

Food, culture and spirituality



Food, culture, spirituality

Every religion gives an interpretation of the symbolic aspect of food, and the status of food, and readings dictated by the Divine indicate to the human being his behaviour towards the earthly food. Food is an integral part of our history, and of our fate. Theology, religious discourse that interprets what the divine indicates in His language and liturgical texts are there, being the expression of the divine in the language of the People. Each of us has a unique way of behaving towards food, disciple or not of a particular religion (cultural reference system consolidating our relationship with the forces of transcendence).

Man, since its advent on earth, practically selected food that has been helpful for survival. He has also been slow to adapt to certain foods and to domesticate what was natural. Later, depending on culture and / or tradition, man has legislated on the categories, on helpful food, bad food, pleasant food ... By establishing strict coding rules on how to eat, cook, etc...Man has forced many generations to internalize a certain taste and to preset certain eating habits.

Thus, from one continent to another, whereas today it is possible to find the same food everywhere, we find that there are different ways to eat, cook and prepare these foods.

In the collective unconscious exists here and there a conditioning and learning specific to each culture, our religions that encourage us to sort between desirable: the known, and the undesirable: the unknown.

The food remains the vector of our culture (our religion) because it is meaningful. If I refuse to eat a particular food, it is my inner “conscience” which tells me that there is a taboo (although sometimes I do not know the reason for this ban and I will try to build a logic argument (often taboo is religious)).

The concept of lawful and unlawful, sacred and profane is a duality which is similar to the universal notion of good and evil. The difference is then made between the food polluting the body and food benefiting the body. Eating a particular food is always a choice, an activity of the mind which classes, dictates, chooses based on cultural, economic and religious criteria. The food may also be in some traditions, a sacred food, that is to say, reserved for the gods, fit for consumption by the Gods, food offering or ceremony.

The holidays are times sanctuaries where certain categories of foods are consumed, depending on History, Memory, Tradition; This is how our history may be likened to the history of our favourite foods.

Men eat as society has taught them to feed themselves; this evidence appears to some as unfounded. We often love food that our mother taught us to consume. And our likes and dislikes, our food aversions are the result of our upbringing, our culture, our religion.

Taste and food aversions nestle in us between the burden of heredity and constraints of socialization. All food system act as a control, it is a language of differentiation and distancing. Diet indicates a belonging, an ideal. We must not forget that in the Old Testament (Genesis - Gen. I 0. 29 to 30). It is recalled that the “Paradise is vegetarian” and it was only after the flood that <https://assignbuster.com/food-culture-and-spirituality/>

God allowed man to eat differently. It is written, " Everything that lives and moves will serve you as food ."

Food, constitutive factor of cultural identity

" I am what I eat, what I eat transforms me; eating transmits certain characteristics to eaters. As a result, if I do not know what I eat, I do not know who I am " *Claude Fischeler* .

Do we eat to live or do we live to eat? A question that often arises. In the face of this dilemma, the answer is both simple and complex. To live we must eat, we cannot do without food. Our diet and how to feed ourselves have evolved at the same pace as us. Our story is the story of our food. Our relationship with food is complicated, and each one of us rules it in his own way, as the hermit who needs just little food to survive, essentially fundamental to its survival; by cons if you abuse too much food as a bulimic, it becomes dangerous and can lead you to death. We must therefore follow a certain measure, knowing that food is both poison and medicine.

Food is central to our mental and social universe, it accompanies us from our birth to our death - for some civilizations beyond death by the offerings made daily on the altar erected to the memory of ancestors - .

Learning about our tastes and sensations is done very early, from our first feeding; loved foods are those that have the taste and flavour of " flavoured" breast milk. Thus our brain receives and manufactures from the first moment of our life categories, adapting or rejecting by selecting certain tastes. We can say that the choice of our food is never so risky. This choice is always to

specific categories that have to do with our children, our youth, our social and cultural environment, ultimately our history.

Chance has little place in our food choices. Say that you love more this than that does not denote a single individual desire, this desire is conditioned by what we have already eaten or liked, even if we have forgotten “ when and where? “.

Food, therefore, is a social cultural phenomenon induced positively or negatively in our mind, and determines our eating habits. Our uniqueness is also food.

To this must be added the symbolic and mythological representations that illustrate our imaginary perception of food; the example of milk may well be illustrated by the milk of Mother Wolf of Romulus and Remus, as the preferred food to Paradise (with others). Milk creates an inseparable kinship and makes those who were fed together “ brothers and sisters in milk ” that is to say a third person who gives the breast to other children makes them his children, brothers and sisters of milk of her own children. This will prevent them later to marry from each other.

We see that eating urges the individual. Eating is a social and cultural ritual that ensures continuity and diversity in family and social contacts. Eating together is sharing moments and fun with family and friends and participating in the unification and cohesion of groups, that is to say, sociability and maintaining social ties.

