

Food and Culture of Spain  
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### The Identity of Food

When I was little my mom used to read my sister and I a book called *chocolatina*. The main character did not have healthy eating habits. The villain in the story had a recurring line in the story “you are what you eat. As you can imagine from the title of the book, when Tina, the main character, was eating too much chocolate, she turned into a “Chocolatina”. That was one of my first exposures to food and identity. As we get older, there’s a lot of stigmas around different foods, especially fast food and junk food. People that witness you eating certain things may begin to make assumptions about your identity. As the text states in the chapter *The How, the Why, and the Wherewithal of Food is Culture*, “ways of eating revealed the personality and character of an individual.” When you’re young, you may not realize this, but as you get older you begin to realize your own food identity.

Realizing one's food identity also helps to understand which foods make oneself feel the best. Throughout my time in Spain, I have come to realize how different the normalities around the food culture are here versus in the United States. Although there are a wide variety of fast food restaurants in touristy areas, the locals value a more balanced diet when they eat out. Also, the fast food here is not nearly as toxic as the fast food in the United States. There are less chemicals used to produce the food and less additives within them.

Each restaurant is vastly different, serving dishes of different sizes, prices, and flavors, which gives each one their own unique identity. Due to this, when discussing certain restaurants with a group of people, there will always be some who like the restaurant and others that do not. This is because of the difference in people’s taste buds and likes and dislikes when it comes to cuisine. This also includes different cultures. In Barcelona, it took me a little while to get used to the difference in timing for eating meals. Because of this, I found restaurants I liked that were open at times I was ready to eat at, and these restaurants therefore became my favorites. Although I am now used to the new timing of meals, I still frequent these restaurants as I have become comfortable with the menu and the people. These restaurants have become a part of my own identity, as one can find me there very often.

The identity of a person with regard to cuisine can change, just as the identity of certain cuisines can change. For example, since arriving in Barcelona, I have begun to try a

variety of different foods that I have never tried before in the United States. This is mainly because they are more readily available to me and are popular within the culture here. Along with this, as I said before, I am now eating at different times and eating smaller portions than I would at home in the United States. I find it very interesting how quickly one's identity with food can change when they are trying to immerse themselves within a new culture.