

English cuisine

English cuisine encompasses the cooking styles, traditions and recipes associated with England. It has distinctive attributes of its own, but also shares much with wider British cuisine, largely due to the importation of ingredients and ideas from places such as North America, China, and India during the time of the British Empire and as a result of post-war immigration.

The Sunday roast

was once the most common feature of English cooking. The Sunday dinner traditionally includes roast potatoes (or boiled or mashed potatoes) accompanying a roasted joint of meat such as roast beef, lamb, pork, or a roast chicken and assorted other vegetables, themselves generally boiled and served with a gravy. Sauces are chosen depending on the type of meat: horseradish for beef, mint sauce for lamb, apple sauce for pork, and bread sauce for chicken. Yorkshire pudding normally accompanies beef (although it was originally served first as a "filler"), sage and onion stuffing pork, and usually parsley stuffing chicken; gravy is now often served as an accompaniment to the main course.



Afternoon tea

It is a widespread stereotype that the English "drop everything" for a teatime meal in the mid-afternoon. A formal teatime meal is now often an accompaniment to tourism, particularly in Devon and neighbouring counties, where comestibles may include scones with jam and clotted cream (together known as a cream tea). There are also butterfly cakes, simple small sponge cakes which can be iced or eaten plain. Nationwide, assorted biscuits and sandwiches are eaten. Generally, however, the teatime meal has been replaced by snacking, or simply dispensed with.

Chip shops and other takeaways

England is famous for its fish and chips and has a large number of restaurants and take-away shops selling this dish. It may be the most popular and identifiable English dish, however before potatoes were imported from the Americas the 'chips' would have been sections of roasted root vegetables seasoned with herbs, and salty butter. In some regions fish and chips were served with a side order of mushy peas with salt and vinegar as condiments. Foods such as deep fried breaded scampi are usually on offer as well as fishcakes (authentically a fish slice between two potato slices) and a number of other combinations. Scallops, battered potato slices that were traditionally cooked with the fish and sold cheaply, are still popular.



Sausages

English sausages, colloquially known in certain regions as "bangers," are distinctive in that they are usually made from fresh meats and rarely smoked, dried, or strongly flavoured. Following the post World War II period, sausages tended to contain low-quality meat, fat, and rusk. (Reputedly the term "banger" derived from the excessive water added to the mix turning to steam while cooking and bursting the casing with a bang.)

Pork and beef are by far the most common bases, although gourmet varieties may contain venison, wild boar. There are particularly famous regional varieties, such as the herbal Lincolnshire, and the long, curled Cumberland with many butchers offering their own individual recipes and variations often handed down through generations, but are generally not made from cured meats such as Italian selections or available in such a variety as found in Germany.



Pies and pasties

The English tradition of meat pies dates back to the Middle Ages, when an open top pie crust was used as the container for serving the meat and was called a coffyn. Since then, they have been a mainstay of English cooking. Different types of pastry may be used, including the lard-rich pastry of a raised pie. Meat pies generally contain fillings such as chicken and mushroom or steak and kidney pie (originally steak and oyster).

Dishes of Indian origin

In the Victorian era, during the British Raj, Britain first started borrowing Indian dishes, creating Anglo-Indian cuisine. Kedgerree and Mulligatawny soup are traditional Anglo-Indian dishes. The many varieties of Indian curry, of which Chicken Tikka Masala and balti are best known, are more recent. The word curry, meaning 'gravy', has been used since the medieval period. The chicken tikka masala is now considered one of Britain's most popular dishes.



International and fusion cuisine

Indian cuisine is the most popular alternative to traditional cooking in Britain, followed by Chinese and Italian cuisine food. Thai, Spanish, Jewish, Greek, Tex-Mex and Caribbean restaurants can also be found, with American and Middle Eastern food mostly represented in the take-away sector. Whereas most international food is pitched in the middle of the price range, French food tends to be considered haute cuisine.

Indian restaurants typically allow the diner to combine a number of base ingredients— chicken, prawns or "meat" (lamb or mutton)— with a number of curry sauces, without regard to the authenticity of the combination. (Many restaurants are run by Muslims from the Indian sub-continent, so pork is rarely offered.) Meals are almost always accompanied by rice, usually basmati, with bread sometimes ordered in addition.

Anglo Indian Fusion food started during the British Raj with such dishes as mulligatawny soup, kedgeree and coronation chicken. The process continued with chicken tikka masala in the 1960s and Balti in the 1980s, although some claim the latter has roots in the subcontinent.

Chinese food is predominantly derived from Cantonese cuisine, and so adapted to Western tastes that Chinese customers may be offered an entirely separate menu. Spare ribs in OK sauce is an example of crossover cuisine.

Caribbean and Jewish food are mostly eaten within their respective communities, although bagels are becoming more widespread as a snack



Vegetarianism

Since the end of World War II when their numbers were around 100,000, increasing numbers of the British population have adopted vegetarianism, especially since the BSE crisis of the 1990s. As of 2003 it was estimated that there were between 3 and 4 million vegetarians in the UK, one of the highest percentages in the Western world, and around 7 million people claim to eat no red meat. It is rare not to find vegetarian foods in a supermarket or on a restaurant menu.

“The contemporary English cuisine has incorporated many new ingredients, retaining the traditional flavor and the richness.”