

# Grand Tour Report (Group 1)

**Topic:**

**Food Culture**

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# **Chapter 1: Introduction**

Our group would like to show appreciation to King Ling College for offering us a precious opportunity to travel and learn in a foreign country, Cambodia. It helps our class to create our collective memories.

It is irrefutable that all countries would try their best to show the most beautiful side of the country to tourists. Our group is curious about the food culture in Cambodia so we use “food culture” as our study theme. We study numerous methods like taking photographs and videos, doing researches and from the conversation with our tour guide.

Food culture is affected by the country’s background, economic development and geographic condition of the region. Since there are a huge difference in Hong Kong and Cambodia. So, the food culture is expected to have a big contrast.

We all had an incredible experience in Cambodia as we learnt knowledge outside the classroom.

# **Chapter 2: Methodology**

## **2.1 Choice of Method**

Qualitative methods including interview, photo analysis and literature review were adopted in this project. Interview with a Cambodian tour guide was conducted so as to acquire qualitative and authentic information about the local food culture in Cambodia. Photos taken during the short stay in Cambodia which featured various Cambodian delicacies would be analyzed. Literature review was done by conducting further researches including reading local recipes and books about Cambodian food culture as well as watching TV programs.

## **2.2 Classification of the Studying Target**

As Hong Kong is distinct from Cambodia in terms of climate, economic development as well as living environment, the food culture in the two places also vary from each other. As one of the international and cosmopolitan cities in the world, Hong Kong integrates the characteristics and specialties from various countries, fostering the development of its unique food culture. However, Cambodia may only have resembling food culture with her neighboring countries including Thailand and Vietnam instead of having an unique one due to their lower level of development and their similar climate and geographical location.

Our group aimed at locating the differences between the food culture in Hong Kong and the food culture in Cambodia. Therefore, we would like to find out the reasons behind the differences and have an investigation about ways of facilitating the integration and the development of the two cultures.

## **2.3 Target Group**

The target group of the project is the Cambodians who we met in the 6-day journey including Cambodian chefs in a cooking school and the local tour guide. They have a deeper understanding of the traditional cuisines in Cambodia. So that authentic and precise information can be acquired. Other than that, as the aim of the project is to study the differences between the food culture in Cambodia and in Hong Kong, Hongkongers will also be a part of the target group.

## **2.4 Questions asked**

1. What kinds of herbs are the most commonly used in Cambodian dishes?
2. Why are herbs added into the dishes?
3. Are there any relationships between the climate in Cambodia and the food culture here?
4. Is it common for Cambodians to dine out?
5. Where will the Cambodians usually buy ingredients for the dishes?

## **2.5 Problems faced and Solutions**

There are a few problems encountered while using the above methods in the project. For example, as the photographs analysis and the analysis of the answers for the questions above can only be conducted or carried out after or in the later stage of the journey, our group has to make assumptions and predictions about the answers as well as the rationale behind the answers in the earlier stage. Moreover, as the questions in the interview are open-ended, the answers from interviewees may differ from the others. It is fortunate that the difference in answers can be minimized or eliminated through further researches and observations.

### **Interview**

The biggest challenge while conducting an interview with the chef of the cooking school was the language barrier as the proficiency in English of the chef is not of a high level, we could communicate with her with extremely simple English. Also, it was hard to catch all the points that were said by the chef due to her accent.

Various solutions to overcome the challenges were suggested as follows:

Firstly, we have asked our tour guide who is a Cambodian to be our translator so that the chef can understand our questions thoroughly and we can also catch the points said by the tour guide more accurately due to his less strong accent.

Secondly, we have asked for the recipes of various Cambodian delicacies in English so that the procedures as well as the ingredients of the dishes can be recorded more precisely.

### **Photographs analysis**

As the photographs could only show the appearance and major ingredients of the Cambodian dishes, the taste, other ingredients as well as the procedures might not be recorded completely and thoroughly.

### **Literature Review**

Since a large portion of the sources found related to the topic was in Chinese, it is difficult and time-consuming to precisely translate all the content into English.

## **Chapter 3: Literature Review**

In the Cambodian traditional delicacies, there are different components including rice, fish, seafood, vegetables and fruit.

According to a report, Food Culture in Southeast Asia <sup>1</sup>, “Southeast Asia is primarily agricultural; rice, the dominant and preferred cereal crop, is also used for making noodles, rice flour, and rice wine”. Rice is an important crop in Asia is an undeniably fact because it uses in nearly all kinds of Southeast Asian Countries’ cuisines. In Cambodia, the price of the rice is relatively lower than in Hong Kong as it grows rice on its own. So, many Cambodian dishes, like amok and curry are served with rice.

