

Comparison of Diet and Cooking based on Chinese and Western Culture

Baoding Li

Henan Polytechnic, Zhengzhou, Henan, 450046, China

Keywords: Chinese and Western culture, Diet culture, Cooking, Balanced diet.

Abstract: There is an objective difference of diet and cooking culture between China and the West. So it is of great significance to strengthen the comparative study of Chinese and Western diet culture. Diet culture, developed from people's practice, has gradually become diversified with the development of culture. Chinese diet culture tends to pursuit delicacy and taste, paying much attention to the use of crops, while Western diet prefer the light taste and balanced diet to traditional high-calorie diet. Therefore, comparison of Chinese and Western diet culture has positive significance and important value for healthy diet habit.

1 INTRODUCTION

Due to the different development conditions, different nations have different dietetic cultures. Therefore, an effective way to learn the cultural features of a nation is to understand its dietetic culture. China, with a long history of more than five thousand years, has become a great power with multiple nations through years of war and peace (Bian Haoyu, Gao Yongchen, 2004). Therefore, there are various diet cultures in China, and the diet cultures in Chinese Nation are quite different from that of Western.

2 SUMMARY OF DIET AND COOKING CULTURES

Diet and cooking are common words in dairy life. In fact, they are just the centralized summarization of eating and drinking. However, there is rich cultural connotation behind dietary behaviors rather than just maintaining the life of people. With the development of human beings, food culture itself has many different forms. In different regions and nations, each food culture has underlying value playing a unique role in different aspects of society. The cultures of diet and cooking are all generated and developed from people's labor process. From initially simple eating to diet cultures, people have devoted deep considerations and creative ideas to diet. Therefore, the cultures of diet and cooking are

all rich and unique. From the raw material to final artistic food, food materials have presented more functions and art values during diet and cooking (Guo Lijiu, 2003). The cultures of diet and cooking include the cooking technology as well as related etiquettes and customs behind dietary behaviors. Besides, there are also cuisine conceptions in diet, so it is an integrated cultural system with its own structure.

3 COMPARISON OF THE ORIGINS BETWEEN CHINESE, WESTERN DIET AND COOKING CULTURES

3.1 Origins of Western diet and cooking cultures

The culture of Western diet originated from its precious spiritual culture, with the features of region and history. So it has obvious regional characteristics. In terms of physical geography condition, most Western countries are located in the zone of temperate maritime climate. So most Western countries and areas are not suitable for crops cultivation, but for the development of animal husbandry. Therefore, they pay much attention to the meat with high-calorie for its function of cold resistance. For instance, in east Europe, like Russia

and Ukraine, people prefer to the high-calorie food and hard liquor (Lin Yan, Xuan Meishun, 2014).

On one hand, achievements of industrial revolution in Western countries have promoted the development of Western society. Meantime, Western political and economic patterns have been concentrating on the big powers like United Kingdom and United States. Due to the increase of working hours and production efficiency, Western countries with relatively developed industry tend to choose simple and fast cooking and diet. On the aspect of materials selection, they pay much attention to materials which can be easily cooked. But for some countries showing preference for literature and art, such as France, the skills of cooking are more important. And they also lay more attention on the richness of food materials than other Western countries. On the other hand, the religious culture also has a great influence upon Western diets and cooking culture. In Christian civilization, lamb-kid and milk cannot be simultaneously cooked as mentioned in the Old Testament. Besides, drinking the blood of animal was forbidden, which affects Jewish dietary habits. Other examples can also be given as taboos of Islam for Muslim diet. Therefore, the culture of Western diet and cooking has been deeply affected by above factors.

3.2 Origin of Chinese diet and cooking culture

Chinese diet and cooking cultures are the same as that of Western, with a long history and rich cultural background. The long-term processing and consumption of food materials have left Chinese diet and cooking culture a rich heritage. Therefore, the rich diet and cooking cultures in China are in close contact with its civilization of more than five thousand years.

Chinese diet has undergone the process from eating raw food to cooking. And with the inchoation of civilization originated of ancient dynasties, more skills and etiquette for food and cooking have been produced. In terms of physical geography condition, China lies in East Asia, with a long coastline, affected by monsoon for long term. In this unique physical geography condition, China pays more attention to the plantation of corps like cereals and rice. Traditionally, Chinese people attach great importance to cooking and eating of meat. Even so, the majority of Chinese still take the plantation of crops very seriously. As China has a vast territory, the people in coastal areas eat seafood more often; while the inland people are good at cooking fungus

collected from mountains since ancient time. Such cultures of diet and cooking have an obvious regionalism, thus resulting in the diversity of diet culture.

Chinese economic development also has a great influence on its cultures of diet and cooking, which can be seen from the development of Shanghai cuisine. Since 19th century, Shanghai has been divided into concessions and port on the basis of economic development. Furthermore, Shanghai cuisine has absorbed the various cultures from different countries, forming a very unique taste. With the influence of religion, there are also some religious connotation in Chinese diet cultures. For instance, there is a cooking tool called tripod in China. It is a symbol of patriarchal clan system and social status in Zhou Dynasty, also a symbol of power monarch and father. In the Taoist that developed and flourished in Han Dynasty, the meat diet and irritable food are forbidden. What's more, they also proposed the food therapy theoretically, with the wishes of body regulation. Buddhism, as a foreign religion introduced from other countries, has been spreading in China for more than two thousand years. Affected by the Chinese diet cultures, Buddhism proposed the thought of the combination of Tea and Zen for diet.

