water fluoridation, public health authorities, including the American Dental Association, the United States Public Health Service, and the World Health Organization, all support it as a safe and effective preventive measure. One can see its effectiveness in the fact that, although sugar consumption in the United States has been increasing, children have fewer cavities than they had in the years before fluoridation became widespread.

Sugar substitutes are used to produce candies, chewing gum, and beverages that taste sweet without harming the teeth. Chewing gum containing xylitol, one of these alternative sweeteners, has been shown to be protective.

**Diet and Periodontal Disease**
Gingivitis, or periodontal disease, is the other common dental disorder. The bacteria in dental plaque cause an infection of the gums and structures that hold the teeth in place. The gums become red, swollen, and tender. Food does not play an important role in the development of gum disease, as it does in the formation of caries. Good oral hygiene is the most important preventive measure. A nutritious diet, which supplies generous amounts of vitamins and minerals, can offer some benefit by helping to maintain the immune system's ability to fight the infection.

**Dental Status and Eating**
The other side of the food and dental health interaction is the importance of healthy dentition in enabling people to eat and enjoy a wide variety of foods. The absence of a significant number of teeth or a condition such as periodontal disease or poorly fitting dentures, which makes chewing uncomfortable, may limit a person's food choices and compromise his or her nutritional status. This problem occurs most frequently in elderly and low-income populations, who are more likely to be at risk for nutritional problems.

Some researchers do not find this effect, possibly because the subjects with poor dentition have chosen nutritious foods that are easy to chew, or because the comparison population ate no better in spite of good dental status. In general, however, poor dental health increases the risk of poor nutritional health. Good dental care can correct most of these problems and enable individuals to enjoy eating a nutritious diet.

*See also* Digestion; Fluoride.

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**DESSERT.** See Cake and Pancake; Chocolate; Ice Cream; Pastry; Sherbet and Sorbet.

**DIASPORA.** The term “diaspora” was first used to describe the shared experience of the Jewish peoples—experience of exile and displacement, but also of continuing (some would say strengthening) connection and identification. Etymologically, “diaspora” derives from Greek *dia* (‘through’) and *speirein* (‘to sow, scatter’). The word is used more broadly to refer to the cultural connections maintained by a group of people who have been dispersed or who have migrated around the globe. Each distinct “diasporic group” or “community” is a composite of many journeys to different parts of the world, occurring over very different timescales. The experiences of particular subgroups can therefore vary considerably—to the extent that some writers argue it is meaningless to talk of shared identities and experiences of, for example, “the South Asian diaspora,” at the global level. Avtar Brah’s book *Cartographies of Diaspora* provides a detailed discussion of the complex history and uses of the concept.

A key characteristic of diasporas is that a strong sense of connection to a homeland is maintained through cultural practices and ways of life. As Brah reminds us, this “homeland” might be imaginary rather than real, and its existence need not be tied to any desire to “return” home. The maintenance of these kinds of cultural connections can in some cases provoke both nostalgic and separatist tendencies. The focus here is on the place of cooking and eating among the enduring habits, rituals, and everyday practices that are collectively used to sustain a shared sense of diasporic cultural identity, in recognition that culinary culture has an important part to play in diasporic identifications.

**Diasporic Foodsapes**
Among the everyday cultural practices routinely used to maintain (and in some cases enhance or even reinvent) diasporic identities, food is commonly of central importance. There are a number of reasons for this. First, food traditions and habits are comparatively portable: groups that migrate around the world often carry with them elements of the diet and eating habits of the “homeland.” Indeed, the migrations of foods can be used to track the past movements of people, a cornerstone of research into
foodways and foodscapes. Every nation’s diet therefore bears the imprint of countless past immigrations. Second, foodways are adaptable: While migrations can map the movements of ingredients, foodstuffs, or methods of preparation into new habitats unchanged, they also tell tales of adaptation, substitution, and indigenization. As people and their cuisines move, they also change to suit local conditions. Ghassan Hage’s research with Lebanese migrants in Australia provides a simple illustration. In his essay “At Home in the Entrainls of the West,” based on interviews with Lebanese migrants to the Parramatta area of Sydney, Hage reports on this process of adaptation and substitution. One of his respondents talks about using peanut butter in Lebanese dishes in place of tahini, which was not at the time available in Australia. (In fact, when tahini later became available, the respondent admits to craving peanut butter.) Over time, this reshaping of ingredients and cooking methods often leads to a reshaping of diasporic culinary cultures, such that the dishes sometimes bear little resemblance to the original version. Comparing the same dishes among diasporic groups in different countries (say, the Chinese in the United States and in the United Kingdom) makes this clear, as does comparing diasporic versions of dishes with those served “back home.”

