

Nutrire il pianeta:

Energia per la Vita

Food and ethnicity:
A journey in search of identity

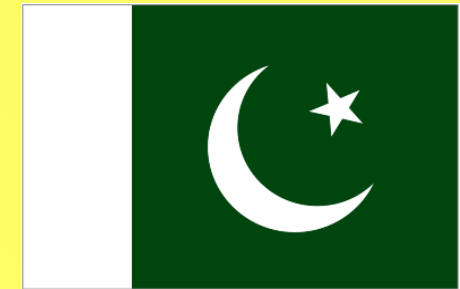
Elena Ungari

Università Cattolica del
Sacro Cuore Brescia

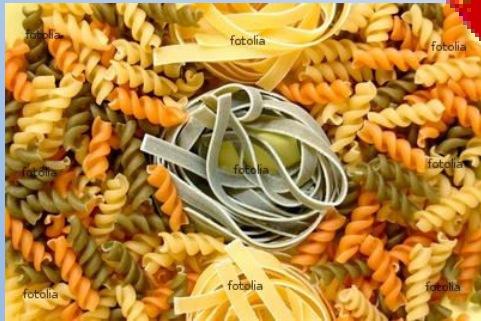
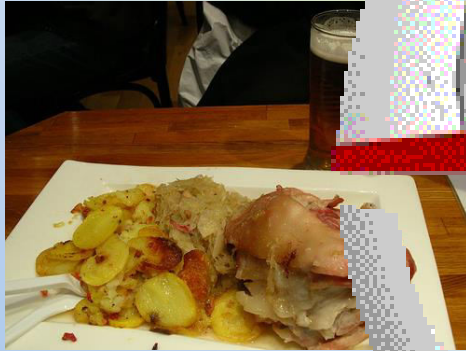


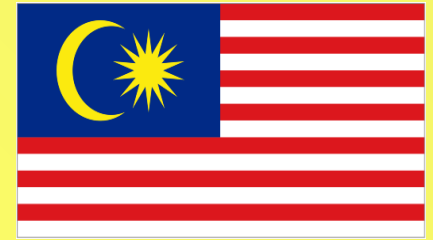
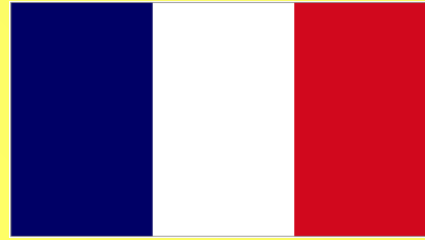


Who are you ?



Who are We ?





Who are they ?



WHO AM I ?

Contents

- .Some notes about the author
- .Some notes about the book
- .Food and Festivals
- .Food and Identity:
 - Food and ethnic identity
 - Food and social identity
- .Activities

Who is Jhumpa Lahiri?

Jhumpa Lahiri (London, 11 July 1967) is an American writer, of Indian origin. She was born in London to Bengali parents, but raised in Rhode Island, USA. Her debut collection of stories, *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999), was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 2000, the PEN/Hemingway Award and The New Yorker Debut of the Year. Her novel *The Namesake* (2004) was a New York Times Notable Book, a Los Angeles Times Book Prize finalist and was selected as one of the best books of the year by USA Today and Entertainment Weekly.

The book has been translated into Italian and published by Guanda as *L'Omonimo*. A film, *Il Destino in un nome* (2006), directed by Mira Nair, has also been made. In 2008, Jhumpa Lahiri published her second collection of stories, *Unaccustomed Earth*. She lives in Brooklyn, New York.

Jhumpa Lahiri



The Namesake

THE NAMESAKE follows the Ganguli family through its journey from Calcutta to Cambridge to the Boston suburbs. Ashima and Ashoke Ganguli arrive in America at the end of the 1960s, shortly after their arranged marriage in Calcutta, in order for Ashoke to finish his engineering degree at MIT. Ashoke is ready to enter into American culture, his young bride is far less malleable. Isolated, missing her family back in India, she will never be at peace with this new world.

Soon after they arrive in Cambridge, their first child is born, a boy. According to Indian custom, the child will be given two names: an official name, to be chosen by the great-grandmother, and a pet name to be used only by family.



But the letter from India with the child's official name never arrives, and so the baby's parents decide on a pet name. Ashoke chooses a name that has particular significance for him. On a train trip back in India several years earlier, he had been reading a short story collection by Nikolai Gogol, one of his most beloved Russian writers, when the train derailed in the middle of the night, killing almost all the sleeping passengers onboard. Ashoke had stayed awake to read a story by Gogol, *The Overcoat*, and he believes the book saved his life. His child will be known, then, as Gogol.

The child feels uneasy with his name (and his Indian origins); only as an adult does he realize the real value of his name and that “life is a gift”. This realization leads him on to rediscover his Indian origins.

