
Chinese Cultural Group In Australia

The Chinese cultural group has a population that stands at nearly 1.438 billion as of the beginning of 2020, which is approximately 18.5% of the total world population. With their extremely large population, there is a wide variety of factors that influence their food selection in not only China but also in Australia. These factors include; Historical and contemporary, social psychological and economic and they comprise of things such as many different things as; Traditions, beliefs, migration and settlement habits, practices and resources available

Historical and Contemporary Factors:

The assimilation and colonisation of Chinese people in Australia have an extensive history. Small numbers of Chinese men migrated as apprentice labourers, convicts and free settlers after the arrival of colony in 1788 to Australia. Though, the number of Chinese immigrants didn't really become substantial until the gold rushes in Victoria and New South Wales throughout the 1850s and 1860s. Almost all of the Chinese immigrants came from poverty-stricken districts of Southern China, especially the provinces around Canton (now known as Guangzhou). This is because they were impelled by the economic, environmental and political challenges that were occurring in China and they were attracted to the appeal of gold in Australia. (La Trobe University, n.d.). It was estimated that there were about 2,000 Chinese in the colony, according to the 1853 census, and after 10 years into the gold rush, there were about 40,000 (approx. 3% of the population) Chinese settled in Australia (Bartleby.com, 2016)

With the expanding number of Chinese migrating to Australia in the 1800s during the gold rush, their food and culture were quickly introduced and incorporated into Australian culture. Once they arrived, many of the migrants depended primarily on their recipes and traditions, as they had not yet been able to prepare English or European cuisine. Due to the sudden influx of Chinese immigrants, many of them established cookhouses bringing new preparation techniques and ingredients such as boiling and tofu. These cookhouses provided traditional foods for themselves and the locals. Among Chinese goldmine workers these small stores were very popular, and due to the magnificent aromas, they soon started attracting Aussie diggers. A few years into the gold rush, Australia's first ever Chinese restaurant was launched in Ballarat in 1854 due to the popularity of these cookhouses and Australia's increasing demand for Chinese. Many people suggest that by 1890, 1 in 3 cooks in Australia were Chinese. The demand for Chinese food skyrocketed through the following decades and soon enough Chinese restaurants and food stores were established around the nation, even in small country areas. In most of the nation's capital cities, Chinatown precincts were developed, and they are still increasingly popular to this day as these vibrant neighbourhoods are the perfect location for tourists wanting to indulge in a genuine culinary experience. (Davy, n.d.) (Menulog, 2019) (Stanford, 2015). Australians have not only adapted many foods from Chinese culture such as fried rice, noodles and some spices and seasonings but also certain cooking and cultural practices in their everyday lives (e.g. stir-frying, braising, boiling, the Chinese New Year celebration and the use of chopsticks). These practices are becoming extremely popular today among Australian households and families and have been incorporated into many meals.

Psychological Factors:

Beliefs are associated with culture and religion, values are guiding principles that motivate us and guide our decisions, habits are regular tendency's or practices and attitudes are a settled way of thinking or feeling something. These four aspects are all examples of psychological factors that affect our food selection in a variety of ways.

There are many different cuisines in China and throughout the country the eating habits differ depending on the region. A commonly recognised phrase in China is 'South Rice and North Noodle', meaning people in southern China generally tend to consume more rice whereas people living in Northern China enjoy eating noodles. Within Chinese culture, an individual's taste preferences also differ between different regions of China. Individuals in Southern China love sweeter foods, salty foods are favoured by people in the Northern areas, individuals in Eastern regions tend to like the acidity of vinegar and in Western districts spicy food is very popular. Because of geological and climatic variations within the country, the products of the various regions are different from those of other regions, and the cuisine prepared is generally produced from local produce/products. (ChinaTour360, 2020). With Chinese individuals migrating and settling in Australia many of them tend to stick to their eating habits of their region that they previously lived with slight variation due to the certain foods available. Whereas, some others choose to adapt to the eating habits of Australian individuals such as eating out once a week.

