The Culture of Late-Night Eating

Why We Eat After Dark | Level B1 | EnglishBridges.com

Before You Read

Discuss these questions with a partner.

1. What is the latest time you usually eat? What do you often eat late at night?
2. Where do people in your town go to eat late in the evening, or do they stay home?
3. How might the time people eat dinner differ by country, job, age, or season?

Reading: The Culture of Late-Night Eating

In many cities, eating near midnight is completely **ordinary**. In Seoul, Taipei, and Madrid, people often eat late. The reasons, however, are very different from place to place.

Taiwan is famous for its night markets. They grew after World War II, when many workers moved to the cities and needed cheap food after long days. Today, crowds walk between the **stalls** in the evening. Dishes such as oyster omelets come in small **portions** at low prices, so people can try many things in one night.

In Spain, dinner often starts between 9 and 10 p.m. Many people link this **habit** to 1940. That year, Francisco Franco moved Spain's clocks one hour forward to match Germany. The whole **schedule** of the day moved later. Another explanation is about work. After Spain's civil war, many people were poor and had two jobs. They used to finish the first job in the early afternoon and then go to a second job. Dinner would come only after the second job ended.

In South Korea, a late-night snack is called yasik. Office workers would often stay late and then go out with their **colleagues**. Today, many people order fried chicken from a delivery app instead. In 2026, the app Baemin said that late-night orders from foreign visitors had risen **sharply**. In Lagos, Nigeria, sellers of spicy suya meat wait for the cooler evening air before they light the **grill**. During Ramadan, Muslims **fast** from **dawn** until sunset, and cities such as Dubai stay busy late into the night.

Daily life is changing too. Many families used to eat together at a **fixed** time each evening. Now long working hours, night **shifts**, and long **commutes** push meals later. Is this bad for your health? The **evidence** is mixed. Several studies link eating close to bedtime with **heartburn** and poorer sleep. In one small study, people who ate the same meals four hours later felt hungrier and burned fewer calories. But many studies show only a link, not a cause. Some sleep experts suggest finishing a big meal about three hours before bed.

Vocabulary: Fill in the Blank

Complete each sentence with a word or phrase from the box. Use each one once.

portions	**stalls**	**sharply**	**fixed**	**grill**	**commutes**	**heartburn**	**fast**	**shifts**	**habit**
colleagues	**dawn**	**schedule**	**ordinary**						

1. It was just an _____ morning, with nothing special about it.
2. At the market, the _____ sell everything from noodles to phone cases.
3. The restaurant gives huge _____, so one plate is enough for two people.
4. Biting my nails is a bad _____ that I want to stop.
5. Let me check my _____ to see if I am free on Friday.
6. She invited all her _____ from the office to her birthday party.
7. House prices rose _____ after the new train line opened.
8. Put the corn on the _____ and turn it every few minutes.
9. Many people _____ on certain religious days and eat nothing until evening.
10. The birds start singing at _____, just as the sky turns gray.
11. The bus fare is _____, so it costs the same at any hour.
12. Factory workers here work three _____: morning, afternoon, and night.
13. Our _____ to work take over an hour because of the traffic.
14. Drinking milk did not stop my _____ after the spicy dinner.

Word Partners: Collocations and Word Families

Part A. Collocations

Match the two halves to make common phrases. Write the letter on the line.

1. break the	_____	**a.** night shifts
2. a tight	_____	**b.** commute
3. small	_____	**c.** habit
4. rise	_____	**d.** portions
5. fire up the	_____	**e.** evidence
6. work	_____	**f.** grill
7. a long	_____	**g.** schedule
8. strong	_____	**h.** sharply

Now choose three of the phrases and write your own sentences.

Part B. Word families

Complete each sentence with the correct form of the word in brackets.

1. Many _____ in big cities spend two hours a day on trains. (*commutes*)
2. There was a _____ rise in food prices last year. (*sharply*)
3. During Ramadan, the day of _____ ends at sunset with a meal called iftar. (*fast*)
4. It was _____ that he was tired. He yawned all through the meeting. (*evidence*)
5. Our meeting is _____ for 10 a.m. on Monday. (*schedule*)
6. He is a _____ late eater. He almost never has dinner before ten. (*habit*)

Comprehension Questions

Answer in full sentences.

