

## **Honoring Your Culture: Tradition, Family and Food**

By: Kate Walling

Culture is defined by many facets: art, religion, technology, politics, geography, social values, economics, and food. Each individual's experience of culture is dynamic and evolving. In order to preserve our cultures and traditions, we must record and preserve what has been passed down to us and what has enriched our life experience.

### **Remember Who You Are**

Our identities develop in the early stages of our lives but the culture we experience in our childhood may not be the same culture we live in later. Our perceptions, beliefs and lifestyles change with the times; we may even trade one culture for another if we live in another country or marry someone from a different background. It is important to develop a cohesive identity by combining the new traditions and culture of our current lives with those in which we were born. This harmonizing of who we are and who we were allows us to be whole.

### **The Nourishment of Culture through Food**

Culture is enhanced through the preservation of elements like art, dance, stories and social customs. One of the most important and universal elements of any culture is food and its preparation. World cultures define themselves not only by the recipes, flavors and ingredients they use to create meals, but also by food rituals associated with holidays, family traditions and celebrations such as birthdays or weddings. Recording recipes, secret ingredients and customs of traditional family meals is essential to preserving part of our culture that is deeply ingrained in who we are. Arsenio Cordova, musician, educator and historian states, "People without knowledge of their history [are] like a tree without roots." Preserving the elements of our individual cultures nourishes us as people, and in turn, we are able to nurture others.

### **Growth and Fusion**

The challenge every culture faces is adapting to the times while maintaining that which is meaningful. As our society becomes more and more technologically advanced, we see elements of various cultures being left behind. Even the landscape of the places we grew up in looks different. On the other hand, we can use technology to communicate with our families across great distances and to help us record and communicate our traditions more easily. We preserve the foods and recipes we experienced in childhood, while we add our own flavors to these traditions and merge cultures. Fusion cooking is a wonderful example of cultural blending. This trend begins with recorded and preserved original recipes.

Our cultural heritage is the foundation on which we establish our identity and build our lives and ultimately the lives of our descendants. This identity is whole and healthy when rooted in our culture and traditions. The foods we have loved from our childhood and the recipes handed down through our families are part of who we are and a way in which we can honor and preserve our own history for future generations. To learn more about how to preserve your family history through food, visit <http://www.TheSecretIngredients.com>.

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