

Food in ancient china essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In Ancient China, it was very difficult to grow and get food. Meat was very expensive, and the crops they made required laborious and long hours. And even today in modern China, it is still difficult to get food. With its population hovering around a bulging billion people, it is not easy getting food for all of these people, but when they do get it, they often make filling and some tasty dishes.

When you want to order Chinese food, you probably think of getting some sweet and sour chicken, or Mongolian beef. But probably, the first thing you think about is rice, which was the first grain ever farmed in China. There is evidence that they even began farming rice as early as 5500 BCE. People cooked rice by boiling it in water, the way they do today. Or they made it into wine, which was rather unoriginally called rice wine.

Rice wine has been a popular beverage since prehistory. But rice doesn't grow in northern China, only Southern China. That's why in northern China, they eat millet. Northern China is a much colder and drier place to live. The northern people in China would gather wild millet instead.

By the year 4500 BCE, people were farming their own millet, which when grown was boiled into a kind of porridge. China is also associated and is famous for its tea. Tea grew abundantly in China, and soon (perhaps 3000 BCE or even sooner) everyone was drinking tea. Northern China began to eat wheat in about 1500 BCE. Wheat is not native to China and was transported from another country in West Asia, which is why it took so long for it to reach China.

Like millet, the people would boil it to make a sort of Cream of Wheat. These are the main foods of China-rice, millet, and wheat. In both North and South China the people in poverty ate these foods, and probably nothing but these foods, as their only meals. When people could afford it, mainly the rich, they would buy vegetables to put on their rice to add flavor. Soybeans, which is a native plant to China (used to make soy sauce) was used. But there are many other fruits to China including oranges, lemons, peaches, and apricots.

And even anise, which we use to make licorice, is from China, as is ginger. For the even richer though, there was always meat to put on their rice, mainly on social occasions. By 5500 BCE, people were eating domesticated chickens, which came from Thailand. By around 4000-3000 BCE, they were eating pork, sheep, and cattle, the latter two which were not from China.

But since not everyone could afford the expensive meat, and because Buddhists couldn't eat meat, around 1000 CE, people started eating bean curd, or tofu, instead of meat as a source of protein. But some Chinese dishes sounded a little less than delicious. The rich would eat in very small courses over a long course of time, sometimes lasting for over half a day. They ate delicacies like bear paw and baked owl, and many others that didn't sound so appetizing. Because China doesn't have much wood or any large forests, finding a way to heat things up was a problem, and to solve it, people became accustomed to cutting their meat up into very small pieces, so that it was easier and faster to cook on a small fire. Like rice wine, millet wine became very popular, and was considered even better than tea at around 100 CE.

Also around this time period, people began making their own noodles out of wheat. The food of China hasn't changed much, which can be proven by the trip made by Marco Polo in 1200 CE. Polo, from Venice, wrote that the people of Northern China still ate millet boiled with milk to make a kind of porridge. He also noticed that even as late as 1200 CE, that the Chinese still did not make bread yet, which shows that the Chinese people were very proud and content with the meals they ate, which many of them we still eat and enjoy today. History for Kids!. Ancient Chinese Food.

November, 2005. <http://www.historyforkids.org/learn/china/food/index.htm> Ancient China. Great Britain, Dorling Kindersley.

2000