



## **Chopsticks: A Cultural and Culinary History**

*Q. Edward Wang*

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## Chopsticks: A Cultural and Culinary History Q. Edward Wang

Chopsticks have become a quintessential part of the Japanese, Chinese and Korean culinary experience across the globe, with more than one fifth of the world's population using them daily to eat. In this vibrant, highly original account of the history of chopsticks, Q. Edward Wang charts their evolution from a simple eating implement in ancient times to their status as a much more complex, cultural symbol today. Opening in the Neolithic Age, at the first recorded use of chopsticks, the book surveys their practice through Chinese history, before exploring their transmission in the fifth century to other parts of Asia, including Vietnam, Korea, Japan and Mongolia. Calling upon a striking selection of artwork, the author illustrates how chopstick use has influenced Asian cuisine, and how, in turn the cuisine continues to influence chopstick use, both in Asia and across the globe.

## Chopsticks: A Cultural and Culinary History Details

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Author : Q. Edward Wang

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## From Reader Review Chopsticks: A Cultural and Culinary History for online ebook

### Andrew says

In so many ways, a typical academic book. Mind-numbingly boring in places. Excitingly mind-blowing in others.

Once you trudge past the opening chapters that **painstakingly** document Asian transitions to chopstick use, you do eventually get to the interesting parts. Chopsticks as symbolism, especially in love and death. Etiquette. Modern trends. Indeed, a picture emerges of a true chopstick culture in which a single, and often the only, table utensil infuses literature, ritual, and history. This is very different from the west, where, especially in formal settings, a plethora of utensils challenges the diner.

Or put another way: no one writes poetry about the fork.

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### Esther | braveliteraryworld says

#### GENERAL:

- this was a a really interesting read and concept
- I got bored at times though, and had to read it in chunks.

#### LIKES:

- really informational but not too stuffy
- loved the inclusion and analysis of primary texts
- appreciated how the author included both pining and the actual characters
- enjoyed learning more about my own culture

#### DISLIKES:

- I just got bored at times.

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### Carlee says

This book reads like an academic research paper or dissertation about the history of chopsticks - complete with footnotes that take up 1/3 of the page and sentences such as this topic will be discussed in a later section (I'm paraphrasing but you get the idea).

#### Some takeaways:

- chopsticks were originally used to convey non-grain food (also, the author loves using the word "convey") and spoons were used to convey rice/grains. Only Koreans still use both chopsticks and spoons as a set, but not at the same time (i.e. they don't hold a spoon in one hand and the chopsticks in the other).
- Koreans, unlike Chinese, Japanese and Vietnamese, do not pick up their rice bowls because they associate the behavior with beggars. Chinese, OTOH, pick up their rice bowls so they don't have to lean over the table

to eat; behavior that they liken with pigs at feeding time.

- Koreans eat more meat than the other groups, hence their preference for metal chopsticks (more durable, etc).

- Japanese place their chopsticks parallel to the (square) table in front of them. Chinese place them vertically.

- Chinese (and Koreans) tend to eat "family-style"; Japanese eat from individual plates.

- In Japanese families, each person has their own pair of chopsticks that they use. For Chinese, they just grab a pair from the pile of chopsticks (since they are all the same).

The subject is interesting but the presentation makes it less so. I ended up skimming through large parts of the book just to get through. Also, the photo on the cover doesn't really fit the book - sure, there is some mention of eating noodles, but given the large amount of pages given to the history of eating rice, perhaps the ramen should be replaced with rice.

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### **Gunjan says**

Written well, the book digs out different perspectives and narratives, historical facts and speculates the rise of the chopsticks to become such an important culinary tool in the current world of food and cooking.

Recommended for people who are curious about food, eating and cooking habits and how it came to be what it is today

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### **Melissa says**

Great book. The reading is a bit "academic" but I really enjoyed it. My only complaint is minor. I grew up in South Korea. I wish there had been a little more effort to include the Korean/Japanese equivalent words so I could reference the Korean version for better understanding. He added them sometimes. I realize that there isn't always an exact equivalent but there is almost always something similar or related. For example, off the top of my head, Chinese rice punch Jiuniang. There is no exact match but you could add something like "Jiuniang (related to Korean sikhye or Japanese amazake)."

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### **Bibliovixen says**

I thought this was a well-written book on the history and evolution of eating utensils in Asian countries. I enjoyed how the information was presented along with the photos. I also learned quite a bit about eating rituals in Asian countries. Highly recommended!

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