong with butter and maple syrup. In North America, the Belgian waffle is often massive and drowning in syrup, although the traditional version is actually a small street food.
8. *Turkey*: The nation delivers when it comes to delicious foods, with too many to choose from. Turkish cuisine is one of the most influential in the world. Recipes that are based on meat, rice, and vegetables

have become so attractive to the world that Turkish restaurants can be found everywhere. For importing Turkish delights in the US and Canada, some websites can be helpful such as Best Turkish Food. Authentic French garlic soup is made of smashed garlic, salt, pepper, cloves, thyme, sage, bay leaves, olive oil, egg yolks, shredded cheese, and baguette. Although one can find Baklava across the Middle East, Turkey has some of the best baklavas, shown in Figure 8 [6].

9. *Greek*: Gyro is most well known Greece's iconic dish. It is usually made from pork or chicken which is cooked and served alongside onion, tomato, French fries, and tzatziki sauce. It is commonly sold as street food. Another staple of Greek cuisine is moussaka. This Greek dish consists of minced meat and eggplant layers, topped with a layer of custard or béchamel sauce, oven-baked and served hot. The original recipe is made with eggplant, but there are variations with zucchini, potatoes, or mushrooms. Although the dish is popular in other nations such as Egypt, Turkey, Albania, and Bulgaria, Greek moussaka is undoubtedly the most famous Greek food around the world. Another iconic Greek dish is feta. There are some rules governing its production, and anything made outside of Greece is nothing more than an impostor.
10. *Portugal*: Egg custard tart is Portugal's famous dish. It is served fresh from the oven with icing sugar. This tasty sweet is popular in both Portugal and its former colonies such as Brazil. Another famous dish is pastel de nata. The Portuguese have a proverb that says: "A bride who eats a pastry will never take off her ring." As a result it has become customary during wedding celebrations for the bride and groom to visit a traditional Portuguese bakery to indulge in a pastel de nata for good married life.
11. *Poland*: Pierogi is commonly eaten in Poland and other parts of eastern Europe. They are made by wrapping dough around sweet fillings and then frying. Common fillings used in Poland include chicken, ground meat, potato, cheese, fruit, buckwheat, and sauerkraut. To complete the dish, they can be topped with butter, sour cream, or fried onion. For an authentic try of this dish, visit any of the Pierogarnia, restaurants dedicated to preparing pierogi. This dish is shown in Figure 9 [4].
12. *Spain*: Paella, a hearty rice-based dish, is the signature dish of Spain. It is made from rice, saffron, chicken, seafood and vegetable, cooked and served in a large shallow pan. It is a must-try dish amid the heat and flair of Spain. It is regarded by many outside of the country to be Spain's national dish. Paella is a must-order when in Spain.
13. *Hungary*: Goulash is a thick stew is made out of vegetables, meat, and potatoes and seasoned with paprika, the essential spice of Hungary. It has been the national dish of Hungary for centuries. You cannot go wrong with Goulash.
14. *Czech Republic*: Bramboráky (a pan-fried potato pancakes made of dough) is one of the most popular traditional dishes in Czech Republic. The dish is common throughout Central Europe. "Dumplings" in the Czech Republic actually resemble bread loaves, and are made from boiled flour, yeast, egg, salt, and milk.

CHALLENGES

In Europe, it is expensive for travelers to eat out three times every day as can be done in most parts of Asia. There is a trend of consumer interest and demand for traditional products. Consumers are requiring a great amount of nutritional and cheap foods. In Europe, culinary cultures jostle in close proximity and are buffeted by the forces of globalization, migration across the borders, and supranational European Union (EU) regulation. Food is at the heart of cultural identities.

What we eat has big implications for our health, our society, and the environment. Food consumption habits are derived from a series of factors, beginning with the fulfilment of a basic need, all the way to the desire for pleasure. There has been an increase in the consumption of food outside the home, people preferring fast food

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to slow food. Some individuals are increasingly socially conscious about the ethical, environmental, and social impacts of their food choices. The choice of something new also involves a risk, since food can be pleasant or poisonous.

The supra-national context of the EU also poses challenges. Some regulatory mechanisms exercised upon EU member nations have often been perceived as a threat to culinary identity. The European Economic Community (EEC) membership has long been expressed in worries about food. British press habitually reports on the intrusion of European directives in the national life. For example, in Italy, there is increasing resentment of the EU's role in food regulation, which is viewed as a challenge to the Italian way of life [8].

CONCLUSION

Food is a language we use to convey to others and to ourselves who we are. It is more than mere nourishment; food is an expression of identity. Food is linked to both individual and collective identity. Traditional foods constitute an important element of European culture, identity, and heritage. This has been recognized both at scientific and political levels. The International Conference on Nutrition (ICN) was convened in Rome in 1992 and established the food-based dietary guidelines (FBDG) for the public in Europe.

Europe should not be regarded as a homogenous food culture. Noticeable differences exist at both national and regional/local levels in terms of food preferences. As observed in earlier discussion, all European nations have their specialties when it comes to food. Italy is famous for pizza, the Czech Republic are world renowned for beers, Germany for world-famous wursts, Hungary for goulash, Poland for world-famous Pierogis, etc. No matter how picky you are in eating, there is undoubtedly a European recipe that will satisfy you and you can incorporate it in your menu. More information about traditional European food can be found in the books in [12-21].

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Figure 1. Several iconic dishes all over Europe [4].



Figure 2. Italian pizza [5].



Figure 3. The traditional British dish also known as the full breakfast [8].



Figure 4. French croissants [9].



Figure 5. German Pretzels [9].



Figure 6. Pelmeni from Russia [7].



Figure 7. A typical dish on herring in Netherlands [10].



Figure 8. Turkey has some of the best baklavas [6].



Figure 9. Pierogi from Poland [7].