

Cultural Considerations in Nutrition and Food Preparation

It is important to understand cultural differences in order to provide the best care to the consumer regardless of race, origin, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, social class, economic situation, and/or disability. The varied diets and eating patterns of different cultures may impact your work as a provider during shopping and errands, meal prep, and eating.

You cannot assume that your past experiences with a person from a particular culture can be applied to everyone from that culture. It is important to seek more information by asking your consumer questions about his/her culture and what kinds of foods he/she may prefer to eat and at what time of the day he/she prefers to eat a large meal. These foods and meals may be different from what you are used to eating. Communicating with your consumer about his/her needs and how to shop for and prepare enjoyable food during the authorized hours will help to keep your consumer healthy and happy.

A Few Common Diets:

Mediterranean and Middle Eastern:

At the base of this pyramid are all of the plant based foods as the foundation of the meal. Whole grains (including barley, bulgur, faro, rice, polenta, couscous, and pastas), fruits, vegetables, beans, nuts and seeds, and legumes provide healthy choices. Vegetables are normally cooked and drizzled with olive oil. Herbs and spices are included in this section to improve taste. Olive oil replaces other fats and oils, including butter and margarine, as the principal fat. Fish and shellfish several times a week provide the healthy fat omega-3. Tuna, herring, salmon, or shrimp would typically be grilled, broiled, or poached instead of battered or fried. Cheeses and yogurts are regular selections and low-fat options can be included daily. Eggs and poultry are recommended a couple times a week and other meat options and sweets less often. Drinking water is important and 1-2 glasses of wine a day can be included if appropriate. Fresh fruit is the typical daily dessert, with sweets with a significant amount of sugar and saturated fat consumed only a few times per week.

	Mediterranean Foods
Grains	barley, buckwheat, bulgur, farro, millet, oats, polenta, rice, wheatberries, breads (pita), couscous, pastas
Vegetables	artichokes, arugula, beets, broccoli, brussel sprouts, cabbage, carrots, celery, celeriac, chicory, collard greens, cucumbers, dandelion greens, eggplant, fennel, kale, leeks, lemons, lettuce, mache, mushrooms, mustard greens, nettles, okra, onions (red, sweet, white), peas, peppers, potatoes, pumpkin, purslane, radishes, rutabaga, scallions, shallots, spinach, sweet potatoes, turnips, zucchini.
Fruits	apples, apricots, avocados, cherries, clementines, dates, figs, grapefruits, grapes, melons, nectarines, olives, oranges, peaches, pears, pomegranates, strawberries, tangerines, tomatoes.
Nuts, Seeds, Legumes	almonds, cannellini beans, chickpeas, cashews, fava beans, green beans, hazelnuts, kidney beans, lentils, pine nuts, pistachios, sesame seeds, split peas, tahini sauce, walnuts.
Herbs and Spices	aleppo pepper, anise, basil, bay leaf, chiles, cloves, cumin, fennel, garlic, lavender, marjoram, mint, oregano, parsley, pepper, rosemary, sage, savory, sumac, tarragon, thyme, zatar.
Fish & Seafood	abalone, clams, cockles, crab, eel, flounder, lobster mackerel, mussels, octopus, oysters, salmon, sardines, sea bass, shrimp, squid, tilapia, tuna, whelk, yellowtail.
Poultry, Eggs, Cheese, & Yogurt	brie, chevre, corvo, feta, haloumi, manchego, Parmigiano-Reggiano, pecorino, ricotta, yogurt (including Greek yogurt), eggs (chicken, quail, duck), chicken, guinea fowl
Meats and Sweets	beef, duck, goat, lamb, mutton, pork, sweets (baklava, sigara boregi, stuffed dates, yogurt with fruit and honey)

Mediterranean and Middle Eastern food pyramid:

