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# UNIT 9



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## 1. PRE-READING

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Look at the picture.

- Where are these people?
- What is the man doing?

# Please Pass the Bird Brains

**D**O you have a headache? Take an aspirin—or eat bird brains. Do you want beautiful skin? Use skin cream—or eat pearls. Is your hair turning gray? Color your hair—or eat black rice.

"Eat bird brains, pearls, and black rice?" some people ask. "How strange!" But for many Chinese people, bird brains, pearls, and black rice are not strange things to eat; they are good things to eat. They are good medicines, too.

Many Chinese believe that food can be medicine. They believe that eating bird brains, for example, stops headaches, soup with ground pearls is good for the skin, and black rice stops hair from turning gray.

Food that people use for medicine is called medicinal food. The Chinese have eaten medicinal food and spices for centuries. Ginger, for example, is a common spice in Chinese cooking. Ginger gives food a nice flavor. The Chinese began to use ginger many years ago. They used ginger not because it tasted good. They used ginger because it was medicinal. Ginger, they thought, was good for the digestion. It also helped people who had colds.

Pepper and garlic, too, were probably medicinal a long time ago.

Some people don't believe that food and spices are good medicines. They want to buy their medicine in drugstores, not in supermarkets. Other people want to try medicinal food. They say, "Maybe medicinal food can't help me. But it can't hurt me, either."

People can try medicinal food at a Chinese restaurant in San Francisco, California. The restaurant serves medicinal food. The menus at the restaurant have a list of dinners. Next to each dinner there is information about the food. The information helps people order. "Queen's Secret," for example, is one dinner at the restaurant. This dinner has rice from chickens with black feathers. It is for people who want to look young.

A store is next to the restaurant. The store sells medicinal food. People who want to cook medicinal food at home can shop at the store. Alan Lau is the owner of both the restaurant and the store. He is working at the store. He is weighing something for a customer. Is it a spice? Is it medicine? Or is it both?

## 2. VOCABULARY

Think about the story and answer the questions.

1. Soup with *ground* pearls is good for the skin. Does the soup have very big pieces of pearls or very small pieces of pearls?
2. Chinese people have eaten medicinal food for *centuries*. Have the Chinese eaten medicinal food for hundreds of years or for only a few years?
3. Ginger is a *common* spice in Chinese cooking. Do the Chinese use ginger often or not very often?
4. Ginger is good for the *digestion*. Does ginger help the heart or the stomach?

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### 3. COMPREHENSION

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#### UNDERSTANDING THE MAIN IDEA

Circle the letter of the best answer.

1. "Please Pass the Bird Brains" is about
  - a. eating bird brains.
  - b. Chinese medicinal food.
  - c. a Chinese restaurant.
2. People who like medicinal food say,
  - a. "Food and spices can be good medicine."
  - b. "I buy medicine only in drugstores."
  - c. "Eating bird brains is strange."

#### UNDERSTANDING DETAILS

Read the sentences. One word in each sentence is not correct. Find word and cross it out. Write the correct word.

1. Many Chinese people believe that ~~furniture~~<sup>food</sup> can be medicine.
2. Eating bird brains stops backaches.
3. Soup with ground beef is good for the skin.
4. Black rice stops hair from turning red.
5. Food that is medicine is called delicious food.
6. The Chinese have eaten medicinal food for months.
7. Ginger, pepper, and garlic were medicines a short time ago.
8. People can try medicinal food at a bakery in San Francisco.

#### UNDERSTANDING PRONOUNS

Look at the pronouns. What do they mean? Write the letter of your answer on the line.

- |  |                                     |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1. _____ <i>They</i> have used medicinal food for centuries. | a. ginger                           |
| 2. _____ <i>It</i> is a common spice in Chinese cooking.     | b. a restaurant in California       |
| 3. _____ <i>It</i> serves medicinal food.                    | c. meat from chickens with feathers |
| 4. _____ <i>It</i> is for women who want to look young.      | d. the Chinese                      |

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## 4. DISCUSSION

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People everywhere use medicinal food. They also use home remedies. For example, when someone has an earache, people in Italy put a little warm olive oil in the ear. Putting olive oil in the ear is a home remedy for an earache. Do your classmates use medicinal food and home remedies?

Ask a classmate the questions below.

What does your family do when someone has:

- an earache?
- a cold?
- a sore throat?
- a headache?
- a stomachache?
- a burn?
- hiccups?
- a fever?

Share information about medicinal food and home remedies with the class.

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## 5. WRITING

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Imagine that there is a special medicinal food. It is not for headaches or stomachaches. This medicinal food is for problems. When you eat it, your problems go away.

You went to the store, bought the medicinal food, and ate it. Which problems went away? Write about them.

Here is an example.

*I had three problems. My English was not good. I didn't have enough money. I didn't have a boyfriend. Then I ate the medicinal food. Now my English is perfect. I got a new job, and I make \$50,000 a year. I have plenty of money. I also have a boyfriend. He is very handsome. That medicinal food was great!*