

Special Report: The Cambodian food culture**The Observation of Eating Habits between Cambodian and Japanese**

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ABSTRACT : The delicacy of food is a representation of each nation. Deeply rooted from generation to generation, people's eating habits evolved and resulted in a reflection of food cultures and family dynamics. This report aims to detail the eating habits between Cambodia and Japan. While both countries, located in Asia with rich cultures and traditions, are fascinated by many other countries, the diversity between eating habits and food cultures within family and society can be seen.

INTRODUCTION

In Cambodia, the tradition of eating together is a standard that has been practiced for many centuries. These traditional habits emphasize the importance of community and family bonds. Meals are often prepared and enjoyed by family members and sometimes extended to neighbors and friends. Cambodians normally gather around a table, or sometimes they eat directly on the floor, on a layer of Cambodian style's mat. We can often see that Cambodian meals consist of a few dishes per meal that are served in a big bowl to be shared with family members or friends. On the other hand, Japanese eating habits present a dining culture that is equally communal but marked by a distinct feature on etiquette and healthy balanced nutrition. The act of sharing food in Japan is also a way to reinforce social bonds but it is characterized by a tradition that is known as "Teishoku". "Teishoku" or set-meal is often enjoyed by many Japanese. It has been rooted for a very long time, which can be seen in many daily common meals such as home meals, school lunches, hospital meals, and also restaurants. It is often come in a one-person portion, that is not need to be shared between family members. On the other hand, Japanese eating habits present a dining culture that is equally communal but marked by a distinct feature on etiquette and healthy balanced nutrition. The act of sharing food in Japan is also a way to reinforce social bonds but it is characterized by a tradition that is known as "Teishoku". "Teishoku" or set-meal is often enjoyed by many Japanese. It has been rooted for a very long time, which can be seen in many daily common meals such as home meals, school lunches, hospital meals, and also restaurants. It is often come in a one-person portion, that is not need to be shared between family members.



Picture 1. Cambodian's eating habit



Picture 2. Japanese's eating habit

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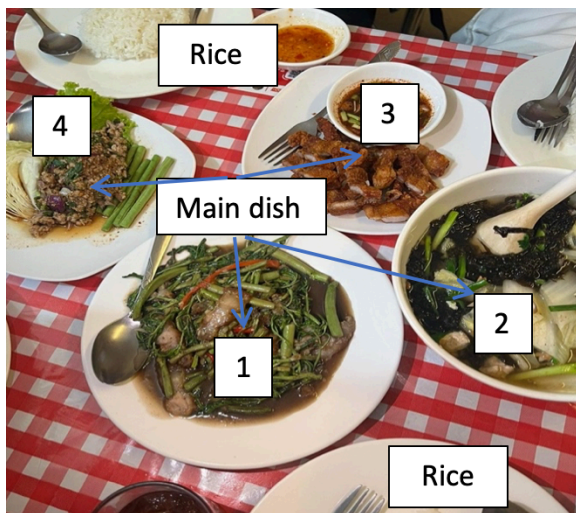
The contrast between these two cultures leads to a curiosity about how they differ from one another, moreover, this report will deeply analyze the food plating and preparation between each country and so as the pros and cons that come with it. It will be a guide to understanding a perspective of both Japanese and Cambodian cultures.

1. Meal and plate preparation

1.1 Cambodia

In Cambodia, we believe that the quality of the family can be seen at every mealtime. Traditionally, mothers prepared meals with love and care. Time and effort are needed to receive a plate of delicious dishes. Cambodian meals normally consist of rice and a main dish. Talking about the main dish, there are normally two to three dishes, various from soup, fried, stirred-fried, or even boiled meal. The main meal can consist of different foods, since Cambodia has a variety of meals that can be chosen from, it also depends on the family's economic status. The main dish is served in a big bowl or plate, then it is shared among the whole family.

The picture below (Picture 3) shows how Cambodian people enjoyed their food. There are 4 main dishes, including stirred-fried vegetables (1), seaweed soup (2), deep-fried pork (3), and minced pork salad (4) that are shared between 3 to four people.

