

TASK 4. (0–7)

Read two texts about food. For questions 4.1.–4.7., choose the answer that best matches the text and circle the appropriate letter (A, B, C or D).

Text 1

THE SPICE OF LIFE

I find it difficult to describe what British cooking is really like. The adjectives commonly used are 'good' and 'plain', with the latter being used as an insult as much as a compliment, sometimes with some justification. Yet, plain food cannot be bettered if its quality is right and the freshness palpable. And British food certainly wasn't all that plain for most of its history! An interesting question to ponder is how the inherently conservative people of the British Isles have come to accept and encourage influences from all round the world throughout centuries, and still do so at an ever-increasing rate. You have only to consider that one entire generation believes that the Chinese take-away, tandoori chicken, spaghetti, kebabs and hamburgers they love so much are all British. The generation just older than them will think longingly of British cooking as baked apples and sweet cured hams, of the mellowness of cinnamon and the bite of cloves in baking, and of peppery beef stews, without ever realizing that the ingredients which make them so special – the spices – are all imported from far-away eastern lands.

The earliest cooked food in Britain was meat roasted over flames, and gruels of grains, sometimes flavoured with vegetables and herbs. The first contact with spices was during the long Roman occupation, but when the Romans left and the Dark Ages cast their pall over Europe, the British returned to a less sophisticated style of food. The most monumental change came with the last successful invasion of these shores by the Duke of Normandy. As well as introducing new and more luxurious styles of cooking, the Normans also gave us many new words for food, for instance pork and beef. And after the Normans came the Crusaders who reintroduced spices to Britain and also brought with them sugar, dried fruit and rose water. Over the centuries, the rise and fall of a dozen empires and kingdoms have made their contribution to British food. For generations Britain has taken what has been offered, chewed it over and kept what it liked the most.

I hope you will be surprised at this book. When gathering material, I was certainly surprised many times. For instance, at how quickly foods which have been common for centuries can disappear. Why did we stop using rose water about 60 years ago, or flavouring our custards with bay leaf or orange? Is it a silly snobbishness that led to the virtual disappearance of the once envied British puddings based on breadcrumbs?

I hope you will use the recipes included in this book judiciously, altering the proportion of ingredients as it suits you – but without moving away from the spirit of the dish. Spirit seems to me to be the great link between the extraordinarily different styles of British food. Through this book we can follow in our predecessors' footsteps with respect and with the lightness of our own touch.

adapted from The Cooking of the British Isles by Glynn Christian

4.1. In the first paragraph the writer implies that

- A. the plainness of British food is its worst enemy.
- B. British cooking has deservedly earned its unrivalled reputation.
- C. embracing international food is a recent phenomenon in Britain.
- D. British people are often ignorant about the origins of some popular foods.

4.2. Which of the following sentences is TRUE?

- A. Britons refrained from using spices at the time of the Roman conquest.
- B. During the Dark Ages British food lost some of its refinement.
- C. The Crusaders were the first to flavour British food with spices.
- D. The Normans did not influence the British diet in any significant way.

4.3. The author of the text

- A. reviews a book discussing the quality of British food.
- B. previews the content of his own publication on British food.
- C. weighs different hypotheses about the origins of British food.
- D. outlines historical research supporting his theories about British food.

Text 2

COOKING ENCOUNTERS

Lillian loved best the moment before she turned on the lights. She would stand in the restaurant kitchen doorway, rain-soaked air behind her, and let the smells come to her – ripe sourdough yeast or garlic, mellowing as it lingered. Lillian breathed in, feeling the smells move about and through her, even as she searched out those that might reveal whether the new assistant chef was still double-dosing the curry in the dishes. She was. The girl was good enough with knives, but some days, Lillian thought with a sigh, **it was like trying to teach subtlety to a thunderstorm.**

Tonight was Monday, a cooking class night. Lillian's students arrived with a variety of motivations, some drawn by a yearning as yet unmet to hear murmured culinary compliments, others trying to find a cook rather than become one. A few participants who had been given the course as a gift, had no desire for lessons at all, arriving as if on a forced march to certain failure; they knew their cakes would always be flat, their cream sauces filled with small, disconcerting pockets of flour. And then there were those students who seemingly had no choice, who could no more stay out of a kitchen than a kleptomaniac could keep her hands in her pockets. They fantasized about leaving their corporate jobs and becoming chefs with an exhilarating mixture of guilt and pleasure. They always came early and stayed late. If Lillian's soul sought out this last group, it was only to be expected, but in truth, she found them all fascinating.

It was during her early years that Lillian discovered cooking. After her father left, housework became for Lillian's mother a travel destination rarely reached; laundry, a friend one never remembered to call. Lillian picked up these skills by following her friends' mothers around their homes, while the mothers pretended not to notice, dropping hints about bleach or changing a vacuum bag as if it were just one more game children played. Lillian learned, and soon developed a certain domestic routine. But it was the cooking that occurred in her friends' homes that fascinated Lillian the most – the aromas that started calling to her just when she had to go home in the evening.

