

The World Food And Economic Crisis

To begin with, cooking is the act of preparing food for eating by the application of heat. It encompasses a vast range of methods, tools and combinations of ingredients to alter the flavor or digestibility of food. It is the general preparation process of selecting, measuring and combining of ingredients in an ordered procedure in an effort to achieve the desired result. Factors affecting the final outcome include the variability of ingredients, ambient conditions, tools, and the skill of the individual doing the actual cooking. The diversity of cooking worldwide is a reflection of the myriad nutritional, aesthetic, agricultural, economic, cultural, social and religious considerations that impact upon it. Asian food has an incredible range of flavors and styles. Asian food has become familiar in the Western world, with Asian restaurants on virtually every corner. Now it's easier than ever to bring that Asian flavor into your own kitchen, even if it's 9000 miles away from China. Also, the Mediterranean is a world unto its own when it comes to cuisine. From the oils, sauces and pastas of the Italians to the olives and complicated masterpieces of the Greeks to the exotic grains and intense flavors of the Moroccans, this region of the world covers a lot of ground. No pun intended. So let's begin our whirlwind tour of the tastes of the Mediterranean. On the other hand, no ethnic cuisine has penetrated American culture like Mexican food has. From fast food joints to truly authentic Mexican restaurants, it's everywhere. But few stop to think how Mexican cuisine originated from the blending of two cultures. During the Spanish conquests in the Americas, typical European food (rice, olive oil, beef and garlic) combined with native Aztec ingredients and became today's Mexican cuisine that we all know and love. However, Suddenly food has become too expensive. The shadow of "a new hunger" that has made food too expensive for millions is the result of a sudden and dramatic surge in food prices around the world. Rising prices for the world's crucial cereal crops and growing fears of scarcity are careening through international markets, creating turmoil. Rice is a staple food for half the world's population. But the sudden surge in prices and restrictions on exports come at a time when stockpiles of rice are at their lowest level in decades. Egypt decided to suspend rice exports for six months to meet domestic demand and to try to limit price increases. Egypt's move was matched by Vietnam, the world's second largest rice exporter after Thailand, which cut exports by 25 percent and ordered officials not to sign any more export contracts this year. In the Philippines, officials are raiding warehouses in Manila looking for unscrupulous traders hoarding rice, while in South Korea, panicked housewives recently stripped grocery-store shelves of food when the cost of ramen, an instant noodle made from wheat, suddenly rose. India and Cambodia also rushed to curb their exports in order to have enough supplies to feed their own people. At the moment, world rice inventories are said to stand at a mere 72 million metric tonnes about 17 percent of what the world consumes annually. Additionally, with crude oil soaring above US\$100 a barrel, higher fuel prices have driven up the cost of production and increased transportation costs for all foods. All together, millions of people in China and India have suddenly become relatively wealthy and are changing their eating habits, consuming more meat and chicken, which places a huge demand on cereal stocks. In China, per-capita meat consumption has increased 150% since the 1980s. But producing more meat requires more feed to raise more animals. Also influencing the food crisis is the move in North America and Europe to biofuel in an effort to ease global warming and reduce reliance on imported energy. Biofuel is any fuel that derives from biomass recently living organisms or their metabolic byproducts, such as manure from cows. It is a renewable energy source, unlike other natural resources such as petroleum, coal and nuclear fuels. Agricultural products specifically grown for use as biofuels include corn and soybeans, primarily in the United States, as well as flaxseed and rapeseed, primarily in Europe. Waste from industry, agriculture, forestry, and households can also be used to produce bioenergy; examples include straw, lumber, manure, sewage, garbage and food leftovers. Most biofuel is burned to release its stored chemical energy. The largest advantage of biofuel in comparison to most other fuel types is that the energy within the biomass can be stored for an indefinite time-period and without any danger. A surge in demand for biofuel has resulted in a sharp decline in agricultural land planted for food crops. About 16% of U.S. agricultural land formerly planted with soybeans and wheat is now growing corn for biofuel. Experts predict world food markets will be locked into an inflationary spiral for at least four years, but some say the crisis could linger for a decade or more.

About the Author

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