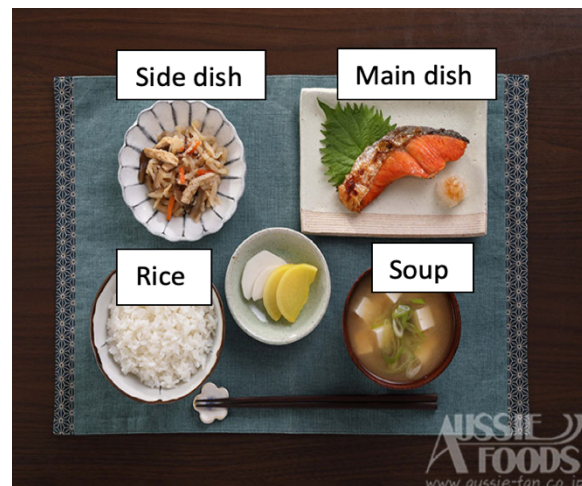


Picture 3: Cambodian's style meal

1.2 Japan

While Cambodians like to share their food, it is less common for Japanese people to do so. Even so, Japanese meals are also made with effort and techniques. The visuals of food are very important to the Japanese, to make it look more appealing and attractive, they often serve one main dish and several side dishes per person. Regarding plating in Japan, they typically place the rice on the left and the soup on the right. The main dish is positioned at the top right, while the side dishes are placed on the lower right. It is believed that Japanese food presentation emphasizes visual appeal, with attention to the arrangement, colors, and shapes of the food. Dishes are often designed to evoke natural landscapes and seasonal themes.

The picture below shows a Japanese set-meal "Teishoku". It includes rice, salad dish, fried fish, and soup. It is a meal prepared for one person that does not need to be shared.



Picture 4: Japanese's style meal

The eating habits of both countries, even though it has their uniqueness and style that make their respective population follow and have been practicing for so many years, have some strengths and weaknesses that can be seen within both cultures. The table below shows the advantages and disadvantages that can be withdrawn from how Cambodian and Japanese eating habits are like. To further discuss this matter, details about each point will be analyzed

Table 1: Comparison of eating habits between Japanese and Cambodian

	Advantages	Disadvantages
Cambodia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing mentality • Satisfaction • Time sufficient 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unbalance nutrition • Insanitation • Unappealing
Japan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balance nutrition • Sanitation • Appealing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-sharing mentality • Dissatisfaction • Time insufficient

2. Comparison

2.1 Cambodia (Advantages)

- **Sharing mentality**

In Cambodia, we believe that love can be shown by sharing. Unexceptionally, food sharing is a norm that can be seen in Cambodian people. This kind of action is thought to be a family bonding moment. In this recent society, family members tend to have different schedules depending on their careers, however, during meal time all members are gathered which means that they can share about what is going on in their life and so as catch on with what the family members are up to. This small action is a reason that leads to the bonds and connections that represent the family dynamic. To a certain point, in some families, it feels like is a duty to eat with your family members for every meal.

- **Satisfaction**

Meal-sharing cultures often embrace joy and fulfillment among family members. Most Asian country, including Cambodia, tends to have a variety of dishes that include diverse and nourishing ingredients. Ranking from vegetables to many types of protein. Food sharing allows everyone to indulge in their favorite dishes, which means even the pickiest eaters do not need to adjust their preferences. For

instance, children can just pick whatever ingredients they like from the dishes without worrying about leaving any leftovers on their plates. This can be seen as a satisfaction to their mentality since it is believed that being able to eat what you like will be an improvement to your mood.

- **Time sufficient**

In this modern society, time is the most valuable thing that humans cherish. It means that everything had to be done efficiently. But how did meal-sharing can be such an important method of saving time? It is so convenient to just cook a meal for once and then share it with your family or partner. This helps reduce the amount of time that is needed to put into preparation. Moreover, it is also such a help when it comes to cleaning. Meal-sharing required less cooking and plating utensils, which led to a reduction in time and labor.

2.2 Cambodia (Disadvantages)

- **Unbalance nutrition**

Despite having all the benefits, some flaws can be seen within the eating habits of Cambodian people. Directly picking whatever you prefer from the table, tends to lead to an unbalanced nutrition intake. For example, during a family meal a child who is picky about their food only picks up their ingredients such as meat from the dish, this can lead to the problem of unbalanced nutrition. Even if the meal is made as a nutritious meal, it still can be an issue if it is not eaten correctly.