Religion in China also impacts the food selection made by individuals around the nation. Buddhism is very popular in China with around half of the Buddhist population situated in China. Estimates made by the Pew research centre, who study religious beliefs around the world claim that there are an estimated 245 million Buddhists in China, which is approximately 18 per cent of the national population. There is also a growing number of Buddhists within Australia, with a population of over half a million people and this number is continually increasing. (Siqi, 2016). Most Buddhists follow vegetarian diets as the religion of Buddhism prohibits the taking of life as they believe this will allow them to be a human being in their future life. (Weng, 1998). Therefore, a strict vegetarian/vegan diet in China and Australia isn't uncommon, abstaining from animal products such as meat, fish and eggs is what most Buddhist monks and nuns have adopted. The demands of a vegetarian Buddhist culture have sparked vegetarian restaurants in Chinese and Australian communities from the 13th century and prompted the development of signature vegetarian cuisine, along with different kinds of imitation meats. In modern day vegetarianism has become a subject of interest among Chinese Buddhists, and there has been a steady rise in the number of Buddhist vegetarian restaurants both in China and in Australia, backed by a large industry producing vegetarian produce. (Kieschinick, 2005)

In the traditional Chinese society, attitudes /values heavily influence food purchasing and preparation. In Chinese culture within not only China but also in Australia men and women have different social obligations/ roles in the household. In many Chinese households within both countries the men are accountable for outside affairs such as farming and harvesting the produce whereas the women are usually responsible for internal jobs such as food production, collection, procurement and preparation of food as this is the traditional duty of women. Women are responsible for approximately 69.8% of food purchase in China whereas for men it is only 26.3% according to a recent survey carried out throughout multiple regions across the nation. With still a small number of men getting involved in the internal affairs, the belief that women are responsible for the food purchase and prep is still help by many Chinese families living in Australia and China as it is a solid tradition which is passed through many generations. There's

also a difference between the sexes when it comes to food distribution within the household as typically less food is given to female members of the family whereas male and older members of the family are generally provided with more food and are given first choice. Such variations in the distribution of food makes the women in the family more vulnerable to dietary complications. (GuanshengMa, 2015)

Social Factors:

In Chinese culture there are a variety of traditions and cultural practices that heavily influence the food that is consumed within China and Australia.

The Chinese culture is heavily reflected in some of the special dishes that are served only on special occasions or on specific traditional/ cultural events. Weddings, festivals or any other kind of special occasion that involves the whole family, will include many different conventional foods that are consumed. Different information is symbolised through many of these foods that eaten during these events. Seeds and dates are eaten at weddings in the expectation that the newly married pair will have children early, noodles and peaches at birthdays are eaten to symbolise prosperity. Many foods are also discouraged because individuals believe they bring bad luck e.g. pears are suspected to bring separation. Many often consume special foods to mark significant events or holidays such as Australians enjoying pavlova on Australia Day. For example, during the Chinese New Year, which is China's most popular traditional holiday that is also celebrated in Australia, foods consumed are used to show hopes for happiness and good luck. Sweet round sticky rice balls symbolise harmony and reconciliation and they are commonly eaten during the Lantern festival. Different societies and cultures greatly affect the food customs in a country. In Chinese communities' noodles and peaches are eaten to mark one's birthday whereas in Western culture during a person's birthday many people eat cake, light candles and sing birthday songs. However, many Chinese families living within Australia have adopted to Australia's food habits during celebrations and many of them choose to combine food from their culture along with food from westernised cultures. people within also combine food from different cultures during special events. (GuanshengMa, 2015), (Wu, 2018)

Food is important component in Chinese society in Australia and their own nation as it can be used to express and establish relationships not only between one another but also between individuals and their traditions/ cultural beliefs. between family members. This bond can exist between people, individuals within the community, religious groups and ethnic groups. For starters, at the Spring festival also known as the Chinese New Year, which is also celebrated with an annual festival in Sydney, people consume dumplings to demonstrate their relationship with God. People in Chinese society typically provide others with meals to meet new people or to strengthen existing relationships. For example, Cantonese breakfasts are regarded as morning tea and often people chat about business and share knowledge when getting together for morning tea. Among eaters, specific foods are served to express closeness of a relationship between groups. In Chinese society, serving pricey and uncommon foods usually shows appreciation for the guests. Just like people who aren't part of the Chinese culture within Australia, co-workers from the Chinese culture will go to local food stands to eat and people in a relationship might have a candlelit dinner.

