

A photograph of a wooden crate filled with pink tissue paper. A single red apple is placed in the center, partially wrapped in white tissue paper. The title "Food for Today" is written in a yellow cursive font across the top of the image.

# *Food for Today*

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# Food for Today

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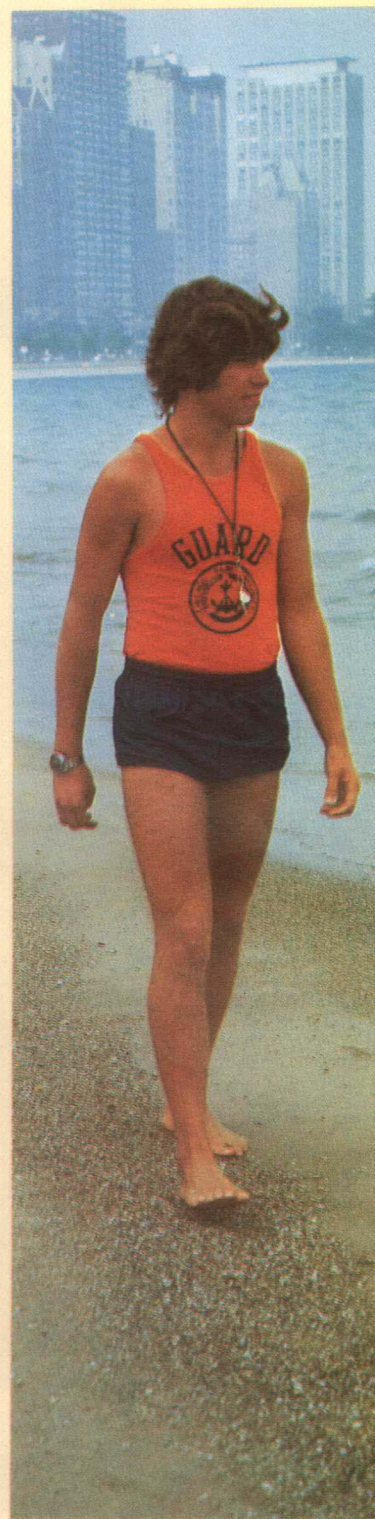
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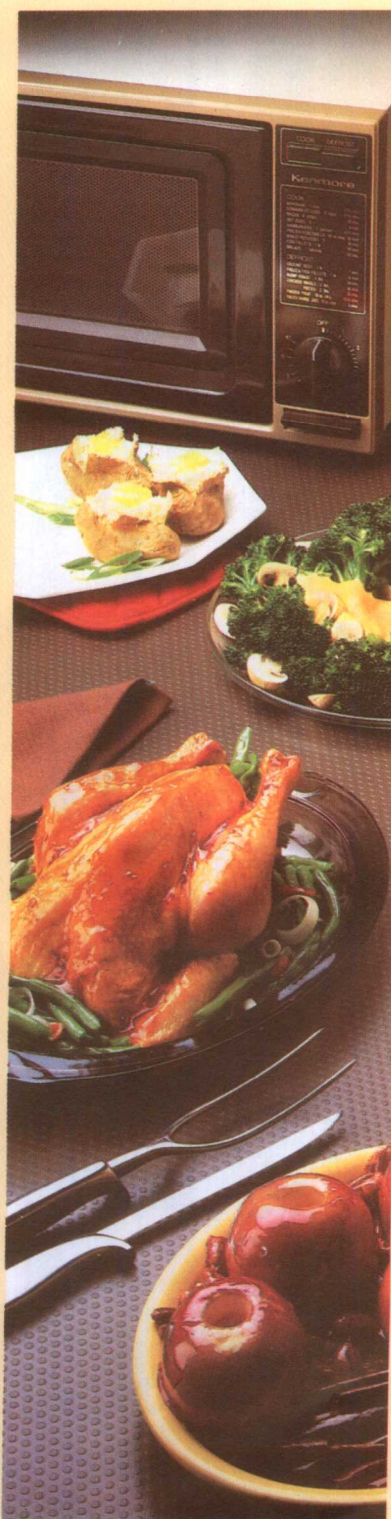
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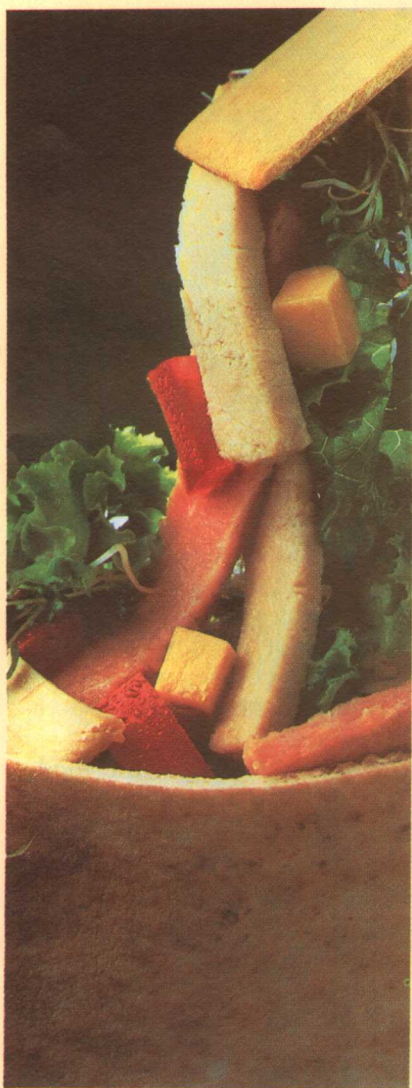
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## CHAPTER

