

GatherRD

**Asian
Americans
and Pacific
Islanders**
a member interest group of the
Academy of Nutrition
and Dietetics
eat right.

Official Newsletter of the Asian Americans & Pacific Islanders MIG

Volume 2 • Issue 1 • July 2021

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR-ELECT

Levin Dotimas, MS

AAPI Chair-Elect 2021-2022



A Filipino tale tells of a big and sturdy mango tree planted next to a group of bamboo trees. The mango boasted of its strength and ridiculed the bamboo trees' slender bodies. One day, a violent storm ravaged the surrounding area. Once the storm had passed, the mango tree laid on the ground, uprooted from its supposedly firm grip on the earth. Meanwhile, the bamboo trees huddled through the forceful gusts and remained standing.

When I first joined the Academy in 2015, I was ecstatic to see that we had Filipino Americans in Dietetics & Nutrition (FADAN). Volunteering was impossible then with work and school taking up most of my time. Later, we merged with the Chinese Americans in Dietetics & Nutrition (CADN) to form our current Asian Americans & Pacific Islanders (AAPI) MIG. This time, I was able to become more involved and devote time to volunteering.

Like the bamboo trees, FADAN and CADN were relatively small groups within the Academy, and I truly believe that merging together made us stronger and more sustainable.

Over the last few years, not only did our membership continue to grow as we sought out other ethnic groups under the AAPI umbrella, but also the benefits that we offer to our members:

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leadership opportunities, scholarships, social media engagement, discussion groups, webinars, newsletter, and networking sessions. And we're looking to add more in the future!

After serving as the Communications Committee Chair for the past two years, I am now moving on to serve as the Chair-Elect for AAPI MIG, and eventually the Chair. I am honored to be trusted in this position and to pass the "communications" torch to Kim Korff. I am confident in her abilities and optimistic about the lengthy strides she will make in this position.

I invite all of our members to participate in the AAPI MIG through the numerous opportunities that we offer. On our own, we can be bamboo trees, but together, we can be stronger than a single mango tree and see ourselves through difficult times. Please don't hesitate to reach out to us via [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), Discussion Board, or email at AAPI@eatright.org.

MESSAGE FROM THE COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE CHAIR

Summer is here, and with it we are excited to welcome in the new AAPI leadership team!

As Levin moves into the role of AAPI Chair-Elect, I join him as the new Communications Committee Chair. Our team has lots of plans for this next year to help AAPI members continue to learn, connect and improve their practices in food and nutrition. There is no better time to get plugged into your MIG and back into community than after a year of disconnect and difficulty.

Our amazing members make AAPI what it is! If you have any pieces you'd like to contribute to our social media, newsletter, or website we'd love to hear from you! Some ideas might include:

- Be interviewed for the Student or Career Spotlights
- Research articles
- Share recipes
- Write an article on your culture/country
- Do an Instagram takeover and share a day in your life



Kim Korff, RD, LD
AAPI Communications
Chair 2021-2023

Be looking out for new posts, resource materials, newsletters and opportunities for you to contribute and be part of the AAPI MIG community. Watch for updates on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), and in your email inbox! Don't hesitate to reach out with any questions for our team at AAPI@eatright.org.

AAPI EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2021-2022



Nikki Nies, MS, RD, Chair

Nikki is Food Consulting Company's Entrepreneur in Residence, a position created to drive and commercialize new products. Her focus is understanding the information needs of our customers and satisfying them through innovative programs, content and services. Nikki's background spans a variety of food and nutrition work for food companies and supermarkets, including work as a regulatory & nutrition manager. She has also created content for several online sites and was the 2018 Texas Academy Northeast Registered Young Dietitian of the Year.



Aimee Estella Reuhs, MS, MPH, RD, Past Chair

Aimee is currently a dietitian in the school nutrition sector where she creates menus and assists with the management of multiple food operation databases for a large school district. She received a dual master's degree in nutrition and public health from Benedictine University. She has worked in various health care settings, and went into the nutrition field because she loves how dietitians can play an important role in health promotion and disease prevention.



Levin Dotimas, MS, Chair-Elect

Levin was born and raised in Manila, Philippines, and later moved to the US to Baltimore, MD. He graduated from Brigham Young University with a bachelor's degree in dietetics and a minor in French. He recently finished the coursework for his master's degree and is now completing his dietetic internship at Oklahoma State University. He plans on taking the RD exam early in the fall and looks forward to finally beginning his career in dietetics. He is excited to be the Chair-Elect of AAPI MIG and increase engagement among AAPI students and dietitians.



