Before You Read

In small groups or with the whole class, answer the following questions.

1. What foods are traditional in your culture?
2. Do you ever eat in restaurants that serve foods of other cultures?
3. What is your favorite food? Why?

Read

The information in this article is from an anthropology textbook.

Food Traditions

Every **culture** in the world has its own style of cooking and eating. Every **culture** has its own beliefs about what is good to eat and what is not. Many of these food customs started hundreds or even thousands of years ago. They developed in part because of where the people lived.

DIETS OF EARLY HUMANS

The **diet** of early humans depended on what foods were **available** to them. Different foods were **available** in different environments. For example, humans who lived near an ocean **relied** on the ocean to **supply** them with fish to eat. In contrast, humans who lived in forest areas ate the animals they hunted. Humans in the warm Indus Valley picked wild bananas to eat. Humans in northern Europe dug up wild onions. Flavorings, such as spices, also depended on what was **available** in the environment. Sometimes seeds or leaves were added to foods for flavor. Over time, these foods and flavors became traditional in a **culture**.

EARLY FARMING

About ten thousand years ago, humans learned to farm. These early farmers tamed wild cows, goats, and sheep. They planted wheat, barley, and other grains. Slowly, farming spread to other areas. The animals that farmers raised and the crops they planted depended on where they lived. Rice, for example, grew well in southern Asia, but not in dry desert lands.



Early humans who lived in the far north fished through holes cut in the ice.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

The animals and crops **ensured** that the farmers would have a **supply** of food **available** to eat.

NEW FOODS

Over the years, people learned about new foods. They learned from their neighbors or from travelers. They also learned about new cooking **techniques**. Travelers who went to distant places **discovered** new foods. Marco Polo, for example, traveled to China and brought noodles back to Italy. Explorers who sailed to the Americas brought tomatoes and potatoes back to Europe. Many of the new foods later became part of the traditional **diet** of some **cultures**. Potatoes, for example, became a **significant** part of the Irish **diet**. Both pasta (noodles) and tomatoes became part of the Italian **diet**.

EATING TECHNIQUES

Cultures also developed their own **techniques** for eating. Thousands of years ago, people in China began using chopsticks. They have **preserved** this eating **technique** and still use chopsticks today. People in other Asian countries learned the **technique** from them. The first eating tool used in Europe was probably a seashell or curved piece of wood. Later sharp, pointed knives were used. Most Western countries now use metal forks, knives, and spoons to eat with. Some **cultures** do not use eating tools. Instead, people use their fingers to pick up bites of food. People in other **cultures** **rely** on pieces of flat bread to pick up food.

People are proud of their **cultures** and enjoy their traditional foods. They want to **ensure** that their food traditions are **preserved**. ■



People still use chopsticks today.

Reading Comprehension

Mark each statement as *T* (True) or *F* (False) according to Reading 1.

___ 1. The diet of early humans depended on what foods were available in their environment.

___ 2. People who lived near the ocean relied on the ocean to supply them with animals to eat.

___ 3. Marco Polo discovered potatoes in China and brought some back to Europe.

___ 4. Tomatoes became a significant part of the Irish diet.

___ 5. The people of China have preserved the technique of eating with chopsticks into modern times.

___ 6. People are proud of their cultures and want to ensure that their food traditions are preserved.

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