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# C · H · A · P · T · E · R

## 1

### *Your Food Choices*

To help you to . . .

- Identify needs met by food.
- Describe the influences on food choices.
- Explain the reasons for differences in food customs among various cultures.
- Use management skills to make food choices.

#### **LOOK FOR THESE TERMS**

nutrients  
hunger  
starvation  
psychological health  
self-esteem  
resources  
management  
culture  
ethnic foods  
regional foods

Have you ever thought about why you eat? The question is not as silly as it may seem. Of course, you eat because you are hungry, but is that the only reason?

Why do you eat the foods you do? Perhaps you love Chinese food, but your best friend would rather have Mexican. Read on to discover some possible reasons—and some tips for making food choices that are right for you.



## FOOD IN YOUR LIFE

What foods have you eaten today? What did you order the last time you ate out? Why did you select those foods instead of others available? You might answer, “They sounded good,” or “I like them.” Although these are some of the more common reasons people give, there are others, too. Some of them may surprise you.

You probably are not aware of how your food choices have developed. However, the more you know about the factors that shape your eating habits, the better your choices will be. That’s important because the food you eat affects your emotional and physical well-being.

## WHAT DOES FOOD PROVIDE?

People around the world eat to meet some of their basic human needs. You probably think of food itself as a physical need. It is necessary for life. Food also helps people satisfy emotional needs and desires.

