

### 3-1: The Puffer Fish

Most people avoid eating dangerous foods. They don't want to get sick. However, there is one food that may be deadly, yet some people eat it on purpose. It's called the puffer fish.

This kind of fish, called *fugu* in Japanese, lives in the Pacific Ocean. Some people die every year from eating *fugu*. In fact, the Emperor of Japan is not allowed to touch it. Why? Well, the insides of the puffer fish are very poisonous. They contain a poison 275 times more powerful than the deadly poison cyanide.

Usually nothing bad happens when *fugu* is on the restaurant's menu. Customers feel great after the meal. That's because chefs are trained to remove the insides of the puffer fish before they give it to their customers. If they miss even a small amount, the fish is not safe to eat.

Puffer fish is very expensive. A plate of *fugu* costs more than \$200 in some restaurants in Tokyo. Besides being dangerous to eat, the fish is very ugly, with spines all over its body. Also, it can puff, or blow, itself up to double its normal size. Why do the Japanese risk so much for such an ugly and dangerous fish? Well, some people like taking risks. And *fugu* tast

### 3 – 2 Foods from Around the World

Foods that are well known to you may not be familiar to people from other countries. Tourists and other travelers almost always get to try some unfamiliar food. That is part of the fun of traveling. Here are four people's experiences with foreign food.

Shao Wong is a student in France. He comes from China. "I'd never tasted cheese or even milk before I came here. Cattle are rare in my part of China, so there are no dairy products. I drank some milk when I first arrived in France. I hated it! I tried cheese too, but I didn't like it. I love ice cream, though, and that's made from milk."

Birgit is from Sweden. She traveled to Australia on vacation. "I was in a restaurant that specialized in fish, and I heard some other customers order flake. So I ordered some, too, and it was delicious. Later, I found out that flake is an Australian term for shark. Now whenever I see a new food, I try it on purpose. You know why? I remember how much I enjoyed flake."

Chandra is a dentist in Texas. She is from India. "I'm frightened to try new foods because they might contain beef. I'm a Hindu, and my religion forbids me to eat meat from the cow. That's why I can't eat hamburgers or spaghetti with meatballs."

Nathan is from the United States. He taught for a year in China. "My friends gave me some 100-year-old eggs to eat. I didn't like their appearance at all. The eggs were green inside, but my friends said the color was normal. The Chinese put chemicals on fresh eggs. Then they bury them in the earth for three months. So the eggs weren't really very old. Even so, I didn't want to touch them."

Life in a new country can be scary, but it also can be fun. Would you eat a 100-year-old egg? Would you order shark in a restaurant?

### 3 – 3 Chocolate

We think of chocolate as something sweet. However, a long time ago, people thought of chocolate as something very bitter. For us, chocolate is a candy, but once it was a medicine. Today, chocolate can be a hot drink, a frozen dessert, or just a snack. Sometimes it's an ingredient in the main course of a meal. Mexicans make a hot chocolate sauce called mole and pour it over chicken. The Mexicans also eat chocolate with spices like chili peppers.

Chocolate is a product of the tropical cacao tree. Cacao beans taste so bitter that even the monkeys say "ugh!" and run away. The word *chocolate* comes from a Mayan word. The Mayas were an ancient people who once lived in México. They valued the cacao tree. Some of the Mayans used cacao beans for money, while others ground them to make a bitter drink.

When the Spaniards came to Mexico in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, they started drinking cacao, too. Because the drink was strong and bitter, they thought it was a medicine. When the Spaniards took the drink back to Europe, people discovered that sugar removed the bitter taste of cacao. Wealthy Spaniards heated the sweet drink and thought it was good for their health.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, an English company made the first solid block of sweetened chocolate. Now people could both drink and eat chocolate. Later, a Swiss company mixed milk and chocolate

together. People liked the taste of milk chocolate even better.

Besides the chocolate candy bar, one of the most popular American snacks is the chocolate-chip cookie. Favorite desserts are chocolate cream pie and, of course, an ice cream sundae with hot fudge sauce.

### 3-4 The Blue Revolution

The population of the world is increasing rapidly. By 2020, there could be 7.5 billion people on earth. Will there be enough food for all these people, or will we have a food shortage? Some scientists think fish farming could solve this problem. However, other scientists worry that fish farming could cause serious environmental problems.

Fish farming is not a new thing. There were fish farms in China 3,000 years ago. Today, about one-third of the fish we eat comes from fish farms.

Most fish farms raise plant-eating fish. Popular kinds of plant-eating fish are carp, tilapia, and catfish. Unfortunately, many fish farms are starting to raise meat-eating fish. A popular type of meat-eating fish is salmon. These meat-eating fish live on processed food made from wild fish. However, it takes up to 5 tons of wild fish to produce just 1 ton of farm-raised salmon. The supply of wild fish is already decreasing. Eventually, many types of wild fish could become extinct. What will we do then?

Critics of fish farming also say that farm-raised fish is unhealthy for humans. They say the fish contains dangerous chemicals. They also criticize fish farming because it pollutes the water. Another criticism is that farm-raised fish can spread diseases to wild fish.

Some people say that farming methods being used now won't produce enough fish anyway. Instead of putting fish farms in lakes or near the coast, they say that the fish farms should be moved far out into the ocean. Several countries are already experimenting with deep-ocean farms. In the future, fish farms might be large cages that move across the ocean.

Like most things, there is both a good and bad side to fish farming. Fish farming may help to feed millions of people. At the same time, however, fish farming may damage the environment.

### 3-5 Twenty-one Days Without Food

Why would someone decide to stop eating? We know that the body needs food in order to function well. However, many people fast at some time during their lives. Why is this?

Some people fast for political reasons. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, women in the United States weren't allowed to vote. In protest, many women went on fasts. They hoped that fasting would bring attention to this injustice. Mohandas Gandhi, the famous Indian leader, fasted 17 times during his life. For Gandhi, fasting was a powerful political tool. In 1943, he fasted to bring attention to his country's need for independence. For 21 days, he went without food. Another famous faster was Cesar Chavez. In the 1960s, he fasted for three weeks. Why? His goal was to bring attention to the terrible working conditions of farm workers in the United States.

Fasting is also a spiritual practice in many religions. Every year during the month of Ramadan, which is a religious holiday, Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset. Many Hindus fast on special occasions, as do some Christians and Buddhists.

Of course, not everyone fasts for political or religious reasons. Some people occasionally fast just because it makes them feel better. The American writer Mark Twain thought that fasting was the best medicine for common illnesses. Whenever he had a cold or a fever, he stopped eating completely. He said that this always made his cold or fever go away. Another American writer, Upton Sinclair, discovered fasting after years of overeating, indigestion, and headaches. His first fast lasted for 12 days. During this time, his headaches and stomachaches went away. Sinclair also said that fasting made him more alert and energetic.

Choosing to go without food can be very dangerous. However, that doesn't stop people from fasting for political, religious, or health reasons.