

# Probing into Change of Food Culture in China

Gaimei Zhao<sup>1, a</sup>, Yaodong Wang<sup>2, b</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Xi'an Peihua University, Xi'an 710125, China

<sup>2</sup>Xi'an University of Science and Technology, Xi'an 710054, China

<sup>a</sup>1142626982@qq.com, <sup>b</sup>1694480194@qq.com

**Abstract.** It is known that life comes from food, which is related to human survival and development. With the change of history and social progress, food culture also changes with the change of the times. Eating is the simplest and most superficial phenomenon. Based on food culture, this paper shows the prosperity of China after the reform and opening up. People's food, clothing, housing, transportation have undergone tremendous changes. The author states changes are illustrating one thing: society is developing and progressing. The change of Chinese food culture can also be said to be a microcosm of China's change and development.

**Keywords:** food culture; China.

## 1. Introduction

The food show "China on the tip of the tongue" has become popular at home and abroad because the cultural factors have been added into the food. It is not accidental that Chinese restaurants can be found all over the world, and the phenomenon is closely related to Chinese food culture. Therefore, exploring Chinese food culture will help to explain this phenomenon. When Chinese food culture is talked about, Chinese culture must be involved, for the relationship between them is extremely close.

## 2. Connotation of Food Culture in China

Simply food culture means food and beverages that people are eating and drinking. In another way food culture refers to the skills, science and art in the utilization of raw materials, food production and consumption, as well as the customs, traditions, ideas and philosophy in the social development.

Food culture is about what people eat and how they eat and so on. Chinese food culture is also the Chinese food lifestyle. As an important part of culture, food culture has formed its own specific field from processing technology, preservation, business and services, etc. Food culture cannot exist and develop without cultural exchange. The distinctive regional and national characteristics of food culture are based on cultural exchange. [1]

## 3. Brief History of Chinese Food Culture

As an important component of folk culture food culture directly reflects the social status of a nation. Food culture is constantly changing with the natural ecological environment, social policy, economic development level, social communication and other factors.

In ancient times culture is more restricted by the environment especially in the early stage. Food culture is also influenced by the natural geographical environment and the humanistic environment. After the emergence of civilization, the culture at that time was expressed with a strong realistic trend of thought, and the color of ethics and morality was very strong. In Chinese history, eventually, the Qin State unified the country by encouraging military merit and rewarding farming and warfare. During the Han and Tang Dynasties, with the birth of China's reunification, the Emperor of the Han Dynasty had the most complete food management system in the country. This is a huge official system. During this period, the spread of Chinese food culture to the outside world.

Meanwhile cucumbers, walnuts, carrots and pomegranates from the Western Regions are introduced. [2]

Generally speaking, food culture has strong regional, national and cultural characteristics. Unlike the south of China which is spring-like all the year round, plant and animal resources are always limited in the northern part. People are mainly feed on a type of pasta as part of their staple diet. Chang'an (Xi'an in Shaanxi) in Tang Dynasty was the center of world culture at that time, which facilitated the exchange and integration of food culture of all nationalities. During the Han and Tang Dynasties, the mainland of the Central Plains introduced many kinds of vegetables and fruits through exchanges with minority nationalities in Northwest China. Han and Tang Dynasty is also a period of gradual changes in traditional Chinese diet. The two-way cultural communication between different nationalities has begun. [3]

Despite thousands of years of respect for Confucianism and Taoism, the Han nationality did not limit the development of food culture. On the contrary, they provided a tolerant social and cultural environment for its independent development. The change of dietary habits is a manifestation of cultural change and progress. This is not only the change of simple way of life, but also the change of ideas. This kind of communication is not blind, but selectively adopts the other's cultural characteristics. Eventually both of them optimize their own culture.

As an important part of culture, the change of food style also reflects the change in culture. Cultural change refers to the change of a national culture caused by the internal development of the society or the contact between different nationalities. There are two reasons for cultural change: one is caused by internal changes in society, the other by external changes in the natural environment and the social and cultural environment. Taking chairs, tables for example, after the appearance of tables and chairs, it is natural for people to sit around a table for dinner. Food culture is an important part of folk culture. However, it is not unchanged, but constantly changing with the natural ecological environment, social policy, economic development level, social life and other factors.

