

Cooking in Britain Today

Topic: Modern British cooking and restaurants; the popularity of celebrity chefs

Aims:

- To learn or revise vocabulary relating to food, restaurants, tastes and textures
- To develop reading and comprehension skills
- To develop speaking skills/ discussing preferences and attitudes towards food and restaurants

Level: Intermediate+

Introduction

This lesson consists of a series of activities to help students discuss food and cooking. To prepare them for the reading exercises, they will brainstorm food vocabulary and complete a food quiz. The main focus of the lesson is a text based on a recent survey in the UK indicating that British people are becoming more adventurous and experimental in their cooking and eating habits due to the growing popularity of cooking programmes. Students will be asked questions relating to their comprehension of the text, and their opinions towards ideas in the text. They will finally read a series of restaurant reviews and have the opportunity to describe restaurants themselves, expressing their own preferences.

Procedure

Brainstorming task

Rationale: The aim of this part of the lesson is to get students interested in the topic and to develop their food vocabulary.

- Give out Worksheet A
- Put students in pairs/small groups and ask them to complete the table with as many national or typical dishes as they can.

If students are struggling to come up with ideas, ask them to think of typical foods (such as fruits) from each country as well as national dishes. You may want to give them a few examples to start them off, eg fish and chips (Britain), pasta (Italy), olive oil or stuffed vine leaves (Greece). Allow them to use a dictionary. You could also use pictures to help them.

- Ask students to discuss their answers to the second part of the worksheet, in small groups.

Alternative task:

To make the activity more dynamic, you could hold a class survey with each student going round the class and interviewing other students. They could then report back their findings. Students may need prompts on the board:

The majority of the class have tried/like/dislike...

Some people....

Almost nobody...

Many people said that...

Half/ a quarter/ two-thirds of the class prefer...

Vocabulary exercise: Describing Food

Rationale: The aim of this part of the lesson is to help students to describe the tastes and textures of food, and what different dishes are made from.

- Give out Worksheet B.
- In pairs, ask students to think of a different food to match each adjective in the table.
- Write examples up on the board from students around the class. Clarify any new vocabulary that comes out of this exercise.
- Now ask students to read the clues in the second part of the worksheet. Ask them to guess what food is being described.

Answers:

This food is soft and it tastes sweet. It is made from cream, sugar and fruit or chocolate. It is eaten very cold, usually in summer. (**ice cream**)

This food is crunchy and it can be salty or sweet. It is often eaten in the cinema. (**popcorn**)

This food is hard on the outside, but usually soft in the middle. It is very versatile and is used to make lots of sweet and savoury dishes. In the UK people also eat it on its own for breakfast or in a sandwich. (**egg**)

This food is usually hard and crunchy, and it is red or green in colour. People often use it to make desserts, eg pies. (**apple**)

- Ask each student to write a clue of their own, for the rest of the class to guess.

Food Quiz

Rationale: The aim of this exercise is to find out about students' perceptions of British food, and to encourage them to think about and discuss the variety of food available in Britain today.

- Put students in pairs/small groups to try and guess the answers to this quiz. Make it clear that they are not expected to know all the answers. Write up new vocabulary on the board.
- Give them a point for each correct answer and see which group gets the highest score.

Answers:

1. Which of these do the British eat most of in Europe? **crisps and chocolate**
 2. What is the most popular food in Britain? **curry**
 3. What is 'haggis'? **a Scottish dish made from sheep's stomach and innards**
 4. Stilton, cheddar and double Gloucester are all kinds of: **cheese**
 5. What do most British people have for breakfast? **toast and cereal**
 6. Who invented the sandwich and why? a. **The Earl of Sandwich – he wanted food which he could eat with one hand while gambling**
 7. What is a 'kebab'? **Turkish fast food**
 8. Which of the following ingredients would not be a possible ingredient of a British pudding? **lettuce**
 9. Which of these do you find in a pub in Britain? **a. lager b. cider c. bitter (trick question)**
 10. What is 'chicken tikka masala'? **a curry**
 11. How many vegetarians are there in the UK today? **3-4 million**
 12. Where do people eat deep-fried chocolate bars? **Scotland**
 13. When are toffee apples eaten in the UK? **Halloween**
 14. What is the difference between these things? **British English v. American English**
 15. When did the first curry house open in Britain? **1809**
- Use the feedback session to find out about students' perceptions of British food. Without going into a lecture, you may want to highlight the fact that while many traditional British foods remain popular, foods that are eaten by British people everyday often have their origins in other countries. You could talk about the great variety of foods in Britain today – Italian pasta and pizzas, Indian and Pakistani curries and Chinese dishes are perhaps the most popular, followed by Mexican, Thai and Japanese. This discussion of modern British cuisine will lead in nicely to the text in the next exercise.

Reading task 1:

Rationale: The task should help to develop students' reading comprehension skills, and act as a springboard for talking about people's cooking and eating habits.

- Hand out worksheet C to students.
- Ask students to read the article about cookery programmes and their effect on British cuisine.

- Give students 5-10 minutes to decide in pairs whether the statements are true or false.

Answers:

- Britain is starting to get a reputation for bad cuisine. **(false – British cuisine has often been criticised as being bland and uninteresting but this is starting to change)**
- Advertising campaigns are encouraging British people to try new foods. **(false – TV chefs, not adverts, are the new inspiration)**
- The most popular TV chefs in Britain are younger and more charismatic than they used to be. **(true)**
- ‘Jamie’s Kitchen’ is a TV programme about ordinary people who set up their own restaurants with no cooking experience. **(false – the programme is about young unqualified people who train to work in Jamie’s restaurant, not set up their own restaurant)**
- Jamie’s restaurant ‘Fifteen’ will be opening in several months time. **(false – it is already open and proving very popular with the public)**
- The traditional British diet may be dying out. **(true)**
- Following on from this exercise, ask students to get into small groups for discussion. Ask them to think of other reasons why people may be changing their cooking/eating habits in the UK. Encourage them to compare with food in their own country, and to discuss their own cooking preferences.

Reading Task 2:

Rationale: The aim of this task is to develop students’ ability to describe restaurants, through learning useful vocabulary and phrases relating to food, service, prices and atmosphere.

- Hand out Worksheets D and E to students.
- Ask students to read the restaurant reviews in Worksheet D, noting down any new vocabulary or phrases which can be used to describe restaurants. You may need to clarify some vocabulary.
- Now put students in pairs/small groups to answer the questions in Worksheet E, which relate to the restaurant reviews. Ask a different group to report back their answers to each question, to see whether others have similar opinions.
- Divide the class into different groups of 3-5 people for the planning task in Worksheet E. Give them 30 minutes to work through this exercise.
- Ask each group to do a brief presentation about their new restaurant.

- Hold a vote to see which restaurant the students would most like to visit.

Additional Task: With higher levels, you may choose to follow up this exercise by asking the students to write their own restaurant review. They could write a review of a restaurant they have already been to or of a restaurant designed by one of the other groups. Bring in some more examples taken from a variety of magazines, newspapers or websites.

Food Proverbs Exercise:

Rationale: The aim of this final exercise is to generate discussion amongst students. Proverbs are a very good basis for discussion, particularly with higher levels, for they often carry universal messages across cultural boundaries.

- Hand out Worksheet F with the list of food proverbs and quotes.
- Ask students to get into small groups of 3-5 people to discuss the questions on the worksheet.
- Ask each group to present their ideas about each proverb to the rest of the class. You may wish to ask each group to focus on a different proverb.
- Encourage students to practice saying these proverbs aloud, as this can be good pronunciation practice.
- Ask students to learn their favourite proverb/quote off by heart for the next class.