

Global English News

Food Around the World

Food tells a story. Every dish on your plate comes from a place, a history, and a group of people. The **culture** of a country often lives inside its food. The **geography** of a place matters too. Mountains, rivers, and oceans decide which **ingredients** grow nearby. A hot, wet **climate** grows different food than a cold, dry one. Because of this, every country has its own **staple food**, the food people eat almost every day. In Italy, this might be pasta. In Japan, it might be rice. These staple foods are not random. They grew from the land, the weather, and centuries of daily life. Food connects people to their home, even when they travel far away.

In Asia, rice is the most important **grain**. It feeds nearly half of the people on Earth. Farmers in China, India, and Thailand have grown rice in wet fields for thousands of years. Rice alone can taste plain, so cooks add bold **spice** to bring out new **flavor**. Ginger, chili, and turmeric are common choices. Each **region** of Asia uses spice in its own way. Indian food is often rich and warm. Thai food is often sweet, sour, and spicy at the same time. Farmers still **harvest** rice by hand in many villages, cutting golden stalks before the rain comes. This hard work has shaped daily life across the continent for generations, long before rice reaches a dinner table.

In the Americas, corn tells a different story. People in ancient Mexico first grew corn almost ten thousand years ago, making it one of the oldest farmed **crops** in the world. This **ancient** plant became sacred to early civilizations like the Maya. Workers learned to **grind** dried corn into soft flour. They mixed this flour with water to make tortillas, a flat bread eaten with almost every meal. This **tradition** never disappeared. Today, families across Mexico still make tortillas by hand, just as their great-grandparents did. Corn also became tamales, soups, and drinks. From one **generation** to the next, this single plant has fed millions of people and shaped an entire region's identity.

In Southern Europe, the story turns to wheat, olives, and bread. The land near the Mediterranean Sea is unusually **fertile**, with mild winters and long summers full of sun. This rich soil grows wheat, olive trees, and tomatoes with ease. Along the sunny **coast**, fishing towns add fresh seafood to every meal. Bakers **bake** bread fresh each morning, and its warm smell fills small village streets. Cooks **combine** simple ingredients like olive oil, garlic, and herbs to create meals that feel both light and full of flavor. This style of eating is not just for special occasions. Families eat this way almost **daily**, season after season, which is part of why doctors often praise this diet for good health.

Food is also about people. Around the world, families **gather** around the table to share a meal and talk about their day. Many cultures **celebrate** big moments in life with special food. A birthday, a wedding, or a holiday often means a favorite **recipe** comes out of an old notebook. Grandparents teach grandchildren how to cook the same dish their own grandparents once made. This simple act helps a family **connect** across many years. Food also shapes group **identity**. A single dish, like dumplings or curry, can make someone feel instantly at home, even in a new country far from home. In this way, a recipe becomes much more than instructions; it becomes a small piece of history.

Beyond the Headlines

Here is a strange fact from history. In ancient Egypt, **workers** who built the great pyramids did not always receive money as **payment**. Instead, they often received bread and beer! This thick, low-alcohol beer was packed with grain and calories, so it helped hungry workers **survive** long days of hard labor in the desert sun. Beer was so important that ancient Egyptians even saw it as a kind of **symbol** for daily life.

itself. They believed the goddess Ceres helped **protect** their grain harvest each year. The next time you eat bread, remember: this simple food has fed and paid human workers for thousands of years.

Vocabulary

Paragraph 1

culture (n.)	(n.) The customs, food, and way of life shared by a group of people. <i>"Food is an important part of culture in every country."</i>
geography (n.)	(n.) The natural land, water, and climate of a place. <i>"The geography of a country affects what food can grow there."</i>
ingredients (n.)	(n.) The different foods used together to make a dish. <i>"This soup needs only four simple ingredients."</i>
climate (n.)	(n.) The usual weather of a place over a long time. <i>"A warm climate is good for growing rice."</i>
staple food (n. phrase)	(n. phrase) A food that people eat almost every day. <i>"Bread is a staple food in many countries."</i>

Paragraph 2

grain (n.)	(n.) A small, hard seed from a plant like rice or wheat, used as food. <i>"Rice is the most common grain in Asia."</i>
spice (n.)	(n.) A dried plant part used to add strong flavor to food. <i>"Cooks often add spice to make a dish taste bolder."</i>
flavor (n.)	(n.) The taste of a food or drink. <i>"Ginger gives the soup a fresh flavor."</i>
region (n.)	(n.) A large area of land, often with its own culture or climate. <i>"Each region of Asia cooks rice in a different way."</i>
harvest (v.)	(v.) To collect a crop from a field when it is ready. <i>"Farmers harvest rice by hand in the autumn."</i>

Paragraph 3

crops (n.)	(n.) Plants grown in large amounts for food. <i>"Corn and rice are two of the world's oldest crops."</i>
ancient (adj.)	(adj.) Very old, from a time long ago. <i>"The recipe comes from an ancient tradition in Mexico."</i>
grind (v.)	(v.) To crush something into very small pieces or powder. <i>"Workers grind dried corn into soft flour."</i>
tradition (n.)	(n.) A custom or practice passed down through many years. <i>"Making tortillas by hand is a strong tradition in Mexico."</i>
generation (n.)	(n.) A group of people born and living around the same time. <i>"This recipe has passed from one generation to the next."</i>

