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## Israel, Its Origin, Culture, Geography and Tradition

Israel is one of the most culture rich countries in the world. Having rich culture means that you will also have amazing cultural food. Since Israel has a huge range of geological features like mountains, valleys, seas, rivers, desert, and wetland it also has a very large variety of foods that grow and are prepared there. The main export of food from Israel is fruits like avocados, melons, and tomatoes because of its range of climates. I think Israeli food is some of the best food in the world.

Israel's economy is very technologically advanced, it is the 24th largest economy in the world. Israel's science and technology sector is one of the most developed in the world. Israel ranks fourth in the world in scientific activity and Israel's percentage of the total number of scientific articles published worldwide is almost 10 times higher than its percentage of the world's population, that is absolutely extraordinary. Israel is one of the world's three major centers for polished diamonds, right behind Belgium and India. Israel's polished diamond exports in 2010 were \$1.45 billion. Tourism is one of Israel's major sources of income, with 3.45 million foreign tourists in 2010 alone! Israel has a large amount of historical and religious sites, beach resorts, and archaeological tourism.

Israel's traditions are mainly based on the Jewish religion because the majority of people who live in Israel are Jewish. Food plays an important role in almost all Jewish celebrations. The Sabbath (which is on Friday evening to Saturday evening) is welcomed with an amazing dinner of wine (or grape juice), challah (braided bread), candles, and matzo ball soup. On Purim (which is coming up on the 7th of March) we eat hamantaschen. Hamantaschen is a triangle shaped cookie that is filled with jam like apricot (my favorite), strawberry, cherry, and sometimes even chocolate. On Tu B'Shvat, which is the Jewish New Year, we eat apples and honey to celebrate a sweet new year and a round challah to represent the cyclical nature of life. On Passover we are not allowed to eat leavened bread for one week (which I still have not succeeded in) but eat a special unleavened bread called matzah, that is very tasteless. We also have a special service called a "Seder" which means "order" in Hebrew that consists of many foods like boiled eggs, charosis (a mixture of apples and walnuts), zeroah (a lamb or shank bone), maror (bitter herbs), and karpas (parsley or celery which is dipped in salt water).

In Israel there are many different foods eaten daily, not only on special holidays. Falafel which is ground chickpeas mixed with onions and spices formed into balls and fried, are served in pita bread as a sandwich with tomatoes and lettuce. Tabbouleh, which is also pretty popular, is a salad of bulgur wheat and chopped vegetables. One of my favorites are hummus, which is ground chickpea, is usually eaten with a warm pita. Baklava is a popular Arabic dessert that is

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made of flaky dough layered with honey and nuts and is very sweet. Coffee is also made in the Turkish style, which is extremely strong and thick.

Although Israeli food very different from ours, it is still extremely tasty. I think it is interesting how the religion and geography could influence the food of a whole country. I love Israeli food and I hope I will get to go there someday and experience the culture, religion and food of such a amazing country.

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