- **Insanitation**

In some cases, eating a meal from the same plate as other people can be seen as an unsanitary form of action. Germs and cross-contamination can be transferred from one person's saliva. It is easy for a disease to spread, especially a cold or flu that can be transmitted easily. In addition, it is also very common in Cambodia to eat directly on the floor. However, it is not hygienic to do so, since a lot of dust and dirt are mostly gathering on the floor. These norms could be a reason that leads to a health hazard. This type of habit has been normalized without much consideration in Cambodian culture. More attention should be given to this kind of habit by being more careful and hygienic to prevent more issues.

- **Unappealing**

Taste is the most important factor in food, however, appearance is another factor that boosts the remanence in food. In Cambodian household culture, they do not care about the outside appearance of the food but more focus on the flavor. In restaurants, it might be necessary to make the food more appealing to the consumer, on the other hand, in family households is less common to spend some time on making the meal look more eye-pleasant.

2.3 Japan (Advantages)

- **Balance nutrition**

It is known worldwide that Japan is a country that has one of the longest life expectancies. Many reasons are behind this phenomenon but one of the main reasons is due to the eating habits and portion control of the Japanese. The culture in their household of having a main dish, side dish, and soup plays an important in balancing out the nutrition intake of an average Japanese. The habits of eating "Teishoku" make the family members feel responsible for finishing what they have in front of them. The sense of responsibility will lead to a cycle of consuming a nutritious meal every day.

- **Sanitation**

From cooking to plating, Japanese people are very conscious about the hygiene. Since raw fish is one of the most eaten sources of protein in most households, it is very common for food poisoning to occur. As a

result, they always cooked in a manner that show cleanliness and sanitary. Also, the separation of meals

between families makes the spread of germs even more impossible. This is one of the customs that everyone should learn, especially from a country that has a healthy eating routine such as Japan.

- **Appealing**

There is always some form of art within Japanese family meals. To be exact, it is very appealing to separate each meal as a one-person portion size. It can also boost the appetite of the consumer as it looks more delicious and well-organized. Japanese food always consists of different ingredients that have different colors, and the detailed attention that is given to the dishes brings out the arts and deliciousness that stay within the already nutritious meal. In addition, Japan's seasonal change also influenced the ingredients and theme of the meal this thought had been ideal in many families, schools, and restaurants.

2.4 Japan (Disadvantages)

- **Non-sharing mentality**

It is less common for Japanese to share what they eat with the other family members since it is already decided with portion control as a one-person meal. Sometimes, the mentality of sharing and eating meals with your family members is not necessary. It is also noticed that eating alone is more practiced in Japan rather than in Cambodia. Although family dynamics can be composed in many other ways, sharing meals with them can be one of the efficient ways to make the bond stronger.

- **Dissatisfaction**

When a portion size is controlled, it is difficult to satisfy the need and freedom of choosing what they eat. For example, when a picky eater is served ingredients that they do not like, they have no choice but to eat it or in another way, they can leave it which will result in food waste. In Japanese culture, it is rude to have leftovers because it is a sign of disrespect toward the people who cooked for them. That is why many people have to force themselves to finish everything that had been served on the plate. This had become a sense of responsibility for many Japanese people.

- **Time insufficient**

Effort and time are one of the core factors that cause into making Japanese food. Every home meal is very delicatied and time-consuming. "Teishoku" also known as set meals is a component of many dishes that take up much more time than normal meals. Even if it

is pleasant to have the privilege of enjoying a variety of dishes during a family meal it is also a trouble to do the preparation and cleaning

3. Conclusion

All eating cultures around the world are treasured in many ways, not so different from each other Japanese and Cambodian eating habits portray the culture that represents most of the daily activities among the people. This article shows the traits of both countries and also a comparison of how the two countries from the same continent can be so different from one another. Both good and flaws can be seen in every country, though it is fruitful to deeply analyze and understand this study, it is also fascinating to learn and adapt from each other especially, in this modern and diverse society where continuous improvement and adaptability are emphasized. It is like an eye-opening experience to be conscious of the Japanese and so are the Cambodians' eating cultures and habits leading to a future of better acknowledgement between both countries.

Reference:

Picture 1: <https://shorturl.at/jqTJT>

Picture 2: <https://shorturl.at/E9LBp>

Picture 4: <https://shorturl.at/u9rd9>