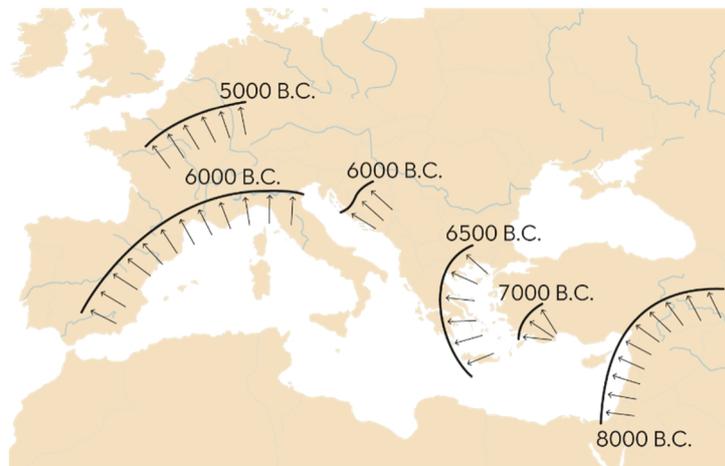


## The geographical origin of food

### 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 13<sup>th</sup> century. In the 12<sup>th</sup> century, people were already making pasta in Sicily. Whatever its origins, the first industrial manufacture of pasta took place in Naples in the 15<sup>th</sup> 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.