

# Roots rediscovered

**F**ood has never stayed in one place for long. As it travelled, recipes transformed—ingredients were swapped, techniques blended, and unique flavours emerged. Many dishes we now associate with a particular country actually trace their roots to faraway places. Join **Ishaani Chaudhary, AIS Noida, XII B**, as she takes us through the surprising journeys of some of our favourite food items.

## Croissant

**Origin:** Austria (as 'Kipfel')

**Migration:** Introduced to France in the 1800s when Austrian bakers opened shops in Paris.

**Destination:** A symbol of French culture, enjoyed around the world.

**Fun fact:** The crescent-shaped Kipfel, a simple bread roll, was a popular breakfast item in Austria. When it arrived in France, local bakers transformed it using laminated dough techniques, creating the flaky, buttery croissant we love today. The croissant's shape is also said to commemorate Austria's victory over the Ottoman Empire in 1683, as it resembles the crescent moon on the Ottoman flag!

## Pasta

**Origin:** China

**Migration:** Brought to Italy through trade routes, evolving into the pasta we know today.

**Destination:** A staple of Italian cuisine, with countless varieties worldwide.

**Fun fact:** While Marco Polo is often credited with bringing pasta to Italy from China, historical evidence suggests that pasta existed in Italy even before his travels. Today, pasta comes in over 350 shapes, each designed to hold different types of sauces!

## Vanilla

**Origin:** Mexico (cultivated by the Totonac people)

**Migration:** Taken to Europe by Spanish conquistadors in the 16th century.

**Destination:** A key ingredient in desserts worldwide.

**Fun fact:** The vanilla orchid was first cultivated by the Totonac people in Mexico, and later used by the Aztecs to flavour chocolate drinks. When the Spanish brought vanilla to Europe, it became a highly sought-after ingredient. Interestingly, outside of Mexico, vanilla orchids are hand-pollinated because their natural pollinators, the Melipona bees, do not exist elsewhere around the globe. This is why natural vanilla remains one of the most expensive spices in the world!

## French fries

**Origin:** Belgium

**Migration:** Introduced to the US by American soldiers stationed in Belgium during World War I.

**Destination:** A global fast-food favourite, served with a variety of toppings and dips.

**Fun fact:** Despite being called 'French' fries, this beloved snack originated in Belgium. In the 1600s, Belgian villagers fried thin slices of potatoes as a substitute for fish when rivers froze in the winter. During World War I, American soldiers in Belgium tasted these crispy delights and mistakenly named them 'French Fries' because the Belgian Army primarily spoke French. Today, Belgium is still famous for its fries, often served with delicious mayonnaise instead of ketchup!

## Cheesecake

**Origin:** Ancient Greece

**Migration:** Adopted by the Romans, later spread across Europe as well as North and South America.

**Destination:** A worldwide dessert sensation with regional variations.

**Fun fact:** The earliest known cheesecake dates back over 2,000 years to Ancient Greece. In fact, Greek athletes in the first Olympic Games, in 776 BC were given cheesecake as an energy booster! The Romans later adapted the recipe, and it spread across Europe. In the 19th century, American cheese makers developed cream cheese, which led to the creation of the most famous New York-style cheesecake!

## Samosa

**Origin:** Egypt (known as 'Samsa')

**Migration:** Travelled through the Middle East and arrived in India via trade routes.

**Destination:** A beloved Indian snack and street food, which is now available worldwide.

**Fun fact:** The original Egyptian 'Samsa' was a meat-filled pastry, enjoyed by traders and travellers along trade routes. When it reached India, the local version evolved into a vegetarian delight, typically filled with spiced potatoes and peas. Today, samosas come in various regional variations – some stuffed with lentils, others with minced meat or even sweet fillings!