Janice Chow, MS, RD, Secretary

Janice Chow, MS, RD, is a San Francisco Bay Area-based Registered Dietitian and recognized nutrition expert. Through her private practice, The Mindful Chow, she empowers Asians to break their cultural obsession with thinness using the Health At Every Size™ approach. She obtained a Bachelor of Science in Nutritional Science from UC Berkeley before completing her Dietetic Internship and Masters of Science in Dietetics & Nutrition at Tufts University. Janice has 8 years of experience in clinical nutrition and nutrition education promoting cultural competencies. You can find Janice on Instagram @janicehychow.rd. In her spare time, she enjoys cooking and hiking with her dog.



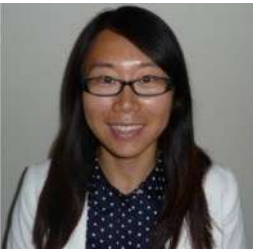
Hokyung Anna Roh, MS, RD, LD, *Treasurer*

Anna has been committed to improving the quality of life of diverse individuals with kidney disease for the past 11 years. She received her BS from the University of Illinois and MS from Southern Illinois University. She loves to share healthy eating education to prevent kidney disease. She also enjoys working to improve the quality of life for individuals on dialysis and coaching and collaborating with other dietitians. She is currently employed at Fresenius Kidney Care as a lead dietitian.



Christina Liew-Newville, EdD, RD, LD, FAND, *Nominating & Awards Committee Chair*

Christina has a passion to educate. She is currently the director of the Dietetic Technician Program at Tarrant County College. She enjoys teaching students and helping them to be successful. She received the 2017 Chancellor's Award for Exemplary Teaching. Christina has recently obtained her doctoral degree in Education Leadership. She hopes to utilize her knowledge and skills to increase health and financial literacy in her community.



Chen Du, MS, RD, LD, CNSC, *Nominating & Awards Committee Chair-Elect*

Chen is currently an Advanced Practice Clinical Dietitian at Parkland Memorial Hospital, while pursuing her doctoral degree in nutrition at Texas Woman's University. She is also an adjunct nutrition faculty at the University of Dallas. She was awarded the Young Recognized Dietitian of the Year by Texas Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics in 2017. Chen's vision in life is to contribute to the advancement of nutrition by mentoring dietetic students, equipping them with good understanding of science, and conducting cutting edge research.



Katie Chew MS, RD, *Nominating & Awards Committee Member*

Katharine 'Katie' Chew is a clinical dietitian in the San Francisco Bay Area, CA at a local hospital and skilled nursing facility, and formerly a Dominican University Head Start Dietitian with the Chicago Early Learning Program. Katie served as the AAPI Nominating and Awards Committee Chair from 2019-2021. Now, she continues to be a part of the AAPI Nominating and Awards Committee as a committee member.



Jera Zhang, MS, MA, RD, *Professional Development Committee Chair*

Jera is currently pursuing her doctoral degree in Behavioral Nutrition at Teachers College, Columbia University, focusing on dietary management of digestive issues. Besides research, she provides nutrition consultations to help individuals and health startups achieve their goals. She has also been trained in sociology and behavioral science with experiences at the United Nations and various NGOs.



Dustin Reed, MS, RD, FAND, *Membership Committee Chair*

Dustin is originally from Lexington, Kentucky, where he spent his childhood on a historic horse farm in the area. He attended the University of Kentucky where he received his Bachelor's and Master's in Dietetics. His current role with Compass is as a Customer Experience Manager on the corporate level. In addition to his work experience, Dustin sits on the executive board for several non-profits and manages political campaigns. He currently resides in Richmond, Virginia.



Maggie Tsai, MS, *Membership Committee Member*

Maggie came from Taichung, Taiwan, and is currently a dietetic intern at Yale-New Haven Hospital, CT. She received her Master of Science in Biochemical and Molecular Nutrition from Tufts University and finished the DPD program at Simmons University. At Tufts, she enjoyed analyzing genetics, the gut microbiome, and other human nutrition research data. She is very excited about accumulating clinical nutrition experience during the internship. Her goal is to become an RD specialized in genetics. Outside of work, she likes to go on neighborhood food tours with her fiancé.



Zheng Zeng, *Membership Committee Member*

Zheng is currently working towards her Master of Science in Nutrition & Dietetics and Dietetic Internship at the University of Pittsburgh. Her interests are in clinical nutrition and research with special emphasis on digestive diseases, pediatric nutrition, and diabetes care. Zheng is passionate about the Health At Every Size™ approach and hopes to provide weight-inclusive, compassionate care after finishing her MS/DI. In her spare time, she enjoys learning about photography, hiking, and exploring cafes/restaurants with friends.



