

History of Chopsticks



Chopsticks were first used in 1200 BC in China, where they were made of metal and used for reaching into boiling pots. At the time, people would eat their food with their hands, as it was cooked in large pieces and this was a practical option.

This changed in 400 AD when a population boom meant that people had to conserve resources like cooking fuel to survive. A solution was to cut food into smaller pieces, meaning it would take less time and resources to cook. Using chopsticks to pick up the small pieces became a practical way to eat.



As the food arrived at the table already chopped up, there was little need for diners to use knives. Chinese philosopher Confucius also believed that having knives at the table while eating would remind people of violence, disrupting the happy, contented mood that should accompany meals. This is one possible reason why Chinese chopsticks usually have a more blunt end than other countries.



Soon other cultures began to use chopsticks, although they altered them to suit styles. For example, Japan used different natural materials to show how wealthy the diner was, while in Korea, the norm is to use metal chopsticks with a rough tip that makes picking up food easier. It was believed that silver chopsticks would change colour in contact with poisoned food, so royalty often opted for this type to protect themselves.