

FAQ: Foods and Food Preferences

Created by an adoptive parent, Dec. 2004

When your child first comes to the U.S., s/he probably will be somewhat "picky" about what s/he eats. American food can be very different from that in Ethiopia--the spices, textures, variety, even the way of eating is brand new. Over time, many kids' tastes evolve to include more and more American food. Below is a list of foods that many kids have enjoyed when they first came to the States, followed by a list that many parents have reported received less than favorable responses. Like many other kids, they are likely to change eating habits over time, sometimes refusing something they ate heartily the week before.

Remember, every child is different so your child may not like some of the foods on the Likes list, and they may like some of the foods on the Dislikes -- this is why some foods appear in both. However, these lists have been compiled from common themes heard from many parents. Many parents have asked children to take a tiny "Thank you helping" of new foods.

Foods commonly eaten at Layla and Wanna Houses:

Breakfast: hard-boiled or scrambled eggs on a roll, yogurt

Other meals: injera, doro wat, shiro wat, oranges, apples, bananas, rice, spaghetti

Special treats (going away parties): pastries, popcorn (sprinkled with sugar), potato chips, soda

Essential foods to keep available in the early days

Peanut butter, Bread, Bananas (one parent commented that her child seemed to exist on only these the first week, with no negative intestinal side effects)

Ethiopian food, if possible

Likes:

Fruits – Apples (may need to peel them), Bananas, Grapes (frozen grapes may be liked as a treat, also) Lemons, Mangos, Oranges, Papaya, Pineapple

Vegetables – Broccoli, Cabbage, Carrots, Corn, Green beans, Lettuce salad, Onions (sauteed), Popcorn (this is a special treat in Ethiopia), Potatoes (cubed, mashed, fries), Tomato Sauces, Yams

Grains – Animal crackers/cookies, Bagels, Bread, Cornbread, Crackers, Croissants, Macaroni & cheese (may want Berbere on it) Oatmeal/Cream of Wheat, Pancakes/waffles, Pasta (especially spaghetti -- plain or pasta with butter/oil and spices), Pop tarts, Ramen Noodle soup, Rice

Protein – Chicken, Chicken Nuggets, Eggs (hardboiled, scrambled), Fish, fish sticks, Hamburger (also ground beef with sauce), Lentils, Peanut Butter, Steak

Dairy – Cocoa, Chocolate milk, Ice cream, Milk, warm milk with sugar and/or vanilla, Yogurt

Beverages – Chai, Coffee (with lots of milk and sugar) Pop, Soda, Tea (hot, with lots of sugar)

Ethiopian-style foods – Berbere as condiment (in a shaker like pepper) or mixed with oil or butter on breads, Niter Kibbeh to “stir-fry” chopped vegetables or chopped meat (chicken, lamb, beef)

Other – Injera, Lollipops, Pizza, junk snacks (potato chips, Doritos, cheese puffs, etc.), Mexican-style Food (salsa may become a vegetable at your house!), other spicy cuisines, Salt (liberally applied), Sherbet

Dislikes

Bacon

Casseroles – especially with a creamed-soup base

Cheese – seems to be a texture issue; children may like cheese lightly “scattered” on pizza, but not forming a “skin” that would resemble a slice

Cold cereal

Cold drinks – may not like ice cubes

Cold Milk

Unpeeled Fruit – like apples and pears

Hot dogs

Macaroni & Cheese – may eat with Berbere liberally sprinkled on top

Pizza

Soup

Ethiopian Recipes

Recipe Source – Go to the Africa and Middle East cuisine section, then click on Ethiopian. <http://www.recipesource.com/>

An internet search engine (Google, Yahoo!, Mamma.com, etc.) search on Ethiopia and Food or Recipes will turn up a variety of websites with Ethiopian recipes.

If you travel, you may be able to find an English-language cookbook in the markets.

Cookbooks:

Taste of Ethiopia. Tsegaye, Webayehu / Degefa, Tamiru, c1991.

Exotic Ethiopian Cooking: Society, Culture, Hospitality & Traditions. Daniel J. Mesfin Rev. extended edition, 1993

Ethiopian Cookbook Enterprises of Falls Church, VA, 7409 Carol Lane, Falls Church, VA 22042

Ethiopian Cooking in the American Kitchen by Tizita Ayele, 1999.