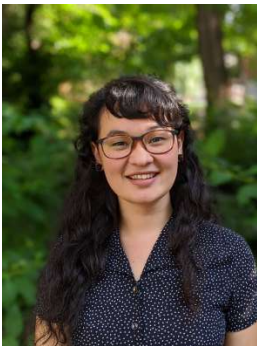
Shuhao Lin, MS, RDN, *Membership Committee Member*

Shuhao is currently working towards her Ph.D. degree in Human Nutrition at University of Illinois at Chicago. Her research focus is the effect of intermittent fasting and weight loss to help prevent diet-related chronic diseases. Originally from Beijing, China, she has always been passionate about diverse food cultures. She wants to utilize her knowledge and background to promote more diversity in both nutrition research and nutrition counseling.



Hilary Wu, MS, RDN, *Membership Regional Networking Coordinator*

Hilary is currently the DPD Director at Cal Poly Pomona where she helps to train students to become future dietitians. She is also a clinical dietitian at San Antonio Regional Hospital and skilled nursing facilities in Southern California. She had the opportunity of moving back to Taiwan to work in food service and public health for several years prior to earning her Master of Science in Nutrition from Cal Poly Pomona. In her spare time, she enjoys sipping a cup of coffee with her dogs at home.



Kimberly Korff, RD, LD, *Communications Committee Chair*

Kim is a newly licensed dietitian in central Iowa. She completed her dietetic internship at OSF Saint Francis Medical Center in Peoria, IL and has been working for the Women, Infants, and Children Program in Iowa for the past year. Kim loves educating parents about nutrition in pregnancy, breastfeeding, and feeding picky eaters, and is working towards becoming a Certified Lactation Specialist. She has been an active member of AAPI for the past several years and enjoys volunteering her time to AAPI. Among her many interests include small-scale mushroom farming, learning Bangla language, and cooking all sorts of dishes from around the world. You can follow her adventures in cooking and mushroom farming @kimchiemi and @localshroomerydsm.



Maggie Chang, *Communications Committee Member*

Maggie is a dietetic intern and currently works as a virtual assistant, creating nutrition content on IG for various RDs. As an aspiring dietitian, she hopes she is able to modify the general public's food-related attitudes, beliefs, and values to not only reflect better health outcomes, but also lead to a more sustainable food system. In her spare time, she enjoys taking naps and watching anime.



Eden Qi, *Social Media/Communications Committee Member*

Eden is a 4th-year student at The University of Texas pursuing a Bachelor's degree in Nutrition and Dietetics. She has been a volunteer for AAPI for about a year and half, mainly on the social media side. Eden is also a table tennis player and has been playing for over 10 years. Now, she is competing on her college team. It would be a dream come true for her to become a sports dietitian and work with Olympic athletes and meet them in person!



Sophia Tan, *Communications Committee Member*

Sophia received her Bachelor of Science in Clinical Nutrition from UC Davis. She originally became fascinated in nutrition after learning about the food digestion process and fell in love with the major in her undergraduate years. During her free time, she loves listening to music, singing, and spending time with friends and family. Also, her favorite animals are foxes and cats.



Xingyun "Karen" Xie, *Communications Committee Member*

Xingyun is originally from China, and currently lives in Buffalo, NY. Xingyun is currently working towards her Master of Science degree in nutrition and dietetics at D'Youville College. Her interests are in clinical nutrition with a special emphasis in pediatric diabetes care and nutrition. Xingyun believes providing proper nutrition education will be beneficial for kids to practice self-care and insulin management along with healthy eating and exercise to promote quality of life for the lifespan.

Are you interested in getting involved with AAPI?

