

Food – Past, Present, and Future

By Monica Bulger

Have you ever wondered how food is different now from the past? 300 years ago, what did people eat? How could they have survived without microwaves or refrigerators? Living without this technology is pretty hard to do today. Let's take a trip back in time. First stop: 500 years ago, when the Native Americans lived in the wilderness of the United States.

The Native Americans always used every part of an animal they killed. The Native Americans didn't have a lot of food choices, so they lived on a small number of staple foods, foods that were plentiful and allowed them to live. In Massachusetts, the Native Americans lived mainly on three crops – squash, beans, and corn – tough crops that could grow in most climates. Some hunted moose and bison to eat. To get more sources of food, many Native Americans were **nomads**, or people who move around rather than live in one place. This nomadic way of collecting food is called **hunting and gathering**. For example, if the people of a certain tribe used all the berries on the bushes in their area, they would move to a place that provided more berries.

Now let's move closer to our final destination approximately 200 years ago, the 1700s. Food had drastically changed since the hunting and gathering of 250 years prior. Northern Revolutionary War soldiers cooked their own meals and added cranberries to sweeten their bland, thin soups. Around this time the Mexican population introduced hot chocolate to Texans. Imagine what it was like to get your first cup of hot coco... yummy.

100 years later, Americans had again changed their diets. In about 1825, Chinese immigrants introduced rice into the American culture, which became a popular dish. During the "Gold Rush", people very rarely ate fruits or vegetables, leading to a disease called scurvy, and scurvy killed many hopeful people looking for gold. In 1869 Campbell's soup debuted, immediately becoming popular. Towards the end of the 1800s a drink called Coca Cola was introduced. During this time, people began to have their food shipped over to them from other countries, again broadening their food sources.

During the 1900s lots of foreign foods became incorporated into the American diet. Fortune cookies became popular with the rise of Chinese restaurants. Fast food also began to develop into what it is today. In 1920, there wasn't a McDonald's in sight; today, we have one on almost every block! Mexican food also became very popular toward the late 1900s, especially in the southern United States where Mexicans tended to immigrate to. By this point in history, many foods in America were being imported from other places in the world. During the winter, people can still have fresh fruit because it is shipped to us from South America. While the food isn't as fresh this way, people certainly won't stop eating fruit just because it's not from a local farm any time soon.

But wait! We're not done yet. Next, we're going to an imaginary place: the future. Food in the future could be any number of things – perhaps all that people will eat will be microwavable meals. Perhaps everyone in the world will have a robot in their kitchen to make them whatever they want when they want it. That's all just imagination at work. What do you think your food will look like in 50 years?