Each society has its way of sharing food. Food is meant to be shared, in order not to destroy its essence for oneself and for others. In Hinduism, there is a warning “ he who eats without knowing kills food, and if eaten, it kills.” Be aware of what you eat, eating is not a trivial matter but a social act that determines the experience of community sharing. Brillat Savarin (Philosophy taste) gives us the key to this enigma by telling us: “ Tell me what you eat and I will tell you who you are.”

Modern man eats everything but finally digests anything, because the culinary delight presupposes knowledge of your own kitchen or at least its basics. What distinguishes man from a ruminant for example is his awareness of what he eats and the pleasure he derives. Each civilization rebuilt a coherent landscape bases on food, wine is magnified because it is a close relative of the Communion in the Christian Religion, and it gladdens the heart of man. It keeps the image of consolation for the afflicted and haven for aggrieved persons. It is therefore linked to social marginalization. It is more individual than social, if not part of the whole meal that it must accompany or illustrate. Wine is consumed by feeling “ national” - the wine and cheese, typically French picture - we praise it if we are French, as we praise the beer if we are German or Belgian, whiskey is consumed by mimicry or snobbery.

As for coffee , it will make its entry into the French world in the seventeenth century , called “ philosophers ‘ milk .” It is considered a noble beverage that gives spirit and distinguished aristocratic drunkenness. Consumption will allow ladies to enter the intellectual circles. We see that the use of coffee has changed society for a social progress and some liberalization of morals.

<https://assignbuster.com/food-culture-and-spirituality/>

In Asian society, eating is to balance the body's energies, thus ensuring a healthy eating is also a cultural act that has a metaphorical meaning and value. At an anniversary banquet, noodles consumption means long life to the person, the food appears here as a vector and an auspicious message. Put on the table rice stuffed dumplings to taste indicates a certain social and family cohesion. The Asian table must follow the rules of the three senses: sight, smell and taste; to this must be added the five basic tastes: sour, pungent, bitter, sweet and salty and to have a good meal it must rotate the crisp, fondant, sticky and dry.

An Asian meal should be presented with all dishes together without succession in time. It is engulfed at a glance with its variety of colours and nuances of flavours. Thus the guest can choose what he likes, when he likes, and enjoy it at his convenience. Everything is there, everything is ordered in space and not in time. The meal is served to reinforce social relations, to exchange, to speak, as it is improper to eat in silence.

Chinese formerly used knives. They were banished from the table for chopsticks, following a change of power. To mark this rupture, scholars forbade the use of the knife. Here we see the evolution of a table use: knives for chopsticks are happening, what is not a coincidence but reflects the social and political evolution of Chinese society.

Eat all together from a central big dish, with your fingers but within a strict code, eating what comes ahead using three fingers to dip the bread in the sauce, do not lick your fingers, obeying a rhythm in time and focusing on food, these are other ways to behave vis-à-vis food: they correspond to a

certain Mediterranean cultural practice (especially the Maghreb) . Here we eat in silence as the food is sacred. You must devote your attention and time.

Today the food we impose has for criterion regularity, shelf life, caloric intake, leaving the old qualities such as flavour, taste, tradition, fun...

The man has striven for centuries to diversify his supply; He is reversing it today by making an increasingly homogeneous food. Therefore, food is disconnected from the social and cultural body which was its diversity, plurality, and frugality . It's not the food that makes the man, but the man who creates his diet.

We must therefore sometimes relearn how to eat, to sit at the table to give meaning to our diet. Otherwise, we may do, without realizing it, " food autism" We will then only have right to virtual ideal food, safe , tasteless food. Then, the multi-functionality of a meal will appear to us as artificial, as collages acts, simultaneous but inconsistent, that is to say ridiculous features without any content.

Our food is the vehicle of our symbols, it affects our lives and occupies our minds, it gives us sensations; it is essential to our lives and to our progress. Without food, man would be naked: just like he chooses his clothing, he chooses his diet, and this is what sets him apart and distinguishes him and is necessary for him to live and exist.

Food: spiritual food?

It is interesting to see how all the great sages or high initiates - if we want to use a scholarly term - gave a great importance to food.

All religious people, whatever their faith, give a moment of reflection, prayer or meditation just before eating a meal and normally it takes place in silence.

In some cases, the food becomes a spiritual food, because through food you can feed all the parts that make up the human being, of course, the physical part, but also the body parts that are called subtle.

Returning to the theory and teaching of French philosopher and educator, of Bulgarian origin, Omraam Mikhael Aivanhov we find the meaning of food is very original and highly spiritual. It is through food that Aivanhov teaches us how we can increase our spirituality. Food becomes, through his teachings, an act of consciousness towards which we should all strive.

Food certainly has the function of feeding us physically, but also to nourish all the other components of our being, all other bodies which compose us. This will be the purpose of the ethereal part of any food, feed our subtle body parts which are the seat of our psychic and spiritual functions.

The first rule is to be aware of the first bite we take in our mouth: the beginning is extremely important, given that on it depends the rest of the meal. If we start out the meal peacefully, it will run fine until the end, but if we start when we are nervous or agitated, we will remain in this condition until the end. Harmony thus arises from the first bite.

