



Street Food

Around the World

A delicious journey through the world's most famous street food scenes

■ B1 Reading ■ 30 min ■ Fun & Culture

Level	B1 (Intermediate)
Skill	Reading
Topic	Fun & Culture — World Street Food
Duration	30 minutes
Age Group	Teens & Adults

Learning Objectives

- ◆ Read and understand a text about street food cultures from four countries
- ◆ Learn 15 key vocabulary items related to food, cooking, and culture
- ◆ Use descriptive language to talk and write about food experiences
- ◆ Compare food cultures across different countries
- ◆ Write a descriptive paragraph about a personal food experience

1 Before You Read — Food Talk

Think about your experience with street food and discuss:

1. What is the most popular street food in your country? Have you tried it?
2. Do you prefer eating at restaurants or buying food from street vendors? Why?
3. If you could travel anywhere just to try the food, where would you go?

2 Reading: Eating on the Streets

Eating on the Streets: A Global Food Adventure

There is something magical about standing on a busy street corner in a foreign city, watching a **vendor** prepare your meal right in front of you. The sounds of sizzling oil, the smell of fresh spices, and the colourful displays of ingredients create an experience that no fancy restaurant can match. Street food is not just about eating — it is about culture, community, and the simple joy of sharing a meal with strangers.

Around the world, an estimated 2.5 billion people eat street food every single day. It is one of the oldest forms of food service, dating back to ancient Rome and China, where **merchants** sold cooked meals to workers and travellers. Today, street food has become a global **phenomenon**, celebrated by food lovers, tourists, and even professional chefs who draw **inspiration** from humble roadside stalls.

Mexico: The Birthplace of the Taco

No conversation about street food can begin without mentioning Mexico. Mexican streets are alive with the smell of grilled meat, fresh tortillas, and spicy salsa. The taco — a soft corn tortilla filled with meat, onions, coriander, and a squeeze of lime — is perhaps the world's most famous street food. But Mexico offers far more than tacos. Elote, or grilled corn on the cob covered in mayonnaise, chilli powder, and cheese, is a beloved afternoon snack.

What makes Mexican street food special is its deep connection to **tradition**. Many of the recipes have been passed down through generations, with each family adding their own secret touch. Eating a taco from a street stall in Mexico City is not just a meal — it is a taste of history that stretches back thousands of years.

Thailand: The Kitchen of the World

Thailand is often called the world's street food capital, and for good reason. In cities like Bangkok, almost every pavement is lined with **stalls** selling an incredible variety of dishes. Pad Thai — stir-fried rice noodles with prawns, eggs, peanuts, and bean sprouts — is the country's signature street dish and a favourite with tourists. But **locals** are more likely to be found eating som tam, a spicy green papaya salad that perfectly balances sweet, sour, salty, and hot flavours.

Thai street food is known for being extremely **affordable**. A filling meal often costs less than two euros, making it accessible to everyone from office workers to students. The speed is impressive too — a skilled vendor can prepare a plate of pad Thai in under three minutes. Many Thai people eat the majority of their meals on the street rather than cooking at home, which says everything about the quality and convenience of the food on offer.

Turkey: Where East Meets West

Turkish street food reflects the country's unique position between Europe and Asia, blending flavours and techniques from both continents. The doner kebab — thin slices of seasoned meat shaved from a rotating vertical spit and served in bread with salad and sauce — has become one of the most popular street foods in Europe, with kebab shops found in virtually every city from Berlin to London.

But Turkey's street food scene goes far beyond the kebab. Simit, a circular bread covered in sesame seeds, is the classic Turkish breakfast food. Balik ekmek — a grilled fish sandwich served from boats along the waterfront in Istanbul — is a must-try **delicacy**. And no visit to Turkey would be complete without trying lahmacun, a thin, crispy flatbread topped with minced meat, herbs, and a squeeze of lemon, often called "Turkish pizza" by visitors, although Turks would argue it is something far more **sophisticated** than that.

India: A Festival of Flavours

India's street food is as diverse as the country itself. Every region has its own **speciality**, and the flavours are bold, complex, and utterly unforgettable. In Mumbai, the undisputed king of street food is vada pav — a spicy deep-fried potato ball served in a soft bread roll with chutney. In Delhi, chaat — a broad category of **savoury** snacks made with crispy fried dough, yoghurt, chickpeas, and tangy tamarind sauce — is the go-to street treat.

Indian street food is also a masterclass in **vegetarian** cooking. Dishes like paneer tikka, samosas, and dosa prove that meat-free food can be just as exciting and satisfying as any meat dish. The sheer variety is staggering — you could spend a lifetime exploring India's street food and never try the same thing twice.

Why Street Food Matters

Street food is more than just a quick, cheap meal. It is a window into a country's soul. It tells you what **ingredients** grow locally, what spices people prefer, how families cook, and what communities gather around. It supports millions of small business owners and provides employment to people who might otherwise struggle to earn a living. In many countries, street food vendors are the backbone of the local **economy**.

Next time you travel, skip the international chain restaurants and head straight to the nearest street stall. Order something you have never tried before. Ask the vendor how it is made. Share a table with a stranger. You will not only discover incredible food — you will discover something about the place, its people, and perhaps even about yourself.