On the other hand, the report Food Culture in Southeast Asia<sup>1</sup> also shows that the fruit is very common in Southeast Asian countries. The report claimed that “Fruit is used in salads and pickles but is most often consumed as snacks or desserts.” Used Banana as one of the examples, “Bananas, native to the Southeast Asia region, come in many varieties, and are eaten as snacks and used unripe and ripe in a variety of desserts.” In Cambodia fruits are commonly to be served as a dessert in dinner. Some restaurants will serve fruit plate which have seasonal fruits like banana, watermelon and papaya. There are also some restaurants make deep fried banana rolls, a kind of Cambodian desserts. It has a crispy crust and sweet banana fillings inside which is unique and different from the other countries’ traditional dessert.

Although similar ingredients are used in Southeast Asian Countries’ dishes, there are still unique delicacies including the desserts and other traditional cuisines in the local food culture of Cambodia.

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<sup>1</sup> Penny Van Esterik, 2008. FOOD CULTURE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA: London: Greenwood Publishing Group. Retrieved April 19,2017, from [http://ssu.ac.ir/cms/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Daneshkadaha/dbehdasht/behdasht\\_imani/book/Food\\_Culture\\_in\\_Southeast\\_Asia\\_1\\_.pdf](http://ssu.ac.ir/cms/fileadmin/user_upload/Daneshkadaha/dbehdasht/behdasht_imani/book/Food_Culture_in_Southeast_Asia_1_.pdf)



Fig. 3.1.1 Deep fried banana rolls

### 3.2 Globalization in Cambodia

Cambodia is part of Asia, but their food cultures slowly making the same with others Asian, their food cultures slowly making the same with others Asian countries because the globalization from other countries.

### 3.3 Western lifestyle

Due to improvement of living standard, Cambodian are having rapid spread of technology. It's steadily changed Cambodian ways of living and cultures.<sup>2</sup> Others Asian lifestyle already inserted to Cambodia, like the fast food. From the Phnom Penh, we can see the western fast food culture easily like McDonald or Burger King.

### 3.4 Tourism

Tourism industry is quite a new industry in Cambodia because of colonialism, coup d'etat, Khmer Rouge, Vietnam occupation, and protracted civil war.<sup>3</sup> The more tourism in Cambodia is developed, the more food cultural Cambodia is inserted. Therefore, we can see many Korean, Chinese, Thai restaurants in Cambodia.

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<sup>2</sup> Chak Sopheap, 2013. The effects of globalization on Cambodia. Lost in Economic Globalization? Retrieved April 19,2017, from <https://futurechallenges.org/local/the-effects-of-globalization-on-cambodia/>

<sup>3</sup> Kong Puthikar. 'Globalization, Tourism and Cambodia: The Domino Effects' Retrieved April 19,2017, from <https://nobodycare.files.wordpress.com/2007/01/tourism-and-globalization.doc>



# Chapter 4: Photographs Analysis

## 4.1 The Use of Insects in Cambodian Food



**Fig.4.1.1 Deep fried insects**

Speaking of the food culture in Cambodia, various form and types of insects (Fig. 4.1.1) are some of the most prominent food there. Although to most Hong Kong people, insects are not edible and terrifying to eat, those insects are treated like snacks in Cambodia, just like potato chips in Hong Kong. Insects are actually very good snacks, because they are rich in protein and they are very accessible.

Compare this kind of classic Cambodia food with the classic food in Hong Kong like egg puff, they are both very cheap in price. The used ingredients in both kinds of snacks are very cheap and common.

One of the biggest differences between the snacks in Hong Kong and Cambodia is the food hygiene. In Hong Kong, food hygiene is something that Hongkongers stress on. Therefore, even some of the less hygienic place in Hong Kong, food hygiene is so bad. However, in Cambodia, food hygiene is a serious problem. In the local market of Cambodia, flies are everywhere and the places are dirty. As such hygiene is not something Cambodian stress on and that is the main difference between both places' local food culture.

## 4.2 Flavor used in Cambodian food



**Fig.4.2.1 & 4.2.2 Lemongrass used in different dishes**

In Hong Kong, we usually crush different ingredient in powder as flavor, ginger, garlic, pepper, you name it. However, there is one flavor can be seen everywhere in Cambodian dishes, lemongrass (Fig.4.2.1). From starter to dessert, and even in the soup, one always can find lemongrass in Cambodian dishes.



**(Fig.4.2.3 livestock in Cambodia)**

One of the well-known reasons of using lemongrass is that lemongrass provide a fresh smell. In Cambodia, due to the geographic factors, most of the livestock are thin (Fig. 4.2.3). The meat is not too delicious because there is limited fat. Flavor is important for a meal. It would directly affect the quality of a dish. In order to elevate the quality, lemongrass is added into any kinds of food. The reason why Cambodian choose lemongrass is because it can give a special taste which cannot be found in other food. Besides, it is low in cost. As a result, lemongrass has become a major spice in Cambodia.



