



Most of the cities in the United States were originally settled by small groups of people who shared the same values, the same religion and the same hope for a new life in the New World. There is, however, one extraordinary exception - San Francisco.

San Francisco was settled by 25,000 people who showed up one afternoon to find gold. They came from all over the world and just about every ethnic or religious group you can think of and as they mixed together they established the traditions that make San Francisco what it is today.

Native tribes had been living in the neighborhood for thousands of years when the Spanish wandered in in the 1700s and began building missions along the California coast. Nothing much really happened here until 1848 when gold was discovered in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains.

Word of the find spread throughout the world and each day hundreds of people arrived to seek their fortune in the gold fields. And each day the fields yielded over \$50,000 worth of gold. Within three years of the original discovery the population went from 850 people to over 50,000. They worked in the fields or in the support structure that was set-up in San Francisco. The cultural diversity was amazing---it was the most unique population in the world. Almost everyone was a new comer and a risk taker.



And right there, in the gold rush years is where you find the origins of the traditions that make San Francisco what it is today. When you were working in those fields you never knew where your neighbor was going to come from. What his religion might be or his beliefs or his lifestyle. You also never knew who was going to strike it rich and live a life of wealth beyond your wildest dreams and perhaps share it with you. So

tolerance was very important and some of those guys really struck it rich so there was a love of opulence and that is what San Francisco is about today. It may be the most tolerant city in the world and it has a great love of opulence, which makes it a great place to live in and a great place to be a visitor.

The second most significant event in the history of San Francisco was the great earthquake. On April 18th 1906, at 5:16 in the morning, every church bell in San



Francisco began ringing. There was a deep rumbling sound throughout the city. Within 48 seconds over 5000 buildings collapsed. In less than a minute the great San Francisco earthquake was over, but the real damage was caused by the fires that followed the quake and lasted for five days. In 1906 the buildings and the streets were filled with gas lines and gas lamps and when they ruptured the city went up in flames. As soon as the fires were out, reconstruction began. And once again cooperation between all groups became essential for survival.

San Francisco is a city of neighborhoods. They overlap and though you can't always spot the street where one ends and another begins, once you've arrived, it's easy to see that each neighborhood has its own distinct ethnic history, religion, culture, and food.

North Beach is the ancestral home of the Italian community in San Francisco. In the 1830s it was a cattle ranch that supplied fresh meat to passing trading vessels that popped in for supplies. Many of those ships came from the northern Italian city of Genoa. And when the sailors heard there was gold they decided to give up their rigging for digging. They also sent word back home about the gold which meant that thousands of additional Italian men came here and made a five month exhausting journey only to discover that the good stuff was already gone. Yet it was better here than back in the old country. The land was good for farming, the sea was

filled with fish, it was easy to make a new life in a new land. From the churches to the coffeehouses, the bakeries, and the Restaurants the entire community honors its Italian heritage.

North Beach is also the home of the City Lights Bookstore. It was founded in 1953 by Lawrence Ferlinghetti and was the first bookstore in the country to be devoted entirely to paperbacks. It also became the epicenter for the beatnik literature of the 50s and 60s.

After North Beach was destroyed in the fire that followed the earthquake the residents lived in Washington Square while they rebuilt their homes. It was one of the first communities to recover. Within ten months North Beach was up and running. One of the men responsible for the rapid recovery of the city was A.P. Giannini, owner of the tiny Bank of Italy, which served the Italian immigrants. He became famous because the day after the great earthquake he rescued the money and the ledgers from the rubble of his bank. The next day when the other banks refused to open A.P. set up a table on the San Francisco waterfront and began making loans on the basis of a handshake. Today it's known as the Bank of America. Mr. Giannini would love it.

NOB HILL

At the same time that the Italian community was putting together North Beach, those who had made their fortunes during the gold rush were building their great mansions, and the greatest of them were about to be built on Nob Hill. The word nob is a contraction of nabob, an Indian word that means prince and that's who moved in here, the princes of industry.



Nob Hill is the highest hill in San Francisco, it was so hard to get to the top that no one wanted to build their home here until 1873 when the cable car was invented and the railroad barons of California agreed to build their mansions here and a cable car company of their own running down California Street to Market where their offices were. You don't find many big homes made by the gold miners because they didn't actually make that much money --- the real fortunes were made by people who sold things to the gold miners like Leland Stanford, who was a grocer, or Charles Crocker, who was a dry goods salesman. Their homes are up here. There was

almost one exception, Bonanza Jim Fair, he made a fortune with the largest silver mine discovery in the history of the world and he was just about to build his dream home when he died.

His daughters inherited the property and began construction of a hotel. But just before it was scheduled to open it was gutted by the fire that followed the 1906 earthquake. Reconstruction on the hotel began as soon as the fires were out and it opened with a fantastic party just one year to the day after the quake. The Fairmont Hotel quickly became the social center for San Francisco society.

