

# Food Culture: Theory and Practice in Nepal

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## ABSTRACT

Food is the core sub-field of anthropology and the basic element of material culture, human behavior, and socio-cultural life. It occupied a central position in the discipline of anthropology from its inception periods to now. Anthropologists like Malinowski, Boas, Levi-Strauss, Barth, etc. view food and foodways as the major tools to understand individual and ethnic cultures, globalism, and societies, especially when they are positioned in the context of global and historical flows and connections. Food is an important indicator of social differentiation, boundaries between social groups, social hierarchy, and power relations among the people of the society. Nepal is rich in natural beauty as well as ecological and cultural diversities which have 125 caste/ ethnic groups (CBS, 2011) and having diverse food habits and culinary practices. This article mainly concerns the theoretical aspects of the anthropology of food with special reference to the Nepalese culture, society, and the people.

**Keywords:** Culinary practices, Identity, Cultural boundary, Hierarchy, Cuisine.

## Introduction:

The cultural practice that comprises a set of individual and communal attitudes, practices, and habits concerning social behavior including food habits is the food culture. Raw food materials, preparation of food, table manner, eating tools and techniques, belief in food, norms, and values on food, etc. are the major aspects of food culture. It can be defined as distinct habits and consumer patterns with food, which have established themselves over generations, as such, they form the entire tradition and often vary from region to region and from village to village. (Furst, 1988). The anthropological study of food is distinguished from other disciplines in that, its focus on food within a cultural and often cross-cultural situation. Anthropologists study human culture and human adaptation processes across space and time; this includes the study of their life process, environment, dress, and food habits. Subfields of the anthropological study of food include the various food-related activities like hunting-gathering, growing, storage, distribution, preparation, display, serving, and disposal. The anthropological study of food within a cultural system includes economy, inequality, gender, status, food gathering activities, and food as a symbol (encyclopedia.com). So, this article presents theoretical and conceptual frameworks about food

culture, assessing the idea that such a notion offers a common basis for researchers in the social sciences, anthropology of Food as a sub-field of anthropology.

## Objective and Method:

The overall objective of this paper is to study food culture from an anthropological perspective. The specific objective is to describe the concept and theories of anthropology of food and discuss some food cultures of Nepal. Regarding the above-mentioned objectives, the descriptive method is applied in this paper. The data used in the article is mainly qualitative which are collected from secondary sources. Some of the secondary sources like a textbook of anthropology, journal articles are written by national and international academicians as well as other websites also used for this article.

## Anthropology of Food: Global Context:

Archaeologists are interested in the diet or subsistence pattern of people. Meanwhile, seasonal patterns of the movement of indigenous people are often linked to subsistence regimes and archaeologists frequently study the overall settlement as well as subsistence pattern. Other prominent topics of the study related to food are the origins of farming, the process of plant and animal domestication, and the

study of foodways. Faunal and paleo-ethnobotanical analysis can determine diet as well as hunting-gathering and butchering practices, food preparation techniques, the identity of preferred foods, the seasonality of site occupation and diet items, and animals/plants domestication. The adage “you are what you eat” is correct in that what we consume shapes our bones, blood, and other organs, leaving chemical imprints behind. (encyclopedia.com, 2021). Human bones replicate the general health and nutrition of the individual and may be chemically analyzed to reveal diet through isotopic (heavy element) or chemical signatures (Tierney & Tierney, 2012). Anthropologists study food because of its essentiality to human existence and have proved valuable for debating and advancing the anthropological theory (Minz & Du Bois, 2002). Several studies have reported that food habits have connections with social, cultural, and ritual practices. Food research has focused on more ritual beliefs, their social connection, and human civilization. Anthropologists have also shown how food solidifies (ethnic, racial, national, class, & gender) group membership; and sets these groups apart. Although it is not a new topic and culinary cultures have been already described in the earliest anthropological articles, food was usually treated as a means enabling scholars to examine some other features of the society and cultural groups, not as a central idea (Siewicz, 2011).