We are currently looking for a **DIVERSITY LIAISON**. This position involves collaborating with the Academy's Diversity and Inclusion Committee to develop and implement efforts to increase diversity and inclusion in the dietetic profession. The Diversity Liaison will be writing grant proposals for diversity-related activities. This term lasts for 2 years. If you or someone you know is interested, please send us a message at AAPI@eatright.org.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

LET YOUR VOICE BE HEARD! Advocate for strong nutrition and health policy standards through the Academy's new and improved [Action Center](#). Enter your contact information once and it will be saved for future action alerts, including your U.S. Representative and Senators. Each alert has a pre-filled message that can be tailored to your unique experience in the field of dietetics. As of July 2021, here are some of the following action alerts listed on the Action Center:

SUPPORT HEALTHY SCHOOL MEALS FOR ALL

U.S. Sens. Bernie Sanders (Vt.) and Kirsten Gillibrand (N.Y.) and U.S. Reps. Ilhan Omar (D-Minn.) and Gwen Moore (Wis.) announced legislation to expand on the success of the universal free lunch approach recently extended by the USDA during the COVID-19 pandemic, which would bring long-term relief to millions of food-insecure families. The Universal School Meals Program Act of 2021 would permanently provide free breakfast, lunch, dinner and a snack to all school children regardless of income, eliminate school meal debt and strengthen local economies by incentivizing local food procurement.



Photo courtesy of Boulder Valley School District



Photo courtesy of FER.com

TELL YOUR SENATORS TO CO-SPONSOR THE SCHOOL FOOD SERVICE MODERNIZATION ACT

As schools stretch to respond to food insecurity caused by the COVID-19 pandemic while also facing significant financial losses from this crisis, providing an infusion of additional funding can help ensure schools are prepared to serve healthy, nutritious foods when schools return to normal operations. U.S. Sens. Susan Collins (Maine) and Tina Smith (Minn.) introduced the bipartisan School Food Modernization Act of 2021 (S. 876),

which will expand schools' ability to modernize kitchen infrastructure and equipment, strengthen workforce training and support emergency preparedness for the future.

SUPPORT MEDICARE COVERAGE OF IBT FOR OBESITY BY RDNS

The bipartisan, bicameral Treat and Reduce Obesity Act (TROA, H.R.1577, S.596) has been reintroduced for the 117th Congress. TROA would allow RDNs to independently provide intensive behavioral therapy (IBT) for obesity within Medicare Part B and would improve access to anti-obesity medications in Medicare Part D. Urge your members of Congress to support this bill to improve patient outcomes, enhance health care access and reduce health care costs.

FROM THE ACADEMY



FNCE® 2021 REGISTRATION IS LIVE!

The Food & Nutrition Conference & Expo™ is in a class by itself. *No other conference* offers such high-quality professional development for food and nutrition professionals. With 100 educational sessions across 14 tracks, experts will examine the intersection between nutrition, culture, technology, mental and physical health, and modern practice. Attendees will be able to learn about products and services from exhibiting companies showcasing the latest and greatest trends and offerings in food, nutrition and health. Click [here](#) for more details.

PROPOSED GOVERNANCE TRANSITION

The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics' current leadership structure includes a Board of Directors and a House of Delegates. Both the Board of Directors and House of Delegates work in collaboration to ensure members are the leading source of food and nutrition services. It has been 20 years since the Academy reviewed its governance structure. In February 2020, the Academy collected information and feedback from key stakeholders that included a comprehensive survey (members and non-members) that generated more than 17,000 responses, feedback from the Board and through numerous "sounding board" interviews.

The proposed changes are designed to serve the **professional** by allowing the Academy to be more agile and respond more swiftly to changes members are asking for; and to serve the **profession** by enabling a faster allocation of resources to areas where the profession needs greater visibility or focus.

While many of the details have been considered, not all have firm plans behind them, which is why the Academy is engaging members in helping craft the next steps. We don't have all the answers yet, but through a strong partnership with members, we will. Click [here](#) for more details about the proposed governance plan and a form for members to submit questions or comments.

Reimagining Our Governance Structure



PROPOSED ACADEMY BYLAWS AMENDMENTS

The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics is proposing a change to its bylaws: Amendment: Section XV Amendments-Methods and Notice. View the proposed changes [here](#). Let the Academy know if you support the proposed changes by [completing this survey](#). The member comment survey is open from Wednesday, June 16, 2021 – Saturday, July 31, 2021.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: *Leijie "Eden" Qi*



Name: Leijie "Eden" Qi

Education: University of Texas, Austin, TX (DPD)

Hometown: Shandong, China

Tell us a little bit about yourself!

I'm a senior majoring in nutrition at UT Austin. I grew up in China and came to the US in my teens. I began volunteering for AAPI MIG in 2020 with the Communications Committee and I am now serving as the Social Media Co-coordinator.

What foods or food-related customs from your culture do you love?

I love that we bring all the dishes to the table and everyone just gets what they want from the meals, instead of everyone getting their own plate. I like how everyone can taste all the food and share what they like and not like about the food. I also feel like it brings family and friends closer together.

What led you to study dietetics?

