

A top-down view of a bowl of Vietnamese pho. The bowl is white and sits on a round, woven bamboo placemat. The pho consists of a clear broth, wide rice noodles, slices of beef, and fresh herbs like cilantro and green onions. A hand is visible in the bottom right, holding wooden chopsticks and lifting a piece of noodle. To the right of the bowl, there is a pile of bean sprouts and more green onions. To the left, there are long, thin green leaves. In the bottom right corner, there are three red chili peppers. A red banner with white text is overlaid across the middle of the image.

EASTERN VS. WESTERN FOOD PRACTICES AND TABLE ETIQUETTE AND HOW IT
RELATES TO A LARGER GROUP IDENTITY

FOOD AND EATING ARE SHARED ASPECTS OF DAILY LIFE FOR MANY PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD. FOOD IS A NOTABLE COMPONENT WHEN IT COMES TO HOLIDAYS AND CELEBRATIONS, RELIGIOUS BELIEFS, AND CULTURAL TRADITIONS. BECAUSE IT IS SO COMMONPLACE, FOOD AND THE PRACTICE OF EATING ARE OFTEN OVERLOOKED IN TERMS OF IMPORTANCE. WHAT MANY DO NOT REALIZE IS THAT WHAT WE EAT AND HOW WE EAT IT IS A REFLECTION OF A LARGER GROUP IDENTITY.

SOME KEY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN EASTERN AND WESTERN CULTURES

EASTERN CULTURES

- MAJOR RELIGIONS INCLUDE HINDUISM AND BUDDHISM (LAFAVE 1)
- GOVERNMENTS ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE AUTHORITARIANISM BASED (MAKHMOUTOV 58)
- SHARED VALUES INCLUDE FAMILY, AUTHORITY, HARMONY, AND TRADITION (MAKHMOUTOV 58)
- COLLECTIVIST CULTURES

WESTERN CULTURES

- MAJOR RELIGIONS INCLUDE JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ISLAM (LAFAVE 1)
- GOVERNMENT IS BASED ON DEMOCRACY WITH REPRESENTATIVE BODIES (MAKHMOUTOV 58)
- SHARED VALUES INCLUDE INDEPENDENCE, INDIVIDUALISM AND FREEDOM (MAKHMOUTOV 58)
- INDIVIDUALISTIC CULTURES

THE DINNER TABLE IN EASTERN COUNTRIES

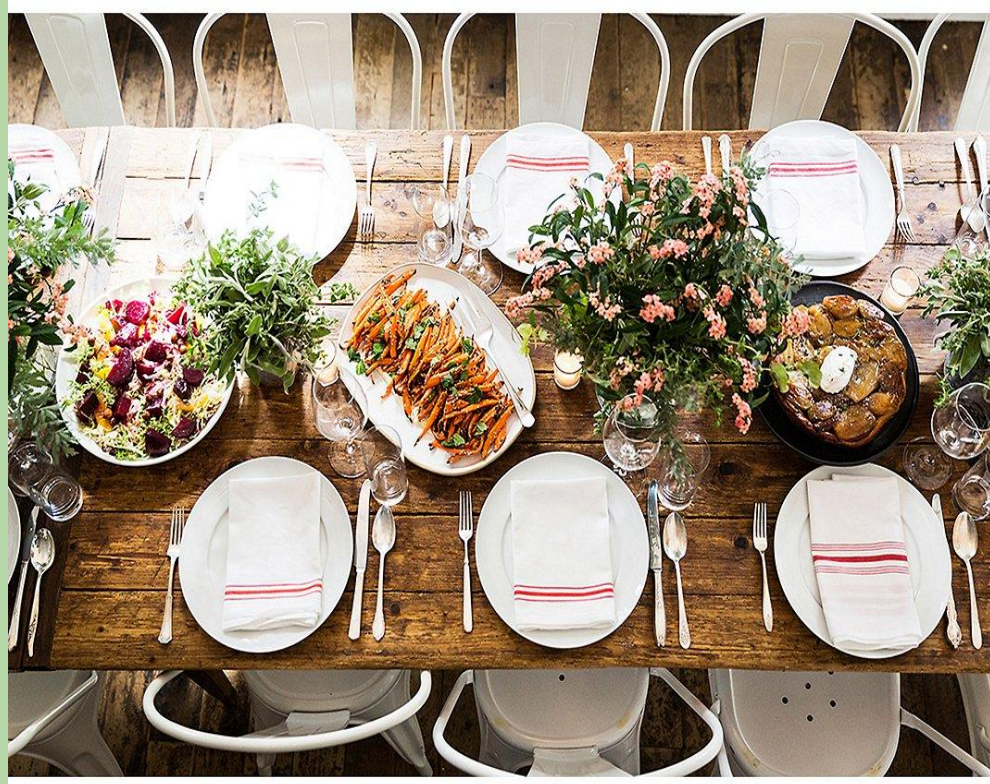
IN EASTERN COUNTRIES SUCH AS CHINA, DINNER TABLES TEND TO BE ROUND WITH EVERY GUEST VISIBLE AND INCLUDED IN THE CONVERSATION OF THE TABLE... A DIRECT SYMBOL OF THE COLLECTIVIST CULTURE. THE SEAT FACING THE MAIN DOOR IS CONSIDERED TO BE THE "MAIN SEAT" AND IS RESERVED FOR THE MOST DISTINCTIVE GUEST WHO IS USUALLY A RESPECTED ELDER. THIS TABLE PLACEMENT SIGNIFIES ADHERENCE TO AUTHORITY FIGURES, A NOTION THAT IS STRESSED IN EASTERN CULTURES (YANG 146).



Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Customs_and_etiquette_in_Chinese_dining

THE DINNER TABLE IN WESTERN COUNTRIES

IN WESTERN COUNTRIES, DINNER TABLES TEND TO BE LONGER AND RECTANGULAR IN NATURE WITH THE ENDS OF THE TABLE USUALLY RESERVED FOR THE HOST AND/OR HOSTESS OF THE DINNER. GUESTS SPEAK WITH THE PERSON NEXT TO THEM AS SHOUTING ACROSS THE TABLE IS CONSIDERED RUDE. THIS IS A DIRECT REFLECTION OF THE INDIVIDUALISTIC CULTURE IN WESTERN COUNTRIES (YANG 145-146).



FOOD IN RELATION TO WESTERN RELIGIONS

AS PREVIOUSLY MENTIONED, RELIGION CAN BE A PREDOMINANT FACTOR IN HOW AND WHAT PEOPLE

EAT. WITH THE PRIMARILY WESTERN RELIGION, JUDAISM, STRICT DIETARY LAWS ARE FOLLOWED.

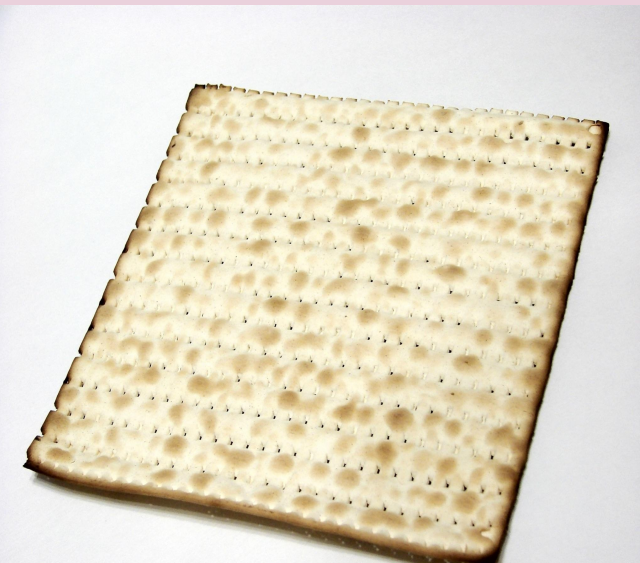
FOOD MUST BE "KOSHER" WHICH TRANSLATES TO "FIT". ONE OF THESE LAWS CONSISTS OF ONLY

EATING ANIMALS THAT CHEW CUD AND HAVE CLOVEN FEET. IN ADDITION, SPECIFIC JEWISH FOODS

ARE EATEN ON FAITH-BASED HOLIDAYS . THESE FOODS INCLUDE MATZAH AT PASSOVER AND BLINTZES

AND KREPLACH AT SHAVOUT ("FOOD AND RELIGION").

JEWISH HOLIDAY MEALS



MATZAH BREAD

Source:<https://oukosher.org/passover/articles/matzah-101/>



BLINTZES

Source:<https://forward.com/food/340927/how-i-turned-blintzes-on-shavuot-into-little-packs-of-love-for-dad/>



KREPLACH

Source:<https://www.westoftheloo.com/2019/09/18/traditional-beef-filled-kreplach-for-the-high-holidays/>

FOOD IN RELATION TO WESTERN RELIGIONS

SIMILAR TO THE CONCEPT OF KOSHER FOODS ARE "HALAL" FOODS IN ISLAM. MUCH LIKE "KOSHER" TRANSLATES TO "FIT", "HALAL" TRANSLATES TO "ALLOWED". THE EATING OF SWINE IS PROHIBITED IN ISLAM AND FOR MOST, THE CONSUMPTION OF ALCOHOL AND CAFFEINE ("FOOD AND RELIGION"). AFTER FASTING DURING RAMADAN, MUSLIMS CELEBRATE THE FEAST DAY OF EID AL-FITR AND WILL EAT SUCH FOODS AS MUTTON KORMA, SHEERMAL AND SHEER KHURMA (SENGUPTA 1).