Anthropologists have long been interested in the food and food practices of human beings. Since the first volume of *American Anthropologist* (1888), Garrick Mallery published an article on the topic of Manners and meals, in which he first time mentioned the food culture (Minz & Du Bios, 2002). Subsequent notable research included Cushing on Zuni bread (1920), Boas on Kwakiutl salmon recipes (1921), and Goody’s *Cooking, Cuisine, and Classmark* (1982) were turning points in the study of food culture. Similarly, Richards (1939), Ikpe (1994), and Anigbo (1987) have provided a broad overview of all aspects of food in one society/culture (Cited in Minz & Du Bios, 2002). Since the period of 1950s, the anthropology of food became a concrete subject and from the period of 1980s, it had become a genuine sub-field of anthropology,

along with kinship, political anthropology, economic anthropology, linguistics, etc. Research in the period 1980s and 1990s have focused on food to illuminate broad societal & cultural processes, to refine the theories of the relationship between cultural and biological enlargement. Other researchers have particularly studied the relationships between food supplies and seasonal rituals of conflict and comparative cross-cultural research (Harriman, 2016). Since most of the books of the 1980s have been dealing with a single commodity like potato, tomato, saffron, banana, maize, rice, sucrose, guinea pig, capsicum, marzipan, chocolate, capsicum, cassava, etc. for the study of food culture. Food culture has become a key notion in the European social sciences since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It occupied the central theme in different disciplines and subjects. In that period, sociologists & anthropologists considered food as a total social and cultural fact (Mauss, 1966). Similarly, historians have broadened it by connecting to an accumulation of layers and ruptures in history and geographers have claimed that food is a system of identity distinction based on distance and interconnectedness ( Fumey, Jackson & Raffard, 2016). So, food culture has been a very broad notion and studied in many disciplines like anthropology, sociology, culture, peasantry, etc. from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to now.

#### **Theory of Food Culture:**

This theory refers to the practices, attitudes, and beliefs as well as the networks, associations, and institutions adjoining the production, distribution, and consumption of food (Well essentials, 2020). It encompasses the concepts of foodways, cuisine, and food system and it includes the fundamental understanding of a group about food, historical and current conditions shaping that group’s relationship to food, and the ways the group uses food to express identity, community, values, status, power, artistry and creativity. Specifically, an individual’s food culture is observed in his/her choice of food, taste and serving, and eating habits. Anthropologist Barthes (1964), describes the food as a sign, communicating something in addition to itself, perhaps the social values of diverse communities. Other scholars like Lévi-Strauss (1983) and Douglas (1971), mentioned that food is observed

to the same practices as language because it is a code that can express patterns of social connections and interrelationship. Similarly, Jacobsen (2004), illustrates the connected value of food as fuel for the body, and grazing comes to mind. He describes three dominant frames of food i.e. food as nature, food as a commodity, and food as a culture.

Similarly, every single anthropologist studied the classical theories of Malinowski, Evans-Pritchard, and Levi-Strauss and discussed the methods used by them. But it's probably because we've never tried to perceive it through the prism of culinary culture, as Barthes wrote, even or perhaps especially to the scholar, the subject of food connotes triviality or guilt (Barth, 1999/1961). However, Barth's opinion was presented in an article written in the early sixties, and since then a lot has changed in the concept of food. The classical mind vs. body dichotomy is being overcome and a new discipline appears. Major classical anthropologists studied the food culture and gave their views. Malinowski described the food chain, which has a history as long as human civilization, as a foundation of human life (Siewicz, 2011). His idea of food habits is connected with our daily life activities such as gardening, farming, hunting, and gathering of wild animals and wild food as well as eating habits of the communities. Similarly, another anthropologist E. Prichard tries to take us back to the earlier civilization of the human race. He connects food production, food habit, and civilization to the social class based on various factors like economy and social development (Resolute Reader, 2012). Anthropologist Mary Douglas was one of the first semiotic engagements with the meal. In *Deciphering a Meal* (1966), she begins by addressing the meal as code. Alternately, it could be seen as an object, symbol, currency, language, etc. According to her, if food is treated as a code, the messages it encodes will be found in the pattern of social relations being expressed. Similarly, Le'vi-Strauss (1969), has constructed his culinary triangle to show the connection between culture and nature in human thought. After analyzing various cooking techniques he concluded that seeing the difference between the raw and the cooked is a reflection of the nature/culture opposition and is a universal feature of human thinking. Modern

anthropologists studied it in the form of foodways of particular peoples and regions; the dynamics of various food systems; the cultural effects of ancient foodways; the ethno history of specific commodities; food-habit formation and change; the socio-cultural effects of food shortage; food-related beliefs, rites, and symbols; eating habits and etiquettes; and systems of food classification and meal structure. Hence, anthropology of food concerns the multiple aspects of human life, human behavior, social class, ethnicity as well as gender issues of the society.

