

FOOD AND STUFF

Ok, so I'm supposed to be talking about food. Now, frankly, food is not the most exciting thing to talk about, unless you're crazy about cooking. Or eating. Anyway, I'm just going to say a few things about what kind of meals people like to eat in various parts of the English-speaking world and point out the differences as well as what they all have in common.

Basically, in the civilized world everyone eats the same kind of food. You get a piece of meat and something to go with it. This something is called a sidedish or garnish. Or is it dressing? Actually, dressing is what you put on a pizza, right? Whatever. So unless you're a vegetarian, that's pretty much what most of your hot meals look like: meat and stuff.

Speaking of vegetarians, more and more people are worried about what they eat and they try to find as much information as possible about what they should and shouldn't eat. Obviously, the media are happy to provide this information. So people put up lists of harmful ingredients on their kitchen walls and stick to organic food to feel better about themselves.

Now, this is all good and well, except scientists keep changing their minds about what you should eat and how much of it. Take eggs, for example. For decades, scientists warned us not to eat them. So a lot of people didn't. Then one day, it was like, Sorry, my bad, eggs are fine. It's potatoes that you should steer clear of. So a lot of people thought Screw this, I'm going to eat whatever my body tells me to eat. I'll eat five pounds of red meat every day if I feel like it. Which brings us back to meat.

The meat we eat comes from a variety of animals such as pigs, cattle, sheep or even deer. Each of these kinds of meat has a special name, let me just mention pork and beef, the two kinds that Czech people prefer. There are some animals, like dogs or horses, whose meat isn't routinely eaten in this part of the world. But at the same time people in other parts of the world don't mind killing and eating these animals and actually enjoy it. In the Muslim countries, people don't eat pigs for religious reasons. Yes, the same people who approve of cutting non-Muslim's throats would be horrified at the idea of eating a pig.

Meat can be prepared in many ways but because I hardly ever cook, I'd be hard pressed to really tell you what those ways are. I mean, I couldn't tell you in Czech, let alone in English. I do remember you can roast meat and you can probably grill it, too, but which one of these two involves putting the meat in the oven and which one has it lying on the pan, I honestly don't know.

Most countries have holidays during which everyone eats the same kind of food. Like, in the U.S. everyone eats turkey at Thanksgiving. In Czechia, the carp population plummets over Christmas time. There's lots of candy thrown around, too, which I find really over the top. I mean,

you've just finished a turkey that could easily wrestle you to the ground if it were half-alive and before you know it, a tray **covered in** candy lands in front of you. You eat some, **wash it down** with a beer **or two** and **sneak out to puke your guts out**. Then you **crawl back** and eat **some more**.

What I find most interesting is not so much the dinner meals or holiday traditions as the little things. Like in the movie Pulp Fiction **these** gangsters talk **about how** McDonald's in Europe is **nothing like** McDonald's in the U.S. **In fact**, it is **pretty much** the same, **except** the terminology is different and very **confusing** for poor American tourists. But **that's not what I was going to say**.

What I **had in mind** is **more like** what we eat for breakfast and how Americans eat something totally different. **For instance**, I can't imagine an American **spreading** butter on a roll in the morning. **Or ever**. A Czech person **arriving in** America for the first time is usually **appalled to** taste the famous peanut butter, especially when the thick brown **matter** is spread on pancakes and covered in liters of maple syrup poured **on top** of it. **Which is not to say** I didn't like it when I stayed in the U.S. **It's just that** some people, those with taste buds, **might wonder if** maybe it isn't **too much of a good thing** or something.

Now, continental breakfast is a term they use in the States for a special kind of breakfast. It sounds very **sophisticated, as if a whole** continent **put their heads together to come up with** this amazing breakfast. **In fact, it's what we call** cold breakfast, which usually **consists of** buttered rolls or other pastries I mentioned **earlier**. A croissant, if you prefer **fancy stuff**. A donut or a plateful of them, if you're Homer Simpson. **On** weekends people like to have a real breakfast, **the way** it should be, the way people dreamed they **would one day be having** breakfast. This would **likely include** bacon and eggs, or hash browns, I'm not really sure.

Anyway, one thing **that I think should** be imported from the United States **in terms of** meals is the all-you-can-eat **policy** some restaurants have. **After paying a fixed amount you're allowed to** eat as much as you can. **Although** I can see why Czech restaurants **have not taken to** the idea. I can already **picture** bags of food **being smuggled** out, friends hiding under tables, people secretly **switching** seats. Nah, this wouldn't **work**. In Czechia, **honesty** becomes the best policy only after multiple **attempts at dishonesty have failed**.

You're probably **expecting me to say a word or two** about Czech cuisine **as opposed to** British cuisine. By the way, **cuisine** is **such** a funny little word **though**, isn't it? Anyway, **in all fairness**, if you want a taste of Czech cuisine, **all you have to do is** go to a pub and order fried cheese with fried potatoes. Then when you're **visiting** a Czech family, any family, you **will be given** a plateful of dumplings with **stuff**. That's all you need to know about Czech cuisine. And it's good, **too**.

As far as British cuisine is **concerned, the less said** about it, **the better**.