



Overview of Religions

Although there are literally thousands of religions in the world today, *Food, Cuisine, and Cultural Competency for Culinary, Hospitality, and Nutrition Professionals* draws the reader's attention to four prominent religions. These chapters provide an overview of the religions that, along with other major faiths central to certain cultures, are discussed further in the subsequent country-specific chapters. The religions covered briefly in this section are:

CHAPTER 1 Christianity

CHAPTER 2 Islam

CHAPTER 3 Judaism

CHAPTER 4 Seventh-Day Adventist

RELIGIONS

Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and Seventh-Day Adventist are major religions that are practiced throughout the world.

Christianity

Christianity was rooted in the Abrahamic religious tradition and originated in the eastern Mediterranean. During the Middle Ages, Christianity became a religious minority in the Middle East, North Africa, and India.

Islam

Islam is an Abrahamic religion and is the predominant religion in much of Africa and the Middle East, as well as in major parts of Asia.

Judaism

The world Jewish population lives mostly in Israel and the United States. It too is a religion descended from Abraham.

Seventh-Day Adventist

The Seventh-Day Adventist religion was founded in the United States during the middle of the 19th century and was formally established in 1863. It currently has a worldwide membership and is culturally diverse.

CHAPTER 1

Christianity

Zaheer Ali Kirmani, PhD, RD
Sari Edelstein, PhD, RD



CULTURE

Christians celebrate the life of Jesus Christ, whom they believe to have been the son of God and who preached God's message of love and forgiveness in Jerusalem more than 2000 years ago. Having suffered crucifixion because of his teachings, according to Christian belief, Jesus Christ rose from the dead after 3 days and ascended to heaven. Christians believe in only one God, but the concept of the Trinity is an essential part of the faith. The Trinity includes: (1) the Father (God, the Creator of heaven and earth); (2) Jesus, His son, who came to earth to teach love and forgiveness; and (3) the Holy Ghost, the unseen power of God that is working everywhere in the world. It is believed that Christ's crucifixion and rising from the dead signifies forgiveness for wrongdoers so that they can have a fresh start in life.

The Old Testament of the Christian holy book, the Bible, is also recognized by Muslims and Jews,

whereas the New Testament, which chronicles Christ's life through to his death and resurrection, is relevant solely to Christianity. With Jesus Christ's teachings as the common thread, Christians are subdivided into various denominations such as Catholic, Protestant, Greek Orthodox, Pentecostal, Baptist, Southern Baptist, Mormon, Anglican, Latter-Day Saint, Jehovah's Witness, Quaker, and Seventh-Day Adventist (SDA), among others. The style of worship and customs differs among the various denominations and sects. For example, although the crucifix is universally recognized in Christianity as the symbol of Christ's suffering and death, some Christians believe that a cross without his figure is a more appropriate symbol because he ascended to heaven after death. Most followers of Christ perform acts of kindness toward people in need. Such endeavors include supporting orphanages, schools for disadvantaged children, hospitals, and schools in developing countries. In most Christian churches, babies are welcomed into the Church in a baptism ceremony

in which the baby is either submerged in blessed water or blessed water is sprinkled on the baby. Young Christians may also celebrate First Communion, which commemorates the last meal Christ ate with his disciples the night before his crucifixion.

In many Christian households, although Sunday is the day of formal worship and church attendance, prayers are offered before every meal and before going to bed. In addition, Christians who adhere more fervently to symbolic rituals often engage in special practices. For example, many Christians in South America lead processions on certain days with palm branches in their hands and in the hand of a statue of Christ.

Christians have several holy days. Epiphany marks the visit of the Three Wise Men to the Baby Jesus. Ash Wednesday signifies the beginning of Lent (a period of prayer and self-denial before Easter) in February/March. Holy Week is celebrated in March/April with Palm Sunday, Good Friday, and Easter to commemorate the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In June, Pentecost celebrates the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Advent period, in November/December, is observed until Christmas, and Christmas is celebrated as the birthday of Jesus Christ.