I have been deeply in love with food since I was younger. I've also been playing table tennis for a long time. Table tennis made me want to know more about how food and nutrition can improve my performance.

What do you like most about studying dietetics?

I like the people in this field (dietitians in different areas, professors, peers, etc.). They are all nice and patient and they are always there to help.

What challenges did you have while studying dietetics? How did you overcome them?

There is so much information out there about nutrition. Some of them are science-based but some of them are not. I often hear completely different opinions on one single topic, and I found it difficult to figure out what is true or reliable. I just follow the knowledge I've been learning in school. I listen to and read about different reports and opinions without fully trusting them. I just keep them in mind while I keep building my own beliefs about nutrition.

How did you prepare for your internship?

I've been trying to get experience in different dietetic areas (clinical, research, sports, community) to see what I enjoy as well as what I might be doing during my internship or job as an RD. I'm also trying to review what I've learned in the past. I often forget about what I've learned in the past so I go back and

review so I can have solid knowledge for my internship.

What are your personal and professional goals?

I'd like to work as an RD in a hospital or become a sports RD for a sports team.

What advice would you give to fellow dietetics students?

Start to get experience early on. I think any experience would add points to your resume or application. I personally think that getting ahead of the materials you will be learning is critical. I found that I will have a better understanding if I study the materials ahead of time. It gives me more time to think about what the materials are really talking

about and how it might apply to a real case instead of rushing into the concepts to get a good grade on the exam.

The topics of diversity, equity, and inclusion have been very important recently. How do you think AAPI dietetics community can contribute to this conversation?

I believe that our culture and history is fascinating and special. I found that a lot of people do not know a lot about it. And I think that's where some of the confusion or misunderstandings come from, which cause issues with equity and inclusion. We should always speak up and be proud of our story and introduce them to more people.

STUDENTS! Would you like to go to FNCE®?

Students interested in attending FNCE® 2021 are encouraged to complete the Foundation's student stipend application by **August 31** for a chance to win free FNCE® registration (\$85 value). Students must apply prior to registering for FNCE®. In order to be considered eligible to apply for a Foundation student stipend, you must:

1. Be enrolled as a student for the Fall 2021 semester.
2. Be a student member of the Academy for the 2021-2022 membership year.
3. Have not registered to attend FNCE® 2021 yet.
4. Agree to all assurances identified within the application.

Apply [here](#) for a chance to learn from many educational sessions and to network with nutrition and dietetics professionals. As with every year, there will be a Student Internship/Supervised Practice Fair where future dietetic interns can meet and network with Dietetic Internship, Coordinated Program, ISPP and Future Education Model program directors from all over the United States.

CAREER SPOTLIGHT: *Kim Chin, RD*



Name: Kim Chin, RD

Hometown: San Francisco, CA

Current Position & Employer: BaySport, Inc.,
Assistant Wellbeing Manager, Foster City, CA

Education: Cal Poly San Luis Obispo (DPD),
Wellness Workdays (DI)

Tell us a little bit about yourself!

I am a Chinese American. I was born in Los Angeles, then moved overseas to Hong Kong and Singapore for almost seven years. I lived most of my childhood in Asia and loved the food culture there. To this day, I am a foodie and will travel for food.

But how did I get to where I am today? There was a time after I graduated college when I wasn't sure what I wanted to do. I ended up getting into recruiting for tech companies for a few years. I knew this wasn't what I wanted to do forever. I wanted to

be fulfilled, to find my passion. This was when I leaned back to my undergraduate degree in nutrition.

I knew I wanted to become a registered dietitian, so I applied to dietetic internships and matched with Wellness Workdays. I became a registered dietitian in 2016 and ever since have had experience in clinical, food service, nutrition counseling, and corporate wellness.

What food-related customs do you have?

Something that has always stuck with me through life is having a balanced meal. Growing up Chinese, we always had some sort of protein, carbohydrate, and vegetable to achieve this balance. I always want to make sure I eat a balanced meal and include a vegetable in each meal. Not all the time for breakfast, but I do love throwing in spinach in my smoothies!

What led you to study dietetics?

While I was applying to colleges, I saw that Cal Poly San Luis Obispo offered a nutrition degree. As someone that has always loved food and science, I thought this would be the perfect major. A lot of schools I was looking into didn't offer this program. Luckily, I got in and wouldn't be where I am today if I didn't apply. I loved all my nutrition professors and classes, I even loved most of my science classes, even though they were hard!

How did you obtain your current position?