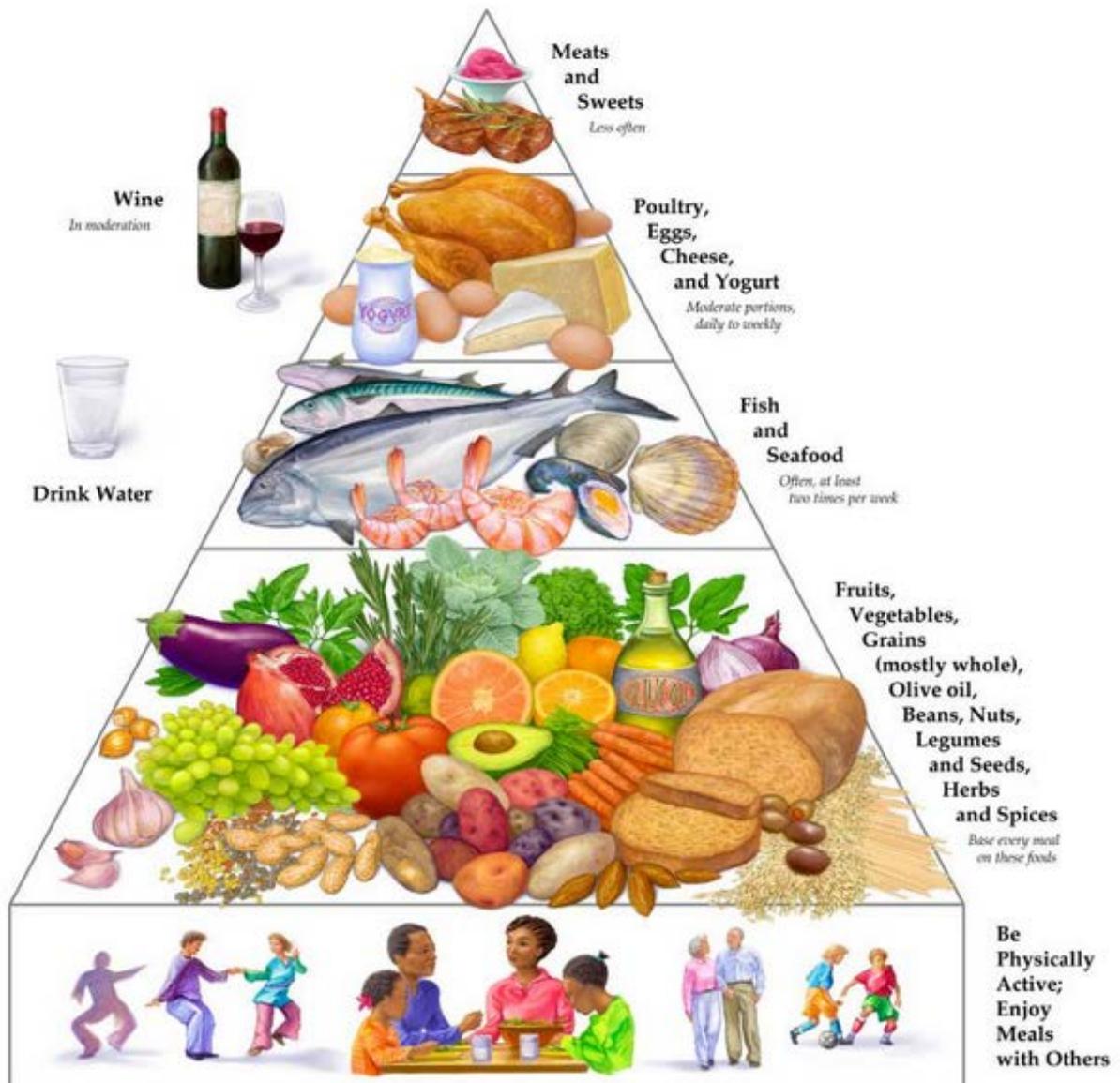


Illustration by George Middleton

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Asian:

Each Asian region has its own distinct cooking styles and flavors but share some common foods. Rice provides a basis for most Asian diets as do other grains such as noodles, millet, and corn. These along with fruits, vegetables, legumes, seeds, nuts, and vegetable oils make up most daily meal and snack selections. Diets overall are largely plant-based; animal sources of protein like fish and shellfish are common in areas with extensive coastlines, as is dairy in countries like India. Poultry, eggs, and sweets are more popular in some areas compared to others but are recommended for weekly consumption. Other meat sources, such as beef, are only consumed on an infrequent basis and are often combined with vegetables in dishes. Six to eight glasses of water or tea is recommended. Sake, wine, or beers are also included in Asian eating but moderation is recommended.