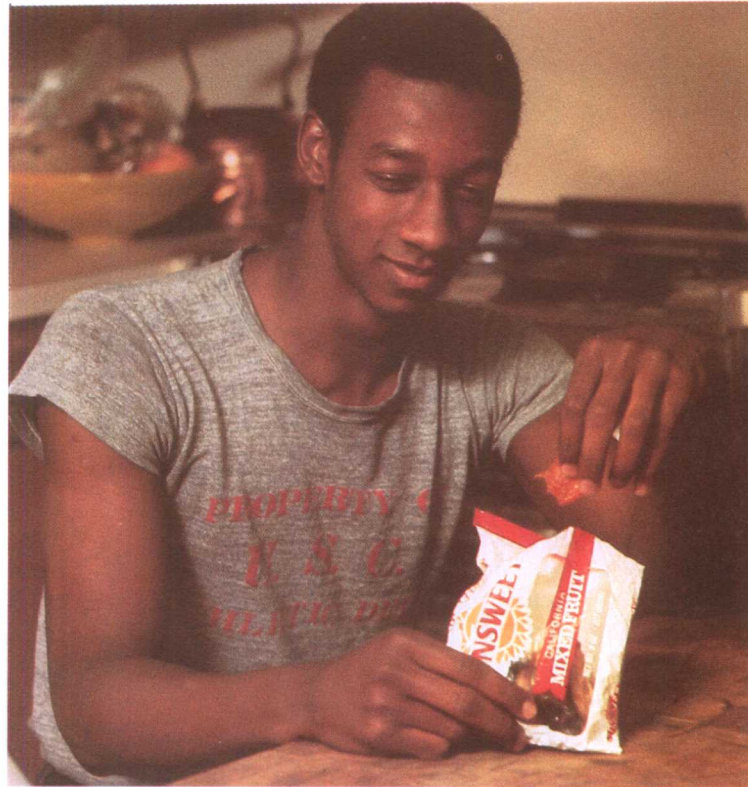
### Physical Health

Food is one of the basic necessities for survival. Food contains **nutrients** (NOO-tree-unts). These are chemicals the body must have to function, grow, repair itself, and create energy.

**Hunger** is the body’s need for food. In its extreme form, when people have little or no food for long periods of time and their lives are threatened, hunger is known as **starvation**.

To survive and be healthy, you need not only food, but the right food. Everyone needs a well-balanced diet to stay healthy. Some people also have special food needs. Do you know someone with an allergy or disease that requires avoiding certain foods?

Many people consciously try to make healthy food choices. Some, however, don’t know enough about nutrition or don’t want to change their poor eating habits. This book will help you learn how to make good choices about the food you eat.



■ Next time you want a snack, avoid the candy bars and have a sweet piece of fruit instead. The right eating practices will help you develop a well-balanced diet to stay healthy.

### Psychological Health

**Psychological health** means your mental and emotional well-being—your general outlook, ability to solve problems, and so on. Your body’s physical condition is closely related to your psychological health. For example, when you are tired, it’s hard to make an important decision. You may feel grouchy whenever you have a cold.

Because food affects your physical health, it also affects your psychological health. Students who come to school hungry, for instance, find it difficult to concentrate on their studies or take part in activities. School breakfast and lunch programs have helped thousands of students become healthier and better able to learn.



■ Why is it important for students to have lunch every day?

Food also affects your psychological health in other ways. It can help you fulfill some of your emotional needs and desires, such as security, enjoyment, and belonging.

### Security

To be secure means to feel safe and free from worry. When people have enough to eat, they feel more secure; but if it becomes difficult to obtain food, they become uneasy.

Have you heard about food shortages during World War II? Many food items, such as meat, were in short supply. Some people bought more than they needed. They were afraid shortages would get worse. Ration tickets had to be issued to help distribute available food fairly. Do you feel secure about food? Does everyone in your community? How would you rate food security worldwide?

### Enjoyment

The next time you look through a cookbook or consider the choices at a restaurant, think about all the different kinds of food people eat. Not only are many basic foods available, such as chicken and green beans, but they can be prepared and served in many ways. People use different cooking methods and combinations of foods to make thousands of different dishes.

If food was considered only as a source of nutrients, people would have invented only simple methods of preparation. But to most people, food is more than a necessity—it is a source of enjoyment.

Much of the enjoyment of food comes from the senses of taste, smell, sight, and touch. Your favorite food is probably the one that tastes the most delicious to you. The aroma of pizza hot from the oven can whet your appetite and make you look forward to eating. The sight of a colorful arrangement of fresh fruits and cheeses can have similar effect. Think about biting into the smooth skin of a crisp, juicy apple. Would you enjoy the apple as much without that texture? What about the temperature of steaming hot soup or a crisp, cold salad? All of these sensations help you take pleasure in eating food.

Physical sensations are not the only way food brings enjoyment. Many people use preparing and serving food as a way to develop their creativity. Being creative brings enjoyment not only to them, but to the people who share the end result. Creativity is also an important way for people to improve their **self-esteem**—the feeling that they are worthwhile, capable people. Some people entertain friends elegantly and turn ordinary recipes into artistic masterpieces. Others may develop a reputation for their homemade bread or enter cooking contests.

Have you ever eaten egg drop soup, roast goose, or hazelnut torte? Some people satisfy the spirit of adventure by exploring exotic foods. They enjoy trying as many new foods as possible. Others find a challenge in preparing foods that involve special skills, such as boning a chicken or making their own noodles.



