

English for Life in the UK

23 July 2020

Episode 27: Food in the UK

(Mark) Hello and welcome to episode 27 of the podcast ***English for Life in the U.K.*** This podcast is for intermediate-level learners of English and is produced by a group of volunteer teachers from the St. Augustine's Centre in Halifax, Yorkshire. Where we provide a range of support and advice to those in need and particularly to asylum seekers, refugees and migrants. The aim of this podcast is to help those of you wanting to improve your English and, at the same time, learn more about life in this country. We think that one of the most effective ways to learn any language is to listen to a number of native speakers, talking in a natural everyday way, about a range of subjects.

For regular listeners you may notice we have changed the format a little - from now on, most episodes will include a section based on the information in the official Government publication, "**Life in the UK - a Guide for New Residents**", which helps prepare people to take the test required to become a British citizen. Then we will have a discussion about this subject. Finally, we will include a short quiz in the same form as the questions used in the Citizenship Test.

You can find links to other episodes and to the transcripts - that is the written versions of these episodes - on our website : www.staugustinescentrehalifax.org.uk

Here you can also find more information about the Centre, other support that is available and for any of you who can afford it, how to make a donation to help keep our work going. Today's episode is brought to you by Christine, Sheena and Mark.

(Music)

(M) So today we're going to talk about food - ***Food in the UK*** - and I'm going to start with a piece which is directly from the official government book on living in the United Kingdom, which is where those of our listeners who want to become British citizens will have to pass a test, based on some of the things in here. And it lists a number of foods from different parts of the UK and these are the main ones:-

(3 minutes:14 seconds)

So it says Cornish pasties - is the first one. Now Cornwall is a county¹, down in the south west of England, and that's where this dish originates from and it's basically a pastry, containing meat and vegetables. And it was originally a meal for people working in the fields and the mines, and it was supposed to be something easy to hold and to eat while you were working.

The second one is Bakewell Tarts. Now Bakewell is a town in Derbyshire and that's where this tart comes from which is a pastry base, filled with jam and almond filling - so almond filling. Almonds are a type of nut.

(Christine) I like Bakewell Tart!

(M) Christine will be pleased to note the third one on the list is haggis.

(C) Oh!

(M) Haggis is from Scotland. It's a savoury dish containing sheeps' hearts, liver and lungs, mixed with onion, oatmeal, suet, spices and salt, all mixed with a stock and, traditionally, it was put inside an animal's stomach, though these days, I understand, that the ... that it's usually inside a kind of sausage casing, when that's used.

(4 minutes:51)

(C) Yes, and you can buy it in plastic, as well, Mark -

(M) Yes, you can. And then there's Welsh Cakes - which I am not sure I knew what a Welsh Cake is - anyway apparently, it's made of flour, spices and dried fruit. And it's cooked on a griddle - which is a kind of grill, isn't it? An iron grill of some sort.

(C) Yes, it's like a hot piece of metal - you can heat it underneath and it's flat on top.

(M) A hot piece of metal - yes, very good.

The next one is Lancashire Hot Pot: Lancashire, of course, is a county, quite close to us here in Yorkshire where we're recording this. That is, a traditionally, a lamb stew with sliced potatoes on the top.

And then, of course from Yorkshire, we have Yorkshire Pudding, which apparently dates back to 1737. There's a recipe book from that date which has Yorkshire pudding

¹ county: a local area usually responsible for local government in that area.

in it. And it's made from batter and is usually served with roast beef, although these days, is often served with all sorts of things and sometimes you get large Yorkshire puddings with sausages and various things inside them.

(C) Yes. You said it's made with batter, but I think we better explain what that is.

(M) Yes - well, go on.

(6:19)

(C) It's just a mixture flour and egg and milk, mixed up to be a creamy consistency.

(M) Yes. There's three more. The next one is soda bread which, apparently, is originally Irish and is a type of bread that uses something called bicarbonate of soda, rather than yeast, for making the bread.

And then we have Hot Cross Buns. These are a kind of small spiced bread containing fruit, with a cross on the top and it is traditionally associated with the Christian festival of Easter.

