

B1 TEENS

The Food Nobody Talks About

Unusual food culture, open-mindedness and the first conditional

B1 Intermediate | Grammar | Reading | 40 min

★ Lesson Objectives

- ✓ Read about unusual and controversial foods from different cultures
- ✓ Learn vocabulary for food, taste, cultural attitudes and reactions
- ✓ Use the first conditional (if + present simple, will + base verb)
- ✓ Use unless, as long as, and when in conditional sentences
- ✓ Discuss food culture and open-mindedness
- ✓ Write about food traditions using the first conditional

1 Before You Read

▶ What is the most unusual food you have ever tried?

▶ Is there food in your country that foreigners find strange?

▶ Would you eat an insect if someone offered you one?

2 Reading: Eat It or Leave It

Words in this colour are key vocabulary -- definitions are in Section 3.

Eat It or Leave It

What counts as food depends entirely on where you grow up. A **dish** that one culture considers a **delicacy** might make someone from another culture feel physically sick. A food that seems perfectly normal to you might seem absolutely **disgusting** to a visitor. The truth is, almost nothing about food is **universal** -- except the fact that every culture believes its own food is the best.

Let's start with insects. If you live in Europe, the idea of eating a grasshopper probably makes your stomach turn. But if you grow up in Thailand, Mexico or parts of Africa, insects are a completely normal **source** of protein. In Thailand, street **vendors** sell fried crickets, silkworms and water bugs the same way that European vendors sell **roasted**

chestnuts. In Mexico, chapulines -- fried grasshoppers seasoned with lime and chilli -- are considered a **traditional** snack dating back to the Aztec empire. According to the United Nations, over two billion people worldwide eat insects regularly. If Western countries don't change their attitude, they will miss out on one of the most **sustainable** food sources on the planet. Insects require far less water, land and energy to produce than beef, and they are packed with **nutrients**.

Then there's the question of **fermented** food -- food that has been left to **decompose** in a controlled way. Cheese, yoghurt and bread are all technically fermented. But what about surstromming -- the Swedish fermented herring that smells so bad it is often opened outdoors? Or natto, the Japanese fermented soybeans with a slimy **texture** and a strong smell that many foreigners find **unbearable**? Millions of people enjoy these foods every day. If you visit Japan, your host will probably offer you natto. If you refuse, they might feel **offended**. But if you try it with an open mind, you might actually like it.

Some foods are **controversial** for reasons beyond taste. Durian fruit is so famous for its powerful smell that it has been banned from hotels and public transport in several countries. The fruit is actually sweet and creamy, but the smell is often described as a mixture of old socks and rotten onions. "If you hold your nose and take a bite, you'll probably love it," says food writer Mei Chen. "But if the smell reaches you first, your brain will tell you not to eat it. Our **perception** of food is mostly **psychological**."

Chen, who has documented unusual food **customs** in over fifty countries, says the key is to separate "different" from "disgusting." "Every culture has foods that outsiders think are strange. The British eat marmite. Americans eat peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, which most Europeans find **bizarre**. The French eat snails. The Koreans eat live octopus. If you only eat what your own culture tells you is normal, you will never understand the rest of the world."

Food anthropologist Dr. Rafael Santos agrees. "Food is one of the most important **markers** of cultural identity. If you want to truly understand a country, start by eating what the local people eat. Unless you're willing to be **open-minded**, you'll never experience the full richness of another culture. As long as the food is safe, there's no reason to say no."

So here's the challenge: if someone puts a plate of fried crickets, fermented beans or stinky cheese in front of you tomorrow, what will you do? Will you eat it or leave it?

3 Vocabulary

Word	Definition	Example
dish	a particular prepared food	" <i>This dish is popular in Thailand.</i> "
delicacy	rare, expensive or especially tasty food	" <i>Grasshoppers are a delicacy.</i> "
disgusting	extremely unpleasant	" <i>Some find insects disgusting.</i> "

Word	Definition	Example
sustainable	doesn't damage the environment	"Insects are sustainable."
nutrient	substance the body needs	"Packed with nutrients."
fermented	changed by bacteria/yeast	"Natto is fermented soybeans."
texture	how food feels in your mouth	"Slimy texture puts people off."
unbearable	too unpleasant to deal with	"The smell was unbearable."
offended	feeling hurt by something	"Host might feel offended."
controversial	causing disagreement	"Some foods are controversial."
perception	the way you think about something	"Perception of food is psychological."
custom	traditional way of behaving	"Food customs vary worldwide."
bizarre	very strange or unusual	"Europeans find PB&J; bizarre."
open-minded	willing to try new things	"Be open-minded about food."
vendor	person who sells things	"Street vendors sell crickets."
marker	sign that represents something	"Food is a marker of identity."