I truly think I got offered the position, because of my experience during my dietetic internship. My

dietetic internship brought me experience working in corporate wellness, which is what my role is today. I am a Wellbeing Manager at a biotech company in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Take us through a typical day for your job!

Each day is a bit different. However, what stays consistent is always having an incentive program or campaign running to better the wellbeing of our employees. It may be focusing on nutrition, physical activity, mental health, or preventive measures. With these programs, we have presentations, workshops, and different events (now all virtual for the time being).

What do you enjoy about this job?

I enjoy helping employees focus on their health and wellbeing. Employees are working so hard that it is refreshing to see them focus on self-care and take a moment for themselves. It's a great benefit that some employers offer that really shows how much they care about their employees.

What challenges have you faced in this field and how have you overcome them?

I have been fortunate in my education and career and have had many opportunities to grow and learn. However, I think in the world of dietetics, there needs to be more diversity and awareness. There needs to be more studies and recommendations for different cultures to be more inclusive. I have noticed some efforts, but there is still more work to be done in that regard.

What advice or tips would you give to aspiring dietitians?

Find meaning and fulfillment in your work. Don't give up and keep trying to achieve your goals. For those that are wanting to match with a dietetic internship, keep applying, get experience and you will get there. For those that have passed the RD exam and are looking for a job, find something that you are passionate about and you will succeed.

The topics of diversity, equity, and inclusion have been very important recently. How do you think AAPI dietetics community can contribute to this conversation?

AAPI dietetics can contribute to this conversation by being open to all cultures. To educate and to understand all cultures and to understand the diverse experiences one has lived. In the world of dietetics specifically, we can help provide meal recommendations for different cultures, traditions and variations of cooking. We can connect with clients through culture and diversity. And to be inclusive and respectful of age, culture, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, size, and socioeconomic characteristics.

Do you know a student or RD/DTR that we could feature in our newsletter?

Let us know by messaging us in our Instagram or Facebook accounts or by emailing us at AAPI@eatright.org!

AREA SPOTLIGHT:

Central Asia & the Uyghurs

Written by Angela Merwin, RD

Photos are courtesy of the author and her sister



Popular Uyghur dishes include *polo*, *laghman*, *samsa*, and *naan*. *Polo*, or *plov*, is a Central Asian dish with many variations throughout different countries. The Uyghur's *polo* typically includes lamb, rice, onion, carrots, cumin, and raisins. It is usually served with yogurt, cucumber, and tomato salad. *Laghman* is a handmade, pulled noodle dish with a meat and vegetable sauce on top. *Samsa* is a savory pastry that can be baked or steamed. The filling usually consists of meat, onion, salt, pepper, spices and sometimes vegetables. One of my family's favorites is *Kawa Manta*. This is a variation of *samsa* that is steamed and filled with meat, pumpkin, salt, onion, and cumin.

The Silk Road was an important trade route that connected East to West. About 4000 miles long, the heart of the Silk Road was in Central Asia, at the center of which are the Uyghur people. The Uyghurs are a Turkic and Central Asian ethnic minority who reside mostly in what is now Northwestern China. Their indigenous land was at the crossroads of East and West along the Silk Road, which brought many influences on their culture, history, and food. Many Uyghurs live in diaspora, where preservation of culture is especially important amidst a crisis, and food is one of the ways culture is expressed.



In the Uyghur homeland, the geography is a mix of deserts, mountains, steppes, and oases which provides diverse climates for agriculture. Uyghur cuisine consists commonly of lamb, noodles, rice, chicken, dairy, *naan*, *samsa*, and fruits and vegetables. Uyghurs use a variety of spices in their cooking. Staples include cumin, salt, white pepper, garlic, and onion.

Naan is typically baked in clay ovens and stamped with a *tukush*, which is a tool used to make a circular pattern in the middle of the bread. *Kawap*, or kebab, is usually made from lamb with a distinct spice mix, grilled over hot coals, and sold along the streets. My father's favorite snack was folding a hot piece of naan over fresh kebabs as a sandwich.

The Uyghur region is rich in produce, mainly fruits such as grapes, cantaloupe, watermelon, peaches, and nectarines. In the summertime, it is common to consume watermelon after every meal.



Uyghurs also use many vegetables in their dishes, such as potatoes, green beans, eggplants, onion, garlic, celery, peppers, and carrots. As with other Asian cuisines, some spices can be difficult to find in the US. Lamb is one of the more expensive meats in the US, so many Uyghurs substitute chicken or beef for lamb and reserve lamb for very special occasions.