And finally, we have cheeses and there are a number of English cheeses - the ones listed in the book are Stilton, which I think is a kind of blue cheese, isn't it, Stilton? Cheddar - now Cheddar is an area again down in the south west of England where it originally comes from, although I think Cheddar is made in lots of parts of the UK, now. - Sorry, Christine?

(C) Sorry, to interrupt, - and all over the world.

(M) And all over the world. Yes. - And Caerphilly - which is a cheese, originally from Wales. But of course there are lots of other cheeses and here in Yorkshire we have some famous cheeses, including Wensleydale - which happens to be one of my favourite cheeses.

So that ... those are the main, British, UK traditional foods that are mentioned in the book. They go on to say that of course, the UK has a rich tradition of food from other cultures, as well as traditional British foods. And that most towns and cities, these days, will include restaurants with a wide range of dishes from for example, India, Thailand, China, Poland and Italy to name but a few.

So those are the ones that are listed I was wondering, first of all, would we add anything to that list in terms of what we would regard as traditional UK food?

Christine?

(C) Absolutely - I mean, the most popular and, traditionally, popular British dish is not mentioned - and that's fish and chips. You know, there are fish and chips shops in all the towns that you go to. Fish and chips.

(M) Yes - a surprising omission from the list, I agree. Do you want to say something about how the fish is cooked in traditional fish and chips?

(C) Well, exactly - it's cooked in batter and I mean you can make batter - you don't have to put eggs in batter - but it's flour with some kind of liquid mixed up, to coat the fish and then fried - (*in a*) big, deep fat fryer. Do you know i'm feeling hungry as we're talking about this.

(9:48)

(M) It's '**making your mouth water**'.

(C) Indeed.

(M) That's a good English expression. Sheena - would you add anything?

(Sheena) Well, I was thinking ... only about breakfast, first, and that's because it came from one of the other "*Life in the UK*" books I had - and that's the "Ulster Fry" - egg, bacon, sausage, maybe black or white pudding², mushrooms, tomatoes. I would never associate that with Ulster. I would always associate that with everywhere in the UK really, but what I find is - I think when I've been in Ireland - Southern Ireland - they call it an Irish breakfast. Here, when I have had such things, it's a full *English* breakfast. So I think everybody in the UK sometimes has that, not all the time, because it's very filling; maybe, if you're on a walking holiday, if you're having a special Sunday 'brunch'³. It's quite a large meal for breakfast.

² like a sausage containing pigs' blood and cereal

³ Brunch = a combination word "**br**-eakfast" and "**l-unch**" so a meal eaten late morning.

- (C) There are quite a few people who will fry something for breakfast. I know my brother-in-law will always start with, typically, a bacon sandwich, or a sausage and an egg - so not the whole "fry-up", but part of it.
- (M) So, I think before ... next, it might be useful to reflect on our own personal likes and dislikes and also, how our tastes have changed, in food that we eat and also how our tastes have changed, over time. So, Sheena, do you want to start us on that?
- (S) Yes. Yes. When I thought back about early memories of food, the food I remember first making myself, when I was a small child, was potato cakes, with my grandmother, who came from Ireland. So it was quite a traditional thing, I think. We made potato cakes all the time: I don't really remember baking or cooking much else. And then, after that, my main memories are of school dinners which I didn't get on too well with. I think at school we possibly had meat and two veg (*vegetables*) most days and then, you know, a pudding - which I think was, probably, too much for me to eat, at the time, and you weren't allowed to leave the table until you'd eaten it. So I think I struggled and I don't think it helped me, really, to like food too much.

(12:35)

As I got older I began to enjoy the food of friends and things - as well as food at home, maybe - but also friends, maybe from different cultures. So one of my friends was Polish, so I used to eat something that was called "beetke" (?spelling?), in Polish, at her house, but it's like *Wiener schnitzel*⁴ - I think it's very similar to that.

And then, when I went to college, I had friends who were from Asia, from Singapore, India, and we had curries. That their mothers' recipes ... their mothers had sent them to cook, so we made curries like their mothers made them. And Chinese friends as well. And then, more recently, the food I cook myself is generally food I've eaten at other people's houses or food I really like or I've eaten with friends on holiday and I replicate - cook - replicate those foods, because I've enjoyed the food, but also maybe the experience as well. So lots of soups and things recently.