#### **4. Explanation of Modern Chinese Food Culture**

Commercial drinks, the result of social interaction and cultural adjustment include Eastern herbal tea and western drinks, as long as it is in demand in there will be a market. In addition to the considerable income, the extensive transportation network has also increased people's access to food. There are not only large supermarkets, but also farmers' markets. There are all kinds of common fruits and seasonal fresh vegetables in the market. There are also greenhouse vegetables out of season, which fully enrich people's diet structure. The dazzling variety of food materials makes people's lives more diverse, proving that the economic basis determines the superstructure.

In Chinese culture people absolutely pursue the application and eliminate all the impractical things. Thus, the idea of more children and more happiness came into being. The idea of more children and more happiness increased the population of society. Because of the low productivity, people can only barely solve the problem of food and clothing. For a long time in the planned economy, people's clothing, food, housing and transportation were inseparable from tickets. At that time, residents purchased grain and oil with the supply certificate of urban residents, and queued up to buy at designated shops. Because of material shortage, radish and Chinese cabbage once became the main dishes on people's table. [4]

After the reform and opening up, the policy accelerated the continuous flow of population in different area. With the rapid development of economy, people's living standards have undergone a qualitative leap, from solving the problem of food and clothing to pursuing a healthier, more nutritious and more delicious lifestyle. Nowadays Chinese people are gradually showing unprecedented prosperity on the dining table. The living standard would bring a series of improvements.

## 5. Suggestion from Chinese Food Culture

People no longer worry about not having food but the pesticide residues in vegetables, the harmful effects of off-season vegetables on health, and the remnants of hormone injection in meat products. The concept of healthy diet is deeply rooted in people. Eating is a kind of enjoyment, but you have ever thought that incorrect diet will lead to many chronic diseases, such as diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular diseases and even cancer. Unbalanced heat, excessive intake of food, especially meat, has been the main cause in adult diseases. Only by using clean, safe and reliable food sources and proper cooking methods can these gifts from God be completely preserved. With the health alarm, people begin to think about their own health and pay more attention to the health of their diet. The green and healthy food has become the main role on the table. The Chinese concept of health at this time has reached a new level.

In spring, the earth is full of livelihoods. From the aspect of Chinese medicine, the functions of organs and tissues are easy to recover. It is appropriate to help the body to keep healthy and remove the excess substances that the human body has included in the winter. The hypertension patients are prone to be affected, and they can choose green vegetables and fruits such as water chestnut, duck pear. In summer heat is easy to make people inflamed, red ears, sore throat, and people sweat more with poor appetite, which is proper for people to regulate the Qi, regulating the spleen and stomach full of vitality, so refreshing the body.

In autumn, the climate is getting colder and colder. Many people feel dry tongue, cough less phlegm, and they are easy to injure the lungs. It is better to nourish and moisten the lungs. If the body operates normally after the season of spring and summer, it needs to supplement proper nutrition to make body strong. Many supplementary foods contain too much sugar, lipids, protein and hormones, so the choice should be on a scale to take health food with a reasonable diet. In winter it is cold, and the body is not readily resistant to typhoid kidney. Less activity, increased intake, body is prone to accumulate excessive lipid substances, while the movement of Qi and blood is slow, cardiovascular and cerebrovascular diseases are prone to occur. People can choose food supplemented with calcium, or made into medicinal diet. In a word, food therapy with the principle of four seasons is a healthy way to keep fit, remove excess materials in the body, regulate the balance of the body so as to achieve the goal of strengthening the body and prolonging life. [5]

## 6. Further Study

Norman E. Borlaug, the Nobel Peace Prize winner in 1970, said that people cannot build a peaceful world in hunger. It can be seen that the people take food as the first need. From the history of food changes in China, we can find some of these characteristics. Finding a sufficient and stable source of food is the first priority for people to survive. Secondly, the different allocation of crop has better resisted the natural disasters, enabling the Chinese nation to have a stronger endurance and the long-term continuation of civilization. Nowadays, food culture means not only a supplement of daily energy, but also a way of relaxation and life experience. In pursuit of taste, people also pay more attention to the attitude of life conveyed by diet itself. [6]

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