HISPANIC INFLUENCE

The first Europeans to build anything in San Francisco were the Spanish. Starting in 1769 they began building a chain of missions between San Diego and San Francisco. The Mission Dolores was built in 1776 and is still standing. It's San Francisco's oldest building. The ceiling is covered with ancient Native American designs that were painted on with vegetable dyes. The decorative altar came up from Mexico in 1796. The original bells were cast in the 1790's and hang above the entrance area.



When Mexico won its independence from Spain; California from San Diego to San Francisco became part of Mexico until the 1840's when it was taken over by the United States. During the early years of the 20th century over 10 percent of the population of Mexico immigrated to the United States with hundreds of thousands of those people settling in California. One result is a distinct Hispanic influence in San Francisco.

The most dramatic visual manifestations of the Mexican community are the street murals. There are over one hundred of them in the Mission District alone. Many are the work of the Precita Eyes Mural Arts Center that was set up by Susan Cervantes in 1977 to encourage, train and support the artists who wanted to paint murals. You can stop into the center and pick up a map that will guide you to the murals or you can sign up for a walking tour.

SUSAN CERVANTES:

Well I think that there are so many murals here because there was a mural movement that started in the late '60's right after the Civil Rights which is still continuing today. And it inspired the African American artists and Chicano artists to really understand their own cultural heritage and their roots.

This mural shows family life and spirit of mankind and that was the theme that everyone agreed to have on it - this is a family oriented neighborhood - they wanted to show community, they wanted to show people getting along with each other and sharing that community and love.



So the mural reflects the dozens of different ethnic groups that are in the community and how important it is for them to get together and love each other. The one thing about this community is that it is very diverse and it does reflect that diversity in the basis of the people that are painted in the murals and this is what's really important to everyone to know that is part of everyone's heritage. It's just a wonderful way that they worked and shared and respected each other's efforts.

So it's a way for someone in the community to discover their own history and then put that in the mural and then to present that history back to their own community in a huge painting.

THE CHINESE COMMUNITY

The Spanish were the first Europeans to settle in the neighborhood and the Chinese were the first Asians. In 1848, at the time of the Gold Rush, China was in total chaos. The Manchu dynasty was falling apart and unable to govern. There was widespread starvation and the peasants were in rebellion. Thousands of Chinese left their homeland in search of their golden opportunity which they believed was buried in the mountains just outside of San Francisco.

The earliest Chinese workers to arrive in the mines were known as "coolies", which comes from the Chinese *ku li* meaning bitter strength. They did the toughest jobs for the least money and set up their own community in San Francisco. When the gold rush came to an end the Silver Rush started and they were back in the mines again. And when the silver petered out they went to work building the railroads and as always at half the price of whites. At one point nine out of ten workers on the Central Pacific Railroad were



Chinese. Today San Francisco's Chinatown is the oldest and one of the largest Chinese communities outside Asia...the population is estimated at about 100,000.

The entrance to the district is Chinatown Gate. The words at the top translate as: "Everything in the World is in Just Proportion." I'm not sure that's true but it is certainly a goal to work towards.

The Chinese community is a powerful political and economic force in the city and Chinatown is a fascinating place to visit. The main shopping street for both residents and tourists is Grant Avenue. It was named in honor of Ulysses S. Grant who wasn't much of a shopper, but a devoted tourist. Before he became President he spent many years touring the southeastern part of the United States.



You might also like to take a walk through Waverly Street, known as The Street of Painted Balconies. It feels much like the traditional streets of China. And if your stash of powdered antler horn is running low you'll love this block.

The French and many other European immigrants influenced the early cooking of San Francisco. But the biggest impact came from the thousands of Chinese laborers who worked in the gold fields, and on the railroads, and at the wineries. They built their own town within a town. Today it is the largest Chinatown outside Asia. Originally it was almost completely a male society. The men lived in small rooms without kitchens. All their meals were taken in nearby restaurants. Hundreds of restaurants, and at all levels of quality and expense. Today some of the finest Chinese cooking in the world is right here in San Francisco.

Shirley Fong-Torres is a cookbook author, a historian, and television chef who has created a walking tour of her neighborhood that she calls "I Can't Believe I Ate My Way Through Chinatown". She also runs daily tours that cover the history, culture, and folklore of the community.

SHIRLEY FONG-TORRES:

A good place to stop is the Sam Wo restaurant for Chinese breakfast. Cheung Fun, in Chinese, in Cantonese means "long", and Fun means the "rice noodle". It is cold, and inside it is lean barbecue pork and then there's coriander and green onions and some scrambled eggs. So it's sort of like a breakfast roll. And so you just pick it up with either your

fingers or your chopsticks as a little snack.

Dou Minao which I hope you order in a restaurant is a pea sprout that comes from the snow pea family. When you bite into it, it has a little bit of an aftertaste.