**(Fig.4.2.4 lemongrass added in soup)**

The other possible reason is that lemongrass becomes sour after it has been boiled. There is a different order in a set meal between Hong Kong and Cambodia. Cambodian meal usually serves the soup before the main dishes which unlike Hong Kong. When lemongrass is added into soup(Fig.4.2.4), a sour taste will be delivered. The taste of sour has 2 functions. The first one is to clean up other tastes in mouth so one can taste the main dishes clearly. The other function is sour can make one feel hungry. Taste will be much better when the customers is hungrier. Also, customers will order more so the sellers can have more profit.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

After the project, we could discover and realize more about the food culture of Cambodia like what Cambodian usually eat and kinds of herbs that they mostly used to make the dishes.

To commence with, as Cambodia is part of South-east Asian country, locals usually eat rice, fish and seafood, vegetables and fruit. However, unlike others, Cambodian eat insect as their snacks and they used fruit to make salad and desserts instead of cutting into pieces and eat it.

On the other hand, lemongrass usually used in Cambodian dishes as it provides a fresh taste which cannot be found in other foods. Also, it is used as an ornament and makes the dishes look better. Almost all Cambodians add lemongrass into soup, salad as it is sour and it can whet their appetite.

Furthermore, the food culture of Cambodia is more related to the climate. As Cambodia is a Southeast Asian country, the weather is really hot and locals love eating fruits as fruit relieve heat. Also, as Cambodia is in a subtropical zone, it is suitable for farmers to grow rice and that is why Cambodians regard rice as their main starch.

It is not common for Cambodians to dine out. They usually cook at home and dine with their relatives every day as they cherish the moment with their relatives. Also, Cambodians usually buy ingredients in markets instead of supermarkets as supermarkets are much more expensive and they cannot afford to buy food in there.

After the tour, we were very happy to discover Cambodia. It was our pleasure to discover more about Cambodia, especially the food culture of the country.

## Chapter 6: Reflection

### 6.1 On the first day (30<sup>th</sup> March, 2017)

*Lum Chi Lok, Lok and Tse Yat Long, Ronnie*

On the first day of the trip, after finishing the four lessons in the morning, we started preparing ourselves and got on the coach to the airport. We could not suppress our excitement as we were the first class to depart from Hong Kong.

After leaving the plane, we could immediately feel the high temperature in Cambodia. The unfavorable weather condition inflamed us with anxiety about the coming week that we would have to spend in Cambodia.

We enjoyed our first meal in the hotel we were staying in, Cardamom Hotel. We were served with Cambodia delicacies. The one that we found most interesting was the salad. There were some lemon grasses, leaves, peanuts and pork inside with fish sauce and a kind of sour seasoning. It is so different from the salad we have in Hong Kong because it has a strong sour flavor and the rich lemon grass. On the other hand, there are peanuts inside which made the salad carries a crispy texture.

Although there were no tourist spots we need to visit in our first day itinerary, we found out that lemon grass is one of the common herbs that would be used in the Cambodian dishes. Besides, we learnt how to adapt to unfavorable conditions, like weather condition etc. Even though the weather condition in Cambodia differs from that in Hong Kong, we learnt that we should adapt to it instead of complaining. Learn to adapt is the best way to associate well with the others but not living on our own way.

## 6.2 On the second day (31<sup>st</sup> March, 2017)

*Lee Sheung Wa, Aaron*

In the morning of the second day, we visited Choeung EK Killing Fields. Before the trip, I had never thought about "death", or the idea of "staying alive". When I was standing in front of the Stupa of Ek, thousands of bones had shocked me. Khmer Rouge killed millions of victims who were against the pro-government political party. The Stupa of Ek in the Killing Fields is the place storing thousands of bodies of the victims and showing how they were killed, aged of death and their gender.

One of the most unforgettable sites named The Killing Tree, The Killing Tree was used to beat children and woman by pushing their heads to the tree until the brain was crushed. I know those people were who against Khmer Rouge, but I have no idea why Khmer Rouge had to kill those innocents. They were part of the nations of also. Even the Khmer Rouge owned a reason to kill them, why can't they just use a more humanity method in order to reduce the pain of those victims.

After the visit, I reflected on why there were many innocent victims were suffered. At last, I figured out an answer, war. Cambodian had passed through the darkness path of history, the Cambodian Civil War. However, there are still wars nowadays. As a student, I can't do much to stop the war, but at least I can donate something to people who suffered from war, money or any necessity. Helping each other is one of the responsibilities of a human living on this planet.

