

Cooking in Britain Today

Task 1: Brainstorming national dishes

Think of as many national or typical dishes as you can under the following headings:

Your own country	UK	Other countries

Discussion Questions

- Have you tried any of these dishes? Which ones? Did you like or dislike them?
- What is your favourite food? What is your least favourite?
- What is the strangest food you have ever eaten? Did it taste good or bad?
- Do you like trying new foods?
- Are there any foods that you wouldn't eat as a child that you eat now?
- Do you prefer your own country's food or other kinds of food? Has your country 'adopted' many foods from other countries?
- If you were living abroad, which food would you miss most from this country?

Task 2: Food vocabulary

In pairs think of a food to match each adjective.

Tastes		Textures	
Adjective	Example	Adjective	Example
sour		soft	
sweet		hard	
salty		chewy	
bitter		crunchy	
bland		crispy	
strong		smooth	
hot		creamy	
spicy		flaky	

Now read the following clues and guess what food/dish is being described.

CLUES

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.

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

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.

This food is usually hard and crunchy, and it is red or green in colour. People often use it to make desserts, e.g. pies.

Write some more clues of your own and see if your partner or the rest of the class can guess which food you are describing.

Task 3: British Food Quiz

In pairs try to guess the right answer for each question.

1. Which of these do the British eat most of in Europe?

- a. crisps and chocolate
- b. fresh fruit and vegetables
- c. sausages

2. What is the most popular food in Britain?

- a. fish and chips
- b. pizza
- c. curry

3. What is 'haggis'?

- a. a cocktail made from whisky and fruit juice
- b. a type of fish eaten in Scotland
- c. a Scottish dish made from sheep's stomach and innards

4. Stilton, cheddar and double Gloucester are all kinds of:

- a. apple
- b. pig
- c. cheese

5. What do most British people have for breakfast?

- a. toast and cereal
- b. cappuccino and croissant
- c. fried eggs and bacon

6. Who invented the sandwich and why?

- a. The Earl of Sandwich – he wanted food which he could eat with one hand while gambling
- b. Lord Sandwich – he wanted food which he could take for a picnic in the countryside
- c. Queen Elizabeth I – she wanted food which could be prepared quickly for guests

7. What is a 'kebab'?

- a. a type of pub
- b. Turkish fast food
- c. A hot drink

8. Which of the following ingredients would not be a possible ingredient of a British pudding?

- a. pig's blood
- b. chocolate
- c. 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. a type of salad
- b. a type of Chinese food
- c. a curry

11. How many vegetarians are there in the UK today?

- a. 3-4 thousand
- b. 300-400 thousand
- c. 3-4 million

12. Where do people eat deep-fried chocolate bars?

- a. Scotland
- b. Japan
- c. Wales

13. When are toffee apples eaten in the UK?

- a. Christmas
- b. Halloween
- c. Easter

14. What is the difference between: 'chips' and 'french fries'; 'crisps' and 'chips'; and 'fizzy drink' and 'soda'?

- a. One is British English and the other American English
- b. They are made differently
- c. One is formal English, and the other is slang

15. When did the first curry house open in Britain?

- a. 1809
- b. 1919
- c. 1969

Task 4: Reading Task 1

Read the following article about cookery programmes and their effect on British cuisine.

Are Brits becoming more adventurous in the kitchen?

What comes into your mind when you think of British food? Probably fish and chips, or a Sunday dinner of meat and two vegetables. But is British food really so bland and uninteresting? Despite a reputation for less-than-spectacular cuisine, Britain is producing more and more top class chefs who dominate our television screens and whose recipe books frequently top the best seller lists.

It's thanks to these TV chefs rather than any advertising campaign that Britons are turning away from meat-and-two-veg and ready-made meals and becoming more adventurous in their cooking habits. It seems that TV programmes have the power to bring a higher profile to cooking and are wielding real influence on what people cook at home.

