

# **Staples Foods**

## **Lesson# 5.1**

### **Lesson Description:**

In this chapter you will learn about staple foods from around the world. You will see how they are prepared differently from culture to culture. Some recipes are also included so you can prepare the staple foods using different cooking methods.

# A Brief History of Food

Growing food and agriculture began around 12 000 years ago. People came to realize that seeds planted and cared for would yield crops. These people settled down and began farming their food. The first people to do this were probably in the Middle East, where farmers grew earlier versions of wheat and barley. People in China and Central America are thought to have started farming next. Because of the differences in soil and climate, in northern China, people grew millet, and in the south, they grew rice. As the early farmers began to understand agriculture, they learned how to irrigate their crops by diverting water from streams, lakes, and rivers. Settlements began to develop around agricultural areas.

Animals began to be domesticated around the same time as settled farms began. The type of animal that was domesticated depended upon the area in which the people lived. Cows were uncommon in mountainous or rocky areas, where goats and sheep were better adapted to handle the terrain.

Planting seeds freed us just as much as it rooted us in place. For the first time in human history, all of us did not have to be directly involved in the production of food. With agriculture, some of us could be artists or craftsmen or religious leaders. Some of us could do things beyond sustenance to increase the depth and breadth of human knowledge.

## **Staple Foods**

A food staple is a food that makes up the dominant part of a population's diet. Food staples are eaten regularly—even daily—and supply a major proportion of a person's energy and nutritional needs. Food staples vary from place to place, depending on the food sources available. Most food staples are inexpensive, plant-based foods. They are usually full of calories for energy. Cereal grains and tubers are the most common food staples. There are more than 50,000 edible plants in the world, but just 15 of them provide 90 percent of the world's food energy intake. Rice, corn (maize), and wheat make up two-thirds of this. Other food staples include millet and sorghum; tubers such as potatoes, cassava, yams, and taro; and animal products such as meat, fish, and dairy.

Food staples traditionally depend on what plants are native to a region. However, with improvements in agriculture, food storage, and transportation, some food staples are changing. For example, in the islands of the South Pacific, roots and tubers such as taro are traditional food staples. Since 1970, however, their consumption has fallen. Foods that were particular to one region are becoming popular in regions where they don't traditionally grow. Quinoa, for instance, is a grain-like plant that is grown high in the Andes Mountains of South America. Today, quinoa is popular far outside of Latin America.

Although staple foods are nutritious, they do not provide the full, healthy range of nutrients. People must add other foods to their diets to avoid malnutrition. This is particularly the case for children and other nutritionally vulnerable groups.