The Uyghurs predominantly adhere to the Islamic religion, which influences their food choices. However, there are some cultural food choices that hold regardless of religion. One such example is abstaining from pork.



Uyghurs celebrate Islamic holidays such as Ramadan and have their own celebrations as well. One big celebration is *Qurban bayram*. During this time of the year, you may see some lambs being butchered on the side of the road, getting ready for feasts. Uyghurs are not allowed to openly practice their religion anymore, so finding halal or pork-free foods can be difficult. Uyghur holidays and celebrations are also banned, so these cultural experiences are rare to find now.



Uyghur cuisine is central to all social gatherings. Uyghurs are very hospitable and are great hosts. Typically, there are always nuts, candies, dried fruit, and chai waiting on the table when guests arrive. After visiting and munching on snacks, the meal is served. A lot of food is prepared, usually too much, but denying food offered to you can be considered impolite. So, if you are a guest visiting a Uyghur household, be prepared to leave with a very full stomach and a very full heart. Uyghurs love to have parties and love to throw extravagant weddings with huge feasts. Some of my favorite memories were at Uyghur weddings where we dance, socialize, and eat delicious food all evening long.

Uyghur food culture may not be well known, but it definitely is a rich, beautiful and historically significant one. As the Uyghur culture has been

undergoing erasure, it is imperative to share about Uyghur food and culture.

About the author:



Angela Merwin is a registered dietitian working in behavioral health nutrition. Angela grew up in East Turkestan and Central Asia and now lives in the U.S. Growing up around Uyghur food is what motivated Angela to become a dietitian. It is Angela's mission to

spread awareness about Uyghur food and culture amidst a current cultural genocide, and to spread awareness of how vital it is to the human experience to allow food to provide social and emotional nourishment.

Instagram: @angiemerw

Email: merwin.angela@gmail.com

RECIPE:

GULNISA'S POLU

Courtesy of Elise Anderson, original recipe [here](#)

YIELD: 12 servings

INGREDIENTS

2–3 large white or yellow onions, sliced
3 lbs. carrots, peeled and sliced into sticks
1 1/4 cup (300 ml) oil
2 lbs. lamb (or another meat)
3 lbs. short or medium grain sushi rice
6 1/3 cup water, plus water for rinsing rice
2 bulbs garlic
3 tbsp. salt
2+ tbsp. whole cumin seeds

DIRECTIONS

Note: Prep your onions and carrots before you start cooking anything!

1. Peel the carrots, then place 2-3 carrots next to one another and cut on a diagonal across the carrots to make medallions. Now go back and chop across the medallions, cutting into sticks.
2. Add oil to pot and heat over medium-high heat. Once oil is heated, cook onions until they begin to caramelize.

3. Add meat and stir vigorously, cooking until onions start to disappear (but do NOT let them burn).
4. Add carrots, lower heat to medium, and cook, stirring, until carrots soften and begin to turn a deep orange.
5. Meanwhile, rinse rice vigorously in cold water and drain AT LEAST three times (more if very starchy), then soak in water for at least 15 minutes.
6. Remove outer layers of garlic peel and wash off any dirt from the bulbs. Cut around bottom of bulbs to expose garlic but try not to loosen the cloves.
7. After the carrots have taken on a deep color, add water, salt, and cumin to pot. Increase heat and bring to boil.
8. When water reaches boiling, add garlic heads, making sure to submerge them. Cover pot and boil for 10 minutes.
9. After boiling, remove garlic and meat, and set aside.
10. Drain rice and add to pot, layering rice on top of carrots, but do not mix the rice and carrots!
11. Raise heat to highest setting and let water cook off until the liquid level is slightly below the top of the rice.