Collocations: street food • food source • open-minded • cultural identity • an acquired taste • try something new • packed with nutrients • make your stomach turn

4 Grammar: First Conditional

if + present simple, will + base verb: "If Western countries don't change, they will miss out."

if + present simple, might: "If you try it, you might like it."

unless = if not: "Unless you're open-minded, you'll never experience..."

as long as: "As long as the food is safe, there's no reason to say no."

Structure	If-clause	Result	Example
Basic	If + present simple	will + base verb	If it rains, I will stay.
Negative	If + don't	won't + base verb	If you don't try, you won't know.
Might	If + present simple	might + base verb	If you taste it, you might like it.
Unless	Unless + present	won't + base verb	Unless you try, you won't know.

Structure	If-clause	Result	Example
As long as	As long as + present	will + base verb	As long as it's safe, I will try.

⚠ Common Mistakes

~~If it will rain, I will stay home.~~ → If it rains, I will stay home. (no will in if-clause)

~~If you won't try, you won't know.~~ → If you don't try, you won't know.

~~Unless you don't hurry, you'll be late.~~ → Unless you hurry, you'll be late. (unless = if not already)

5 Match the Halves

#	If-clause	Result
1	If you visit Thailand,	you'll see insects as street food.
2	If you try natto,	you might actually like it.
3	Unless you are open-minded,	you'll miss amazing experiences.
4	If the food smells bad,	your brain will tell you not to eat.
5	As long as food is safe,	there's no reason not to try.
6	If you refuse food in Japan,	your host might feel offended.
7	If you hold your nose,	you won't taste the durian smell.
8	Unless you try new things,	you'll never discover new favourites.
9	If everyone eats more insects,	it will help the environment.
10	If you only eat what you know,	you'll never understand other cultures.

6 Comprehension Quiz

1. How many people eat insects regularly?

Answer: Over 2 billion

2. Why are insects sustainable?

Answer: Need less water, land and energy than beef

3. Mei Chen says food perception is...

Answer: Mostly psychological

4. Dr. Santos says to understand a country...

Answer: Eat what local people eat

5. 'If it rains, I will stay home.' If-clause tense?

Answer: Present simple

6. 'Unless you try' means...

Answer: If you don't try

7. '___ it's safe, I'll try it.' Best word?

Answer: As long as

8. Which is WRONG?

Answer: If it will rain, I will stay home.

7 Fill in the Blanks

Word Bank: visit • won't know • will miss • might like • don't try • is • refuse • will help

1. If you _____ Thailand, you will see insects.
2. If you _____ new food, you _____ what you're missing.
3. Unless you're open-minded, you _____ out.
4. If you try durian, you _____ it.
5. As long as the food _____ safe, try it.
6. If you _____ food in Japan, your host might feel offended.
7. If everyone eats more insects, it _____ the environment.

Answers: 1. visit • 2. don't try, won't know • 3. will miss • 4. might like • 5. is • 6. refuse • 7. will help

8 Speaking & Writing

◆ Discussion Questions

Would you eat fried insects? What if they were in a burger?

What's the strangest food from your country?

Should people be more open-minded about food?

'If everyone ate insects, we'd save the planet.' Agree?

Will globalisation make every country eat the same?

◆ **Example Dialogue**

A: Would you ever eat insects?

B: I don't think so. The idea is disgusting to me.

A: But if you try them, you might like them. They're crunchy, like crisps!

B: Unless they're disguised, I won't eat them. It's psychological.

A: As long as you're open to trying new things in general, that's what matters.

B: If someone offers me something unusual when I travel, I'll try to be brave.

✍ **Writing Task**

Write 100-150 words. Use at least 5 first conditional sentences:

Option A: Your country's food culture. What will a visitor experience?

Option B: The future of food. If population grows, what will change?

9 Food Challenge – The Game

Interactive game available online. Complete 10 first conditional food sentences!

#	Sentence	Answer
1	If you ___ Thailand, you'll see insects. (visit)	visit
2	If you don't try, you ___ what you're missing.	won't know
3	Unless you ___ open-minded, you'll miss out.	are
4	If everyone eats insects, it ___ the environment.	will help
5	If you ___ food in Japan, host feels offended.	refuse
6	As long as food ___ safe, try it!	is
7	You ___ know unless you try.	won't
8	If it ___ tomorrow, we'll eat inside.	rains
9	___ you hurry, you'll miss the festival.	Unless
10	If you hold your nose, you ___ taste the smell.	won't

10 Review Checklist

- ✓ I can understand a text about unusual food from different cultures
- ✓ I can use vocabulary for food, taste and cultural attitudes
- ✓ I can form the first conditional (if + present simple, will + base verb)
- ✓ I can use unless, as long as and when in conditionals
- ✓ I can discuss food culture and open-mindedness
- ✓ I can write about food traditions using the first conditional

Congratulations!

You have completed this lesson: The Food Nobody Talks About