MUSLIM MEALS EATEN AT EID AL-FITR



SHEER KHURMA

Source:<https://food.ndtv.com/food-drinks/eid-2019-11-best-dishes-to-celebrate-eid-ul-fitr-2047722>



MUTTON KORMA

Source:<https://food.ndtv.com/food-drinks/eid-2019-11-best-dishes-to-celebrate-eid-ul-fitr-2047722>



SHEERMAL

Source:<https://food.ndtv.com/food-drinks/eid-2019-11-best-dishes-to-celebrate-eid-ul-fitr-2047722>

FOOD IN RELATION TO EASTERN RELIGIONS

FOOD IS A PREDOMINANT FACTOR IN EASTERN

RELIGIONS AS WELL. HINDUISM IS THE PRIMARY

RELIGION OF THE EASTERN COUNTRY INDIA. ONE

COMMONLY FOLLOWED DIETARY RULE IN HINDUISM

IS NOT EATING BEEF. THE COW IS CONSIDERED SACRED

AND THEREFORE, IT IS FORBIDDEN TO EAT THE ANIMAL

("FOOD AND RELIGION").



Source: <https://www.hinduhumanrights.info/time-to-end-the-mischief/>

FOOD IN RELATION TO EASTERN RELIGIONS

IN BUDDHISM, DIETARY RULES AND PRACTICES
TEND TO BE MORE INDIVIDUAL AND
REGIONAL IN NATURE. A COMMON PRACTICE
IN BUDDHISM IS VEGETARIANISM AS ONE OF
THE DOCTRINES IN BUDDHISM FORBIDS
TAKING A LIFE ("FOOD AND RELIGION").



Source: <https://www.lionsroar.com/friends-not-food/>

EASTERN VALUES IN FOOD

MANY EASTERN COUNTRIES VALUE COMMUNITY. THIS NOTION IS DEMONSTRATED WITH SOUTH KOREA. INSTEAD OF EACH DINNER GUEST ORDERING THEIR OWN DISH, KOREANS ORDER MANY SMALL DISHES KNOWN AS "BANCHAN" AND EVERYONE WORKS TOGETHER TO EAT THEM (KWONG 1).



KOREAN BANCHAN

Source:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/28/dining/banchan-recipes.html>

WESTERN VALUES AND FOOD

IN CONTRAST TO EASTERN SHARED DISHES,
MANY WESTERN COUNTRIES TEND TO
PROMOTE INDIVIDUAL SERVINGS AND THE
VAST MAJORITY OF DISHES ARE NOT MEANT TO
BE SHARED REFLECTING AN INDIVIDUALIST
CULTURE (KWONG 1).



Source:

<https://theeatguide.com/most-popular-western-dishes-you-should-try/>

EASTERN VALUES IN FOOD

NEXT, EASTERN COUNTRIES TEND TO VALUE AUTHORITY AND THE RESPECT OF ELDERS. THIS NOTION IS DEMONSTRATED IN CAMBODIA WHERE ELDERS ARE ALMOST ALWAYS SEATED FIRST AT THE DINNER TABLE (PALLARDY 1).



CAMBODIAN FISH AMOK

Source:

<https://theculturetrip.com/asia/cambodia/articles/the-21-best-dishes-in-cambodia/>

WESTERN VALUES IN FOOD

IN SOME WESTERN COUNTRIES LIKE THE UNITED STATES, TIME AND CONVENIENCE IS HIGHLY VALUED. BECAUSE OF THIS, AMERICANS AND OTHER WESTERN COUNTRIES OFTEN EAT MEALS OUT AT FAST FOOD RESTAURANTS INSTEAD OF COOKING AT HOME (LEWIS 1).



Source:

<https://www.marketplace.org/2021/04/29/health-risks-low-pay-affecting-fast-food-workers-appetite-for-jobs/>

CONCLUSION

IN CONCLUSION, ONE CAN SEE THAT FOOD SYMBOLIZES OUR VALUES, HISTORY, CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS. THIS IS DEMONSTRATED BY THE WAY WE EAT, OUR DINING ETIQUETTE, HOW WE SIT AT THE TABLE, AND THE DISHES WE CHOOSE TO EAT. ALL IN ALL, ONE CAN SEE THAT WHAT WE EAT AND HOW WE EAT IT IS A DIRECT REFLECTION OF A LARGER GROUP IDENTITY.

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