Fish and chips
A lot of what we think of as traditional English food wasn’t actually eaten until the 19th century. The well-known English take-away fish and chips have only become popular in the last hundred years or so. After all, chips are quite a recent invention, attributed to the Belgians. Fish and chips used to be given to miners and factory workers, as it was a filling meal that could easily be carried and eaten at work. The invention of railways brought the cod, the fish usually used in this dish, to the people who didn’t live near the sea.

Puddings: sweet or salty?
Yorkshire pudding is a traditional side dish, which was primarily eaten in the county of Yorkshire. It is made by pouring batter (made of lard, milk and flour) into a baking tin and then baking it at a high temperature until golden brown. Traditionally, it’s eaten with gravy and served with roast beef. Because Yorkshire pudding was a part of a meat dish, it appeared mostly on the tables of the rich. A pudding in English can also mean dessert, a heavy, soft dish made from a kind of batter. There is a huge variety of puddings, most of which are steamed – placed in a bowl over a saucepan of boiling water for a long time until they are cooked. There are steamed jam puddings, chocolate puddings (this isn’t a traditional one!), lemon puddings, Christmas pudding and the traditional fruit puddings, like spotted dick. The name is probably responsible for the decline in popularity of this one!

Scones are another old dish. Originally from Scotland, they are a type of bread made with milk and butter. They can be plain, or filled with cheese or sultanas.

Current English tastes
A recent survey suggested that the most popular dish in Britain is chicken tikka masala, which comes from India. Italian and Chinese food is very popular, too. A lot of English people don’t actually eat much English food any more! In Scotland, a new dish has been invented – deep fried Mars bars, so the British taste for heavy food is still alive and well.

Alex Jordan (UK)
Unexpected Tastes of the World

Look in most textbooks and you’d think all Americans eat hamburgers and the British stuff themselves on fish and chips. What about Australia, Canada, and South Africa? Here is what some of Bridge’s contributors said when asked to name a typical dish from home.

South Africa: Biltong and Boerewors

There are two things that every South African longs for when away from home. First, biltong, which is beef, ostrich, or game meat that is cut into long strips, marinated, and then hung up to dry. Biltong is tastiest when really dry and flaky. The second specialty is boerewors, Afrikaans for “farmers’ sausage”, which originates from the time when the Dutch settlers trekked into the interior, preparing sausages for their long ox-wagon trip. The traditional recipe uses minced beef, mutton and veal, pork fat and spices. Pearl Harris

Australia: Vegemite

No, we don’t sit down to a hearty meal of kangaroo. Well, not often. Our most popular food is a spread called Vegemite. This black paste made from yeast extract is regarded as a national icon by Australians, while the rest of the world says it is like salty boot polish, tar in a jar, or simply inedible. Ryan Scott

USA: S’mores

A popular camping dessert in the US is the s’more. S’mores are made by roasting a marshmallow on a stick over the campfire. When it gets brown and soft, you put it between two graham crackers and a piece of chocolate to make a sandwich. Be sure to squish the sandwich together because the heat from the marshmallow is supposed to melt the chocolate. Why are they called s’mores? ‘Cause if you have one, you are gonna want some more (s’more)! Jacy Meyer

Canada: Habitant* Pea Soup

French-Canadian pea soup that helped feed the troops during the First World War. This heart-warming soup is known as habitant pea soup because of its French-Canadian origins and is made with yellow peas, pork fat and spices including bay leaf and thyme. The soup quickly became a staple in households across Canada and the United States, and has even been sold in a can.

Hana Škrdlová

Vocabulary

South Africa
1. to long for – toužit po něčem
2. ostrich [ôstr[i]ʃ] – pštrosí maso
3. game meat – zvěřina
4. ox-wagon trip – cesta volským povozem
5. minced beef – mleté hovězí maso

Australia
6. veal [viːl] – telecí maso
7. hearty – vydatný
8. spread [sprɛd] – pomazánka
9. yeast extract [jist ’ækstrækt] – výživa z kvasnic
10. boot polish – krém na boty
11. tar in a jar – asfalt v zavařovací sklenici
12. inedible [i’nɛdɪb(ə)l] – nepoživatelný

USA
13. attachment to sth – náklonnost k
14. jingle – reklamní znělka

Canada
15. pea – hrášek
16. duvet [djuːvət] – peřina

Glossary

graham cracker – a thin biscuit that tastes like a Bebe cookie
habitant – a French settler in Canada