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Meals and Customs in America

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Food is of paramount importance around the world not just because of our fundamental need to consume it but because of the cultural and social connotation it is given. In all cultural traditions, food is only one aspect but yet it is probably one of the most constant. Food plays an inseparable role in our daily lives. Without food we cannot survive. But food is much more than a tool of survival. Food is a source of pleasure, comfort and security. Food is also a symbol of hospitality, social status, and religious significance. What we select to eat, how we prepare it, serve it, and even how we eat it are all factors profoundly touched by our individual cultural inheritance.

Let's have a look at meals and customs in America. In early times, daily physical effort was the rule, and heavy meals provided warmth and energy. But as technology made life easier and as the workday became shorter, heavy meals were not only no longer necessary, they were impractical and expensive.

Today's American trend is breakfast-on-the-run, which usually means simply orange juice and coffee. Typical lunches include sandwich, milk or coffee, and fruit or ice cream. Dinner in the evening is usually the only meal when most families are together, and it normally includes the traditional soup or appetizer, meat or fish plus vegetables and tea, coffee, or milk to complete the meal.

Americans, like most of the western world, love to snack during coffee breaks and coffee parties. They like to have easy access to candies, soft drinks, and chewing gums and go to fast-food outlets with ethnic specialties such as tacos or pizza as well as hamburgers, hot dogs, ice cream, and french fries. More and more the pattern of three meals a day is blurring into a day-long fest of nibbling or "grazing" from breakfast to the late-evening show on television and fast food has proven to be a revolutionary force in American life.

Over the last three decades, fast food has infiltrated every aspects of American society. An industry that began with a handful of modest hot dog and hamburger stands in southern California has spread to every corner of the nation, selling a broad range of foods wherever paying customers may be found. Fast food is now served at restaurants and drive-throughs, at stadiums, airports, zoos, high schools, elementary schools, and universities, on cruise ships, trains, and airplanes, at K-Marts, Wal-Marts, gas stations, and even at hospital cafeterias. [1, c. 13] Americans now spend more money on fast food than on higher education, personal computers, computer software, or new cars. They spend more on fast food than on movies, books, magazines, newspapers, videos, and recorded music – combined.

References

1. *Schlosser, Eric*. Fast Food Nation. The Dark Side of the All-American Meal./ Eric Schlosser. – Houghton Mifflin Company, 2012. – 384 p.