

## Your Shortcut to... The Food That Changed The World

You can eat them for breakfast, lunch, dinner, and dessert... if you're in China, you'll have a long life if you slurp them ... and no, Marco Polo did NOT introduce them to Italy. This is your Squiz Kids Shortcut to Noodles—the podcast where we dive into the who, what, when, where, why and how of the big news stories. I'm Amanda Bower.

And I'm Bryce Corbett.

Bryce, you might be asking yourself... noodles? A big news story? Well... not exactly. But they're a big deal! Not only are they eaten on every continent... not only are they one of the world's most popular foods... but the types of noodles eaten in each place, and the history behind the dishes, tell us a lot about the culture that they come from. You know that saying, you are what you eat? We're going to learn a little more about some cultures by looking at their noodles.

We'll take you through WHY it is that we humans love noodles so much; WHERE in the world we can eat noodles; and—I think I'll be surprised by this one—WHEN we can eat them.

Listen carefully - there's a S'Quiz at the end!

Bryce, one of the reasons we love noodles is that they're one of the most inexpensive and common foods in the world... and they've been around a really, really long time.

How long are we talking?

Well, a few years back a team of archeologists—they're the people who study ancient human history by digging up sites and analysing what they find—found a bowl in China that contained 4,000-year-old noodle leftovers.

4,000 years! Those are some old noodles!

I'll say. They probably aren't delicious anymore, but all over the world, people love noodles for the fact that they fill you up; they can be combined with lots of different sauces and flavours; and they are pretty darn easy to cook.

Just stick them in some boiling water, right?

And if they're the two-minute variety, they're ready in a flash.

Love it. So WHERE in the world can we go to eat noodles?

Bryce, I love Spin the Globe on Squiz Kids Today, so I thought we'd do it on Shortcuts just this once, too! Let's see where we land, and whether we can eat noodles there.

(SOUND FX... Globe spin and sounds of Chinese music)

Ahhh... we've landed in China. Makes sense, if they've been eating noodles for over 4,000 years.

And there are hundreds of types of noodles in China, and thousands of ways of preparing them. China is a really big country—it's about 24% bigger than Australia, and has 1.4 BILLION more people than us! Each region has its own noodle specialties, and there are noodle dishes for special occasions, too. Yi Mein is a type of noodle made from wheat flour and eggs, and is known as "long noodles". They're common at Chinese New Year and birthday celebrations, and the cook will never cut or break them. If you can EAT them without biting through and breaking the noodle, it's considered good luck. Which means, Bryce, that it's probably okay to slurp those noodles... great news for those of us still working on our table manners!

That makes me think of the scene in the cartoon movie Lady and the Tramp, where the two dogs are slurping down the same long strand of spaghetti... hey, is spaghetti a noodle?

Let's give the globe a spin and see if we can get to Italy...

SOUND FX... US NATIONAL ANTHEM

Wait a second... I've got a huge plate of spaghetti and meatballs in front of me, but I'm not in Italy!

That's right! You're in America, because this is the place that spaghetti and meatballs was invented. About 4 million Italians moved to America between 1880 and 1920, and when they arrived, they went from having to spend three quarters of their money on food to stay alive, to just one quarter. With more money, they could afford more meat... and they invented meatballs. Here's another thing you might not know, Bryce... guess who helped to make spaghetti—which IS a kind of noodle—so popular in America?

Surely it was all those Italian immigrants?

Even before they arrived! Back in 1787, an American called Thomas Jefferson went to Italy and fell in love with pasta. He brought the first pasta machine back to the US, and when he became President in 1801, he often served pasta at White House dinners.

Imagine getting mac and cheese at the White House today!

Yeah, it's less fancy and unusual now, isn't it? Okay, let's spin again...

SOUND FX... THAI MUSIC

Oh, yum... is that what I think it is?

You betcha... one of Thailand's national dishes, pad thai. Because we're in a place where rice grows better than wheat, most noodles eaten in Thailand are made from rice. Rice noodles are also much more common in Vietnam, southern China, Burma, the Philippines... tropical places with lots of water where rice grows well.