1. Why did night markets in Taiwan grow after World War II?

2. Why can people try many dishes in one evening at a night market?
3. When does dinner often start in Spain?
4. What happened to Spain's clocks in 1940, and how did it affect the day?
5. How did having two jobs make dinner later in Spain?
6. What is yasik, and how do many people get it today?
7. Why do suya sellers in Lagos wait for the evening?
8. What three things push meals later today, according to the reading?
9. Why does the writer say the evidence about late eating is mixed?
10. **True, False, or Not Given:** *"Most people in Taiwan eat dinner at a night market every day."* Explain your answer using the reading.
11. **Yes, No, or Not Given:** *"The writer believes that late eating has been proven to cause weight gain."* Explain your answer using the reading.
12. **Author's purpose:** Why does the writer mention the small study in which people ate the same meals four hours later? Is it (a) to give one example of evidence that late eating may affect hunger, (b) to prove that everyone must stop eating at night, or (c) to show that Spanish dinners are healthy?

True or False

Circle T (true) or F (false). Be ready to correct the false sentences.

1. Night markets in Taiwan grew after World War II. **T / F**
2. Food at night markets usually comes in large portions. **T / F**
3. In Spain, dinner often starts between 9 and 10 p.m. **T / F**
4. In 1940, Spain moved its clocks one hour back. **T / F**
5. After the civil war, many people in Spain had two jobs. **T / F**
6. Yasik is the Korean word for breakfast. **T / F**
7. Suya sellers in Lagos wait for cooler evening air before they light the grill. **T / F**
8. During Ramadan, Muslims fast from sunset until dawn. **T / F**
9. Several studies link eating close to bedtime with heartburn. **T / F**
10. In the small study, people who ate later felt less hungry. **T / F**

Language Focus: Used to and Would for Past Habits

used to + base verb: a past habit or a past state that is not true now. *I used to live near the sea.*

would + base verb: a repeated past action, often in a story about the past. *Every summer we would swim in the river.*

Negative and question: *I didn't use to eat late. Did you use to cook?* (no *-d* after *did*)

From the reading:

"They **used to finish** the first job in the early afternoon and then go to a second job."

"Dinner **would come** only after the second job ended."

Tip: Do not use *would* for states such as *be*, *like*, *have* (own), or *live*. Say *I used to like spicy food*, not *I would like spicy food*.

Part A. Sentence starters

Finish each sentence so that it is true for you.

Used to (a past habit or state)

1. When I was a child, I used to _____
2. My family used to eat dinner at _____
3. I didn't use to _____

Would (a repeated past action)

4. In high school, after class, my friends and I would _____
5. On summer evenings, my family would _____

Part B. Questions

Answer each question in a full sentence. Try to answer using used to *or* would. *Then ask a partner.*

6. What did you use to eat as a late-night snack when you were a student?
7. What would you do on weekends when you were ten years old?
8. What were you afraid of when you were a small child?
9. Where did you use to live when you were younger?
10. What games would you play with your friends after school?

Discussion Questions

Discuss with a partner or in a small group. Give reasons and examples.

1. What is your favorite food to eat late at night? Why?
2. Have you ever been to a night market or a street full of stalls? What was it like?
3. Do you prefer to go out for late-night food or to order delivery? Why?
4. What time does your family usually eat dinner? Has this changed since you were a child?
5. Do you ever eat with colleagues or classmates after work or class? What do you usually talk about?
6. How does your work or study schedule affect when you eat?
7. Would you like to live in a place where dinner starts at 10 p.m.? Why or why not?
8. When you visit a new country, why is it exciting to try what local people eat?
9. How do weather and seasons change when people eat in your area?
10. What are the good and bad points of shops and restaurants that stay open all night?
11. Delivery riders often work late so that others can eat at any hour. Is this fair to the riders?
12. Should a country change its clocks to match the sun better, even if it is difficult? Why or why not?
13. Health advice says one thing, but work and family life often say another. How can people find a balance?
14. Do you think families eating together at a fixed time is becoming less common? What might be lost or gained?

Online Practice

Scan the code or visit **englishbridges.com/lessons/late-night-eating** for the full reading, vocabulary activities, the Speed Challenge, typing practice, and AI conversation prompts.