■ Neither the food nor the garnish has to be elaborate to add an artistic touch to a meal. Notice how appealing the soups on the right look in comparison to the ones that were not garnished.

### Belonging

Having friends and relatives gives people a sense of belonging, of being accepted and valued by others. Food is important in helping people fulfill this need. Food can create a warm feeling of hospitality when people get together. In such a friendly atmosphere, people find it easier to socialize. Think of some of the gatherings you have been to in the past year—perhaps club meetings, family get-togethers, or parties. At how many of these did food play a part?

■ Food helps people meet basic physical needs, but it also gives them an opportunity to express other needs. What needs would these chicken party appetizers express?

## WHAT INFLUENCES YOUR FOOD CHOICES?

Now you know some of the basic needs and desires that are met by food. Why, then, doesn't everyone eat the same foods or prepare them in the same way?

Think about your own food choices. You may not realize it, but every day you make many decisions about food. What foods will you eat at your next meal? How much will you eat? Will you make the food yourself, have someone else make it, or eat out? Will you make the meal from scratch or just heat canned or frozen foods?

There are many reasons behind the choices you make. First of all, your decisions depend on the resources you have available. Your choices are also affected by social and cultural influences—your family and friends, advertising, and current food trends. Your emotions, lifestyle, and values affect how you weigh all of these influences to make your choices.



## Available Resources

**Resources** are the things that can help you meet your needs and goals. You have many resources for getting the food you need.

- **Food supply.** The foods available help determine what you can eat. Most people in the United States can visit a nearby supermarket and select from thousands of foods. You can buy strawberries in January. Fresh seafood is available in Kansas City. There are even fully prepared meals that need only be reheated.

Most of these choices are possible because of modern food processing, transportation, and storage methods. Such technology is not generally available in less developed countries. People must rely on foods grown locally. This severely limits the variety, quality, and amount of food.

- **Money.** Although many foods are available, some may not be affordable. Most families have a limited budget for food. They can't eat out as often as they would like, and must watch carefully for bargains at the grocery store.

- **Time.** Time is another important resource to consider. How much time do you have? How do you want to spend it? The answers can affect what and where you eat.
- **Knowledge and skills.** The information and abilities you have also affect food choices. The more you know about nutrition, cooking methods, and smart shopping, the better your choices will be.
- **Energy.** One kind of energy is the power that heats an oven or runs an electric mixer. Your personal energy is a resource, too. If you're like most people, you have more energy some days or some times of day than others. When would you be more willing to prepare a meal?
- **Imagination.** Have you ever felt stumped by the question, "What can I have for breakfast?" Your imagination is a resource that can help you answer that question. The more ideas you can think of, the more likely that you will find a good solution.

- **The type of land determines what kind of food is available locally.** Regions with large coastal areas generally have an abundant supply of seafood, and fleets of fishing boats are a common sight in village harbors. Mountains and hilly regions usually cannot be used for growing crops, so what type of foods might the people raise?





■ When saving money is important, plan your meal around less expensive foods that still supply necessary nutrients. What other resource is saved by cooking the vegetables with the fish?

- *Tools.* Tools can help you make the most of other resources. A tool can be as simple as a sharp knife that you use to slice open a pineapple. A microwave oven is a tool that can save time and energy.

A relatively new tool is the personal computer. Programs are available that can plan menus and analyze their nutrients. A computer can keep a food inventory, make up shopping lists, and maintain a file of recipes.

- *Other people.* Remember that family members, friends, and others may have resources to share. Have you ever traded recipes with someone? If so, you both increased your knowledge resources. People often share skills, tools, and energy by working together to prepare a meal. Books, magazines, newspapers, television, and radio are all ways for people to share information and ideas. What resources will you gain from others by taking this class?

■ Home economics students work with a home computer to plan well-balanced meals. What are three other ways a computer can help them plan their food choices?

### Managing Resources

Unless you are unusually lucky, you don't have an endless supply of money, time, and other resources. You can, however, make the most of the resources you do have. That's where management comes in. **Management** means using resources wisely to reach your goals. Every day you must manage your resources to make the best food choices.

One way to manage resources is to use ones that you have as substitutes for ones that are in short supply. For example, does every-

