

Dear LLC classmates,

Now that Covid restrictions are mostly over we can begin to think about traveling to other places, experiencing the food and culture the world has to offer. The best part of any traveling is experiencing new foods, or familiar foods served in different ways.

That opening was written a couple of weeks ago, before the newest restrictions have gone onto effect. How fast our conditions change. I think real travel will be more cancelled than experienced in person. At least we can dream and think and read to fill our wanderlust. And trying new recipes from different parts of the world might help satiate our wanderlust a little.

So much of what any country eats was dependent historically on what grew in that particular climate. But recipes often differ among areas that have the same climate. This class will explore different cuisines linking their foods to their culture, climate, history, and other relevant factors, and contrast similar dishes from different cultures when appropriate. For example, homemade paneer and ricotta are almost the same recipe. And there are many stuffed pasta recipes in different places, such as pierogi in Poland, khinkali in Georgia, ravioli in Italy and jiaozi in China.

Format: Each participant will study a country or region (e.g. Peru or Siberia or Texas) and do a class presentation. Presenters should aim to gain an understanding of the type of food the people prepare for their daily lives, or for celebrations, and are encouraged to make some of the recipes they find and report on their experiences. Interviews of people from the area you have chosen are encouraged. One benefit our Zoom classes offer is the ability to do show and tell in class—you might show prepared foods or items that are used in its preparation or serving, or invite a native of the region as your guest.

There will be no textbook. Each person (or group of two) will study a country or region (e.g., Peru or Siberia) and try to get a feel for the type of food the people prepare for their daily lives and/or celebrations. Readings from magazines, cookbooks memoirs, the internet (including YouTube). are all ways to study your subject. Perhaps interview someone from the country or culture you have chosen. If possible, try a recipe or maybe make a whole meal, then report on the experience and thoughts.

If you are looking for inspiration, check out the following:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_cuisines

Please let Gloria know what country or place you would like to report on and on which date so she can fill in the calendar. (Remember, the earlier you do your report, the more you can relax during other people's reports.) I also encourage you to pick a cuisine that you know nothing about and that probably no one in the class knows about. (Last time we did this class I studied Siberia—an area no one in the class knew with dishes very different from what we are used to.)

Coordinators: Nancy Weiss-Fried
email: nwf_la@yahoo.com
Gloria Depaola
email: gloriadp26@aol.com

As you inquire into your topic, consider the following—

- The climate of the area and the indigenous fruits, vegetables and animals. (This is a little flexible, for example it would be hard to study Italy without the tomato, which came from Peru.)
- The everyday dishes the people eat, the food-centered celebrations of your chosen culture/region and the special dishes that are served.
- You might consider other cultures that share the same climate and similar dishes but call them by different names and give them their own meaning, e.g., pierogis versus raviolis.

Some questions you might consider in your presentation:

- Why did you choose the place you are reporting on?
- How has the climate influenced food and recipe choices?
- Are there any recipes with interesting histories?
- Most places have a special dumpling type dish (flour and water covering filled with meat and/or vegetables like ravioli, pierogi, etc.) if yours does, what is it like and what makes it unique?
- What is mealtime like in your region?
- See if your place has table manners different than those of the US, any rules for guests, rules for conversation at the table, etc.
- Did you try to make anything new after researching this area and what did you think about what you made?
- Can you recommend a nearby restaurant that features the cuisine of your chosen country?

We are planning on starting the session by me and Gloria doing the first two presentations. Don't forget to let Gloria know what you want to do and she will fill in the schedule. Gloria has decided to do Afghanistan, because, she said, we will probably host many new arrivals from there who will be bringing their cuisine to us. I have spent many hours trying to decide what area to study. I have thought about Bolivia (discarded because no book from the library centered on that area), Nigeria and or Benin because their relationship to American southern cuisine, just about every middle eastern country, Botswana (couldn't find enough recipes to try) or South Africa. Too many choices. I finally decided on Thai cuisine because I have never found a Thai meal I didn't like and I know almost nothing about the cuisine and what the most popular dishes are.

Presentations—So far our class is not full so it looks like we can do one presentation each class. Maybe we will have to do two a couple days. That takes away from the time constraints. If we get more students then we might have to shorten the presentations.

Try to allow time at the end of your presentation for questions and answers. Since the class is on Zoom you will need to know how to do screen sharing. We will help you in setting up your presentation and using screen sharing. (After you do it once it is not so hard.) If you know how to do Power Point that can work well in putting the things you want to show into an order. LLC also has presentations on using the google version of Power Point that I can send to if you would like to use that format. I looked at the instructions and it seems much like Power Point. My recommendation is to use whatever format seems to be the most comfortable. Gloria and I can help you a little and are willing to listen to part of your screen sharing program to make sure things work when you give it in class.