Food and festivals: the origin of personal / national identity

1. Indian Festival: *Annaprasan*
2. American Festival: *Thanksgiving Day*

Annaprasan

The Annaprasan is the Hindu ritual when an infant eats rice for the first time. This feeding ceremony is usually arranged when the child reaches 6 months of age. In Bengali community, normally the maternal uncle feeds the child.

A special dish is arranged with rice, different cooked vegetables, fish, sweets and 'payesh'. Firstly a small amount of payesh taken on the finger tip or a spoon is put on the lips of the child; then other items are one by one simply touched on the lips.



Relatives, friends and neighbours are normally invited on this ceremony. After the feeding ceremony, a tray containing gold or coin, a book, a pen, a clay pot is placed before the child. Gold ornament or coin symbolize wealth, the book symbolizes knowledge, the pen career and clay pot symbolizes property. It is assumed that the child's future is indicated by the object the child touches or holds.



Thanksgiving: historical facts

Thanksgiving is America's preeminent family festival. It is celebrated every year on the fourth Thursday of November. Its origin can be traced back to the 16th century when the first thanksgiving dinner is said to have taken place. This festival commemorates the feast held by the Pilgrim colonists and members of the Wampanoag people at Plymouth in 1621.



White settlers and
Indians celebrating
Thanksgiving in the
old days

The pilgrims, crossed the Atlantic in 1620 in Mayflower, a 17th- Century sailing vessel. They reached Philadelphia on December 11, 1620. In the summer of 1621, owing to severe drought, pilgrims called for a day of fasting and prayer to please God and ask for a bountiful harvest in the coming season. God answered their prayers: it rained at the end of the day, so the corn crops were saved.

On this day, people express gratitude to God for his blessings. Feasting with family is an integral part of Thanksgiving Day celebrations.



White settlers and Indians celebrating Thanksgiving in the old days

Food and identity

- 1. Food and national/ ethnic identity
- 2. Food and social identity

Thanksgiving Day:

National Identity in Traditional Symbols



Turkey

Turkey is an inseparable part of Thanksgiving celebration, although no evidence proves if the customary turkey was a part of the initial feast. According to the first hand account written by the leader of the colony, the food included, ducks, geese, venison, fish and berries.



Pumpkin

Pumpkins have been a Thanksgiving symbol for about 400 years. However, pumpkin pie, a modern staple adorning every dinner table, is unlikely to have been a part of the first thanksgiving feast.



Beans

Beans are a special symbol of Thanksgiving. Native Americans are believed to have taught the pilgrims to grow beans next to cornstalks. So beans could grow and use cornstalks as their pole. Thus American beans are also known as 'Pole Beans'. Famously known as one of the 'Three sisters', beans are a part of Thanksgiving feast.



Cornucopia

Cornucopia, a horn-shaped basket, is usually filled with fruits and goodies



Cranberry

Cranberry sauce is turkey's favourite thanksgiving feast partner.



Corn

Corn was a part of first Thanksgiving feast and is still popular today.

Indian Food: a glossary

Dal

It is a preparation of pulses (dried lentils, peas or beans) stripped of their outer hulls and split. It also refers to the thick stew prepared from these: It is an integral part of Nepali, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi cuisine. It is eaten with rice and vegetables in Southern India.



Samosa

It is a stuffed pastry and a popular snack in South, Southeast, and Central Asia, the Arabian Peninsula, the Mediterranean, Southwest Asia and in some areas of Africa. It generally consists of a fried or baked triangular, semi-lunar or tetrahedral pastry shell with a savoury filling, for e.g. spiced potatoes, onions, peas, coriander, and lentils, or ground beef or chicken. The size and shape of a samosa as well as the consistency of the pastry used can vary considerably.



Halwa

This term is used to describe two types of desserts.

The first one is flour-based (typically semolina). The other ingredients are oil and sugar and it is slightly gelatinous.

The second one is nut-butter-based. This type of halva is crumbly and usually made from Tahini (sesame paste) or other nut butters, such as sunflower seed butter. The primary ingredients are nut-butter and sugar.

Halva may also be based on numerous other ingredients, including beans, lentils, and vegetables such as carrots, pumpkins, yams, and squashes.



Luchi/ Luchis

It is a deep-fried flatbread made of wheat flour, typical of Bengali cuisine. It is typical of Bangladesh. In order to make *luchis*, a dough is prepared by mixing fine maida flour with water and a spoonful of ghee, which is then divided into small balls. These balls are flattened and individually deep-fried in cooking oil or ghee. They are usually served with curries or gravies. Luchi that is stuffed is *called kochuri*, the one stuffed with mashed peas is one notable variety.



Chapati

It is a flat, unleavened, disk-shaped bread of Northern India made of wheat flour, water and salt. In some regions chapati (also called chapatti) can be obtained using miglio or corn instead of wheat. Chapati is usually served with dal or vegetables, it is also accompanied by spices (such as Indian curry). Finally, ghee (a variety of butter) is spread on chapati.



Channa Dal and Chutney

Channa dal is the word indicating small croquettes of yellow split peas, cooked until very soft, puréed and mixed with minced parsley, chopped ginger, salt, powdered bay leaf and crushed cumin seeds, then bound with egg, and fried.



