

THE INFLUENCE OF CULTURE ON OUR DIET



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INTRODUCTION:

- How is “Culture” defined - to you?
- Well for one thing... When I think of all the wonderful countries throughout the world, my first thought of culture, is of the FOOD.
- For example.. Italy- Pasta and Wine... Cuba- Ropa Vieja and Rum... Japan- Sushi and Saki.. And The list goes on..
- But how has this cultural aspect affected the lives and health of generations of people?
- The truth is, we inherit more than just genetics from our families. We inherit their lifestyle and eating habits as well.



SO,.. WHY TALK ABOUT “CULTURE AND DIET” YOU MAY ASK?

- The reason being, is that food has always fascinated me. (Hence why I’m a Dietetics and Nutrition Major, in college now)
- Since I was young, I can remember watching the food channel very late at night and feeling so intrigued by the different places of the world, and the iconic foods of the cultures from various countries.
- As I began to get older, and I explored different hobbies (that being - Body Building), I then realized the challenges I would face, as I tried to change my diet to fit my Physical Needs, rather than what was traditional for me and my family.



SOME CURRENT FINDING'S:

- What I've discovered is that a child's Dietary Habits and Choices are developed at infancy, in accordance to their parents views of healthy eating. (Dr. Edward Group)
- Diet is part of the fundamentals of daily life, as well as means for social gatherings, whether that be formal or informal. An example would be Wedding Cake at a wedding, or drinking a cold beer at a barbeque etc. (Genes & Nutrition; BioMed Central)
 - Or in my culture **Pasteles** & **Turkey** for Christmas/Thanksgiving and **Baked Ziti** or **Lasagna** at any other family gathering. → → → → → →
- Also “Cultural Shifts” can influence an individuals health as well. For instance, if your from a foreign country, where the food you normally would have chosen to eat is locally sourced and nutrient dense, to then transition to the United States, where most food available/affordable is overly processed, high-fat and full of empty calories. (Linda H. Lamb)

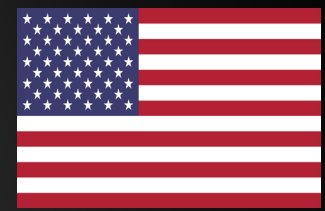


RESEARCH QUESTION :

“ HOW HAS THE FOODS, THAT YOU GREW UP EATING, AFFECTED YOUR WEIGHT - NOW AS AN ADULT? ”



INTERVIEWS:



- My **Husband** – He says that he can remember growing up in the Dominican Republic, as a very skinny kid, and that he would eat so many tropical fresh fruits straight from the land. He could easily go outside to the neighbors yards and pull the fruit right from the trees. Now as an adult and living in the United States, he finds his weight to have increased and losing weight is very difficult when fresh produce is very expensive at most grocery stores.
- My **Father** – He says that growing up in a mixed cultural home, of Puerto Rican and Italian American foods, that he would consume a lot of carb rich foods, such as pastas, breads, rice and pastries. Then after getting married, he still maintained that style of eating, (he has a big sweet tooth, my mom calls him the cookie monster lol), but instead no longer maintained the same activity level of being in the U.S. Marines, and then gained a significant amount of weight. He has recently dropped the weight, but not without strict discipline and an entirely different way of eating.
- My **Mother** – She grew up in America, eating mostly traditional homecooked Puerto Rican food and was rather slim as a young woman, and never had a huge appetite, but after marriage her weight has too increased, by eating more carb rich/high-fat foods she prepared for her family. She has since struggled with healthy eating and weight management. She says she tries to incorporate more smoothies and shakes as a meal substitute since she was never fond of eating fresh fruits and vegetables.

THE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES :

- What I've come to recognize from my interviews is that geographical, as well as social factors play a major role in how a person's diet is formed and shaped.
- If the individual was introduced to healthier eating at an early age they would find it easier to enjoy healthy foods.
- If certain circumstances change, such as migrating or marriage, then it would take greater effort to maintain a healthier diet when other aspects take effect.



CONCLUSION:

- What I've learned about Culture & Diet, is that they each go hand in hand.
- Although our food preferences begin as children, we can now as adults make proper food choices with more nutritional understandings.
- We do not have to give up every aspect of our childhood favorite foods, but we can alter the way our favorite foods are prepared, by substituting unhealthy options for healthier ones. (ex. Choosing lean ground chicken instead of beef)
- We may come to discover a whole new way of eating healthier, without giving up our culture and heritage, for our children, and their children to come.
- It may not be easy or cheap to spend on healthier food, but having good health for generations to come is priceless.



REFERENCES :

- How Culture Affects Diet; By: Linda H. Lamb

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- How Culture and Society Influence Healthy Eating; By Dr. Edward Group DC, NP, DACBN, DCBCN, DABFM (Published on August 11, 2016)

<https://www.globalhealingcenter.com/natural-health/how-culture-and-society-influence-healthy-eating/>

SUMMARY:

- As a Dietetics Science Major, it is of great interest to me to study the influences of diet and lifestyle behaviors. With great pleasure I have been able extend my research from a sociological viewpoint, and create this power point slide to further discover the attributes to “why we eat, what we eat?”. I have used my acquired knowledge over the years to manipulate unhealthy food choices into healthier ones, without sacrificing satisfaction and enjoyment. I hope to be able to educate others on the benefits of healthy eating, and that it’s not just about eating “a salad”. The word diet has been used too literally, as a diet is a temporary routine, so I would rather use the term “lifestyle”, which fits more appropriately, as changing your lifestyle over time is more impactful and consistent. Aside from my interest in healthy lifestyle living, I have always found world culture and foods throughout the nations beyond fascinating. For me, being able to master the Art of Cooking, and doing so in a healthy way is my ultimate goal. We can very well have our cake and eat it too. Eating well is not about sacrifice. It means self-love and self-care. There is a whole world out there of food to discover and enjoy. If you currently struggle with your health or your weight, I encourage you to get informed about the food choices that you're making, and learn what the healthy alternatives to these foods are. You don't have to loose your culture to live healthier. With the wide variety of food that God gave to us, the options are endless.