During mealtimes in China, there are a variety of dining traditions/ cultures that are undertaken when eating with family or with guests. Toasting to each other, the use of chopsticks, seating

arrangements and eating order based on seniority, dressing well and arriving on time are all dining etiquette traditions undertaken in Chinese culture. (Naidoo, 2009-2020). These dining traditions are not only abided by within China but also within Australia due to the migration of Chinese and the influence of their culture on Australian society. Many Chinese people living in Australia today still abide by their traditional beliefs regarding table etiquette and many Australians have adapted these traditions in many different ways throughout different meals of the day. Australians tend to eat their everyday meals with either a spoon, knife or a fork whereas for many Chinese households' chopsticks are widely used and in Chinese restaurants, people are encouraged to try using chopsticks to eat their meal. Toasting to each other is a popular tradition that is undertaken during family dinners.

Economic Influences:

The vast majority of the food consumed by the Chinese are produced domestically as they are historically striven for domestic food production self – sufficiency. So far China maintains a 95% self-sufficiency rate on their staple foods (wheat, rice, corn and potatoes will hopefully be added to the main food group in the near future). (Chen, 2019). In China corn is the main food product produced within the country trailed by rice and fresh produce whereas pork is the most produced animal product closely followed by chicken and beef. (Cook, 2020). This why popular meals in China mostly consist of a serving of rice accompanied by a meat product and vegetables. Due to China's massive population they are only able to feed its people only through massive state oversight, investment, and regulation in agriculture. Even then China imports many foods and they are considered not only to be the biggest importers of food in the world, but they are also topping internationally in being the biggest consumers of food worldwide. Only by significant state supervision, innovation and control in agriculture will China be able to feed their huge population. China imports food even then to supply for growing demands which means they are not only recognised as being the world's largest importers of food, but also as the world largest producer of food. The simple response is that even with regular, diligent and successful control of their food supply, China will eventually not be able to feed its ever-growing population. This is for many reasons such as; China needing to feed 21% of the world population with only 7% of the world's agricultural property., the total size of Chinese farms is small, the mechanisation is restricted, productivity is decreasing, production per hectare is poor, the ageing agricultural labour force and many more. (Szeftel, 2020).

Australia is widely known for their good reputation for manufacturing natural, highest quality produce by Chinese customers, therefore Australia is one of China's main food providers. It is estimated that Australian exports to China reached \$5.3 billion in 2016. Foods such as; cattle, dairy goods, sheep and goat meat, pork, wine and spirits, horticulture, fish processed food and grains such as barley are some of the popular foods that are received in China through imports from Australia. (Aus Trade and Investment Commission, 2020), (DFAT, n.d.)

Farmers, businesses and factories in China have regular markets to sell their fresh foods, poultry, seafood and tofu. Whereas for small-scale producers operating in smaller areas, there are markets for them to sell their products as many of them are unable to fulfil the retail manufacture criteria. However, with this many Chinese shoppers tend to buy the majority of their groceries at their local markets. China sought to substitute markets with supermarkets in the early 2000's, in an attempt to develop cities and modernise urban markets. However, after a few years, shoppers kept to their markets for most fresh food and switched to supermarkets

for supplementary shopping and smaller goods. This is because many Chinese consumers still prefer to buy fresh food from the smaller markets as they perceive their products to be truly fresh and directly from the farm or fields. (Cavish, 2020), (Kang, Kuijpers, Sawaya, & Wang, 1996-2020).

Due the continual migration of Chinese residents now settling in Australia, there are a growing number of Asian food markets establishing around the country to accommodate to the growing number of Chinese immigrants settling into Australia. Local Chinese corner shops owned by Asian grocers are now widely prevalent throughout many cities in Australia, providing traditional Chinese food and ingredients sourced from China and more and more Chinese restaurants are being established to accommodate for the growing demand of Chinese food by from not only Chinese individuals but also everyday Australians. Also, main supermarket companies such as Woolworths and Coles carry a larger range of Asian ingredients in their stores, even having parts of aisles dedicated to selling Asian food due to the growing popularity.