Last but not least, another inspiration from the visit is about life. Death is not the opposite of alive, but instead, the end of the journey. As a Hongkonger, we are so lucky that live in a safe and well-developed city. I know that every generation had their own problems and difficulties. Unfortunately, there were many chose to end their lives. By comparison, we are much better than those people who suffered in wars. At least we have the right to decide to live or not. Whenever I think of those victims, those who even did not have a choice for their own life, I know I should treasure my life, be responsible to the only life I have.

### **6.3 On the third day (1<sup>st</sup> April, 2017)**

*Ip Ting Hin, Ivan*

On the third day of the Grand Tour, our class visited the well-known Angkor Wat. First, we enjoyed the sunrise in Angkor Wat. After a break in the hotel. We explored the place for the rest of the day.

It was quite disappointing that we could not see the sunrise due to the weather and there was a short but heavy rain during the visit. However, the Angkor Wat was truly impressive.

Angkor Wat was a temple of god. The amount of extensive details and hard work that were put into every single brick are incredible. Outside of the Angkor Wat, our class could only see the countless amount of stone structures. However, upon entering the temple, a combination of different complex structures like elevate towers and chamber with the decoration of the depiction of the gods in Hinduism was shown to us.

The impressiveness of Angkor Wat comes from not only the exceptional details on every part of the temple, but also in the technic of building. Especially the temple was built in such an early age, the technology and technic was so primitive to build such an impressive architecture. Despite the lack of technology, it was, and still, one of the most stunning architecture.

#### **6.4 On the fourth day (2<sup>nd</sup> April 2017)**

*Wong Ho Ming, Edward and Wong Tsz Ki, Don*

On the fourth day in Cambodia, our class went to visit HUSK, a NGO and a cooking school which works directly for local families. When we arrived the cooking school, we formed groups in 2-3. The chef demonstrated the process of making curry sauce. Our class made chicken curry, fish fillet with curry sauce, spring rolls and banana in hot toffee. After the demonstration, our class started to make our own dishes with the help of the chef. She played an important role to help us. After that, we enjoyed our dishes. The dishes were authentic and we left afterwards. It was a wonderful morning as we gained a lot like cooking skills.

In the afternoon, we went to the village which was far away from the cooking school. We divided into groups of 6 and helped the elderly to repair their house. We used the cell wall of bamboo together with the plant-like wire to build the wall. It was excruciating that someone got hurt when we were building the wall, we learnt to stay calm when facing adverse situation. Fortunately, Mr. Lo gave a first aid treatment to Zoey and sent her to the Royal Angkor International Hospital.

Overall, our class see the polarization of wealth in the world. All of the houses in Hong Kong are concrete buildings while houses of underprivileged family in Cambodia are made from bamboo and wood which is vulnerable. Therefore, this experience taught me a lesson of treasuring of what our class own now.



## 6.5 On the fifth day (3<sup>rd</sup> April, 2017)

*Kong Chak Wing, Anthony*

It was the day for us to visit Cambodia primary school. To visit a primary school in Angkor under 39 degrees Celsius, also we had to wear winter school uniform, my expectation was suffering pain. However, unexpectedly, after the visiting, both of the primary school students and both of teachers and students were full of happiness. Not only the sun was the only thing shining, but also the students. During the school visiting, we brought some Hong Kong traditional snacks and stationery to them. After having lessons with them, one of Cambodia primary school student took our hands to the playgroup to play some games and football matches. Although there were only 30 minutes to play with them, we felt meaningful and joyful. Although we were speaking different languages and we were having age gap, we became one! For the Cambodian students, meeting students from other countries might already been the closest distance approachable to the world. Different from Hong Kong, they had no computers or social media. Therefore, we are, in some way, not grateful to what we are having now.

## **6.6 On the sixth day (4<sup>th</sup> April,2017)**

*Mok Chun Yiu, Dickens*

The 6<sup>th</sup> day was the day that 5C returned to HK, we were not having any activities nor visits on that day. The day was a good chance for doing reflections so that I could have words to write here.

It was a good day to reflect on what we had done during the 6 meaningful days. Our group members delivered our message of thankfulness to the staffs served us at the hotel. It was important to always be thankful, always being thankful help improve relationship with others, which is important in the later university and career life.

Other than being thankful, from our reflections and the 5 previous days, our members learnt to reflect in a group. By doing so, the kind of reflections allow us to share thoughts and point out the mistake we made.

Let's take the presentation in the primary school as an example. We noticed that the primary school students were not showing understanding and interest to our presentation, with the presentation composed of easy words. We all reflected that presentation in schools with low level of English education was not effective as English was already a barrier. For improvement, mini games or present in secondary schools are more appropriate.

## **Chapter 7: Bibliography**

1. Food Culture in Southeast Asia (2008), Penny Van Esterik, Greenwood Publishing Group
2. The effects of globalization on Cambodia. Lost in Economic Globalization? (2013), Chak Sopheap
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