### **Food Variation in Different Types of People of Nepal**

In Nepal, there are 125 castes/ethnic and 123 linguistic groups reported in the census 2011. Among them, Chhetri is the largest caste/ethnic groups having 16.6% of the total population followed by Brahman-Hill - 12.2% , Magar - 7.1%, Tharu - 6.6%, Tamang - 5.8%, Newar - 5% , Kami - 4.8%, Muslim - 4.4%, Yadav - 4% and Rai - 2.3% (CBS, 2011). These are Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, Kirat, and other castes/ethnic groups of people. In the classification of nationalities, there has been controversial because of their language, body structure, caste, ethnicity, dress, food habits, and geographical locations. There are three schools of thought for the classification of Nepalese people. The first school of thought divides the people into two broad categories i.e. Aryans and Mongols. But, these are the human races and not nationalities as well as opposite types of food habits. The second division puts people in two baskets like Tagadhari (those who wear Hindu sacred thread or upper-caste Hindus and do not consume meat and liquor) and Matwali (those who consume liquor). Similarly, the third school of thought divides the people into two groups i.e. Pahade (people who reside in the hills) and Madhesi (those who reside in the southern plains or Terai region).

Another type of classification suggests that in Nepal there are Khas (Brahman, Chhetri, Dashnami, etc.), Kirat (Limbu, Yakha, Rai, Hayu, and Sunuwar), Langhali (Magar, Thami, Chepang, Lapche, Kusunda, and Raji), Tangan (Newar, Tamang, Gurung, and Tharu), Himalis and Tarayalis (Pokharel, 2013). Similarly, Tony Hagen has divided the Nepalese people based on their origin into two categories i.e. Tibetan origin Nepali and Indian origin Nepali. He

has again divided the groups into two subgroups each. The first sub-group of Tibetan origin has been divided into two more groups like the Tibetan group (Bhote, Sherpa, and Thakali) and the indigenous Nepalese group (Newar, Tamang, Gurung, Magar, Sunuwar, Rai, Limbu, Budha, Ruka, Tharu). The Indian origin group has been, again, sub-divided into two groups i.e. Nepalese group (Bahun, Chhetri, Khas, Thakuri) and the Indian group (Gadhawali, Kumai, and other Indians in the narrow sense) (Hagen, 1969). According to him, the term Indians in the narrow sense means other people of the Terai region. Another historian Janak Lal Sharma has said that there are the descendants of six groups of people in Nepal. They are Negritos, Austro-Asian, Mangolkirat, Dravidian, Brityamunda, and Aryans or Nordic. (Sharma, 1992). According to Bhattachan (2000), Nepalese people belong to four racial groups: Caucasian, Mongoloid, Dravidian, and Proto-Australoid. He further mentioned that the Terai castes like Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and untouchables groups (Sudra), Hill castes such as Bahun, Chhetri, Dalit, and Muslims belong to the Caucasian race. Likewise, 61 indigenous nationalities or ethnic or tribal groups belong to the Mongoloid, Dravidian, and Proto-Australoid races. But the government of Nepal acknowledged only 59 ethnic groups as the major nationalities in the country. These all types of people have the varieties of food as well as some common foods. Some of the common foods are listed in the following points:

1. **Food prepared from grains:** Rice, wheat, maize, barley, chickpeas, millet, sorghum, flour, chino, kaguno, etc.
2. **Sweeteners:** Sugar, Mishri, Gudh, Khudo, Honey, Sugarcane, etc.
3. **Lubricants:** Nauni, ghee, cooking oil, etc.
4. **Food from Roots:** Potato, Tarul, Sakharkhand, Pindalu, Gittha Vyakur, etc.
5. **Protein or Body Building foods:** Pulses, Gedagudi & Chana, Meat, Mung, Rahar, Musuro, Bodi, Pea, Soybean, etc.
6. **Various Seed Foods:** Almonds, Okhar, Coconut, Cashew, Sesame, Laz, etc.

Similarly, most of the Nepali people commonly eat foods that protect the body (vitamins and minerals)

like Green leafy vegetables: Latte, Neuro, Peppermint, Spinach, Beetroot, Munta, Coriander, Cinnamon, Peanut greens, Mustard greens, Bethe, Fenugreek, Gundruk and Vegetables with fiber-like Saag (green plant), Ladyfinger, Khursani (Chili), Cauliflower, Bitter gourd, Persimmon Carotenoids, Folic Acid, etc. Hence, based on different caste and ethnic groups, there are varieties of food items as well as some of the common foods in Nepal.