Food must then be chewed properly, that is to say long and slowly; because it is in the mouth that occurs the first digestion, even at the subtle level.

<https://assignbuster.com/food-culture-and-spirituality/>

According to Aivanhov it is in the mouth, through small glands located under the tongue, that are absorbed ethereal particles of food, those that can be defined as the subtle energy, not heat, and serve to feed the nervous system.

The ether portion is a food-related colour, the life it contains: a world which is located in the field of air. Therefore, to eat well, the ethereal body must accompany each meal with a good breathing. You have to think to breathe deeply between a bite and the other to allow proper combustion.

Supporting our etheric body means supporting our vitality, our memory, and our sensitivity.

But awareness is not enough if we are going to feed the astral body, where our emotions and feelings reside: for this we must love the food we consume. Be in harmony with oneself is a fundamental condition for being able to stop and have a thought of peace, so that even this body, which is more subtle, can extract what it needs. For those who believe, it is enough to see the food as a manifestation of Divinity and focus on that thought to get the greatest benefit and enlightenment through the repetitive act of the meal.

For Aivanhov, if we want to receive the finer parts of the food, we must be aware and especially predisposed to love, and our bodies will be open and ready to receive the best of the food. In fact, it's like when we welcome a person with lots of love, he (she) will open to us and give us all; but if we receive him (her) with hostility, he (she) will close and we cannot get anything from this person.

<https://assignbuster.com/food-culture-and-spirituality/>

Just like a flower opens and transfers all its fragrance in the light and heat, the same way the food will behave with us, if we are qualified to position ourselves to it positively.

Another key point in his theory states that it is possible to eat everything, but only as it should be eaten, and in reasonable quantities. Indulge and consume quantities above what we really need is harmful and promotes a loss of energy. Once you understand how to eat, it would be possible to feed in "homeopathic" doses.

The power supply has obviously a fundamental role, but mental and spiritual life is more important.

That is why the positive and full of love thoughts are the basis for being able to enjoy fully foods that are ingested. Such thoughts are needed, even during a meal preparation; when we come into contact with food, we can provide it with positive energy through our thoughts.

Aivanhov gives priority to foods that are able to develop spirituality. With the assumption that even infants smell, see colours, hears sounds, it becomes easy to understand how fruits and vegetables, which are steeped in sunlight, allow us to absorb it, through them, when we eat. By contrast, meat, according to him, has a poor light and, above all, it has rapid time decay. That's why it is not fit for human consumption. In addition, the animal feels death approaching when it arrives at the slaughterhouse, so its glands produce hormones that are poisonous to those who then eat its meat.

Even solar energy contained in plants can feed us, but it is important that, in thought, we get it to reach all parts of our body.

Silence is fundamental during the meal, to be able to concentrate, to be aware of the act that is accomplished. In this way, the meal becomes a privileged moment of meditation.

Through this way of meditating, we are present when the act is accomplished, thanks to the love and consciousness; our body is nourished completely, even in its most subtle parts.

The pranic food

There are currently 20, 000 people on our planet who would feed exclusively *prana* (chi, qi, ki) meaning that they would feed exclusively from the ambient energy, the light, at the expense of food and even water.

Formerly, it was the case of the great mystics as Marthe Robin or the Tibetan lamas.

Today, this phenomenon tends to spread and affect persons who are less “religious”.

To make sure of it, scientists observed a man who fasted for 70 years. For this purpose, he was filmed continuously for 15 days, 24 hours a day, continuously, to avoid deception. It was confirmed that he did not eat or drink during those fifteen days, and also he did not urinate or have a bowel movement, that is even more disturbing. Researchers have not yet figured

out how this Indian could live 83 years while he pretended not to eat or drink for more than 70 years.

You should know that today, individuals go towards new energies, raising their vibrational level to a greater spirituality, which gives them less attraction to the material elements.

This no doubt helps people in their adaptation to the pranic nourishment. But it seems it is still too early for humanity to take this step. And for the moment, we must be very careful before getting to the pranic nourishment. We must be surrounded and knowledgeable about the subject. As some have tried and lost their health.

An interesting view on the subject is the movie "light" directed by Peter Arthur Straubinger.

Food plays a central role in all religions, therefore some requirements and uses: Jewish kosher, Halal Muslim food, fasting among Christians. Each of the three monotheistic religions has its own norms or customs.

But with modernity and secularization, are these still respected?

When you believe, you do not eat anything, or anyhow. In most religions, there is a strong link between physical food and spiritual food. Besides, the precepts and prohibitions say something about Divinity, just like the presence of food in most ceremonies.

Referencing

Awad Fouatih - Pluridisciplinary Professor, Aubervilliers, France

<https://assignbuster.com/food-culture-and-spirituality/>

Pranic Food (French Edition) by Henri Monfort

Living Sufism: Tariqa Qadiriya Boutchichiya, islam-&-soufisme