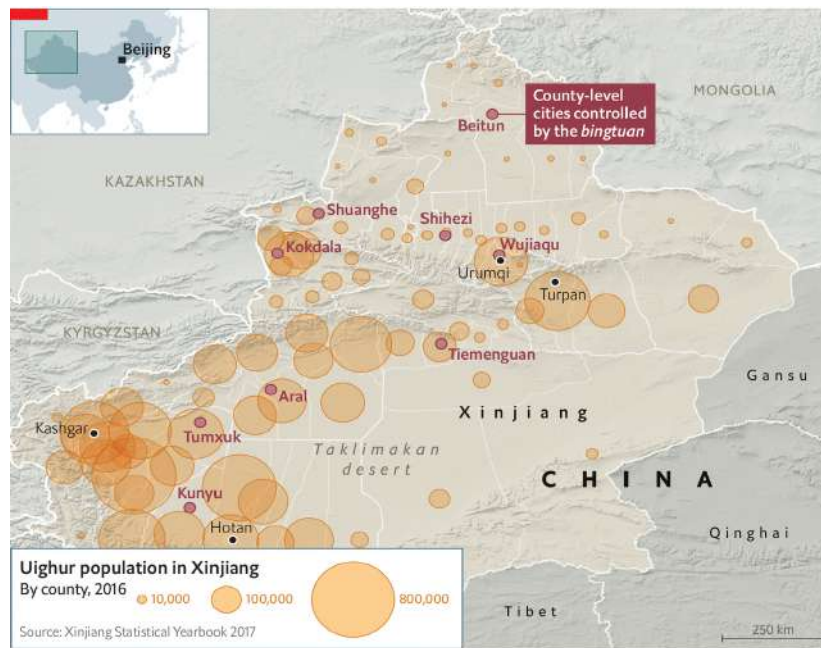


Photo courtesy of Elise Anderson

12. At this point, use a spatula to gently pull rice away from the sides of the pot and heap toward the middle, creating room for expansion. Remember: do not mix the rice and carrot layers!
13. Use chopsticks or another long kitchen tool to make holes in rice leading to the bottom of the pot.
14. Place cooked meat and garlic on top of the rice. At this point, you could also technically add anything. Think chickpeas, raisins, sliced potato, other veggies: anything you want to steam along with the polu!
15. Cover pot, reduce heat to medium-low (if cooking on electric) or low (if cooking on a stronger gas flame), and cook for 30 minutes.
16. While the polu is cooking, you can prepare add-ons, including boiled eggs; a vinegary salad of tomatoes, red onion, and Anaheim peppers in red wine vinegar and salt;

and full-fat Greek yogurt or labneh.

17. Remove garlic, peppers, and meat; cut meat into bite size pieces. Stir rice vigorously to distribute carrots evenly throughout.
18. Serve rice on a platter, placing meat and whole garlic heads (which are now roasted and completely delicious!), and any other add-ons you have steamed on top.



DID YOU KNOW? Most people of the Uyghur ethnic minority reside in Xinjiang, the province in the very northwest of China, which is bordered by several Central Asian countries. Photo courtesy of The Economist.

RESEARCH TIDBITS

DIETARY INTAKE OF PROBIOTIC KIMCHI AMELIORATED IL-6-DRIVEN CANCER CACHEXIA (An et al., 2019)

In this study, six-week-old male Balb/c mice injected with C26 adenocarcinoma cells were given kimchi to determine if it can prevent cancer cachexia. Researchers found that the mice who had kimchi developed cachexia more slowly, lost less weight, preserved more muscle, and had higher survival rates from cachexia. They also found that kimchi suppresses the action of interleukin-6 (IL-6), one of the core mediators of cancer cachexia. Markers of muscle atrophy and lipolysis were also significantly decreased in the kimchi groups. Read more [here](#).



Kimchi photo courtesy of Korea Times

ACCULTURATION AND DIET AMONG CHINESE AMERICAN IMMIGRANTS IN NEW YORK CITY (Kirshner et al., 2019)

This study examined the relationship between self-reported dietary intake and diet quality with level of acculturation in a cross-sectional sample of Chinese American immigrants residing in New York City. More than 2,000 foreign-born Chinese American adults participated in the study. The authors did not find significant associations between acculturation and Alternative Healthy Eating Index (AHEI) scores. Upon breaking down the degrees of immersion in either Chinese or American culture, the researchers found that greater immersion in both cultures is correlated with higher intakes of vegetable, fruit, and nuts/legumes. Greater immersion in Chinese culture represented lower red and processed meat intake while the opposite is true for immersion in American culture. Read more [here](#).



Marshallese women photo courtesy of NorthwestMilitary.com

MARSHALLESE BELIEFS, PERCEPTIONS, AND PRACTICES RELATED TO CHILD FEEDING AMONG MARSHALLESE IN THE UNITED STATES: IMPLICATIONS FOR CHILDHOOD OBESITY (Johnson et al., 2019)

This study explored the child-feeding beliefs, customs, and practices among Marshallese mothers and caregivers of children under 3 years, in Northwest Arkansas through focus groups composed of 6 to 9 participants. The authors found that Marshallese breastfeeding customs, introduction of solid foods, and Marshallese family feeding customs are the three most influential factors for child-feeding practices among the Marshallese. Read more [here](#).



Lunar New Year photo courtesy of
Mad Hatters NYC