

# FOODS OF THE SHERPA PEOPLE



## NUTRITIONAL RICHNESS IN THE HIMALAYAS

The Sherpa community, predominantly residing in the high altitudes of Nepal's Himalayas, boasts a distinctive cuisine that mirrors their cultural heritage and the challenges of mountain life. Their diet is tailored to suit the demanding energy needs and to provide warmth in the cold, high-altitude climate.



Nepal sherpa village farm lodges tea houses Everest trail Himalayas

## KEY STAPLES AND NUTRITIONAL SOURCES



**Tsampa (Barley Flour):** A daily staple, Tsampa is

rich in carbohydrates and provides quick energy. It's often mixed with butter tea, a combination that offers both sustenance and warmth.



**Potatoes:** Introduced in the early 20th century,

potatoes have become a dietary cornerstone. They are a versatile source of vitamins and minerals, especially Vitamin C and potassium.



**Meat:** Yak meat and dried beef are crucial

protein sources. Given the limited vegetation, these high-protein foods are essential for muscle maintenance and overall health.



**Rice:** Consumed less frequently due to the high-altitude, rice is a cherished source of carbohydrates when available.



**Dairy Products:** Yak butter, cheese, and curd are high in fats, crucial for energy in harsh climates.

## UNIQUE BEVERAGES



- **Chang (Millet Beer):** A homemade, mildly alcoholic beverage, often consumed during social gatherings.
- **Butter Tea:** A mix of tea, butter, and salt, this drink is a staple for its caloric density and ability to provide sustained energy.



## INFLUENCE OF TOURISM

Increased tourism has diversified the Sherpa diet, introducing new ingredients and dishes. This has led to a gradual shift in traditional eating habits.



# ADAPTATION TO THE ENVIRONMENT

**Food Preservation:** The cold climate aids in naturally preserving meats and dairy products. Techniques like drying and fermenting are commonly used for long-term storage.



**Seasonal Vegetables and Fruits:** Trade with lower altitude communities allows for a seasonal variety of additional nutrients.



# GROWING FOOD IN THE SHERPA HIGHLANDS

- **Tough Farming:** In the high, chilly mountains, farming is a tough job! Sherpas use special farming steps called terraces to grow crops like potatoes and some hardy veggies.
- **Fewer Crops:** The cold means they can't grow many different kinds of plants. Mostly, they grow barley, potatoes, and some vegetables that are okay with the cold.
- **Planting by the Seasons:** Most of the farming happens in the short summer months because that's when the weather is best for growing crops.
- **Nature's Grocery Store:** Sherpas also find food in the wild, like herbs, mushrooms, and other plants that grow in the mountains.
- **Trading for Tasty Treats:** Since they can't grow everything, Sherpas trade with people in lower lands. This way, they get to enjoy rice, fruits, and other yummy foods that don't grow up high.

## INTERESTING FACTS AND STATISTICS

### Population:

There are approximately **150,000 - 200,000** Sherpas in Nepal, with a significant number living in the Khumbu region near Mount Everest.

### Altitude Adaptation:

Sherpas live at altitudes ranging from **2,500 to 4,000 meters**, where oxygen levels are significantly lower than at sea level.



### Caloric Intake:

The harsh climate and physical demands of mountain life mean that a Sherpa's diet can exceed **3,000 calories per day**, much higher than the global average.

### Dietary Shifts:

With the influx of tourism, a study showed that over **70%** of the Sherpa diet now includes non-traditional foods, a significant change from a few decades ago.



# COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

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### SET 1 (EASY):

What are the main components of the Sherpa diet?

Why are butter and cheese important in the Sherpa diet?

What is Tsampa, and how is it consumed?

How has tourism impacted the Sherpa diet?



### SET 2 (MEDIUM):

Describe the nutritional importance of Tsampa and potatoes in the Sherpa diet.

How do Sherpa people preserve their food?

What is the role of meat and dairy in the Sherpa diet?

How has the Sherpa diet adapted to the high-altitude environment?



### SET 3 (HARD):

Discuss the balance of carbohydrates, proteins, and fats in the Sherpa diet.

Explain the significance of Chang and butter tea in Sherpa culture.

How have recent dietary changes affected the traditional Sherpa cuisine?

What are the challenges of maintaining a traditional diet in the modern Sherpa community?



### SET 4 (CHALLENGE):

Analyze the impact of high-altitude living on the nutritional needs of the Sherpa people.

How has the introduction of new foods influenced the health and lifestyle of the Sherpa community?

Discuss the sustainability of traditional Sherpa food practices in the context of environmental changes.

Explore the potential future of the Sherpa diet amid global influences and climate change.