According to a new study from market analysts, 1 in 5 Britons claim that watching cookery programmes on TV has encouraged them to try different food. Almost one third say they now use a wider variety of ingredients than they used to, and just under 1 in 4 (24%) say they now buy better quality ingredients than before. One in four adults say that TV chefs have made them much more confident about expanding their culinary knowledge and skills, and young people are also getting more interested in cooking. With an increasing number of male chefs on TV, it's no longer 'uncool' for boys to like cooking. The UK's new obsession with food is reflected through television scheduling. Cookery shows and documentaries about food are broadcast during prime time evening slots.

Many of the new celebrity chefs promote modern 'fusion cuisine', which blends classic 'British' cooking with international and exotic influences. Even the chefs themselves are younger, more beautiful and much more experimental, such as Nigella Lawson and Jamie Oliver. Jamie Oliver was only 23 when he first appeared on British television screens. More than 4 million people tuned in to his popular show 'Jamie's Kitchen'. The show began as an experiment and turned into a phenomenon. Jamie gave himself nine months to take a team of unemployed 16 to 24-year-olds, with virtually no previous experience of cooking, and transform them into top class chefs to work in his new restaurant in East London, 'Fifteen'. Jamie left school himself without formal qualifications and believes that with a passion for food, anyone can become a good cook. 'Fifteen' has become a hit in London and is booked up months in advance.

Jamie Oliver has proved to be a huge inspiration for British people. The recent survey finds that the number of those sticking to a traditional diet is slowly declining and around half of Britain's consumers would like to change or improve their cooking in some way. There has been a rise in the number of students applying for food courses at UK universities and colleges, such as those offered by the School of Culinary Art at South Trafford College. Having been ridiculed for centuries for its mediocre cuisine, is Britain now competing with countries such as France and Italy in the field of culinary excellence?

Decide whether the following statements are true or false:

- 1) Britain is starting to get a reputation for bad cuisine.
- 2) Advertising campaigns are encouraging British people to try new foods.
- 3) The most popular TV chefs in Britain are younger and more charismatic than they used to be.
- 4) 'Jamie's Kitchen' is a TV programme about ordinary people who set up their own restaurants with no cooking experience.
- 5) Jamie's restaurant 'Fifteen' will be opening in several months' time.
- 6) The traditional British diet may be dying out.

Questions for Discussion

- Apart from popular cooking programmes, can you think of any other reasons why people may be changing their cooking and eating habits in Britain? Think about the following factors:
 - Travel
 - Health
 - Vegetarianism
 - Ingredients available
- Have there been many changes in your country? Are there any 'new' foods?
- Do you ever cook? If so, what do you like to cook?
- Would you like to train to work in Jamie Oliver's restaurant, 'Fifteen'? Why/why not?

Task 5: Reading Task 2

Read these reviews written about a variety of restaurants in London. Write down any new vocabulary or phrases which can be used to describe restaurants.

The Ritz**Food: traditional British or fusion cuisine****Price per person: £80**

This spectacular palace-style dining room is famous as one of London's most luxurious, romantic restaurants. It's hard to resist splashing out on the exquisite 5-course menu. The staff are discreet and extremely polite. It's hardly surprising that the clients are a mixture of celebrities, business executives and wealthy tourists. Come here for a memorable dining experience, which will certainly do damage to your bank account!

Yo sushi!**Food: Japanese****Price per person: £10-15**

The best known sushi place in town. This restaurant is great both for its raw fish and its kitsch Japanese décor. Service is efficient and speedy. You can eat delicious sushi for a few pounds, serve yourself unlimited beer, select food from a conveyor belt and even have a relaxing head massage! Sometimes there are karaoke nights here. This restaurant is bright and unromantic but great fun.

Amaretto**Food: Italian****Price per person: £15-20**

A family-owned restaurant that has faithful clients coming back again and again. Amaretto offers classic Italian food in warm and friendly surroundings. Whatever time you come here, this restaurant is always busy and lively. The pizzas and pasta dishes are well recommended as being tasty and excellent value for money. Great for families or big groups of friends.

