

# Anthropology of food

Food & Diet



Food is very much a part of culture around. The beliefs, practices, and trends in a culture affect its eating practices. The food families eat around the world is greatly affected by the culture that they are surrounded in. The family in a refugee camp in Chad is barely able to spend \$1.50 on a week's worth of food, yet a family in Germany is easily able to spend \$500 on food. Such drastic differences in food type, cost, and quantity are caused by life around them. The Aboubakar family of Darfur province, Sudan sits in front of their \$1.30 worth of food.

It is all they have for the next week to sustain themselves. They almost completely live on the corn-soy blend provided to them by the United Nations. Any meat, fish, or eggs they are able to consume are already dried, with fresh meat available only on special religious holidays. Only hardy fruits, vegetables, and nuts that can keep for a long time are available to them. Their only available beverage is water, which is provided free through Oxfam, but in limited quantities as even water is strictly rationed in these camps.

They cook over a wood fire outdoors, using natural drying as their only means of preserving their food. With the war in Sudan raging around them, it is hard to get fresh food in large amounts to sprawling refugee camps that usually number in the thousands. Most families in these camps are happy to be together and alive rather than worry about the food available. The culture of war-stricken Sudan dictates what the Aboubakar family can eat. The Melander family in Germany consumes over \$500 worth of food and beverages a week.

As German culture dictates, they drink larger amounts of beer than the other families in the article. They have access to refrigeration and freezing, allowing them to constantly have fresh dairy, meat, fish, eggs, fruits, vegetables and nuts. Germany also sees a fair share of prepared foods, as the family is able to cut down on their own work and make things easier by purchasing food pre-made as this family contains working parents. The German traditions of drinking beer along with modern amenities allow the Melander family to spend the most money in food each week than any other family in this comparison.

The Revis family in North Carolina follows stereotypical American culture by spending the most on sugary soft drinks and fast food. America's fast paced lifestyle makes it extremely convenient to eat fast food and order out. The family has the money to buy convenience; money is of no real concern in their food budget. Refrigeration and freezing gives them easy access to fresh foods of all kinds. Fresh meat, fish, eggs, fruits, vegetables and nuts are easily obtained, kept and eaten. Food is plentiful in America and this family reflects that culture by purchasing whatever they wish.

America's lifestyle clearly has a huge affect on the eating habits of this family. The Dong family in Beijing, China spends about \$150 on food each week. Chinese traditional foods are based around meat, fish, and vegetables. This family consumes large proportions of them each week. Yet in China, we see evidence of globalization with the family consuming KFC, and Coca-Cola. The American indulgences and culture have jumped the pacific ocean to affect them. Tradition sushi of Japan has jumped into china as well.

Sushi's grease and very low fat has a high appeal to those who wish to watch their diets. Food is generally plentiful in China; this family is able to eat what they wish. They can utilize refrigeration and freezing to keep their food fresher longer. This gives them freedom to choose what they wish to eat and when they are going to eat it. The Mendoza family in Guatemala's diet seems to be based primarily on rice, beans, potatoes, eggs, and tortillas. Fish is not available to them as they live very far from the ocean.

Local fare is a primary source of food as out of season items require transportation and refrigeration the local infrastructure just cannot support. Their dairy source is powdered milk as it is easy transport and store. The family rarely eats candies, cakes, sugary soft drinks and snacks as this is not generally available. A huge plus to this is that cavities seem greatly reduced. Potatoes are plentiful in the village they reside in, but each village is different. The potatoes are cheap and plentiful, so the family eats quite a bit of it when it is in season.

They have access to refrigeration but not freezing, providing them of a moderately effective way to keep their food longer. Lacking freezing in their home and in their surroundings prevents them from eating seafood and fresh meat, things that require freezing to transport from producer to consumer. With seven people in the household, the family manages to make do with about an \$80 a week food budget. The culture of rural Guatemala dictates eating of local fare in season, preventing long distance transportation of more exotic foods.

The fares of families around the world reflect the cultures they live in. Families living in well off countries benefit to established infrastructure

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capable of supporting transportation of foods not locally available. Households in generally poorer countries must sustain themselves on what they are able to grow and produce locally. Food products that require refrigeration and transportation are not easily available to them. The culture that one lives in dictates their lives, this relationship can be seen firsthand in the food they eat.