Lillian liked thinking about smells. She often remembered the time Margaret's mother had let her help with a white sauce, playing out the memory in her head the way some children try to recover, bit by bit, the moments of a favourite birthday party. Margaret had pouted, because she was never allowed to help in the kitchen, but Lillian had ignored all twinges of loyalty and climbed up on the chair and stood, watching the butter melt across the pan like the farthest reach of a wave sinking into the sand. Then she gazed at the flour, at first a hideous, clumping thing destroying the image until it was stirred with Margaret's mother's hand over Lillian's on the wooden spoon when she wanted to mash the clumps, moving slowly, in circles until the flour-butter became smooth and until again the image was changed by the added milk. Each time Lillian thought that the sauce could hold no more, that it would break into solid and liquid, but it never did.

adapted from The School of Essential Ingredients by Erica Bauermeister

4.4. The phrase “it was like trying to teach subtlety to a thunderstorm” used in the 1st paragraph implies that the assistant chef

- A.** lacked natural refinement in cooking.
- B.** felt overwhelmed by responsibility.
- C.** had a quick-tempered disposition.
- D.** served excessive portions of food.

4.5. When describing Lillian’s students, the narrator mentions some people who

- A.** had been encouraged to join the course by Lillian’s words of praise.
- B.** were promised a guaranteed improvement of their baking skills.
- C.** had been attracted by the prospect of receiving a complimentary gift.
- D.** were motivated by a vision of a revolutionary change in their lives.

4.6. After Lillian’s father left,

- A.** Lillian’s mother became negligent in her daily chores.
- B.** Lillian insisted on being instructed in some housework.
- C.** Lillian’s friends started to ridicule her extraordinary sense of smell.
- D.** Lillian’s friends’ mothers used tricks to discourage Lillian from cooking.

4.7. In the last paragraph, we learn about

- A.** an incident that led to Lillian’s first cooking failure.
- B.** Lillian’s indignation over the way she was treated by Margaret.
- C.** an early attempt at cooking which Lillian found enjoyable.
- D.** Lillian’s preparations for her friend’s birthday party.

TRANSFER YOUR ANSWERS TO THE ANSWER SHEET!

TASK 5. (0–4)

Read the article. Four fragments have been removed from the text. Complete each gap (5.1.–5.4.) with the fragment which fits best and put the appropriate letter (A–E) in each gap. There is one fragment which you do not need to use.

AMBER CONTRIBUTION TO SCIENCE

The Etruscans prized amber as highly as gold. The Greeks mythologized it as the tears of Apollo's daughters, solidified when they cried for their brother. Cultures stretching from Central America to the Far East, from the Mediterranean to Scandinavia, have used it both as a powerful medicine and as a medium for exquisite jewellery and fine works of art.

Today, scientists value amber even more than artists. 5.1. _____ And unlike ordinary fossils, which are relatively crude rock molds of prehistoric life forms, these specimens are often perfectly preserved, with the most delicate features intact.

Recently David Grimaldi, an entomologist of New York City's Museum of Natural History, has announced a discovery he calls 'scientifically the most important of all amber fossils'. 5.2. _____ That makes them the oldest intact plants ever found in a piece of amber, and an important clue to the origin of the plants that now dominate the earth.

The resin that eventually turns into amber comes from a variety of ancient trees, mostly conifers, including pines and extinct relatives of sequoias and cedars, but also some deciduous trees. It probably evolved as a defense against wood-boring insects. As it dripped down the bark, it acted like flypaper and encapsulated them, hermetically sealing the trees' wounds at the same time. Apart from these creatures, which must have been its target, the resin would also trap anything else that happened to stumble into it. 5.3. _____ Thanks to this abundance of samples surely some important insights into the workings of natural selection can be revealed.

As anybody who has seen the film *Jurassic Park* knows, plants and animals sealed in amber are a potential source of prehistoric DNA. Scientists have extracted genetic material from, among other things, a 17 million-year-old magnolia and a 120 million-year-old beetle. Yet, no serious biologist believes it will ever be possible to clone a dinosaur from just a few bits of DNA. Even so excellent a preservative as amber apparently can't keep DNA from breaking down into fragments that may be scientifically interesting but are biologically inert. 5.4. _____ One thing is certain, though. Whereas for artists any piece of amber is an uncut gem, for scientists only ones with a sample of a prehistoric life form trapped inside are exciting.

adapted from Time, 2006

- A. He claims that the specimens found are exquisite. It is a sample with three tiny buds, probably from an oak tree, that date to the age when dinosaurs walked the continent.
- B. Why is it so? Trapped within translucent, usually gold-coloured tree resin are some of the most ancient examples of certain species known to science: the oldest ants, moths, stingless bees and caterpillars, some of them dating back tens of millions of years.
- C. Some trees fell and ended up buried in these soft sediments accumulated at the bottom of still bodies of water. There, over millions of years, the molecules of resin gradually amalgamated into long, durable chains, creating a material remarkably similar to plastic.
- D. That's one reason why many researchers doubt the claims of California scientists who announced last year that they had managed to retrieve bacteria preserved in amber for 25 million years.
- E. Rotten luck for them, but extraordinary good fortune for evolutionary biologists. In one major deposit – a site in New Jersey whose location is closely guarded – a team of volunteers have found nearly 100 previously unknown ancient species of plants and animals.

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