Levant**Food: Lebanese/Middle Eastern****Price per person: £20-30**

An exotic Middle Eastern restaurant which is perfect for a romantic evening. The atmosphere is moody and intimate, with lots of candles, soft cushions and coloured glass lanterns. When you find the entrance, hidden away down a small street, you are greeted by lush plants and the smell of incense and exotic perfumes. The menu offers a feast of authentic Lebanese food for people who like to try something new and unusual. If you stay late, you will even be able to watch a belly-dancing show!

The George Inn**Food: traditional British pub food****Price per person: £5-10**

A dark and smoky pub, which was built in 1780. Come here if you want to taste traditional English fish and chips or steak and kidney pie in a lively atmosphere. The food isn't great, the service is slow, but this pub serves a good range of beers and ales.

Food for Thought**Food: vegetarian****Price per person: £5-10**

This tiny colourful vegetarian restaurant and takeaway offers food free of chemicals, pesticides and preservatives. The food is good and the menu changes every day, but this place is also great if you just want a coffee. Don't come here at busy times if you want a slow, leisurely meal.

Café Sol**Food: Mexican****Price: £20-30**

Café Sol is a great place to go at any time. Enjoy authentic Mexican cuisine at lunchtime (watch out for the chili!) or go for a drink and a dance when it gets dark. The atmosphere is always buzzing and vibrant, and the food is reasonably priced. On a Saturday night, the young crowds in Café Sol are usually very loud and merry after sampling the extensive list of tequilas!

The Hard Rock Café**Food: Tex-Mex and burgers****Price per person: £10-20**

A genuine celebration of rock 'n' roll! This is the original Hard Rock Café, here since the 1970s, and it's the first ever theme restaurant. The queue to get in is legendary. You can't make reservations and you will find a queue almost all day long, every day of the year. But this actually adds to the memorable experience. Once in, there's good food and a great atmosphere, created by rock music, dim lighting and walls covered in rock memorabilia.

After reading the reviews, answer these questions.

Which restaurant would you recommend for...

- (a) Music fans who don't mind queueing!
- (b) A tourist wanting to try different English beers and ales
- (c) A person looking for a fun evening and good food on a budget
- (d) Some young and hip professionals who like to dance
- (e) An adventurous couple looking for a night out

- (f) A family looking for value for money
- (g) A health-conscious person on a budget
- (h) A person who enjoys spending money on high class dining

Task 6: Open a new restaurant!

Work in groups of 3-5. Imagine you are going to open a new restaurant. Discuss and decide on the following aspects.

- Who are your target consumers?
- What cuisine will you serve?
- Will you have any specialties, or a daily menu, or takeaway?
- What type of atmosphere will you try to generate? How?
- Will there be any entertainment?
- What decor will you have?
- Where will your restaurant be located?
- How will you advertise?
- What prices will you charge?
- What are you going to call your restaurant?

Be ready to present your new restaurant to the rest of the class

Task 7: Food Proverbs and Quotes

Read the quotes and proverbs about food and answer these questions:

- What is the meaning or implication of each proverb/quote?
- Which proverbs or quotes do you agree with?
- Are there any which you disagree with?
- Which is your favourite?
- Do you have any proverbs in your own language which refer to food or diet?

Proverbs

'To eat is a necessity, but to eat intelligently is an art.'

La Rochefoucauld

'Part of the success in life is to eat what you like and let the food fight it out inside.'

Mark Twain

'The discovery of a new dish does more for human happiness than the discovery of a new star.'

Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin

'When diet is wrong medicine is of no use. When diet is correct medicine is of no need.'

Proverb

'An apple a day keeps the doctor away.'

Proverb

'You are what you eat.'

Proverb

'Hunger is the best sauce in the world.'

Cervantes

'Kissing doesn't last: cookery does.'

George Meredith

'Cooking is like love. It should be entered into with abandon or not at all.'

Harriet Van Horne

'Fish, to taste right, must swim three times – in water, in butter and in wine.'

Proverb

'One cannot think well, love well, sleep well, if one has not dined well.'

Virginia Woolf