	Asian Foods
Grains	barley, breads (dumplings, mantou, naan, and roti), buckwheat, rice, millet, noodles (soba, ramen, rice, udon)
Vegetables	bamboo shoots, bean sprouts, bitter melon, bok choy, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, chiles, daikon, eggplant, kumquats, leeks, lemons, lotus root, kale, kombu, mushrooms, mustard greens, peppers, pineapple, pumpkin, scallions, seaweed, snow peas, spinach, sweet potatoes, taro root, turnips, water chestnuts
Fruits	apricots, bananas, cherries, coconut, dates, dragon fruit, lychee, mandarins, mangoes, melon, milk fruit, oranges, pears, tangerines
Nuts, Seeds, Legumes	almonds, beans (adzuki, edamame, mung), cashews, hazelnuts, lentils, miso, peanuts, sesame seeds, tofu
Herbs and Spices	amchoor, basil (Thai), cardamom, chiles, clove, coriander, curry leaves, garlic, ginger, ginseng, kafir lime leaves, lemongrass masala, mint, parsley, pepper, scallion, star anise, turmeric, wasabi
Fish & Seafood	abalone, clams, cockles, crab, eel, king fish, mussels, octopus, oysters, roe, scallops, sea bass, shrimp, squid, tuna, whelk, yellowtail
Poultry, Eggs,	chicken, duck, eggs (chicken, duck, quail),

Cheese, & Yogurt	cheeses and butter (ghee, paneer), yogurt (chaas, lassi)
Meats and Sweets	Pork, beef, lamb organs, sweets (Chinese mooncakes, Indian rice pudding, Japanese sugared sweet potatoes, Thai mango-coconut pudding)

Asian food pyramid:

