

# Fancy a curry? Millions do!

by Andy Keedwell



**People used to say that British food was boring and bland. Nowadays people in Britain have a world of food to choose from.**

Travel around London and you'll find food from around the world. You might come across restaurants and cafes serving ethnic food from – take a deep breath – Armenia, Bangladesh, China, Ethiopia, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Korea, Lebanon, Malaysia, Poland, Russia, Somalia, Turkey and Yemen. Take a look on the internet and you'll find even more, from Africa, South and Central America and the Pacific. Some restaurants mix different cuisines to create fusion food – anyone for Brazilian/Japanese or Indian/French? It's almost the same in other big UK cities. Britain's 'foodies' – people who enjoy good food – are always looking for new adventures.

It hasn't always been the case. Once upon a time, other Western Europeans described British food as boring and bland, too heavy and full of fat, with tasteless soups and puddings only the British could love. Sixty years ago, there were only four Indian restaurants in the UK – now there are over 8,500. There were Italian restaurants in Britain in the nineteenth century but no real Chinese restaurant until the 1930s. The first Indian restaurant in the UK opened three hundred years ago. Today, the oldest Indian restaurant is Veeraswamy's, which opened in 1936. The first

Thai restaurant dates from the 1960s but many other ethnic outlets are much newer.

So why did the British grow bored with their boring food? Firstly soldiers, administrators and planters who had worked overseas encouraged others to try out new food. In the 1970s, the British began to take holidays abroad and discovered new tastes. And at the same time, people from around the world settled in the UK to live and work, bringing food from home which attracted the British.

Many people think of Britain's national dish as being fish and chips – but it's more ethnic than that. Many more, including former Foreign Secretary Robin Cook, see chicken tikka masala as representing British taste. It's a dish with no particular recipe, but involves chicken in creamy sauce, Indian style. You won't find it in India though – one story is that it was invented by an Indian chef in Glasgow in the 1930s. It's come to symbolise multicultural, multiethnic Britain.

Ethnic eating in Britain isn't always cheap, but there are other options. Fancy a curry, as the British say? Head for Birmingham or Bradford, where you'll find delicious, spicy Balti cooking. Vegetarian? Try London's Drummond Street, just behind Euston Station. Check out local bakers and delicatessens in areas where people from abroad have settled. You might not be able to pronounce the names of everything but you are certain to find something you like. Whatever you do, do as the British do and experiment with the exotic!

## Activity 1

Decide if these statements are true or false.

- 1 Ethnic food is only available in London.
- 2 It was hard to find ethnic food until the 1970s.
- 3 Indian cooking has a long history in the UK.
- 4 Travel encouraged British people to vary their diet.
- 5 Fusion food involves food from more than one continent.
- 6 Chicken tikka masala is commonly served in India.
- 7 Ethnic food is always expensive.
- 8 You can only find ethnic food in UK restaurants.

## Activity 2

Each word below describes food and is in the text. Complete the word. What does each word mean? Which of these words describes food from your country?

- |             |               |
|-------------|---------------|
| 1 et _ _ c  | 5 t _ _ _ _ s |
| 2 s _ _ y   | 6 d _ _ _ _ s |
| 3 ex _ _ c  | 7 v _ _ _ _ n |
| 4 f _ _ _ n | 8 b _ _ d     |

## Activity 3

We form words for nationalities in different ways, for example Britain becomes British but India becomes Indian. What are the nationality words for these countries which are mentioned in the article?

- |              |            |
|--------------|------------|
| 1 Bangladesh | 5 Greece   |
| 2 Brazil     | 6 Japan    |
| 3 Ethiopia   | 7 Poland   |
| 4 France     | 8 Thailand |

## Word of the week

**Fusion food**

A type of cooking that is a combination of different countries' cuisines.

## Over to you

What kinds of food do people enjoy in your culture? How would you describe your 'ethnic cuisine'?

Answers	
Activity 1	1 F 2 T 3 T 4 T 5 T
Activity 2	6 F 7 F 8 F
Activity 3	1 Bangladesh 2 Brazilian 3 Ethiopian 4 French 5 Greek 6 Japanese 7 Polish 8 Thai
Word of the week	4 fusion 5 tasteless 6 delicious 7 vegetarian 8 bland