4 COMPARISON OF CHINESE AND WESTERN DIET CULTURE AND COMMUNICATION OF COOKING SKILLS

4.1 Features of communication of Chinese diet culture

China has always been communicating with the world through different channels. Since Han dynasty, the Silk Road leading to the Western countries has been developed for silk trade. In the middle ages, China opened up the ancient Tea-Horse road in Yunnan and Guizhou Provinces to export tea to foreign countries. Besides, there was also "Sea Silk Road" bringing Chinese porcelain and silk to overseas. In addition to bringing Chinese products to foreign countries, these channels had also taken Chinese diet and cooking culture to other countries. The profound influence of Chinese tea should be a good example. In UK, the aristocrats in high society quickly accepted the tea culture, taking tea drinking

as the privilege of them. That was because it is not easy to grow tea in the UK, so they had to rely on China's export in the early stage. In modern times, political pattern has greatly changed as the eruption of world wars. From the late 19th to early 20th century, there has been a large-scale immigration wave. Influenced by this trend, Chinese diet and cooking have been brought to different countries, such as Southeast Asia countries like Malaya, Singapore and Thailand, or Americas and Cuba. In these countries and areas, you can find Chinese gathering areas everywhere, called as "Chinatown". Besides, there also are Chinese restaurants widespread. With the spread of diet and cooking culture, more overseas Chinese can get access to their conventional foods, thus meeting their homesick complex. Additionally, the integration of Chinese diet and local cuisines results in the new dishes with the diet cultures of both Chinese and Western. As one of the overseas-Chinese diet cultures, Guangdong dishes have had a very profound influence on Chinese food within United States. Furthermore, its sales volume is running neck and neck with fast food in US.

4.2 Features of communication of Western diet cultures

The influence of Western diet upon Chinese was firstly shown by the introduction of crops, such as Tomato, sweet potato, guava, walnuts and pepper. Once these crops have entered China, they were widely used in Chinese diet and cooking. With the introduction of Western diet and cooking culture, Western Christianity also spread gradually, thus affecting Chinese culture. Especially in Ming and Qing Dynasty, Western Catholic and Christian missionaries with certain scale stepped into the territory of China gradually, with their diet and cooking culture. As ZHU-Ming and Manchus Government resisted the spread of western religious cultures, these diet and cooking cultures have not taken root in China. The prosperous period of Western diet culture in China started since the Reform and Opening up in 1980s. At that time, China was active in the communication and cooperation with Western countries. Therefore, various Western foods have been introduced into China and found its place in various regions of China, such as hamburger and steak. Then Chinese people's living habits were deeply affected. For instance, drinking coffee and coffee shops can be seen everywhere, which is a common status in China.

The reason why Western diet and cooking cultures were boycotted lies in two aspects. On one hand, part of Western diet and cooking cultures contain rich religious thoughts. While for most Chinese, their religious beliefs are Buddhist and Taoism. So they dare not to taste Western foods at first for their loyalty to religions. On the other hand, all Chinese were affected by national complex at late 19th century to early 20th century. That is because at that time, China was suffering the invasion from Western countries and Japan. Most Chinese people showed a strong hostility to Western diet and cooking. Even today, many Chinese people will rather choose Chinese foods if they have the options. However, among the youth in China, this concept becomes weaker than their elders.

5 COMPARISON OF THE ESSENCE OF CHINESE, WESTERN DIET AND COOKING CULTURES

Essentially, the basic difference between Chinese and Western diet and cooking cultures lies in their different contents. Chinese diet primarily pursues the delicacy and beauty of food, but the Western mainly focus on the nutrition and balance of diet. Obviously, there are various kinds of thoughts in Chinese diet and cooking cultures. Due to the influence of different regional cultures, there are many kinds of dish styles in Chinese diet culture, such as Zhejiang, Guangdong and Sichuan cuisine. Although there are different cooking skills in different dish styles, daintiness of food has always been the concern of Chinese diet and cooking culture. Here is an old saying, "there has no rice in the finest quality, nor meat finely minced." Furthermore, Chinese people emphasize the appearance of the food as well as color matching during cooking. For instance, the feast full of good dishes of Man and Han nationalities developed in Qing dynasty mainly focus on the aggregation of different dishes. Besides, different cooking skills and materials' tastes are also studied in this feast. However, Western diet and cooking criticize the food with high-calorie for the development of medical technology. People in Western countries proposed some ideas about balanced diet. In Western diet and cooking, many people tend to select light food, so Western diet is always very simple. Gradually, such idea of weighing health and refusing appetite are accepted by the majority of

Chinese people. Nowadays, many Chinese people begin to refuse substantial meals while cooking, tending to light foods.

6 CONCLUSIONS

In a word, this work investigated the difference between Chinese, Western diet and cooking cultures. In particular, this work studied the concepts about banquet and etiquette and the content of cooking. So it is possible to analyze the difference between Chinese and Western diet cultures. At present, it is an era for world cross-cultural communication. After China entering the global environment, Chinese diet culture will have more chances to communicate with other diet cultures in the world. Therefore, it seems necessary to study the difference between Chinese and Western cultures. That is because it can dig out the profound connotation behind the difference, especially for the exploration of the cultural details. At last, it can also enhance the awareness for cultural communication in the cross-cultural environment.

REFERENCES

- Bian Haoyu, Gao Yongchen, Differences between Chinese and Western Dietetic Culture, *Journal of Nanjing Forestry University (Humanities and Social Sciences Edition)*, 2004(02): 49-53
- Guo Lijiu, Aesthetic Sublimation of Cooking Arts—an Interview with Chinese Master Chef Peng Yutang, *Chinese Food*, 2003 (04): 11-13
- Lin Yan, Xuan Meishun, Differences between Chinese and Western Dietary Cultures, *Journal of Small Writers Election, Teaching Communication*, 2014(01):118