3 Key Vocabulary

Word / Phrase	Definition	Example Sentence
vendor	a person who sells food or goods, often outdoors or from a stall	The street vendor made fresh noodles right in front of us.
merchant	a person who buys and sells goods as a business	In ancient Rome, merchants sold cooked meals to workers.

Word / Phrase	Definition	Example Sentence
phenomenon	something remarkable or widely observed	Street food has become a global phenomenon in recent years.
inspiration	a feeling or idea that motivates you to create something	Many famous chefs find inspiration in simple street food dishes.
tradition	customs or beliefs passed down through generations	Mexican street food is deeply connected to tradition.
stall	a small open-fronted shop or stand where goods are sold	The night market had over 200 food stalls selling different dishes.
locals	people who live in a particular place	Ask the locals where the best street food is — they always know.
affordable	not expensive; reasonably priced	Thai street food is incredibly affordable — often less than two euros.
delicacy	a type of food considered special or particularly good	Grilled fish sandwich is a famous delicacy in Istanbul.
sophisticated	having a refined or complex quality	Lahmacun is more sophisticated than a simple pizza.
speciality	a product or dish that a place is particularly known for	Every region in India has its own street food speciality.
savoury	having a salty or spicy flavour rather than sweet	Chaat is a popular savoury snack found all over India.
vegetarian	not containing meat; relating to a diet without meat	Indian cuisine offers some of the world's best vegetarian dishes.
ingredients	the individual foods or substances used to make a dish	Fresh, local ingredients are the secret to great street food.
economy	the system of trade, industry, and money in a country	Street vendors play an important role in the local economy.

4

Useful Collocations

street vendor · food stall · night market · local cuisine · traditional recipe · grilled meat
 · fresh ingredients · signature dish · food lover · dining experience · spicy flavour ·
 street corner · deep-fried · local economy · comfort food · cultural heritage

5 Reading Comprehension

1. How many people eat street food every day worldwide?

- a) About 500 million
- b) About 1 billion
- c) About 2.5 billion ✓**
- d) About 5 billion

2. What makes Mexican street food special according to the text?

- a) It is the cheapest street food in the world
- b) Its deep connection to tradition and recipes passed down through generations ✓**
- c) It uses only organic ingredients
- d) It is endorsed by professional chefs worldwide

3. Why do many Thai people eat most of their meals on the street?

- a) Because cooking at home is illegal in some areas
- b) Because restaurants are too far from their homes
- c) Because street food is affordable, quick, and high quality ✓**
- d) Because Thai homes do not have kitchens

4. What do Turkish people think about calling lahmacun 'Turkish pizza'?

- a) They are proud of the comparison
- b) They would argue it is more sophisticated than pizza ✓**
- c) They agree that it is exactly the same as Italian pizza
- d) They find it insulting and refuse to discuss it

5. What does Indian street food prove about vegetarian cooking?

- a) That vegetarian food is always healthier than meat
- b) That vegetarian food is cheaper to produce
- c) That meat-free food can be just as exciting and satisfying ✓**
- d) That everyone in India is vegetarian

6. According to the text, why does street food 'matter'?

- a) Because it is the only affordable option in developing countries
- b) Because it is healthier than restaurant food
- c) Because it reflects culture, supports local businesses, and connects communities ✓**
- d) Because governments promote it as a tourism strategy

6 Vocabulary Exercise — Fill in the Blanks

Complete the sentences with the correct word from the box:

vendor · affordable · delicacy · ingredients · tradition · savoury · stall · speciality

1. The _____ at the corner has been selling tacos for over twenty years.
2. Thai street food is popular because it is delicious and very _____.
3. Balik ekmek is a famous _____ that visitors to Istanbul must try.
4. The best street food is made with fresh, local _____.
5. Making tamales at home is a family _____ that has continued for centuries.
6. I prefer _____ snacks like samosas rather than sweet desserts.
7. We bought our dinner from a small food _____ near the train station.
8. Vada pav is the _____ of Mumbai — you can find it on every street.

7 Answer Key

■ Vocabulary Exercise Answers

1. vendor
2. affordable
3. delicacy
4. ingredients
5. tradition
6. savoury
7. stall
8. speciality

8 Speaking & Writing Tasks

■ ■ Speaking Task: Discussion

Discuss these questions with a partner or your teacher:

- Which country's street food from the article would you most like to try? Why?
- What is the best street food experience you have ever had? Describe it.
- Some people say street food is unhealthy. Do you agree or disagree?
- How is the food culture in your country different from other countries you have visited?

■ Useful Phrases for Describing Food

- **It tastes** sweet / salty / spicy / sour / bitter / rich / creamy.
- **It is made with** fresh vegetables, local spices, and grilled meat.
- **The texture is** crispy / crunchy / soft / chewy / smooth.
- **What I love about it is** the combination of sweet and spicy flavours.
- **It reminds me of** something my grandmother used to make.

■ Writing Task: My Favourite Street Food

Write a paragraph (120–160 words) about this topic:

"Describe your favourite street food or a memorable food experience. Where were you? What did you eat? Why was it special?"

Use vocabulary and food description phrases from this lesson. Include sensory details — what it looked like, how it smelled, and how it tasted.