This mobility and adaptability assures that food habits are usually maintained (even while they are transformed) among diasporic groups. Occasionally entire culinary cultures may be preserved. More often, “traditional” foods are maintained only in particular symbolic meals or dishes. For example, the small community of Russian Molokans in the United States perpetuates the rituals of preparing and sharing formal community dinners, or obedy (as reported by Willard B. Moore in “Metaphor and Changing Reality”). Alternatively, a particular dish can be singled out as embodying and preserving diasporic identity, as in the case of the ghormeh-sabzi, a stew eaten by Iranian immigrants in central England. This dish has particular significance as a way to reconnect with Iranian culture, tradition, and beliefs. A detailed discussion of the place of ghormeh-sabzi can be found in Lynn Harbottle’s essay, “‘Bastard’ Chicken or Ghormeh-sabzi?” Harbottle’s respondents report that they had to make compromises in their families’ diets, allowing some Western dishes onto the table, even though they were generally wary of losing their cultural identity through Westernization. However, they expressed health concerns about the inferiority of the food in England compared with their diet back in Iran, and were keen to maintain the cultural and religious significance of food habits and pass them on to future generations. (These habits were mainly connected with their Shi’ite faith and the consumption of halal ingredients in accordance with Islamic dietary law.) In some cases, this led to the transformation of some staples of contemporary English cuisine, such as pizza or burgers, to realign them with Shi’ite custom. The diasporic transformation of diet is, therefore, a two-way process.

In fact, the arrival of diasporic foodways can more broadly transform the “host culture” into which migrants move. In Britain, for example, the migration of South Asian peoples has brought with it a variety of “immigrant” cuisines. While these were maintained initially for the migrant communities as a reminder of “home,” their popularity among non-Asian Britons is longstanding and has continued to grow. Certain indigenized dishes, such as chicken tikka masala, are among the most enthusiastically and widely eaten meals in Britain today. (This, of course, need not signal comfortable race relations away from the table; see Uma Narayan’s essay on Indian food in the West, “Eating Cultures.”)

**Diasporic Dilemmas**

It would be wrong to simply equate the popularity of chicken tikka masala in Britain with the comfortable accommodation of South Asian migrants into a commonly shared and widely adopted multicultural identity. This is one of Hage’s main points: the adoption of diasporic cuisines by host cultures often does little to encourage other forms of productive encounter between different ethnic groups. In fact, for Hage, the availability of diasporic foodstuffs permits a lazy “cosmo-multiculturalism,” in which eating foreign dishes substitutes for other forms of engagement. Moreover, the necessity of maintaining “exotic” foodways can produce a distinct diasporic burden, fixing migrant culinary cultures rather than allowing them to change. There is, therefore, a set of ethical questions attached to the existence of diasporic foodscapes: For whom are they produced? What are their outcomes and effects? What alternatives might be suggested?

