

O God of Bethel*Philip Doddridge (1702–1751)*

O God of Bethel! by whose hand
thy people still are fed;
Who through this weary pilgrimage
hast all our fathers led:

Our vows, our prayers, we now present
before thy throne of grace:
God of our fathers! be the God
of their succeeding race.

Through each perplexing path of life
our wand'ring footsteps guide;
Give us each day our daily bread,
and raiment fit provide.

O spread thy cov'ring wings around,
till all our wand'rings cease,
And at our Father's loved abode
our souls arrive in peace.

Such blessings from thy gracious hand
our humble pray'rs implore;
And thou shalt be our chosen God,
and portion evermore.

ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ*In the Nick of Time***International Delicacies***Kevin T. Bauder*

During the years that I was president of Central Baptist Theological Seminary I did a good bit of traveling. While traveling I also did a good bit of eating. I'm not exactly what you'd call a gourmet—I can enjoy a good hamburger as well as I can enjoy a steak. Nevertheless, one thing I've found interesting is the variety of unique foods in each region I've visited. Most of us eat three meals every day, and we can hardly remember any of them. Over the years, however, a few meals and a few foods stand out as worthy of recollection.

Our seminary used to have a campus in Romania—specifically, in Transylvania. To get there, our faculty would fly into Budapest, then drive several hours to the border. Usually we would enjoy at least one meal in Hungary. I learned to look forward to goulash on those stops.

I grew up with something called goulash that was made from macaroni and tomato juice. Hungarian goulash is nothing like that. It is a soup. Every little bistro has its own version. It may or may not have tomato in it, but it is always meaty and always spiced with paprika and garlic. Often it is served with noodles called *csipetke*. And it is wonderful.

Romania itself features several gastronomic treasures. One is the Romanian national sausage, known variously as *mititei* or *mic*. This is a darkly-seasoned meat, and I've never found anything quite like it in any other culture. It is often grilled in the Romanian way, over an open fire in a large, concave steel disc. The *mici* are ringed around the outside of the disc. Often chicken pieces or some other meat forms the next ring, and potato wedges are heaped in the middle. As the *mititei* fries, oil from them flavors the chicken and the potatoes. The result is almost transcendently good.

Of course, the Romanian national dish is *sarmale*, which consists of seasoned meat and rice cooked in cabbage leaves. Festive occasions may call for whole cauldrons of *sarmale*. Depending on the season, the cabbage can be either fresh or pickled. It's good either way. Of course, this dish is not uniquely Romanian—most Eastern European cultures feature some variety of it.



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While we're talking about Eastern Europe, one of the most memorable meals I've ever eaten was in Novi Sad, Serbia. I had wanted to meet the president of the Baptist Union of Serbia, who was supposed to be strongly evangelical. He turned out to be a graduate of Moody, and he was genuinely happy to see us. At lunch time he suggested a small local restaurant (in Eastern Europe all restaurants are local and most of them are small). Specifically, he recommended that we try the mixed grill. I have no idea exactly what I ate that day. I only know that it was the most marvelous assortment of sausages, potatoes, and pickled cabbage that I've ever sampled. This lunch was an unexpected delight during a difficult journey.

Of the various Asian countries I've visited, the food that stands out most in my recollection is actually a drink: tea. Of course we have tea in America, but the tea I encountered in India—*masala chai*—was unlike anything I'd ever had from Lipton. I believe that the tea leaves were steeped in (water buffalo?) milk, then spiced with fresh local seasonings. When served with a traditional *dal* (lentil soup) over rice, it made a good, basic meal.

On the subject of Indian cuisine, some of the most entertaining Indian food I've ever eaten was actually a crossover with Mexican, eaten at a hole-in-the-wall place in Toronto, Canada. Toronto is quite cosmopolitan, so it's not surprising to find cultures borrowing from each other there. Thus I was introduced to the "currito," which consisted of Indian butter chicken and rice wrapped in a genuine south-of-the-border tortilla. I thought the idea was laughable until I bit into one—and oh, my! I only wish that I could find something like that in Minneapolis.

Of the national cuisines I've sampled, Brazilian has to be the most varied and entertaining. If anything, Brazil is even more of a cultural melting pot than the United States. You can find good Arab food there. You can find some of the best pizza in the world. But of course, Brazil is best known for its *churrasco*.

What is *churrasco*? Broadly speaking, *churrasco* consists of a variety of meats, mostly beef, seasoned with granular salt and roasted over an open fire. In Brazil, these meats are served in a buffet restaurant known as a *churrascaria*. Waiters bring the various cuts to your table and slice off strips for your plate. The typical *churrascaria* also serves a variety of other foods—*feijoada* (meat and beans over rice), manioc, quail's eggs, palm hearts, and so forth. These restaurants have become so popular that some of them are now opening in the United States, where they are extremely expensive. In Brazil, however, the typical *churrascaria* caters to working people and keeps its prices very reasonable.

Special mention should also be made of a large fish that is caught and eaten along the Amazon. Called the *pirarucu*, this fish is huge. It produces a mild,

white meat that is very flavorful when eaten alongside beans and rice in the open air.

In the category of drinks, special mention should be made of Brazilian *guaraná*. The *guaraná* is a tropical fruit that Brazilians make into a soft drink. It tastes a bit like a golden ginger ale, a bit like a crème soda, and not a bit like either. It has to be experienced to be understood. Every Brazilian has his or her favorite brand, and they're all good. My favorites are Guaraná Antarctica and Guaraná Real.

The hymn writer says, "I sing the goodness of the Lord that filled the earth with food." God could have created us to absorb nourishment through the soles of our feet from the dirt we walk on. Instead, He has given us an amazing variety of foods, and He has further given us palates that can delight in them. Away with all false and unbiblical world-denying philosophies that would insult the Creator by denigrating His gifts! And away with all parochialism that disdains the unfamiliar. The marvelous variety of nourishing edibles is one manifestation of the Creator's common grace. I for one am grateful for these good things that the Lord has permitted me to sample.



This essay is by Kevin T. Bauder, Research Professor of Systematic Theology at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. Not every one of the professors, students, or alumni of Central Seminary necessarily agrees with every opinion that it expresses.
