

History of ethnic foods in the US

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A review paper in the January 2014 issue of *Comprehensive Reviews in Food Science and Food Safety* published by the Institute of Food Technologists (IFT) reveals some interesting statistics about the history of the following popular ethnic foods in the United States.

Mexican

- In 1930s, Mexican immigrants were a small minority and Mexican cuisine was a minority's [food](#)
- Today, it is the largest segment of the ethnic foods market in the U.S.
- Ground beef tacos, enchiladas, burritos, tostadas and beans are popular Mexican foods among non-Hispanic Americans
- Chili powder was first imported from Mexico to San Antonio, Texas in 1943
- There are about 7,102 Mexican restaurants across the country

Italian

- The number of Italian restaurants in the 10 most popular cities is around 16,783; this number is higher than Mexican and Chinese
- Around 10,000 Italian restaurants were established in New York City by the 1930's, and most of these restaurants were simple and undecorated
- Italian dishes became popular in the U.S. after the 1970s

Chinese

- There are more than 43 thousand Chinese restaurants in the U.S.—more than any other domestic fast food restaurant
- U.S. Chinese cuisine differs from the original because "Americanized" Chinese food is usually less spicy than the authentic recipes, has higher levels of monosodium glutamate (MSG) to enhance flavor and involves more deep frying
- The first Chinese restaurant opened in San Francisco in 1849

Japanese

- There are approximately 9,000 Japanese restaurants in the United States
- Sushi bars began to appear in 1957
- Entrepreneurial chefs contributed to the popularization of sushi in Los Angeles
- Japanese food became much more popular in the early 1980s

Comprehensive Reviews in Food Science and Food Safety will publish soon.

Provided by Institute of Food Technologists

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