Two discussions can serve as illustrations of this dilemma. The first focuses on the role of the döner kebap among Turkish “economic migrants” in Germany. In his essay “McDöner,” Ayse Caglar traces the ways in which the symbolic meaning of the döner has shifted over time. He notes its immense popularity in Germany, and reminds us that the dish was invented for non-Turkish Germans and does not exist in Turkey in the form it is now served—as a fast food consisting of meat slices in pide (Turkish flatbread), garnished with salad and sauces, bought on the street from an Imbiss (mobile stand). Moreover, the vast majority of döners are eaten by non-Turkish Germans. Back in the 1960s, döner vendors traded heavily on the ethnic exoticness or Turkishness of the döner, but since the early 1990s the food has been increasingly deracialized, shedding its ethnic signifiers and in many cases being rebranded using American symbols—hence the “McDöner” of Caglar’s title. This shift, Caglar explains, mirrored the mounting social marginalization of Turks in Germany.
In the case of the *döner kebap*, then, we can witness the “invention” of a food symbolic of ethnic identity, though in this case (unlike the Iranian *ghormeh-sabzi*) the food is largely consumed by the “host culture” rather than by the immigrants. The “ethnic” markers attached to the *döner* have subsequently been shed, reflecting the shifting social position of the migrant group. As a final irony, Caglar notes that successful Turkish caterers in Germany have switched to serving Italian food to a more up-market clientele.

A second example is provided by David Parker, in an essay called “The Chinese Takeaway and the Diasporic Habitus.” Like the indigenized Indian curry house (a key provider of chicken *tikka masala*), the Chinese takeaway (takeout shop or restaurant) has come to occupy a particular symbolic location on the British culinary landscape. However, foods from the South and East Asian subcontinents are available through all kinds of other food outlets, from supermarkets to trendy eateries. Moreover, food is only one cultural product used in diasporic identifications; the development of distinct “ethnic quarters” such as Chinatowns in many cities testifies to a broader-based cultural infrastructure. For critics, the existence of such “ethnic quarters” merely furthers the economic exploitation of diaspora, while for other commentators it suggests the success of multiculturalism. Food outlets are commonly center stage in these kinds of urban areas, testifying to the significance of the food distribution as a site for diasporic cultural production.

Parker reads the Chinese takeaway as a key site for the negotiation of British Chineseness in relation to the global Chinese diaspora. By focusing on the encounters between workers and customers, Parker reveals a mode of interaction that he names the “diasporic habitus,” defined as “the embodied subjectivities poised between the legacies of the past, the imperatives of the present, and the possibilities of the future” (p. 75). This habitus shapes ways of “being Chinese” in diasporic contexts, and is the result of the uneven distribution of “imperial capital” between Chinese and non-Chinese Britons: what occurs in the takeaway bears the enduring imprint of colonial contact between Western and non-Western peoples. Parker shows not only how these encounters are overlaid by orientalist racialization, but also how this “contact zone” offers critical possibilities. Parker argues (like Hage) for a contested (instead of celebratory) multiculturalism that explores the complex interplay of identities in everyday locations. The takeaway, therefore, is an emblem of British Chineseness rather than Chineseness—a situational outcome of one particular diasporic foodscape.

Of course, the notion of British Chineseness still retains an emphasis on being (at least in part) Chinese, rather than simply British. This is part of the diasporic burden mentioned earlier: the necessity of retaining some degree of ethnic difference. In some cases, of course, migrant groups may wish to reject, either partially or wholly, their ethnic identity, and adopt the identity of their new “home.” They may, however, be denied that possibility by the “host culture,” which wants to preserve their ethnic identity for a variety of reasons. The deracializing of *döner kebap* illustrates an attempt by German Turks to integrate more fully into German society at the same time that the ethnic marker of Turkishness was becoming increasingly problematic there.

The existence of diasporic cuisine marks a complex negotiation between cultural identities. For both German Turks and British Chinese, elements of their cuisines (or “invented” versions of them) have become institutionalized on the foodscape. While this may provide some level of economic security—the “success” of Chinese takeaways in Britain is often reported as evidence for multiculturalism, at least in terms of business culture—there are many compromises and dilemmas involved as well. As the *döner Imbiss* and the Chinese takeaway both illustrate, mundane yet intensely symbolic items such as food are woven in complex and shifting ways into discourses of tradition and transformation, identity, and community. Diasporic diets, like all aspects of diasporic identity and culture, are constantly remade, even while some key elements endure over time.

See also Judaism; Travel; United States: Ethnic Cuisines.

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