

ESF-U7

Food Diet and Sustainability

Module 10

FOOD AND CULTURE



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(7.3) Social, cultural and ethical issues related to food

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Culture is a feature of all human activities.



Food is a fitting example of culture, with its different categories and meanings, its regularity and variations over time.

Humanity has transformed a primary need (that is food) into a multi-faceted reality with countless possibilities for transformation.

→ **Creolization:** from a social point of view, this term refers to the contamination and hybridization of different cultural forms that come from various populations.





The discovery of fire.



Fire is *“the invention that made humans human”* (Lévi-Strauss)

Cooking has marked the transition between nature and culture, because, while raw food is of natural origin, cooked food implies a transition to culture and society.





The omnivore's dilemma.



Omnivores can eat food of both animal and plant origin. This flexibility allowed by the absence of food specialization has enabled humans to colonize all of the earth's habitats

This flexibility, however, has posed constant challenges to mankind in recognizing the most suitable foods. This inherent difficulty of choice has been called the omnivore's dilemma (Rozin & Fallon, 1987).





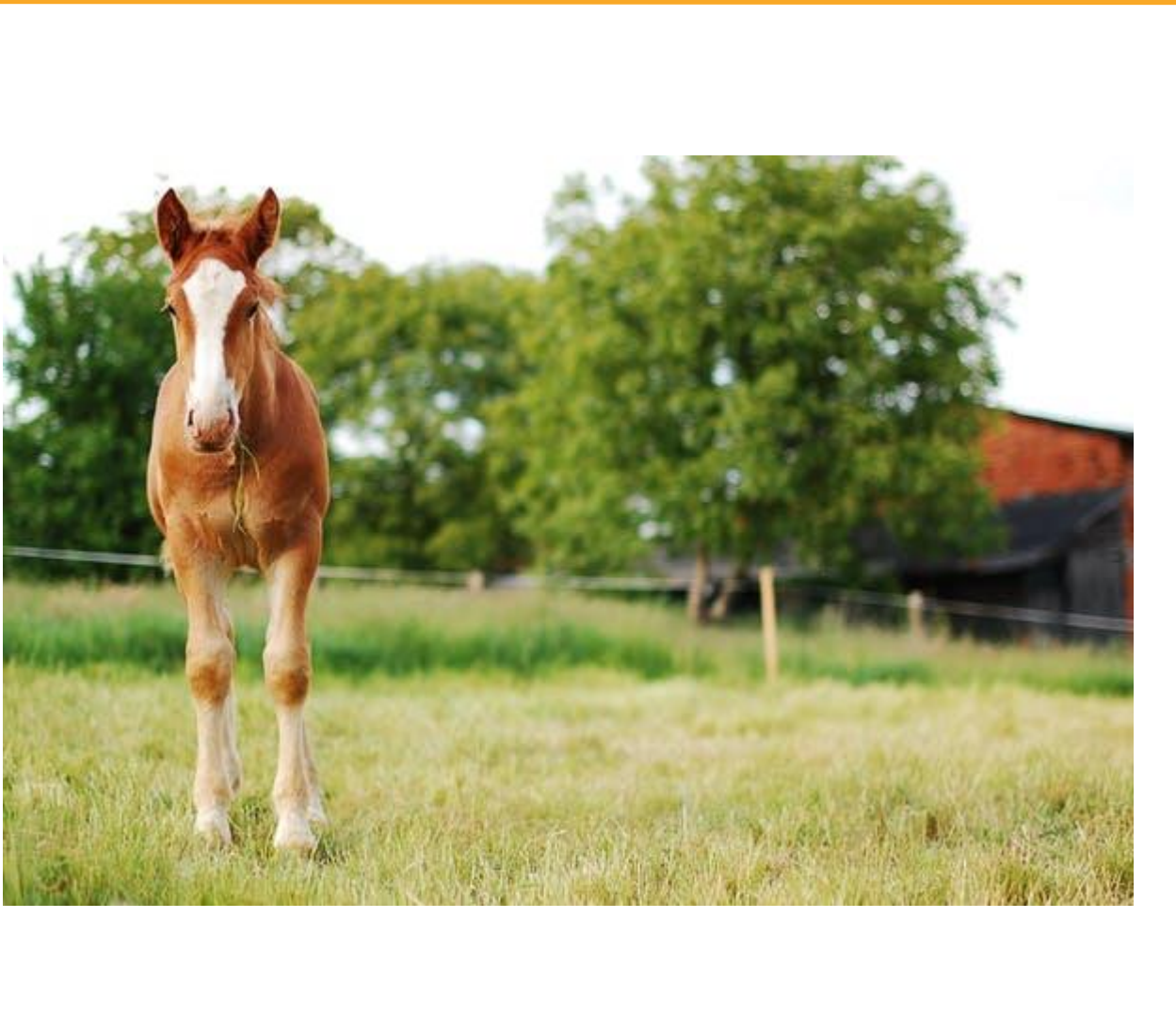
Eating as a mental activity.



Our eating habits are now strongly influenced by mental representations of what we and our culture deem to be edible.

The range of potentially edible foods is much wider than what we normally consume, because various human societies tend to restrict the notion of what constitutes “food”.







Food culture examples.



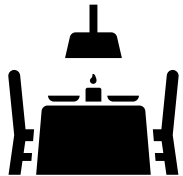
Every culture has established rules for the structure of a meal, food associations and compatibility, based on dietary, ideological or religious criteria.

For example, in every culture, there are dishes and foods more suitable for different moments of the day (e.g., breakfast, lunch and dinner).





Food culture examples.



The role that food plays as a catalyst for meanings and symbols.

Food is linked to the dimension of power, and the different ways food is used across the world mark many cultural moments in our lives through rituals, ceremonies and religious celebrations.





Food, culture and sustainability.



Food cultures and their diets can play a pivotal role for environmental sustainability.

Sustainable diets do not belong to a specific culture, but they are already part of the food heritage of all cultures. Their key message is eloquent: foods that should be consumed most often for our health are generally also those with a low climate impact.





Reference:

Rozin, P., Fallon, A. E. (1987). A perspective on disgust. Psychological review, 94(1), 23.

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Thank you