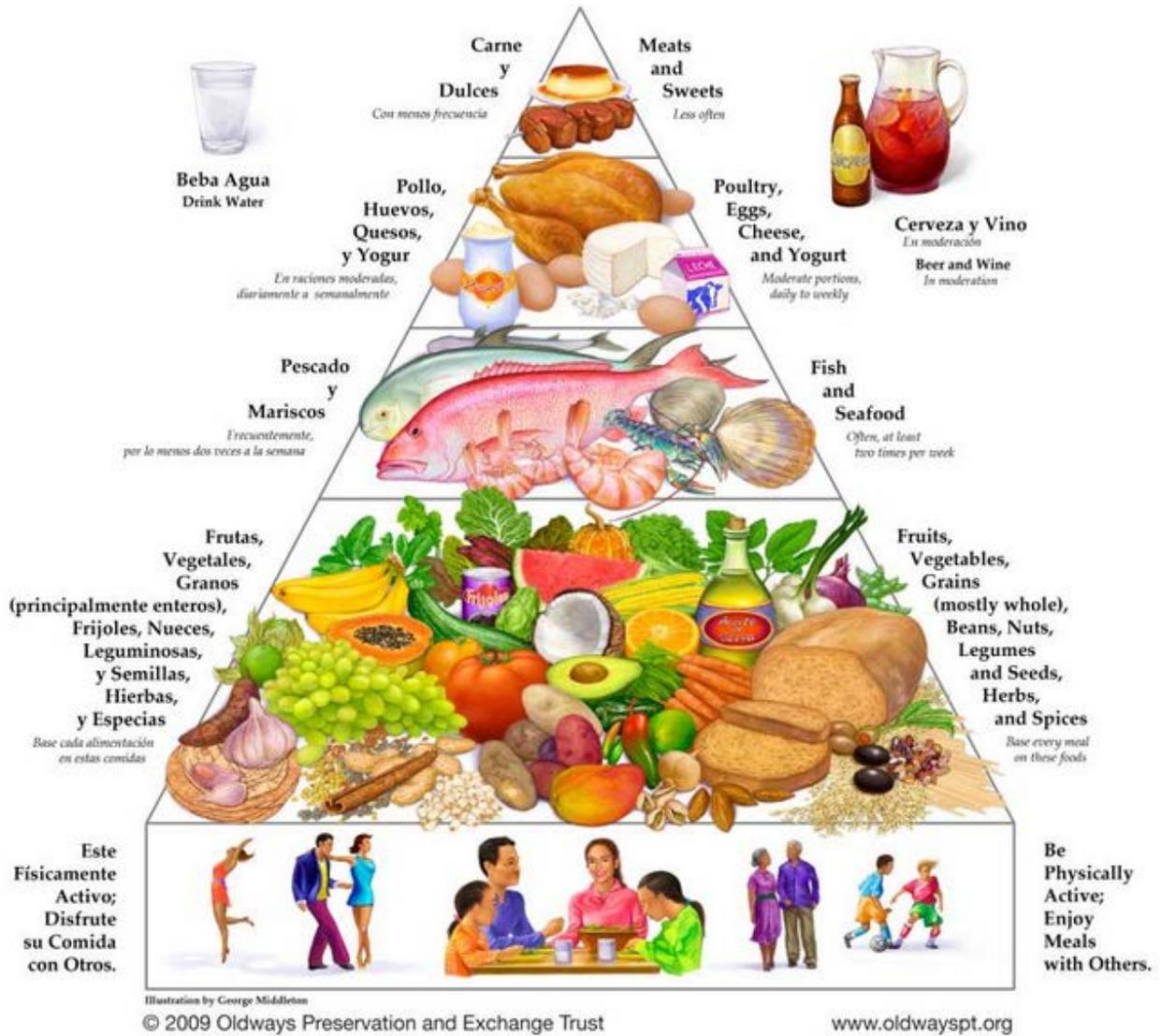


Latino:

Latinos, those who trace their ancestry to Cuba, Mexico, Puerto Rico, or Central and South America, are the fastest growing group in the United States. Plant based foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grain corn, rice, beans, and nuts are recognized as the base of the diet. The Latin American diet includes fish, shellfish, plant oils, dairy, and poultry choices on a daily basis with other meats, eggs, and sweets only selected on a weekly basis. Water is also recommended and alcohol intake is recognized but encouraged only in moderation.

	Latin Foods
Grains	arepas, amaranth, breads, maize/corn, pasta, quinoa, rice, tortillas
Vegetables	Cabbage, carrots, cassava, chard, chayote, chiles, eggplant, garlic, jicama, kale, lettuce, maize/corn, nopales, peppers, potatoes, pumpkin, onion, okra, spinach, yams, yucca, zucchini
Fruits	acai, agave, avocados, bananas, breadfruit, cacao, coconut, custard apples, grapefruit, guanabana, guava, lemons, limes, mangoes, melons, oranges, papayas, passion fruit, pineapple, plantains, pomegranate, prickly pear, pumpkin, quince, sapodilla, starfruit, sugarcane, tamarind, tangerine, tomatoes, tomatillos
Nuts, Seeds, Legumes	almonds, brazil nuts, beans (black, garbanzo, kidney, pinto), cashews, peanuts, pine nuts, pecans, pumpkin seeds (pepitas)
Herbs and Spices	chiles (aji, cayenne, jalapeno, habanero, pasilla, poblano, serrano), cilantro, cinnamon, epazote, garlic, oregano, parsley
Fish & Seafood	abalone, clams, cod, conch, crab, crayfish, mussels, octopus, sea bass, scallops, shrimp, squid, whelk
Poultry, Eggs, Cheese, & Yogurt	chicken, duck, geese, guinea fowl, squab, turkey, eggs (chicken, quail, duck), cheeses (asadero, cojita, minas, reggianito), yogurt, crema, milk
Meats and Sweets	beef, goat, lamb, pork, sweets (cakes, candy, chocolate, cookies, flan)

Latin food pyramid:



Adapted from “Ethnic/Cultural Food Pyramids,” www.fnic.nal.usda.gov/dietary-guidance and Images used with permission from *Oldways: Health Through Heritage*, retrieved from www.oldwayspt.org, October 2013.