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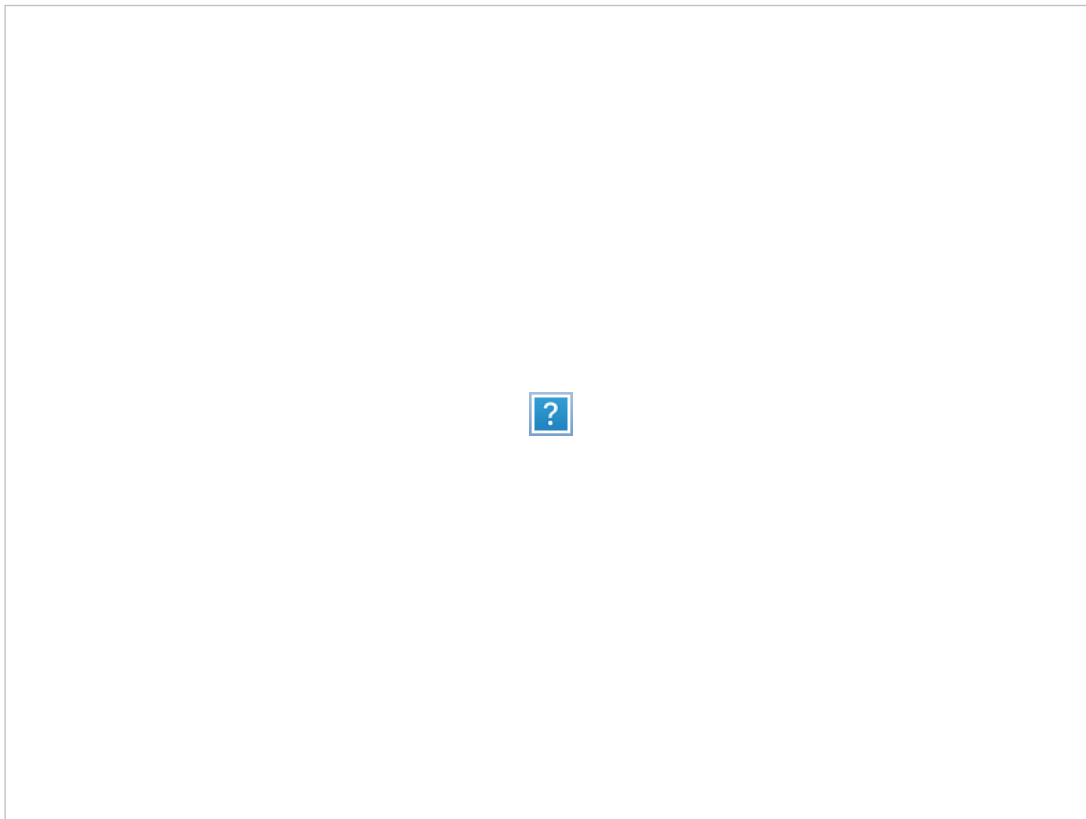
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Try Traditional Foods, Experience New Cultural Traditions

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The world is made richer for the many different cultures that populate it, a benefit of which is the vast array of cultural food traditions! Participating in ethnic food experiences gives us new perspectives and expands our flavor pallets and our minds.

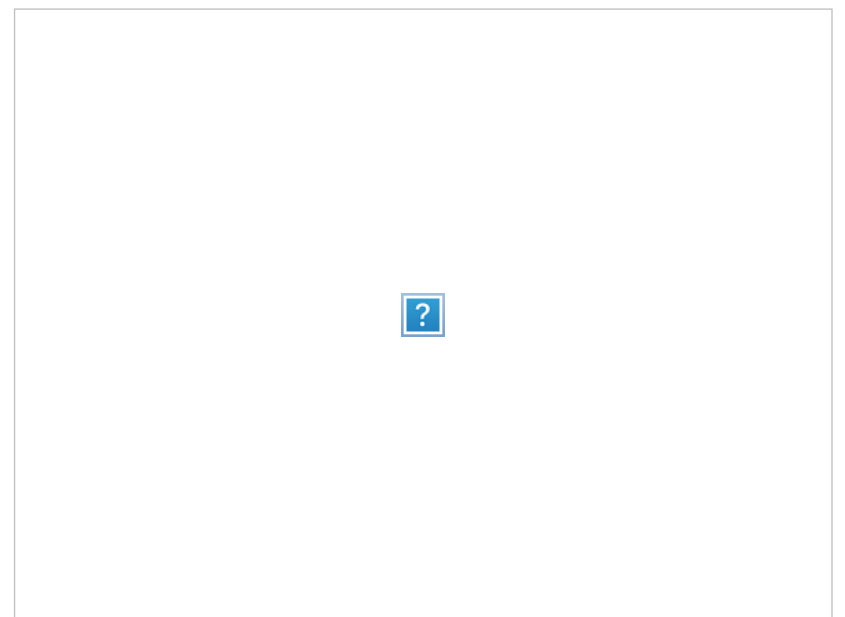
Yet as our world becomes globalized, ironically people are simultaneously losing the value they place on culture and tradition. If you want to make it your mission to preserve and protect cultural traditions in a fun and tasty way, why not embark on an international culinary adventure by taking a tour of the many foods you've never tried? Anything that celebrates cultural diversity and preserves it for generations to come get our Hearts stamp of approval. Bon appetite!