And is pad thai a really old, traditional dish?

Depends what you mean by really old. Compared with those 4,000 year old noodles in China, pad thai has not been around long at ALL. It seems to have been invented around the 1940s by the Prime Minister of Thailand... there's a common theme here of heads of government being really into noodles!

Why did he invent a dish of stir friend noodles, veggies, egg, and peanuts? Not that I'm complaining...

Well, one theory goes that there was a rice shortage in Thailand, but rice noodles were seen as a Chinese food. So the PM created a new recipe, and then his government promoted it as a national dish.

Whether that's what really happened or not, I'm very glad it exists for me to eat! Let's spin that globe one more time.

SOUND FX... ITALY

Ah, finally... we made it to Italy. We can't stay for long, and we definitely won't be able to sample every kind of pasta... according to one book, there are 1,300 different names for different kinds of pasta here!

That would take a long time! Now, I've always heard that the Italian explorer Marco Polo went to China in the thirteenth century, and brought noodles back with him—that was how the whole Italian love affair with pasta began.

I got Squiz-E the newshound to help me check, Bryce, and it turns out that's a myth. The type of wheat that's used in Italian pasta, Durum, was introduced to Italy about four hundred years earlier by Arabs from Libya... the whole Marco Polo story was made up as a way to try to get people more interested in pasta in the United States. The history of pasta in Italy is tricky to trace, because it was seen as a food of the common, poor people who couldn't afford meat... and often it's the rich who write history. Pasta was a great food because it could be dried and last a really long time, and it went beautifully with the tomatoes and herbs that grow so well in Italy's climate.

Yummm... Amanda, my spinning hand is tired... I normally only have to do one each day! But if I could manage more, where else could we have landed and eaten noodles?

I'm pretty full, too... but we could have had ramen in Japan... or gone to Afghanistan and had thick noodles in a tomato-based broth with spices, chili, beef, loads of vegetables, and topped with yogurt.... lobster meat on a bed of spaghetti-like noodles in Greece... pho noodle soup in Vietnam... sopa criolla in Peru, which has meat, onion, garlic, chilli, tomato, egg, milk, and noodles so thin they're called "angel hair." I could keep going, but my stomach is hurting...

#### CLASSROOM RESOURCE NOISE

This week, we're going to get you working with geography and poetry. You'll look through some noodle recipes from all over the globe, place them a world map, and then write a crazy mixed up poem about a recipe that uses some unusual ingredients. It'll be fun.

What a shame we can only eat noodles for lunch and dinner... unless ....

Are you asking WHEN it's appropriate to eat noodles?

Well, Bryce, the answer is always! Noodles can be eaten for breakfast... in Hong Kong, Cantonese fried noodles are a typical brekkie. In Japan, you can slurp on breakfast udon noodles with a delicate broth and a seven-minute egg... mmmmm... and there are lots of recipes for ways to cook eggs and bacon with noodles, too!

Okay, breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Fantastic. But surely not dessert?

And why not? I found a blog on SBS food, which I'll pop in your episode notes, which is going to keep me busy in the kitchen for AGES. In Pakistan, during festivities for the Muslim celebration of Eid, they make something call Sheer Kurma, which is a rich, creamy dessert made with a thin type of rice noodle called Seviyan, nuts, dates, milk, and sugar. And then there was raspberry ramen white chocolate rocky road... a sweet Malaysian street snack called Cendol which is made with jelly noodles... the list goes on and on!

Well, now I'm hungry again. Where's that globe?

"This is the part of the podcast where you get to test how well you've been listening...

Question 1 In which country did archeologists find the remains of 4,000 year old noodles? "

Question 2 Where was the simple noodle dish of spaghetti and meatballs invented?

Question 3 Which dish was supposedly invented by the Thailand's prime minister?

That's all we have time for today. Thanks for joining us as we explored the who, what, how, where, when, and why of noodles.

Now get out there, and have a most excellent day!

Over and out.