### Food Practice in Nepal:

It is common that, most Nepali do not feel they have eaten a real meal unless it has included a sizable helping of rice. In Nepal, most of the people were having meals 3-4 times a day. The time of eating more or less same in Nepal like breakfast is 6-7 am, lunchtime 10-12 am, snacks 3-5 pm and dinner 7-9. Most residents eat a large rice meal twice a day, usually in midmorning and in the early evening. Rice generally is served with dal (a lentil dish) and Tarkari (a cooked vegetable). Often, the meal includes a pickle (*achar or chatani*) made of fruit like unrotten mango or vegetables like radish, tomato, potato, etc. In higher-altitude areas, where rice is scarce, the staple is Dhido (a thick mush made of corn or millet). In areas where wheat is plentiful, rice may be supplemented by flatbread (roti). Most families eat from individual plates while seated on the floor. Though some urbanites use Western utensils, it is more common to eat with their hands. Conventions regarding eating and drinking are tied to caste/ethnicity, class, and gender.

Orthodox high-caste Hindus (Tagadhari group) are strictly vegetarian and do not drink alcohol. Other castes and ethnic people (Matwali groups) may drink alcohol and eat meat like mutton, pork, chicken, etc. Traditionally, rules of caste also dictate who may eat with or accept food from whom. Members of the higher class and castes were particularly reluctant to eat food prepared by strangers. Mostly high caste Hindu people eat Bhat (rice) with dal (a lentil dish), Tarkari (a cooked vegetable), and Achar (pickle) and do not eat meat and do not drink alcohol. The food of high caste people (Brahmin, priest, pundit, high caste Newar, etc.) is determined by the religious text like Gita, Purans, Upanishad, Veds, etc. According

to Gita, there are three types of food: first, food which increases life, purity, strength, health, happiness, and joyfulness, which are spicy and oleaginous, substantial and agreeable, are dear to the Sattwic (pure) people (Gita, 17. 8); second, the foods that are bitter, sour, saline, excessively hot, pungent, dry and burning are liked by the Rajasic and are productive of pain, grief and disease (Gita 17. 9) and third, the food which is stale, tasteless, putrid, rotten and impure refuse, is the food liked by the Tamasic (Gita, 17.10). Gita further mentioned that from Sattwa (purity) arises wisdom or knowledge; from Rajas (passion) arises greed; and from Tamas (inertia) arises heedlessness, delusion, and ignorance (Gita, 14. 17) (Bhaghat Gita,

n.d.). They have some forbidden foods like millet, mas, meat, alcohol, garlic, leeks and onions, mushrooms, and (all plants) springing from impure (substances) are unfit to be eaten by Brahman (twice-born men) and purohit (Pandit). But Chhetri, Baishya, and Sudra of Hindu mostly eat meat and drink alcohol in their daily meal. Dietary habits vary depending on geographical and river-based regions such as the Kaligandaki, Koshi, Karnali, and Sudur Pachim, and sometimes it exists contradictory. According to various types of people, there is also a variety of food and culinary practices. The common food eaten by High caste Hindus is given in the table:

**Table no.-1****Nepalese High Caste Hindu People's Foods Based on Consumption Pattern**

Main food	Bhat, Daal, Roti, Aato, Puwa, Tarkari, Achaar
Side dish/savory dish	Dahi, Gundruk, Maseura, Sinki, Tama-Aalu, Titaura, Dudh, Gheu, Khir, Dhakani, Satu, etc.
Snack	Selroti, Phini roti, Anarasa, Jhiniya roti, Malpuri, Phaparko roti, Puri, Jeri.etc
Beverage	Dudh, Dahi, Mohi, Tadi, Lashi, etc
Sweets, confection	Chaku, Gud, Chakumari, Gundpak, Khajuri, Pustakari, , Sakhar, Selroti, Haluwa, Mithaiharu, etc

**Source: Field Study 2019**

Similarly, most of the indigenous people eat various foods with meat and alcohol and it is also different in Kathmandu valley and the Himali-Hilly-Terai region. Some of the common food of indigenous people is given in the following table:

**Table no.-2****Nepalese Indigenous Foods Based on Consumption Pattern**

Main food	Bagiya, Dhik(u)ri, Chiura, Chyakla, Dhindo, Golphuki, Hakuwa, Khatte, Penagolya, Sattu, Sigolya, Syabji
Side dish/savory dish	Dahi, Gundruk, Kinema, Maseura, Sidra, fish cake, Arikanchan, Bidia, Kachila, Kumbharauri, Sinamani, Sinki, Tama (Mesu), Titaudo
Snack	Adauri , Anarasa, Bagiya, Bara, Bari, Bhakka, Chakumari, Chatamari, Choyala, Dal-puri, Furaula, Kaliroti, Lakhamari, Malpuri, Murai, Puri, Selroti, Sukuti (meat, fish), Tilauri
Beverage	Chyang, Gheu chiya, Jand, Mahuwa raksi, Mohi, Raksi, Tadi, Tongba
Sweets, confection	Chaku, Chakumari, Dabbe, Galeue, Gundpak, Khajuri, Khurma, Perukiya, Pustakari, , Sakhar, Selroti, Yamari
Appetizer, condiment	Achar, Chuk, Tama (Mesu)
Starter	Khamir mana, Manapu, Murcha

**Source: Subba 2012**

Among the indigenous cuisine, Newari, Terai, and Tibetan are representative. Newari cuisine is an internationally more famous and most celebrated food variety in the country that consists of over 200 items. The Newars, who are the indigenous people of Kathmandu Valley, cater the best snacks in the country. Their cuisine features a lot of buffalo meat, however, their vegetable soup with potato and bamboo shoots is exceptional. They have a large variety of meat dishes using every part of what's available as the head, liver, intestine, lungs, etc. They are specially cooked during feasts but are popular dishes in little eateries where people go to drink and ask for these as snacks (Discover Nepal, 2021). It has different varieties of cuisine like Mo. Mo, Kwati, Wo, Chatamari, Chhoyala, Kachila, Yamri, Bara, etc. are the most popular ones.

Similarly, the Terai region which lies near to India and most prefers dishes are similar to Indian cuisine. There are mainly three indigenous food centers in the Terai region Maithali, Tharu, and Bhojpuri cuisine. The Maithali and Bhojpuri people love to consume sweet food items like Jalebi, Rasbari, Lalmohan, peda, and other sweet items. Tharu, indigenous people of the Terai make delicious food of Chichen and they are also known to make mouth-watering fish curry as they are keen fishermen and eat freshwater crab dishes, prawns, snails, and fish besides being farmers (NTB, 2021). Other most notable food items in Nepal are Tibetan cuisine like noodles, yak cheese, dumplings (Mo: Mo), Tibetan bread, goat and yak meat dishes, Sherpa stew, and so on. Flour milled from roasted barley, called tsampa is the staple food of the Himalayan region of Nepal (Shrestha, 2019). Tsampa, flour milled from barley is the staple food, and Sha Phaley (meat and cabbage in bread) is also eaten on a wide scale in this region (Nepal Sanctuary Treks, 2018). The Himalayan cuisine of Nepal is much influenced by Tibetan culture. Exquisite yak cheese of the Himalayan region is notably famous all over the country, and beyond. Butter tea and noodles are also often consumed in this region (NTB, 2021). Similarly, Magar, Gurung, Rai, Thakali, Kumal, etc. are other ethnic groups of the Hilly region who have separate food habits and culinary practices.

#### **Food Culture of Semi-nomadic and Nomadic People:**

Another group of people is foragers or nomadic and Semi-nomadic like Kusunda, Chepang,

Bankariya, and Raji who has been eating Bhat (Rice), Roti (Bread), Tarakri (Vegetable), Maasu (Meat) including forest food products. Nomadic people Raute collect wild yam (*Dioscorea* spp.) and other plants to substitute even cereal foods during the period of food insufficiency. On various occasions, they personified Yams in their drawings and made an analogy between the long spindly tubers and their tuni hair lengths, which look like a trailing Yam root. Besides yam, the other edible forest products collected by them consist of Sisnu (*Urtica dioica* L.), Niuro (*Diplazium* sp., *Dryopteris* sp.), Tama (*Dendrocalamus* sp.), Chyau (*Agaricus* sp.) and Jalugo (*Alocasia* sp.) (Gurung, 1995). Besides these, they also collected Githa, Vaccur, Katus, and other wild fruits for their daily food purpose.