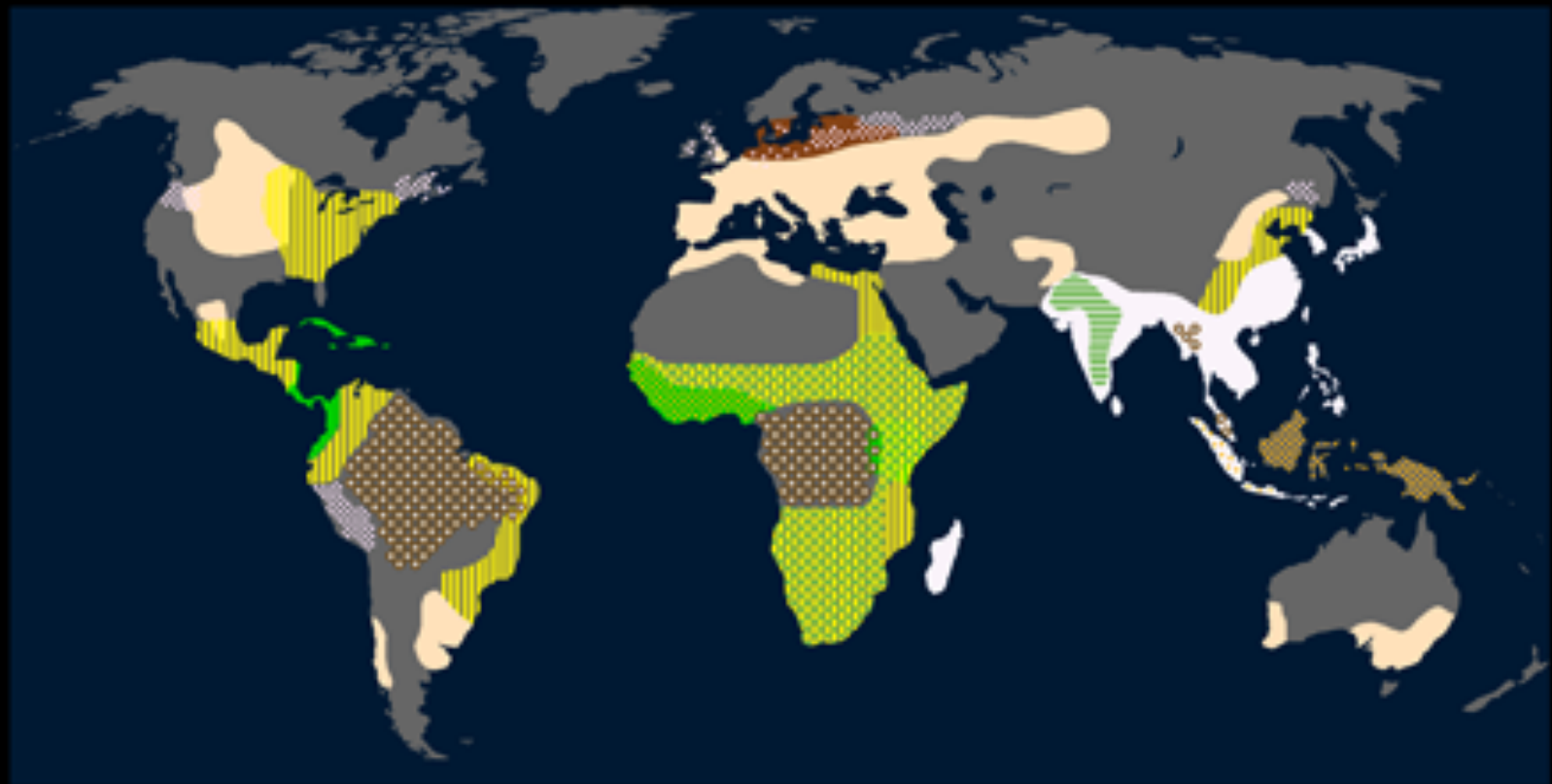
The food supply in any region depends on what foods can be grown there. These staple foods are foods that make up the region's basic food supply. Several factors determine the staple foods for a given area.

- **Geography.** Food is most easily grown where the soil is rich, such as valleys or plains. In mountainous areas, farming is more difficult. However, animals that can live on rocky slopes, such as goats, can be raised in these regions.

