

Changing Eating Habits in Italy Globalization is causing a lot of change in international culture, from the TV shows we watch to the clothes we wear. One major area that has been affected by globalization is food culture. In a recent survey taken in Japan, Brazil, and Canada, 72% of people said that globalization had improved their eating habits. It seems clear that globalization has significantly affected food consumption in most parts of the world, but one country whose food has a long history of being globalized is Italy. If you walk down any main street in any major world city, you will find at least one Italian restaurant. Furthermore, Italy has seen changes in its own eating habits due to influence from other countries. This influence, which is a result of the broader trend of globalization, has had both advantages and disadvantages. In Italy, changing trends have affected the preparation of food. Italian families have always taken a lot of pride in preparing food. Until recently, pasta – a basic Italian food – would have been made by people in their local area. Families would also have made the sauces to eat with the pasta at home. People no longer spend so much time preparing their meals. Indeed, frozen or take-out Italian meals have become very popular in Italy. Furthermore, dried pasta is now mass-produced and is sold relatively cheaply in supermarkets. Ready-made pasta sauces are also increasingly popular – sales have doubled in the last five years, according to one manufacturer. This has added to the convenience of making meals, but has diminished a cultural tradition. Italians' food tastes have changed because of globalization. People are traveling more, being exposed to other cultures more, and reading about and seeing foreign ingredients and recipes on the Internet and social media. Immigrants to Italy bring their food traditions with them. It used to be that people's opportunities to experiment with foreign food were very limited, since only pizza and pasta were available in the local town square. Now they can eat at restaurants with foreign cuisine and buy foreign food in shops. Indian, Chinese, and Japanese food have all become especially popular. While this trend is more common in urban areas such as Rome, Milan, and Venice, many smaller towns are also experiencing similar changes. Many Italians would say that this has been a positive change, but others worry that they are losing their sense of nationality as foreign food becomes more common. A third major change in Italy's food culture has been the rise of large restaurant chains. These chains are often foreign, and their numbers have increased enormously in recent years. Many people like the convenience of fast food. Some Italians, however, feel that this has resulted in the destruction of local and national specialties. In 1986, a famous fast-food chain opened a restaurant in a historic Rome neighborhood. Many unhappy people responded by joining the "Slow Food" movement. This movement encourages people to eat healthy, locally sourced food. In summary, globalization has had a significant effect on the way that Italians eat. Its influence can be seen as both positive and negative. Convenience foods have replaced many of the traditional home-cooked meals, and the availability of foreign foods and international chains has greatly increased. Italians no longer have to rely on food that is produced locally. While some people welcome this extra choice, others fear the damage it may cause to Italian traditions, culture, and local businesses. On the other hand, the great popularity of Italian food worldwide will ensure this great cuisine never disappears.