- (M) Christine, what about you?

⁴ Veal (meat from a calf or young cattle) in breadcrumbs, originally from Austria.

(C) Well, I was brought up on a farm and so we had fresh food just there. You know, I went out - when we wanted a chicken for Sunday lunch - as a little child, I would go out and choose which chicken we were going to eat. You know, and I would go and collect the eggs. But we had typical meat and vegetables but the vegetables were all grown - either actually on the farm or in the garden or bought in a shop but tended to all be *locally* grown. I remember, I'm sure we didn't have peppers - you know, red or green peppers - when I was young, and we certainly didn't have aubergines or avocados - you know, those are commonplace now. We had carrots and cabbage - we didn't even have broccoli, we had cauliflower and that's changed.

But when I was 17, I went to France. I left school and went to work in France for six months and I was suddenly faced with this entire new world of food and it really opened up my eyes to different foods. I met all sorts of food, for the first time - and then, like you, Sheena, I met many people from many different cultures, when I went to university, and started eating all sorts of very interesting foods from all round the world.

(16:24)

I do remember my very first curry though - that was an experience. It was more exciting than going to a theme park⁵ - it was so exciting to have a curry - something that actually made your mouth hot. I'd never experienced that before - I think I was 12. We went to an Indian restaurant when we were visiting my aunt in London. Very surprising. Of course, now it's ... well, certainly, I won't go a week without a curry, that's for sure. What about you, Mark?

(M) Well - I again I had a very, I guess a traditional diet when I was growing up, in the 1950s (*nineteen fifties*) and '60s (*sixties*). My parents - well, my mother - (my father never cooked) - my mother would cook us a main meal every day which was nearly always meat and vegetables. That was it. And as you said, Christine, quite a limited range of vegetables: potatoes and carrots and cauliflower and not a lot else, to be honest, and quite repetitive, really, when I look back on it - it seems that way, anyway. Always a pudding and the pudding was always - usually - a fruit pie of some sort - always with custard. And I have retained my love of fruit pies with custard ever since.

⁵ theme park - an area of leisure activities and rides, like Disney World, for example.

And then, I too remember, but for me it was in my late teens, before I started trying other kinds of dishes from other parts of the world. I remember going to a Chinese restaurant for the first time with some friends and then not long afterwards, an Indian restaurant for the first time, and just being amazed at the different tastes and flavours that there were. And also I was starting to travel, during those years, as well, so I was experiencing food from other countries, as I travelled. And these days my ... sad to say, I don't do very much cooking. Janice, my wife, does most of the cooking, when we do cook, but we quite often eat out, though not in the times of the lockdown, of course, and for real variety, there again, we would have a curry, virtually every week. We'd have some Italian food most weeks. We would have Chinese food, Thai food, so quite a variety of foods that we would have, these days.

(C) There are quite a lot of Middle Eastern restaurants now ...

(M) Yes.

(C) Certainly locally - and I believe all over. You know, traditionally they were called Turkish restaurants, but often not run by Turkish people and have a wider variety of Middle Eastern food.

(M) Yes - there are some restaurants like that, in Huddersfield, that we go to quite regularly as well.

(M) So Christine, I think you've got a recipe for us to finish up?

(C) Well, yes - when we were talking - when we were planning this - Sheena said ... well, we did talk about one of the traditional foods from Scotland as being 'shortbread' - or in a proper Scottish accent "*shortbreed*". Shortbread is a kind of biscuit and Sheena said, 'Ooh, I don't know how to make that' - so I thought I'd tell you and of course everybody else who's listening how to make shortbread: and it's really quite easy, very straightforward.

There are three different ingredients: flour, butter and sugar.

So, if you take one part sugar, two parts butter, three parts flour. So, for example,

50 grams of *caster* sugar, is best

100 grams of butter and

150 grams of plain flour.