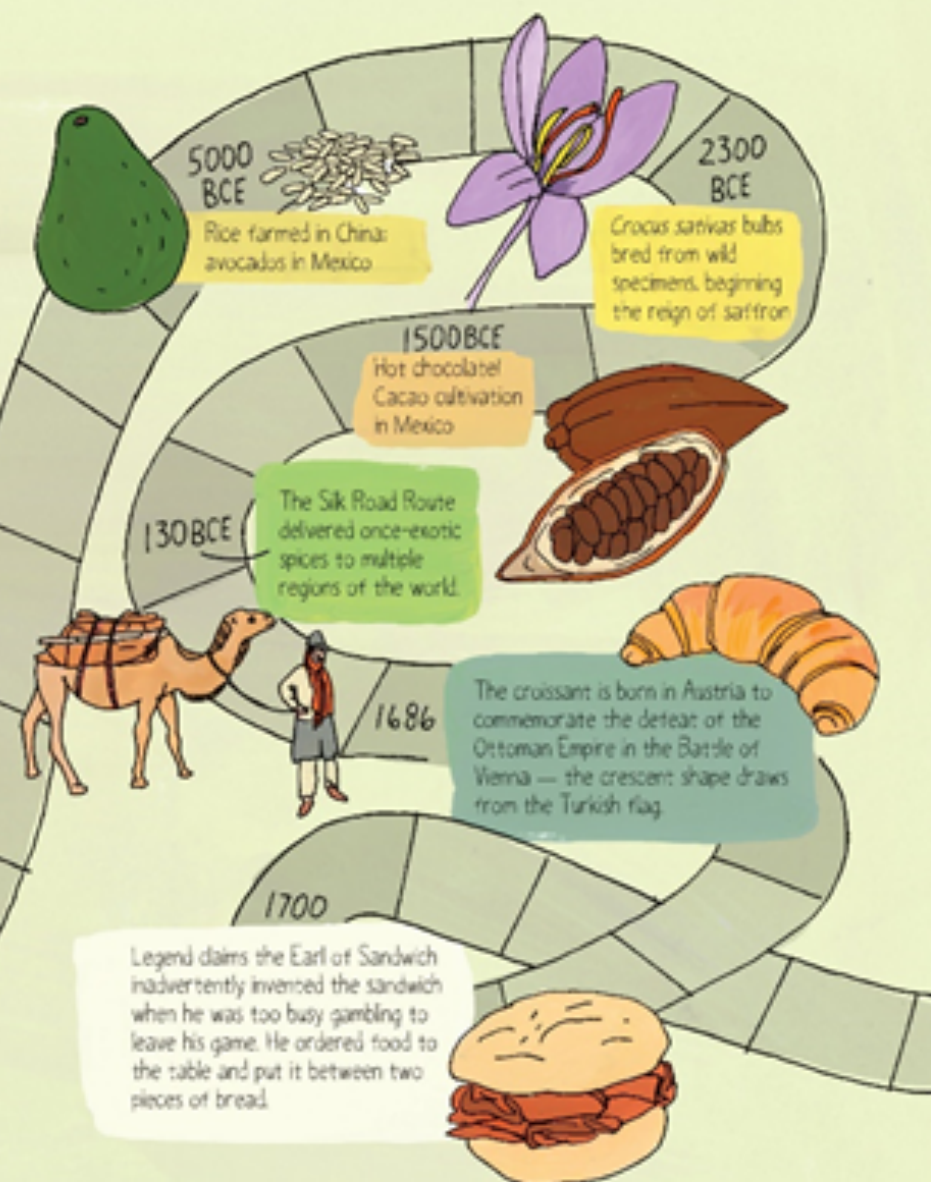
- **Climate.** Moderate temperatures make it possible to grow a wide variety of food. In some climates, temperatures vary and food can be grown only during the warm months. Extreme temperatures, high or low, limit the kinds of food that can be grown.

- **Rainfall.** Some crops thrive in areas that receive a lot of rainfall annually. Little, if any, food can be grown in totally dry areas such as deserts. In many parts of the world, grains are the main staple foods. Each type of grain—wheat, rice, corn, or rye, is best suited to a particular climate. For example, rice grows best in warm, wet climates.

## Dominant Staple Food Crops of the World



# A Brief History of Food







1773



After the Boston Tea Party, many Americans switched to coffee from tea in a show of patriotism.

1763

The first oyster saloon in the American colonies opened in a New York City cellar on Broad Street.



1845-1852

Irish Potato Famine (also known as The Great Famine) struck Ireland leaving about 1 million dead and forcing another million to emigrate from the country.



'Chow Chop Suey' - a Chinese-style American dish made with odds and ends - onions, bamboo shoots, and bean sprouts - gained favor amongst hipsters of the day of New York City. Soon Mott Street becomes a popular destination for Chinese food.

1880



1904

The ice cream cone is invented at the St. Louis World's Fair.



1908

At New York City's first pizzeria, pies cost 5 cents, which many people can't afford.



1923

Caesar Cardini creates his namesake salad at his Tijuana restaurant - adding a splash of showmanship with table-side preparation.



The publication of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* and Julia Child's subsequent PBS cooking show change the way Americans think about cooking.



1928

Sliced bread becomes the perennial next-best-thing ever invented.



1961

The first sushi restaurant in America opens in southern California, but it takes a decade before American-style sushi, like the California Roll, becomes popular.

1966



1986

The slow food movement is founded in Italy with a dedication to encouraging eco-friendly local farming and eating fresh, seasonal produce.





# In Summary

- ✓ Staple foods are foods that make up the basic food supply for people in a region.
- ✓ Staple foods vary from culture to culture.
- ✓ The staple food supply in any region depends on what will grow there.
- ✓ Geography, climate and rainfall are factors that determine which staple foods will grow in a given region.
- ✓ Staple foods around the world include wheat, corn, rice, millet, sorghum, bananas, cassava, and yams.
- ✓ Staple foods are prepared by using a wide variety of cooking methods.