

Comparison between chinese and american food culture

[Business](#), [Industries](#)



Lee Hiu Man Instructor Wynn ESLG 1001 29 November 2012 Comparison of Chinese and Western Food Culture Food is closely related to people's lives and it is considered the most important element in Chinese culture. Chinese food is famous all over the world too. American Chinese cuisine differs significantly from the traditional Chinese cuisine and even though the variation in taste can be so it is still attractive to many people. When it comes to food, Chinese people always care about the color, taste, smell and shape of Chinese dishes.

In 1784, a group of passengers on the ship Empress of China became the first Americans to land in China and they were also the first group of people to eat Chinese food; it was the first time the American palate encountered eastern cuisine (Coe 45). There are many differences in food culture between China and the United States. Strong differences exist regarding cooking methods, ingredients, desserts and cutlery. There are many cooking methods in Chinese food and it may be confusing by terms such as saute, marinade, stir-fry and deep-fry especially for someone new to Chinese food (Travel China Guide).

Boiling is the most common form of Chinese cooking; Chinese boiling means cooking food in boiling water. It wastes fuel. It does not cook the food any faster and it tends to make the food break up and so spoils the appearance. Frying is divided into deep-frying, slippery-frying, quick-frying, and several types of stir-frying; this method mainly deals with vegetables. One cooking method that American dishes seldom use is steaming. It is a kind of slow process and time consuming.

Chinese cooking uses two methods of steaming, which are basic steaming(zheng) and placing one tightly-closed pot inside a larger pot(steaming dun) (Lee 3). The product is usually very soft because the pot is half-immersed in boiling water for two to three hours. One of the famous traditional Chinese foods is Chinese rice dumplings and it is made of glutinous rice stuffed with different fillings and wrapped in bamboo leaves. On the other hand, the cooking methods in American cuisine were affected by the European countries (Cuban Cuisine, 1).

Grilling meats and spit roasting over a pit fire are both common even today. Americans use barbecue smokers to cook chicken, pork and corn. Frying is the most common in Western countries because almost every famous dish is related to frying. Examples include fried chicken, French fries, burgers and fries, etc. Local families in America like to do baking, which is generally applied to breads, lasagna, manicotti, pastries and other sweet confections. There is a big difference between Chinese and American cooking methods. One is mainly concentrated on the color, smell and shape.

The other is always speedy, convenient and cheap. Secondly, the ingredients in Chinese and American food are different. Chinese cuisine involves rice, flour, beans, and vegetables. American cuisine is relatively simple and mainly includes meat, bread and vegetables. For the Chinese one, most dishes include rice, because it is the main crop of many Asian countries and is used in almost every capacity. Not only steamed rice, but rice paper and noodles can be included in a meal. Second, tofu is often used in vegetarian meals, because it is high in protein.

It is used heavily in regions with a tradition of Buddhism. Third, sauces are important to flavor rice and stir-fry. Soy sauce, oyster sauce, black bean sauce, and fish sauces are easy to keep on hand (Yang 3). Rice is a major staple food for people from rice farming areas in southern China and Chinese people always use rice to produce by-products like vinegars and wines (Mashpedia, 3). Noodles are important to Chinese people too and they usually come dry or fresh in a variety of sizes, shapes and textures and are often served in soups or fried as toppings.

Some varieties such as “ Shou Mian” are literally noodles of longevity, are symbolic of long life and good health according to Chinese tradition. Noodles can be served hot or cold with different toppings and broth. On the other hand, a part of the American food is based on traditional German dishes such as hot dogs and hamburgers (Wynn 3). Pre-packaged American meals tend to be high in carbohydrates, fat, sodium, and various preservatives. However, they also tend to be vitamin fortified.

Examples of pre-packed American meals include various casserole type dishes such as Hamburger Helper, as well as bakeable and microwaveable foods such as Hot Pockets, frozen pizzas, frozen burritos, and various types of TV dinner meals (Cuisine of the United States Research Materials, 3). About the desserts in these two countries, Chinese desserts are sweet foods and dishes that are served with tea, along with meals or at the end of meals in Chinese cuisine. Chinese candies and sweets, called “ tang” are usually made with cane sugar, malt sugar, honey, nuts and fruit.

Gao or Guo are rice based snacks that are typically steamed and may be made from glutinous or normal rice. Ice cream is commonly available throughout China. Another cold dessert is called "baobing", which is shaved ice with sweet syrup. Chinese jellies are known collectively in the language as ices. Many jelly desserts are traditionally set with agar and are flavored with fruits, though gelatin based jellies are also common in contemporary desserts (Zickler 5). Chinese dessert soups typically consist of sweet and usually hot soups and custards.

For the American desserts, there are a wide variety of choices like cakes, cookies, biscuits, gelatins and pastries and most of them are considered as sweet and greasy. Famous ones like apple pies, cupcakes, caramels and chocolate brownies are customary desserts for Americans compared with Chinese as they viewed it as a part of the meal. Lastly, the cutleries that are used in Chinese and American food are different also. Chinese people use chopsticks to eat food. Americans use knives and forks to do dining.

Chopsticks convey the concept of harmony in Chinese culture (The Cross-Cultural Rhetoric Blog). In ancient written Chinese, the character for chopsticks was 箸. Although 箸 may have been widely used in ancient spoken Chinese, its use was eventually replaced by the pronunciation for the character 快; meaning "quick". The original character, though still commonly used in writing, is rarely used in modern spoken Chinese languages, which maintains the old usage. Knives and forks are kind of promoting the independence, freedom and violence.

Due to its role as humankind's first tool, certain cultures have attached spiritual and religious significance to the knife. It has impact of the concept of people's lives; knife and fork will necessarily bring about eating apart and chopsticks share dinner with the family members gather around a table. The major items of cutlery in the Western world are the knife, fork and spoon. In recent times, utensils have been made combining the functionality of pairs of cutlery, including the spork (spoon / fork), spife (spoon / knife), and knork (knife / fork) or the sporf which is all three (Attards, 2).

Actually, chopsticks are commonly used in Chinese, Japanese and Korean dishes but it is generally believed to have originated in ancient China. To conclude, there are a number of differences between Chinese and American food culture and they are a part of human civilization. It is great for everyone to know the food that people would like to eat, cooking method and also ingredients between two countries. Even if there are some differences between Chinese food and Western-style food, they can still get along harmoniously. For example Chinese food of U. S. A. is suitable for Americans' taste, because through Americans' improvement; similarly, the Western-style food of China is more suitable for Chinese' taste, because through the Chinese' improvement. There is a folk adage in China " If want to conquer your heart, I will conquer your stomach first". It can clearly show the importance of food in Chinese culture. Works Cited Helen Wang. Cooking Methods in Chinese Cuisine. " Chinese Cooking Tips. Chinese Food DIY Fall 2009. Web. Nov. 17 2012 Giblin, James Cross. From hand to mouth: How we invented knives, forks, spoons and chopsticks, & the manners to go with them.

New York: Crowell, 1987. Print Knoblauch, Mark. Chop Suey: A Cultural History Of Chinese Food In The United States. Booklist 106. 1 22, 2009. Print Lv, Nan, and J Lynne Brown. Chinese American Family Food Systems: Impact Of Western Influences. Journal Of Nutrition Education And Behavior 42. 2 106-114, 2010. Print Richard Pillsbury. No Foreign Food: The American Diet in Time and Place, Westview Press, 1998. Print Peter Zickler. Askives. " What is common Chinese desserts" Web, Nov. 16, 2012