Quick Facts: Cultural Foods and Home Cooking Values

- **195 independent states/countries worldwide:**^[i] Each one of these independent states or countries has within it multitudes of cultures, each expressing their traditions differently at mealtime.^[ii]
- **50% of cultural legacy endangered:** The loss of culture can be commensurately measured with the loss of language. Out of the 7,000 languages in the world, 50% are in danger of becoming lost. We can expect that within the next two generations, about half of our cultural legacy can be gone.^[iii]
- **47% chance to 10+ years more by eating home-cooked cultural meals:** Home cooking is 50% lower in calories, sodium, and fat compared to dining out meals, and results in a much lower rate of overeating.^[iv] Those who eat around the family table at least five days a week have a 47% higher chance of being alive after the next 10 years.^[v] Sharing cultural meals is one way to keep traditions alive.

Take Action! Preserve Culture, try Ethnic Foods

1. **Tap into your family's heritage:** Do your part in preserving your heritage by talking to older people in your family about how to prepare traditional foods. Raid their libraries for old cookbooks. Above all, be sure your children partake in traditional family meals, too.
2. **Tour cultural centers:** Often cultural centers will have cooking classes and historical information regarding food traditions you can try. Check your local phone book or search online for cultural centers such as these famous ones: [Jewish Museum in New York](#), the [Korean Cultural Center in LA](#), and the [Bessie Smith Cultural Center in Tennessee](#).
3. **Attend a heritage food festival:** A great family event, cultural food festivals allow you to sample foods, see how they're made, and make connections with people from different backgrounds.. Among these are The Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage's annual [Folklife Festival](#) in Washington DC, the [University of Montana's International Culture and Food Festival](#) and [Michigan Tech's Annual Parade of Nations and International Ethnic Food Festival](#), and New York City's [Ninth Avenue Food Festival](#). Check out similar heritage festivals organized by your community or universities in your area.
4. **Take a cultural cooking class:** [The International Kitchen](#) provides a fabulous state-by-state list of schools where you can learn everything from traditional Chinese food, Mediterranean, Middle Eastern food, and of course traditional German food techniques. Local museums often host cultural cooking classes. [Art Bites](#), for instance, offers hands-on cooking classes in museums all over the US. When these sites result in nothing in your area, simply do a search online for options near you.
5. **Attend a food-focused anthropology class:** [The University of Minnesota Duluth](#) and [Wellesley College](#) are just a few of the many universities in the US that offer short courses on food anthropology. A class will teach you food and civilizations, food and its effects on cultural construction, and why we eat the foods that we do. The [MIT Open Courseware](#) has an online course on Food and Culture which you can take for free.
6. **Get an ethnic cookbook and work your way through the recipes:** [Goodreads.com](#) has an extensive list of the best ethnic cookbooks, top two of which are [The New Book of Middle Eastern Food](#) and [Sundays at Moosewood Restaurant](#) which has plenty of wholesome [vegetarian](#) and traditional Irish food and Eastern European food.
7. **Visit ethnic restaurants:** Simply go on [Zagat](#), choose your city, and start your search into culinary adventure. Or get inspiration from something like [The Ethnic Food Project](#) which lists Virginia restaurants from 44 out of 190 countries. Or [United Nations of Food](#) which chronicles one man's attempt to sample the cuisine of every country in the world while staying in NYC.



Dig Deeper: the Food and Culture Connection

- Check out [Scientific American](#)'s feature on what happens when cultures die.
- [The National Institute for Consumer Research](#) has an interesting paper on the Sociology of Food and how food relates to identity.
- The [Food and Nutrition Information Center of the USDA](#) compiled a resource list on cultural and ethnic food.

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