Chutney is a mixture of chopped apples, onion and garlic with possibly other vegetables and/or fruits cooked in a vinegar, sugar and spice mixture to a thick consistency, used as a relish. It is also called sweet pickle



Sandesh

This word was widely used in an Indian sweet made from paneer, sugar and cut into squares. It was used in connection to sweets prepared from chickpea flour, coconut and grams. Sugar balls were also named as “sandesh”. These sugar balls are still being sold in front of different temples in Bengal as “sandesh”. At first, however, in rural areas sandeshes did not have a sweet taste. A variety is “gupo Sandesh”, one main salient feature of it was that it had to be made from “chana” extracted from cow’s milk only.



Paneer/ panir

It is a fresh, unripened cheese, similar to farmer cheese or pot cheese.

Panir, also spelled *paneer*, is made from whole cow's or buffalo's milk and curdled with lemon or lime juice. It is essentially the same cheese as chenna, but panir has been pressed until its texture is firm



Food and Social Identity: a question of taste

Bouillabaisse: it is a highly seasoned Mediterranean soup or stew. The typical one is the Provençal fish stew originating from Marseille; it is made of several kinds of fish and shellfish with tomatoes and onions or leeks and seasoned with saffron, garlic and herbs. The bouillabaisse is eaten with croûtons. Apparently, Its origin goes back to a ragout made with the fish left in the fisher's basket.

The most distinguishing characteristic of a bouillabaisse is not the fish, but the flavoring derived from saffron, fennel seeds, and orange zest.

French cuisine



French cuisine

Cassoulet: A classic dish from France's Languedoc region. Although numerous variations exist, the best-known is the cassoulet from Castelnaudary, Toulouse and Carcassonne. The cassoulet consists of white beans and various meats (such as sausages, pork and preserved duck or goose, and sometimes mutton). The combination varies according to regional preference. A *cassoulet* is covered and cooked very slowly to harmonize the flavors. Cassoulet is traditionally topped by fried bread cubes and cracklings.

The dish is named after its traditional cooking vessel, the *cassole*, a deep, round, earthenware pot with slanting sides.



French cuisine

Coq au vin: it is cock cooked in red wine, traditionally a cock from Bresse and a wine from Burgundy. The older the poultry is, the better the Coq au vin will be.



Activities

Identity and Identification

Read the following passage from *The Namesake*

Gogol's fourteen birthday. Like most events in his life, it is another excuse for his parents to throw a party for their Bengali friends.

His own friends from school were invited the previous day, a tame affair, with pizzas that his father picked up on his way home from work, a basketball game watched together on television, some Ping-Pong in the den. [...].

The other celebration, the Bengali one, is held on the closest Saturday to the actual date of his birth. As usual, his mother cooks for days beforehand, [...]. She makes sure she prepares his favorite things: lamb curry with lots of potatoes, luchis, thick channa dal with swollen brown raisins, pineapple chutney, sandeshes molded out of saffron-tinted ricotta cheese.

Text analysis

1 Compare the two parties:

- Find out the words related to food.
- What is the metaphorical value of pizza and the value of Indian food ?

Identity and social gatherings

Read the following passages: In the first Maxine's parents invite Gogol, in the second, Gogol's parents invite Maxine.

At dinner, he (Gogol) meets her father (Maxine's). "How do you do. I'm Gerald", he says, nodding shaking Gogol's hand. Gerald gives him a bunch of cutlery and cloth napkins and asks him to set the table. Gogol does as is told, aware that he is touching the everyday possessions of a family he barely knows. [...]. Gerald tops the wine, Lydia serves the food on broad large plates: a thin piece of steak rolled into a bundle and tied with string, sitting in a pool of dark sauce, [...]. The table would have been lined with a row of serving bowls so that people could help themselves. But Lydia pays no attention to Gogol's plate. [...]. Lydia peers into the salad bowl, fishing out a stray piece of lettuce and eating it with his fingers. [...]. Often, on weekends, he helps to shop and prepares for Gerald and Lydia's dinner parties, peeling apples and deveining shrimp with Lydia.

When he (Gogol) returns to the house (his house), the lunch is set out, [...]. Along with the samosas, there are breaded chicken cutlets, chickpeas with tamarind sauce, lemon sauce, lamb biryani, chutney made with tomatoes. [...]. It is a meal he knows has taken his mother over a day to prepare, and yet the amount of effort embarrasses him. The water glasses are already filled, plates and and forks and paper napkins set on the dining room table. [...].

His parents are diffident around Maxine, at first keeping their distance, not boisterous as they typically are around their Bengali frineds.



Text Analysis

1. Compare the two meals
 - What distinguishes American commensality from Indian commensality ?

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF "MOSCOW WEDDING" AND "VANITY FAIR"
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CH?V=3M5TM94LQYY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3M5TM94LQYY)**



The greatest journeys

Are the ones

That bring you home