(19:42)

What you need to do is - first of all - you need to grease a baking tray, or line it with paper whatever, and then you put the sugar, flour and butter into a bowl and rub it together with your fingers. It's a funny thing - just rub with your finger ends and gradually the butter and the flour and the sugar come together and really they start to look like crumbs, breadcrumbs - but when you've got that all rubbed together, you squeeze the mixture into a ball - and then that ball you roll out flat, with a rolling pin, so about ... you can make it different thicknesses - but I like it about a centimetre - a small centimetre: between half and one centimetre thick. And so you'd roll that out and then you'd cut it into shapes - you can get special biscuit cutters or if you want round ones, you can just use a mug or a glass. Or you can just put it into the tray and draw lines on it, to cut it, to have shapes - squares or finger-shaped biscuits. And then you put the biscuits into the baking tray and put the tray in the fridge, for 15 minutes.

(S) Aaah!

(C) That's very helpful - that improves - that improves the shortbread. And meanwhile, you could heat the oven to 180 degrees centigrade - that's about gas mark 4. And then you bake it for 15-20 minutes, until it looks golden. Take them out and then cool them on a wire tray and if you like - you can dust them with sugar. Sprinkle *caster* sugar on top, And there you have it - the secret to Scottish shortbread. I mean there are more complicated recipes - you can add as well as flour, they add cornflour, or other things but that straightforward recipe makes very good biscuits .

(M) That sounds lovely.

(C) It does - I shall go and make some now - as soon as we're finished. Really.

(Music)

(22:33)

(M) Language Support

In this part of the podcast, we look at some of the language used in this episode including grammar, vocabulary and phrases.

Towards the end of this episode, Christine gave us a recipe and in giving the recipe she used a particular form of the verbs. So she said, for example: *take one part sugar ... grease a baking tray ... put the flour ... rub it together ... roll out ... cut it ... put it into a tray ... bake it ... take them out ...* and that was the final one.

Now, those forms of the verb are called the **Imperative** - you don't need to know the name, but you do need to be able to recognise and use it. So the *imperative* is used when you are giving instructions - in this case, instructions about how to bake shortbread.

Another example of instructions would be when giving directions - you might say 'walk to the corner', 'turn right', 'cross the road',

And then this form is also used for orders or commands. So you might say 'go away', 'stop doing that', 'be careful'.

To form the **imperative** of the verb is very easy: you simply take the base form of the verb and use it without a subject. So, for example: the base of the verb "to go" is "go" and so the *imperative* is "go" as in "go away". So there is no subject - it's not 'I go' or 'you go' - it's just a command: "go away". Another example from the instructions: we said "walk to the corner", so that is the verb "to walk". We've simply taken the base, 'walk', used it without the subject, 'walk to the corner'. If you want to use a negative imperative - then you say "do not" or "don't". So, for example: '*don't go on the ice*', '*do not cross the road*'. So those are examples of the *Imperative* in use.

Also, I found a particular phrase used in this episode when I said all the talk about this food "**was making my mouth water**" - so, to make your mouth water, means you are looking forward to eating something, so if you hear somebody talking about food, or if you see some food, or particularly, if you smell some food, then you can say it's making my mouth water - that means: I'm really looking forward to eating this - I can

almost taste it, even though I haven't started eating it yet.. so that's making your mouth water.

(27:24)

Quiz Questions:

From now on, each week, we're going to end the episode with a short quiz based on the kind of questions that you get asked in the Citizenship test. So two questions for you, today:

The first one is - which two of the following are traditional British foods:

1. Strudel
2. Sushi
3. Welsh Cakes
4. Haggis

Give you a moment : and the answer to that is :

Welsh cakes and haggis are traditional British foods - the other two aren't.

And here's a second question for you: is the statement **true** or **false**?

Yorkshire Hot Pot is a traditional British dish.

Give you a moment, again - is that true or false?

The answer is false - because it mixes two traditional dishes - there are Yorkshire puddings and Lancashire hot pot - there is no such thing as a Yorkshire hot pot - not commonly known, anyway.

That's it for this week. I hope you found this slightly different format for the episode helpful. We'll be using this, certainly, for the next few episodes. So, take care of yourselves, and we look forward to joining you again soon. Goodbye.

(Music)

(29:50)