Christians number 2 billion worldwide, comprising the world's most popular religion. Because Christians exist across various sects in many different cultures, dietary adherence, traditions, and food availability varies extensively, which makes generalizing or describing a universally standard daily meal plan impossible; thus, this chapter highlights only the dietary preferences and traditions of a few Christian denominations.



MAJOR FOODS

The major foods utilized in Christianity, inclusive of protein, starch, vegetable, fruit, fat, beverages, and spices, are best illustrated by the food traditions found at holiday meals. This section focuses on those aspects of two holiday meals: Christmas and Easter dinners.



Christmas Dinner

Just as Christianity has many denominations and sects, Christmas dinner is also celebrated with different cuisines in various regions of the world. In the United States, Christmas dinner may include roast turkey, beef, ham, or pork as the major protein source.



One Example of a Christmas Dinner

This will be accompanied by stuffing and mashed potatoes as the starch source, and corn, squash, or green beans as a vegetable. Desserts may include fruit pies. Variations within the United States may include black-eyed peas as a starch source in the southern part of the country and the use of pineapple as an Asian influence. Mincemeat pie at Christmas dinner is linked to Spanish/Hispanic traditions.

Other regional Christmas dinner preferences may include the use of Luke fish in Norway, an Edam cheese ball in the Philippines, a turkey stuffed with ground beef and peanuts in Peru, cold potato salad in Brazil, and goose, oysters, and cream cake in France. People in The Netherlands do not always practice the family-meal style in which everyone eats from one large platter of each food; instead, people gather to each cook their own Christmas meal in individual frying pans in smaller portions. Finely chopped vegetables and shrimp are commonly consumed in Dutch cuisine. Mexico makes use of tamales (with chocolate or fruit sauces) as a traditional Christmas dinner dessert dish.



One Example of an Easter Dinner

and stuff their turkeys with sugarcane water solutions and fruit for sweetness.



Easter Dinner

Easter dinner is celebrated by most Christians as the end of the period of Lent to signify rebirth; thus, the symbol of the Easter egg represents this rebirth or time of renewal. In the United States, ham is the traditional Easter dinner protein source; however, in Europe roasted lamb may be the protein of choice for Easter. A traditional starch consumed during Easter time is the hot cross bun. Hot cross buns link back to the ancient Greeks and relates to Christ's cross. Russians are known for making kulich, a bread shaped in an Easter symbol (sometimes a tall and narrow shape with a bulging top, signifying that Christ has risen) with beautiful decorations made of candied citrus peels.



FOODS WITH CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Sabbath for the Mormons is Sunday while SDAs observe Sabbath from sunset on Friday to sundown on Saturday. This is the time to take respite from the daily chores and reflect on God's many blessings in the company of family and friends during Bible studies. Sab-

bath afternoon meal is the largest meal of the day and includes the family's favorite foods.

Many foods with cultural significance are those that are prohibited in some Christian sects. For example, SDA and Mormon churches recommend that their followers consume food that is considered clean in order to stay healthy. True followers of both of these religions do not consume alcohol or caffeinated beverages. They also avoid smoking and blood in meats. Human health is the main consideration for the imposition of food restriction in both SDA and Mormon churches, and bears a relationship with the Old Testament. The Old Testament provides clear instruction for the consumption of clean animals, which include those with cloven hooves that chew their cud, and fish with fins and scales. Birds of prey, pig, rabbit, bear, raccoon, cat fish, shrimp, lobster, octopus, frog, snake, and lizard are deemed to be unfit for consumption. Tradition, which was established before proper refrigeration was available, insisted that chicken, other poultry, and beef be consumed, and that persons abstain from eating pork, because pig is not deemed a clean animal according to the teachings of these churches. Vegetarian meals have been adopted by many Christians of these denominations. Specifically, vegetarianism is common in SDA faith and health and dietary regimentation seems to be a hallmark of this religion (See Chapter 4).



Hot Cross Buns

Many Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox groups also discourage pork consumption, with the exception of Eritrean Orthodox Tewahdo Church and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, where the proscription is rarely enforced.

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