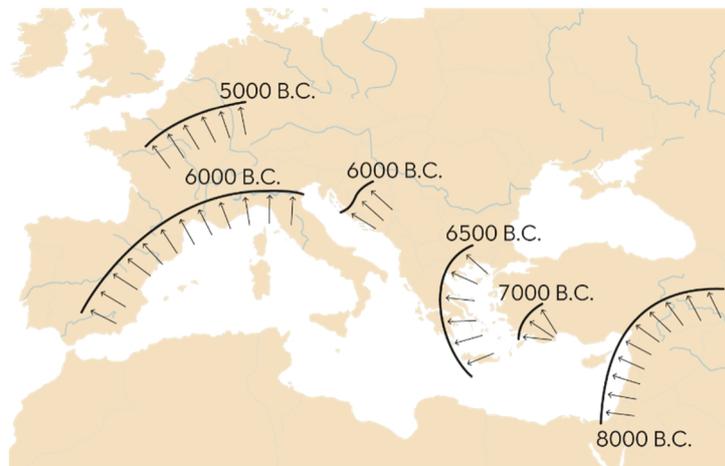


The geographical origin of food

WHEAT

Some foodstuffs are cultivated across the globe, but they usually have a very precise geographical origin. If we look at wheat, the first examples of growing wheat date from about **8000 BCE** in **Mesopotamia**.



Wheat is a plant grown in a temperate climate and has expanded far and wide geographically speaking. These days, it grows equally well in the prairies of the US as in the Argentinian pampas or on the Russian steppe.

There are several species of wheat – the two most important types are **durum wheat** and **common wheat**. Durum wheat is grown in Mediterranean regions with a temperate climate and is used to make semolina, pasta and bulgur. Common wheat is grown in continental areas with cool or temperate summers, like in France or Canada, and its flour is used to produce bread.

RICE

Rice is another cereal which has spread far from its origins. The two species we cultivate are **Asian rice**, which came from the Far East, and **West African rice**, which came from West Africa. The first rice cultivations date to around 5000 BCE in **China**. They spread to other Asian countries and then to the Near East and Europe. Since the Age of Discovery, rice has been cultivated on all continents.

CORN

Corn is another example of a cereal now grown worldwide, but it originally came from **Southern Mexico**. The first cultivations of corn date from **7000 BCE**. The Mayan civilizations lived in Southern Mexico and parts of Central America. 'Maya' means

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'maize' (corn) and the Mayans referred to themselves as 'Maize people'. The Mayans had numerous dishes based on corn – both sweet and savoury. They also had a wealth of various corn-based drinks.

When we talk about the geographical origin of food, as well as corn, cacao and avocados also come from Central America. Watermelons are from Africa and mangoes were first cultivated in India and Burma.

Keywords > Central America: Corn, Cocoa, Avocados

Keywords > Africa: Watermelon

Keywords > India, Burma: Mangoes

PROCESSED FOOD

Processed food can also be related to a place of origin. For example, numerous countries argue about who was the first to produce pasta.



Noodles had already existed in China for a long time before Marco Polo stayed there in the 13th century. In the 12th century, people were already making pasta in Sicily. Whatever its origins, the first industrial manufacture of pasta took place in Naples in the 15th century, but it could not be stored for long. We had to wait until 1800 to discover the process allowing pasta to be dried properly.

The geographical origin of food

When were the first wheat crops cultivated?

- 8000 BCE
- 7000 BCE
- 6000 BCE

Where does wheat originate from?

- Egypt
- Mesopotamia
- China

Which of these foodstuffs is not made from durum wheat?

- Bulgur
- Bread dough
- Pasta

Where was rice first cultivated?

- Colombia
- West Africa
- China

Where does corn (maize) originate from?

- Mexico
- Canada
- Morocco

Which great civilisation was called the 'maize' people?

- The Mayas
- The Incas
- The Rastas

Where were the first cocoa crops grown?

- Africa
- Latin America
- Oceania

What was the problem with pasta prior to 1800?

- Preserving it
- Its colour
- Its flavour

Answers

When were the first wheat crops cultivated?

- **8000 BCE**
Well done! That's right.
- **7000 BCE**
Wrong! Try again!
- **6000 BCE**
Wrong! It was before that.

Where does wheat originate from?

- **Egypt**
Wrong! It did not originate on this continent.
- **Mesopotamia**
Well done! The first wheat crops date back to 8000 BCE in Mesopotamia.
- **China**
Wrong! Try again!

Which of these foodstuffs is not made from durum wheat?

- **Bulgur**
Wrong! Bulgur is derived from durum wheat.
- **Bread dough**
Well done! That's right!
- **Pasta**
Wrong! The pasta we find in shops contains durum wheat.

Where was rice first cultivated?

- **Colombia**
Wrong! It was on another continent.
- **West Africa**
Wrong! A species of rice did originate from this area, but the first rice crops were cultivated elsewhere.
- **China**
Well done! The first crops date back to 5000 BCE in China.

Where does corn (maize) originate from?

- **Mexico**
Well done! Corn comes from southern Mexico. The first crops date back to 7000 BCE.
- **Canada**
Wrong! It is further south.
- **Morocco**
Wrong! It is further west.

Which great civilisation was called the 'maize' people?

- **The Mayas**
Well done! Maya means corn in Spanish.
- **The Incas**
Wrong! That's not the right answer.
- **The Rastas**
Wrong! Try again!

Where were the first cocoa crops grown?

- **Africa**
Wrong! It was not on this continent.
- **Latin America**
Well done! That's right.
- **Oceania**
Wrong! Try again!

What was the problem with pasta prior to 1800?

- **Preserving it**
Well done! It did not keep well as nobody knew how to dry pasta properly.
- **Its colour**
Wrong! That was not the problem.
- **Its flavour**
Wrong! Try again!