Lack of productive land and other opportunities, they are mostly suffering from food deficit during the dry season. They have been dependent on forest food. Drum Sticks, *Dioscorea* (Githa, Vyakur), Pineapple, Banana, wild vegetables, honey, bamboo, Nigalo are short-term species that are provided by forest food products on an annual or seasonal basis to the forest-dependent Kusunda people. Similarly, Katahar (Jackfruit), Badahar (*Artocarpus Lakoocha*), Lapsi (*Choerospondias Axillaris*), Imli (*Tamarindus indica*), Chiuri (*Bassia Butyraceae*), Amla (*Phyllanthus Embica*), Jamun (*Eugenia jambolana*), Koiralo (*Bauhinia Purpurea*), Kafal (*Myrica Esculenta*), Timur (*Zanthoxylum Armatum*), Tejpat (*Cinnamomum tamala*), etc. are species that supply food products to them and supply in diverse season for a long-term period (Thapa, 2013). Tubers are consumed by them after boiling as a vegetable, or a snack, and as the main meal. Bulbils are also eaten as a vegetable. Tubers are used to cure worm infestation in the stomach. To complement vitamin-rich greens and fruits, foragers must obtain enough carbohydrates to fuel their energy-incentive activities. Women are especially adept at digging wild yams, their most calorie-rich food. In Nepali, yams are called Tarul with a modifier that describes different varieties: Ghar Tarul, for example, are house yams and are grown in the kitchen garden, while Ban Tarul are forest yams and are gathered from the forest glades. Ban Tarul was the main food of nomadic people while they were in the hunting-gathering stage. They dig various types of edible tubers belonging to

the genera *Arisaema*, *Cirsium*, *Cissampelos*, *Gonostegia*, and *Phoeni*.

In the case of forest food, each of the people has a different name, uses, and practices. The Chepang community has fifty-one names for tubers. Rautes and Banrajis distinguish a yam lower root area (Iwa), a branching segment (indalye), a stem near the bulb (Iwa-kui yuu), the spherical nodules (gha-tyu), and the stem segment above the bulb (narwaa). Nepal's forest foragers like Kusunda, Rautes, Bankariya, and Raji's know their tubers well, just as potato farmers in the Peruvian Andes know their potato varieties well. The yam is the major food in the world from Africa to New Guinea to Asia. According to Gyani Maya Sen, Ban Tarul is the source of income because it can be sold in the market. She sells the Ban Tarul in Ghorahi bazaar which she has collected from the jungle. Lila Bahadur Kusunda of Pyuthan described that Ban Tarul can be exchanged through other household materials and grains. It was the main food in their hunting-gathering period (Gwanwali, 2018). They eat what they grew. Therefore, according to their ability to produce food and cash crops on their lands, they grow paddy, wheat, maize, pulse, vegetable, and potato from nature they prepare the usual Bhat, Dall, Tarkari, and such dishes. Jad-rakshi (Homemade beer) and meat are very compulsory items. Meat is also an important food for them. Among them, Kusunda, Chepang, and Raji consume the meat of chicken, Kalij, Gohoro, and other wild animals while Raute also eats the meat of the monkey which is not common for others.

In the case of feeding habits, most Nepali people use their fingers to eat, and using spoons and forks is not common, especially when they are having 'Daal – Bhat – Tarkari' the staple Nepali diet. Using the right hand to eat and deal with food reflects someone's culture. The most common tradition in Nepal is Jutho, which interprets as "contaminated" and requires people not to touch others' food and drink with either their hands or their spoon. When drinking water or alcohol, for example, Nepali do not touch the bottle or glass with their mouth so that others can drink from the same bottle or glass, in turn, one after. Another custom is that the foot is ritually dirty and, therefore, stepping over food or pointing the soles of the feet is disrespectful. Don't eat off someone else's plate or offer anyone

food you have taken a bite out of. These are some common cultural practices regarding the food habits in Nepal but 125 ethnic groups have different food cultures and habits. These various food cultures will be future research areas in Nepal.

### Conclusion:

Understanding culture through food is an interesting process because once a person starts asking these questions, such as how something is made, what ingredients are in it, or why it is called a certain way, the answers obtained go beyond culinary learning. In these answers, food tells us something about a cultural approach to life. If a portion of food is more than the sum of the nutrients that compose it, and a diet is more than the sum of the foods that compose it, we can also say that culinary culture is more than the sum of the menus attributable to it: it also includes the entire set of eating habits and the unwritten rules that govern a person's relationship with food and the act of eating. Michael Pollan, in a recent work, expresses and emphasizes with these words the sociological dimension of food and eating (Stajcic, 2013). In the end, we can say that food functions symbolically as a communicative practice by which we create, manage and share meanings with others. Understanding culture, habits, rituals, and traditions can be explored through food and the way others perceive it.

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