When finding a nice, good duck, look for one that has carmelized, that doesn't have too much fat. But not too skinny because then there won't be enough meat. You want one to have a graceful neck and nice legs and thighs.



You will often see a lion dance performed to signify the grand opening of a new restaurant or a business. It's a loud celebration. The Chinese realized there was a business here. They could open up a restaurant and these non-Chinese would come in and pay money for their meals, and that's how Chinese food started to become popular.

THE JAPANESE

The second Asian group to immigrate to San Francisco came in the early years of the 20th Century, and they came from Japan. Over 25,000 Japanese arrived in California and many headed straight for San Francisco. Today, there are over 12,000 Japanese-Americans in San Francisco, and they make major contributions to the city's business, cultural and gastronomic community.

The word around town is that when it comes to Japanese food, Ebisu is at the top of the list. It's owned by Steve Fuji, a major authority on sushi, who taught classes on sushi preparation and presentation at San Francisco's DeYoung Museum.

STEVE FUJI:

To make sushi you put seaweed on a bamboo shade. Put the shiny part outside, and the dull side inside. Then, you put rice. Leave about half inch or so from the top. Spread it out. In a line in the center place your fish and vegetables. And then



come to the end - the wasabi. That's Japanese green horseradish. You put this in the middle.

Bring the mat over and then when you lift it up, almost half an inch of seaweed should hap over it. Then pick

up the mat, one side, okay and then push it over. Just a little. Not too hard.

With a knife run the water down, so it will not stick to the

rice. Cut them in half, then into three pieces. Then when you put them in a dish, the height should all be the same. And the fish should be in the middle.

CALIFORNIA CUISINE

Starting in the early 70s, restaurants in and around San Francisco started developing a style of cooking that became known as California cuisine. They began to use local products produced to the restaurant's specifications. A perfect example is Hawthorne Lane. Ann Gingrass is the chef and David Gingrass manages the house. The room is beautiful, sophisticated and comfortable. The open kitchen can be seen but not heard, and the food which blends European, Asian and American elements is excellent.

The apple carpaccio was the first appetizer. Next, crispy fried prawns with toasted garlic sauce and fresh spring rolls. A taste of stir-fried lamb with eggplant and garlic chips served in radicchio leaf cups. The main course was spiced marinated grilled chicken with curried noodles and carrot and peanut wontons. And for dessert, a lemon chiffon passion fruit cake with shaved white chocolate.



Since the days when the miners came into San Francisco with their pockets filled with gold, the restaurateurs of this city have made it their business to supply their customers with the best of everything.



In 1952, the Buena Vista Cafe decided to try and reproduce the perfect Irish coffee, as it was made in the Shannon Airport in Shannon, Ireland. It wasn't easy.

They even went back to Shannon to try and figure out what they were doing wrong, and they didn't get it right until the mayor of San Francisco, who once owned a dairy, figured out that they had to let the cream rest for 48 hours before they whipped it to the ideal consistency. At last, the perfect Irish coffee had been recreated in the United States. There was much rejoicing throughout the land and many people lived happily ever after.

Here's how they did it. First, a heatproof glass is selected and pre-heated with hot water. Two sugar cubes go in. Then the glass is filled to the three-quarter mark with hot

coffee, and the sugar is dissolved. A jigger of Irish whiskey is stirred in. Now, they only put the whiskey in because it helps hold up the lightly whipped cream which is poured in gently over a spoon.

Not even the Blarney Stone was left unturned in their search for the perfect Irish coffee. Here is to the pursuit of excellence.

In 1849, the Boudin family arrived in San Francisco and opened a French bakery. They used French baking techniques but incorporated a sourdough process to create a sourdough French bread. Since then, San Francisco has become famous for its sourdough bread, which is made from a combination of flour, water and wild yeast. The mother dough that they've perpetuated since 1849.

My guide is Larry Strain, the president of the company. The flour and water are mixed together and exposed to the air in order to attract the wild yeast. Once the yeast takes hold, the mass turns into a starter, or culture, which is the foundation of sourdough bread and acts as a leavening agent like any yeast or baking soda. Each time a new batch of bread is baked, some of the original starter is incorporated in the new batter and some of the new batter is turned back into the original starter. The Boudin bakery is still using the starter that got started in 1849.

What makes sourdough bread taste different in one part of the world than it does in another is the local wild yeast that grows in the area. The wild yeast in San



Francisco is so specialized that it is known as lacto bacillus San Francisco. Now, of course, you could buy sourdough starter in San Francisco and bring it home to any city in the world and make sourdough bread. But it would never taste the same as it does in San Francisco because your local wild yeast would want to join in the fun.

San Franciscans have an extraordinary interest in good eating and drinking. They take it seriously in terms of pleasure. But they also take it seriously in terms of business. There are over 3,500 restaurants in San Francisco. You could eat in a different one every day, and it will take you 11 years to get through them.



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