Paragraph 4

fertile (adj.)	(adj.) Able to grow many healthy plants easily. <i>"The fertile soil near the coast grows wonderful tomatoes."</i>
coast (n.)	(n.) The land next to the sea or ocean. <i>"Small fishing towns line the sunny coast."</i>

bake (v.)	(v.) To cook food, like bread, using dry heat in an oven. <i>“Bakers bake fresh bread early every morning.”</i>
combine (v.)	(v.) To mix two or more things together. <i>“Cooks combine olive oil, garlic, and herbs in this dish.”</i>
daily (adv.)	(adv.) Happening every day. <i>“Many families eat this simple, healthy meal daily.”</i>

Paragraph 5

gather (v.)	(v.) To come together in one place. <i>“Families gather around the table to share a meal.”</i>
celebrate (v.)	(v.) To do something special to mark a happy event. <i>“People often celebrate birthdays with a favorite food.”</i>
recipe (n.)	(n.) A set of instructions for making a dish. <i>“My grandmother’s recipe makes the best soup.”</i>
connect (v.)	(v.) To form a close link or bond with someone. <i>“Cooking together helps a family connect across many years.”</i>
identity (n.)	(n.) The qualities that make a person or group who they are. <i>“Food can be a strong part of someone’s identity.”</i>

Beyond the Headlines

workers (n.)	(n.) People who do a job, often physical labor. <i>“The workers built the pyramids over many years.”</i>
payment (n.)	(n.) Money or goods given for work done. <i>“Bread and beer were a common payment in ancient Egypt.”</i>
survive (v.)	(v.) To continue living, even in a hard situation. <i>“The beer helped workers survive long days in the sun.”</i>
symbol (n.)	(n.) An object or image that represents an idea. <i>“Beer was a symbol of daily life in ancient Egypt.”</i>
protect (v.)	(v.) To keep someone or something safe from harm. <i>“Ancient Egyptians believed a goddess would protect their grain.”</i>

Language Review

Exercise A — True or False

Read each statement. Write True or False on the line.

1. A country's staple food is connected to its climate and geography. _____
2. Rice feeds almost half of the people on Earth. _____
3. Cooks in Asia never add spice to rice dishes. _____
4. Corn was first grown in ancient Mexico almost ten thousand years ago. _____
5. Families in Mexico no longer make tortillas by hand today. _____
6. The land near the Mediterranean Sea is very fertile. _____
7. Sharing food can help connect family members across generations. _____
8. In ancient Egypt, workers were never paid with bread or beer. _____

Exercise B — Matching

Match each word in Column A with its meaning in Column B. Write the correct letter.

Column A	Column B
1. staple food	a. to come together in one place
2. harvest	b. money or goods given for work done
3. ancient	c. a food that people eat almost every day
4. fertile	d. able to grow many healthy plants easily
5. gather	e. an object or image that represents an idea
6. recipe	f. to collect a crop from a field when ready
7. payment	g. a set of instructions for making a dish
8. symbol	h. very old, from a time long ago

Exercise C — Multiple Choice

Choose the best answer (a, b, c, or d) for each question.

1. What decides which foods grow in a country, according to the article?
 - a. Only the price of food
 - b. The geography and climate of the place
 - c. The number of restaurants
 - d. The color of the soil only
2. About how many people does rice feed every day?
 - a. Almost half of the world

- b. Ten people
 - c. Only people in Japan
 - d. No one anymore
3. What do many Asian cooks add to rice to create new flavor?
- a. Sugar only
 - b. Cold water
 - c. Spice, like ginger or chili
 - d. Nothing at all
4. Where was corn first grown, according to the article?
- a. Ancient Mexico
 - b. Ancient Egypt
 - c. Southern Europe
 - d. Northern Canada
5. What do Mexican families still do today, according to the article?
- a. They have stopped eating corn
 - b. They make tortillas by hand
 - c. They only buy bread
 - d. They never cook at home
6. Why is the land near the Mediterranean Sea good for farming?
- a. It is very fertile, with mild winters and sun
 - b. It is always cold and dry
 - c. It has no soil at all
 - d. It only grows rice
7. How does food help connect family members, according to the article?
- a. It does not connect anyone
 - b. Through shared recipes and meals across generations
 - c. Only through restaurant visits
 - d. By avoiding shared meals
8. What did ancient Egyptian workers sometimes receive as payment?
- a. Coins made of gold
 - b. Nothing at all
 - c. Bread and beer
 - d. Tickets to festivals

Exercise D — Discussion Questions

Talk about these questions with a partner or in a small group.

1. What is your favorite staple food, and why do you like it?
2. Does your family have a special recipe passed down through generations? What is it?

3. What food do people in your culture eat to celebrate special days?
4. How does the climate or geography of your country affect the local food?
5. Have you ever tried a food from another country that surprised you? What was it?